

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



November 30, 2015

Education Overhaul Orchestrates Pluralistic Society

Education promoting the rich human values is increasingly driven by a growing understanding of what works in education and how to go about successfully improving teaching and learning in schools with sufficient resource allocation. Pluralistic education plays an essential role in relation to conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation and reconstruction. Under these rationales, education should be structured as a non-traditional tool for building security by linking education to the human security framework. Afghanistan's education system requires an almost total overhaul. In the modern world and economic growth have raised the value of education and increased the importance of ensuring that all children and adults have access to high quality and effective education. The view to revamp over educational system has been a mobilizing force for the conservative and radicalized movement that led to overthrow of the Soviet government and led to rise of the Taliban. During the reign of the Taliban the educational system was inclined to produce Mujahedeen. Taliban hitherto misinterpreted several Holy Koran's verses that justifies killings of thousands of innocents, prohibit women from acquiring education, labeling co-education illicit and the modern scientific inventions desecrated, the list goes on and on. Nonetheless, seeing at the ill priorities of sitting government, one might dare asking whether the state of affair go on reversing. Earlier a study was conducted by Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) that underlined widespread radicalization, including an extensive presence of radical activists among high school students in Afghanistan. It is a point of grave concern for masses, government and international community alike. The last three decades Afghanistan's education system was steered with ample radicalization. The study reiterates that the on-going radicalization of high-school students has not yet reached a critical point, where it could contribute decisively to the destabilization of the country. However, rather than waiting for that to happen, the competent authorities should reconsider the effectiveness of their educational policies and, first and foremost, their ban on political activities in high schools. The study notes that if the ban were to be revoked, at least there would be a more level playing field in high schools, allowing a greater variety of parties and organizations to compete for the loyalty of the younger generation.

To date, the ban has primarily only been successful in keeping out moderate and progressive groups.

It is evident such education can function as a root cause and feeder of conflict, with the potential to retrench ethnic/religious divides and other societal cleavages. This dual nature of education reflects both the positive, or peace building and the negative, or conflict enhancing potential of education. A careful examination of the linkage between education conflict and peace building in Afghanistan demonstrates the ways in which education policy reforms have to deliberately be used creating the conditions for building a foundation for reconciliation and sustainable peace or endless conflict.

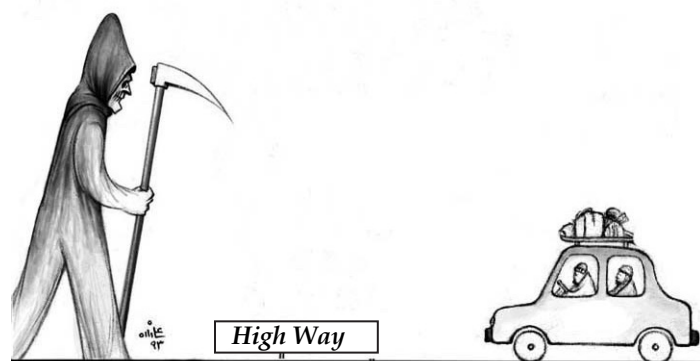
It is mentioned that political parties with radical outlook like Tehrik-e-Islami, Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e-Islah of which their centers are outside the country, recruit teachers here with high salaries and then attract the attention of students. It is cautioned such groups want to infiltrate all tribes and ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Some parties like Hezb ut-Tahrir and Jamiat-e-Islah are mostly active in Kunduz and their goal is to infiltrate all tribes in Afghanistan, the study recorded.

It is discouraging to find education department showing negligence or criminal complicity to bare those behind such clandestine movement.

It is indeed a great challenge for this department already meagerly administered and poorly governed – the cry for lack of resources is high, however when substantiated is defrauded. Afghan education sector already suffering of poor management, was struck by severe stroke of fund misappropriation and now it funds insurgents and turns into breeding ground of extremism may not serve the interest of nation at all.

Regrettably, incriminating education which undoes the fear out of the mind and heart of people is camouflaged in the constant cloud of terror and endless fear – unluckily parasitizes on its very existence. It is right for the world and us to worry about the declining impact of Afghanistan's dysfunctional educational system, especially when it has been demonstrated that poorly educated young men in a country as large as Afghanistan pose a serious security threat to the rest of the world.

Millions of families, especially those with little money, send their children to religious schools or Madrasas. Many of these schools are the only opportunity available for an education, but some have been used as nurturing ground for violent extremism. There is no doubt that Madrasas need to be reformed.



