

**RESEARCH PAPER****Education Policy and the Pursuit of SDG 4 in South Asia: A Comparative Study of Bangladesh and Afghanistan****¹Batool Hassan, ² Muhammad Faizan Salik and ³Amara Wajid**

1. M. Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. PhD Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. PhD Scholar, Department of Management Sciences, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding Author

batoolhassan9@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper compares the education policy in Bangladesh and Afghanistan in terms of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Quality Education). The study uses five analytical frameworks: human capital theory, the capability approach, the political economy analysis, gender and intersectionality, and new institutionalism to question the role of governance structures, ideological orientations, and aid architectures in mediating educational outcomes. Bangladesh is showing quantifiable access improvements and continuing quality gaps, but Afghanistan has been experiencing a disastrous backsliding after the Taliban returned in 2021, which has been endemic in blocking access to education by girls.

Keywords: SDG 4, Education Policy, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Comparative Education**Introduction**

The implementation of 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development in September 2015 has become a turning point in the educational governance all over the world. The goals and targets of Sustainable Development goal 4, to provide inclusive and equitable quality education and facilitate lifelong learning to all, was a reimagining of the preceding Education for All (EFA) pledges as playing an active role in ensuring the quality of education, equity, and lifelong learning as constituent parts of educational justice (United Nations, 2015). However, even ten years after the onset of the SDG, the world system of education is marked by a strong uneven character due to unequal political economies, the legacy of colonizing countries, humanitarian crisis, and ideological landscapes.

There is no better way of capturing this transparency than the region of south Asia. Having about a quarter of the total number of out of school children globally, coupled with some of the worst learning poverty rates in the globe the region is home to both lessons and their warnings. Although Bangladesh and Afghanistan are geographically located within the house of the wider South Asian imaginary, they are the two completely opposite directions towards goal SDG 4. The region has become a shining example of social development: in Bangladesh, primary enrolment is now near-universal, gender parity in basic education is reached, and child poverty has been reduced significantly, yet the gains of human development in the country are fragile because of climate vulnerability, dependence on the garment industry, and a complicated association between the state, the civil society, and the international donors. Afghanistan, in its turn, has witnessed one of the most drastic educational backlashes that have happened in recent history as, with the Taliban taking over the power in August 2021, the systematic marginalization of girls and women, as well as secondary and higher education, has ensued, making Afghanistan the only nation globally to officially outlaw secondary and higher education to women

One of the objectives of this article is to provide a systematic comparative analysis of those two cases through various analytical prism with the purpose to shed light on the highly complicated determinants of education policy consequences. The key question that will inform this inquiry is the following: How and why has Bangladesh and Afghanistan education policy facilitated or hindered the realisation of SDG 4 and according to what theoretical basis does that explain the differences in these divergent paths? The article claims that the educational results cannot be perceived in the terms of a technocrat or the administrative perspective, however, the main problem is that it is the political economy of statehood, the ideological constitution of citizenship, gendered regimes as well as the institutional arrangements.

Although both Bangladesh and Afghanistan share a singly determined effort to achieve SDG 4 as part of the global 2030 Agenda framework, there are stark disparities in the educational attainment of each country, highlighting a basic disconnect between international policy values and the national reality. However, despite nearly universal enrolment, Bangladesh still suffers profound quality shortcomings and cross-cutting inequalities, and Afghanistan has been experiencing an educational descent after the Taliban returned to power in 2021, with an estimated 2.5 million women having no access to secondary education. This article fills that gap, conducting a theoretically pluralist, comparative, analysis of the two cases based on the argument that educational governance SDG 4 targets will never be realized in large sections of the Global South, unless people understand the political and ideological roots of the issue.

Literature Review

This article by Unterhalter, *"The Many Meanings of Quality Education: Politics of Targets and Indicators in SDG4"* (2019) argues in the most critical ways regarding the conceptual underpinnings of SDG 4. She finds a fundamental normative conflict SDG 4 both appeals to human capital theory, in which education is seen as a means, and a rights-based approach, in which education is seen as an end in itself. More effectively, she demonstrates that SDG 4 indicators prefer quantitative over qualitative indicators of learning, equity and capability which creates what she calls a politics of measurement masking the experiences of the most marginalised. This observation directly informs the present study in its application of qualitative and capability-based assessment, in addition to the traditional statistics (Unterhalter, 2019).

The book *Aid Lab* by Hossain (2017) offers the most theoretically advanced explanation of the way of development of Bangladesh. She recognises a moral economy of development an implicit social contract between the state and the civil society and donors, in which the development of the educational sector contributes to political legitimacy, supply of labour, and attracting donors. This framework indicates how Bangladesh has put an emphasis on access but not quality as well as why BRAC has gained disproportionate institutional power. Hossain also attributes the benefits of education to the gender dynamics of the garment sector, showing how the structural economic transformation and education policies co-created the idealized gender parity results in the country - a point of intersection in the current study and its intersectional examination (Hossain, 2017)

"The Taliban at War: 2001- 2018" (2019) by Giustozzi is the most empirically presented, analytically rigorous description of the Taliban ideology and governance strategy, which can be found in scholarly literature. The most important aspect is that Giustozzi focuses on defining the Taliban opposition to secular education, especially female one as the ideological conviction and not the political opportunism. The Taliban assailants of schools and educators between 2001 and 2021 were not just occurrences but rather the systematic targeting of the institutions that were seen as agents of secularisation and gender integration. The governing philosophy manifested in the education policy implemented after the 2021 re-election of the administration therefore show a consistent

vision. This questions technocratic narratives which put educational collapse after 2001 in administrative or financial terms, shifting analytical focus to the ideological and political aspects of educational governance which this paper predicts (Giustozzi, 2019).