Role of Media in Afghanistan

By Dilawar Sherzai

Media has a vital role in democratic countries. Its role and its influence have been so much tremendous that now it is considered as one of the pillars of the state. It is believed that in modern democracy, media keeps an eye on legislature, judiciary and executive and at the same time scrutinizes their policies and their undertakings. Therefore, they have an opportunity to reconsider their undertakings and try to amend themselves as required. However, for this to happen, it is necessary that media should be independent and must not be dominated by the government.

Apart from scrutinizing the government media has an imperative role in developing public opinion and at the same time providing timely information and knowledge. Today's modernized media has the capacity to reach the people 24 hours and provide them information in real time. There are a large number of people in the world who are influenced by the bewitching effects of media. TV's, computers, newspapers and magazines, radios, mobile phones, tablets and many others, all are the parts of modern media and reach billions of people every day. Therefore, underestimating the role of media would be a fool's errand.

Though media's function in daily life is already significant, its role during the era of instability, conflict, war and different movements becomes paramount. Because of this fact, the different parties to the conflict try to use it for different sorts of propaganda and thus persuade the people to favor their perspectives. The independent and unbiased role of media during such an era will definitely make the whole world see the truth, while its biased role may bring more miseries and injustice.

Considering the influence and the role of media in the modern world, it is really important that it should have a very responsible and wise character. Misinformation and too much sensationalized and dramatic versions of the truth may deviate the people away from the path of the truth and they may start believing untrue as true and may even play a role to further dominate the truth.

Afghanistan has been one of the countries that have been dominated by instability and conflict. The role of media in Afghanistan has been felt to be very much vital, but unfortunately, it is has been developed only in the last decade. Today, it is claimed that Afghan media is independent, yet there are many issues that have to be dealt with to really make it free and independent in the true sense of the word. At the same time, the international media active in Afghanistan has also played a role that cannot be neglected at all.

The role of media, both national and international, in the last decade, especially in the era of war against terrorism has been very much important. It has disclosed to the people the real nature of the war and the parties to the conflict. It has brought to the people, the events and the incidents with their details and their horrors. Analyzing these incidents and events, it would not be difficult for the people of Afghanistan to understand their true enemy and friend. It is also crucial that media must make the people know about their true enemies and their true friends so that they must be able to choose the better between them. The media reports and the analysis have clearly shown to the people of Afghanistan that they have been highly influenced by Taliban and their actions. Though, they have been the victims of the war as a whole, the role and activities of Taliban have proved to be more deadly for them.

However, there is an important aspect of the fact that has not been properly handled by media and that is the truth as a whole. The truth in pieces, promulgated both by national and international media have caused certain misunderstandings as well. They have not been able to declare the war against terrorism as a war against terrorism in true sense. The war against terrorism simply means that there are two parties to the conflict; first party is the moderate Afghan culture and their supporters in international community and the second party is composed of the religious extremists – the Taliban.

Due to certain political compromises and at the same time misunderstandings, Taliban have been divided into certain factions. Yes, definitely, from tactical point of view there are different factions in Taliban, but they are one as a whole. They, as can be observed, are divided into factions, like Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban, but their ideologies have shown that they are not much different at all.

It is important for media to see the truth as a whole and try to understand the political tricks that are played by the politicians. It is not the duty of media to pursue the wills of the politicians, but to provide people with unbiased and complete truth. The complete truth is that Afghanistan has been influenced by hard-liner extremists, who have no respect for moderation and are the real party to the conflict in war against terrorism. It is not important what they are termed as; the important factor is what they do and what they want.

Pursuing the truth as a whole is the only way through which media would be able to support the common people in understanding the scenario around them and their real friends and enemies, which is very important to make better decisions for the country as whole.

Dilawar Sherzai is the permanent writer of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan. He can be reached at email.urya@gmail.com

The Import of Exports

By Ricardo Hausmann

Should a country's development strategy pay special attention to exports? After all, exports have nothing to do with satisfying their people's basic needs, such as education, health care, housing, power, water, telecoms, security, the rule of law, and recreation. So why give precedence to satisfying the needs of distant foreign consumers?

That, in a nutshell, is what many opponents of free trade and economic globalization – as well as many on the right who believe that all industries should be treated equally – want to know. But there are no right answers to wrong questions. It is precisely because governments care about their own people that they should focus on exports.

To see this, consider what a market economy is all about. Some, including Pope Francis, would say that it is about greed – a system in which everybody cares only about herself.

But a market economy should be understood as a system in which we are supposed to earn our keep by doing things for other people; how much we earn depends on how others value what we do for them. The market economy forces us to be concerned about the needs of others, because it is their need that constitutes the source of our livelihood. In some sense, a market economy is a gift-exchange system; money merely tracks the value of the gifts we give one another.

As a result, a market economy encourages specialization: We become very good in a narrow set of skills or products, and exchange them for millions of other things we have no clue how to do or make. As a consequence, we end up doing remarkably few things and buying everything else from others.

This observation is as true about an individual as it is about a place, whether the place is a neighborhood, a town, a state or province, or a country. Every town has grocery stores, beauty parlors, gas stations, and movie theaters that serve the local community. Economists call these “non-tradable activities,” because they are not undertaken with distant customers in mind.

But the town's people would also want access to things that nobody in the city even knows how to make. For example, most towns and cities do not produce food, cars, gasoline, medicines, TVs, or films. So they need to “import” these goods from elsewhere. To pay for what they want from out-of-towners, they must sell them some of the things that they do know how to make.

Of course, the out-of-towners have the option of buying from somewhere else. This is why the goods and services that a place can sell to non-residents have a disproportionate impact on its quality of life – and even its viability. A mining town becomes a ghost town when the mine closes, because the grocery store, the pharmacy, and the movie theater no longer have the capacity to buy the “imported” food, medicine, and films they need.

In contrast to non-tradable activities, a place's export activities need to be pretty good to convince out-of-town customers – who have ample other options – to buy from local producers. That means that exports must have an attractive quality/cost ratio.

One way to increase this ratio is to improve quality and productivity. Another is to lower wages. The higher the productivity and the quality of export activities, the higher the wages they can pay and still remain competitive. If employment in the export industry is significant, as is true in most places that do not rely on oil revenues, the wages that the export sector can afford will affect the wages of everybody in town. Everyone thus has an interest in improving their export sector. Because they are subject to greater competition, export activities tend to undergo faster technological and productivity improvements than other parts of the economy. They are constantly under threat from innovation and new competitors that could disrupt their business. Consider the iPhone's devastating impact on Finland's once-dominant national champion Nokia, or the effect of the shale-oil revolution on OPEC. Successful places tend to move from a few technologically simple industries that are competitive enough to export their products to a greater number of industries that are increasingly complex. For example, in 1963, 97% of Thailand's export basket was composed of agricultural and mineral products such as rice, rubber, tin, and jade. By 2013, these represented less than 20% of the total, while machinery and chemicals accounted for 56%.

A similar transformation can be seen in every successful non-OPEC developing country. The success of a place is very much related to its people's ability to accomplish this transformation, as exemplified by places such as Singapore, Turkey, and Israel.

So what should countries, provinces, and cities do? Skeptics might say that they should just focus on fixing the things that locals care about, such as education or infrastructure, or improve everybody's “business environment.” Exports will take care of themselves.

But life is more complicated than this. The needs of export activities are often quite distinct. The specific rules, infrastructure, skills, and technological mastery that export activities require tend to be different from those needed for the non-tradable activities that usually generate the bulk of a place's employment. While diversification into new areas is always challenging, it is particularly difficult for tradable activities, which have to face foreign competition from the start. By contrast, pioneers in non-tradable activities start with a captive market. Moreover, exporters need particularly strong connections to knowhow found elsewhere on the planet, thus making them more sensitive to foreign investment, migration, and international professional links. To survive and thrive, societies need to pay special attention to those activities that produce goods and services they can sell to non-residents. Indeed, the need to act on new export opportunities and remove obstacles to success is probably the central lesson from the East Asian and Irish growth miracles.

Non-tradable activities are akin to a country's sports leagues: different people like different teams. Those engaged in tradable activities are like the national team: we should all root for them – and organize ourselves to make sure they succeed. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

Ricardo Hausmann, a former minister of planning of Venezuela and former Chief Economist of the Inter-American Development Bank, is Professor of the Practice of Economic Development at Harvard University, where he is also Director of the Center for International Development.

Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Hussain Yasa

Vice-Chairman: Kazim Ali Gulzari

Email: outlookafghanistan@gmail.com

Phone: 0093 (799) 005019/777-005019

www.outlookafghanistan.net



The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not reflect the views or opinions of the Daily Outlook Afghanistan.