Material and Methods

The research methodology of the present study can be characterised as a qualitative comparative case study design; it is an appropriate approach to examine context-dependent and complex social phenomena when causal processes cannot be disentangled using only statistical tools. The comparative method enables exploration of several dimensions of analysis such as policy discourse, institutional structure, political economy, and lived experiences across and within cases. This generates deeper theoretical information compared to single case quantitative research. The choice of the Bangladesh and Afghanistan is based on a totally different systems design. Both nations are officially bound to the same global system (SDG 4), but differ greatly at the political level, as well as at the level of institutional capacity and achievement. This contrast increases the leverage of the analysis that enables the research to determine the most important causal circumstances that define divergent outcomes. Since the educational phenomena cannot be considered in terms of one theoretical approach and have many causal chains, this research adopts a pluralist analytical framework, which synthesizes five perspectives that are complementary in their explanation:

Human Capital Theory investigates the connection between investment in education and the economy. Capability Approach determines whether education increases substantive freedoms and opportunities of people. Political Economy Analysis examines the interactions between power and institutions and educational policy and outcomes with interests. Gender and Intersectionality Frameworks examine the forms of inclusion and exclusion (gender and other social groups). New Institutionalism places emphasis on the dynamics of institutions, route dependency, and permanence of policy. The combination of these frameworks allows conducting a multi-dimensional and detailed analysis of the educational development in the two cases. This article is based on secondary sources only as it is written in a documentary and analytical spirit. The primary sources are: International data: UNESCO, World Bank World Development Indicators (2023) data, and UNICEF report. Policy documents: UNESCO country profiles, National education plans, and SDG Voluntary National Reviews. References of scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles used in the literature review. The research is based on qualitative comparison that are structured and implemented through the five above-described analytical lenses.

Theoretical Frameworks and Analytical Lenses

The discussion in the article is heavily multi-perspectival, relying on five correlated theoretical approaches that, when combined, create a holistic analytical scheme of the political, economic, social, and institutional conditions of the Global South educational advancement. The human capital conceptualizes education as a productive capacity investment, but argues that there is a causal relationship between education level and economic growth. Cost-benefit analysis of education spending or cost, returns to schooling, or relating the curriculum to labor market needs has been operationalized in this framework as part of SDGs. Nevertheless, as scholars suggest, human capital approaches run the risk of diminishing the value of education to an instrumental one and obscurantism towards engagement with learning or the gains resulting from its formal delivery, as well as barriers to such access and use that continue to be faced by the marginalised groups. When this lens is used in reference to Bangladesh and Afghanistan, we ask questions of both the amount and quality of investment in education and whether this leads one or more results on human development.

The capability approach gives a background counter-narrative of the highly economistic explanations of education. In this, education is not only appreciated in its terms of instrumental paid off but as a faculty a genuine liberation to live a life one does have a reason to appreciate. This inquiry is applied to the policy of education, which focuses analytical interest on whether education extends the substantive freedoms of learners, even those ones who are members of marginalised and historically excluded groups. The capability approach is particularly relevant to the Afghan situation, in which outlawing of education by females by the Taliban is not simply a policy failure but an utter disenfranchisement of girls as well as women as an agency, so complete as to be, in the words of scholars, an unfreedom.

The role of power, interests, and institutions in influencing the process and outcomes of policies will be forecasted by political economy analysis (PEA). PEA focuses the issues of how leading political elites, donor agencies, civil society organisations and other transnational actors negotiate, contest and implement education policies. Both the case of Bangladesh and Afghanistan are characterised by complicated political economies that heavily influence their educational paths: Bangladesh is the country with the corporatist developmental state due to the existence of a symbiotic relationship between garment industry elites, aid-dependent non-governmental organisations, and a semi-authoritarian ruling party.

Contextual Background: Education Landscapes in Bangladesh and Afghanistan

Bangladesh: Development Paradoxes and Educational Governance

Bangladesh is a country that has a population of about 170 million with a liberation war in the year 1971 that led this country to its independence after a bloody conflict with Pakistan (Aslam & Muzaffar, 2025). Starting with one of the lowest development grounds in the world, Bangladesh has attained what Hossain has coined a development paradox: the averaged 6-7% economic growth since the 1990s, the radical declines in poverty, and the nearly 100% primary education enrolment rates, all of which were reached through income levels which are significantly lower than those. The driving force behind this economic change has been the ready-made garment (RMG) industry which employs mostly female workers and a stringent network of non-governmental organisations most notably BRAC complementing the state in many instances in terms of delivery of educational services (BRAC, 2023).

Bangladesh is a complicated triangulation of state through the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the Ministry of Education; the civil society organization through BRAC; and international donors (the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and UNICEF), which play the most significant role in governance of education in Bangladesh. This three-way system has generated vast success in access: at primary school, the enrolment rate has reached nearly 100 ratios, parity by gender has been attained on the primary and secondary levels with girls actually surpassing boys in secondary enrolment and secondary literacy, has increased to more than 75 percent at the age of 65 years (plus) Nevertheless, such amazing access privileges are accompanied by consistent quality gaps: according to the estimates provided by the World Bank (2023), the percentage of children in Bangladesh who do not have reading and understandability of a simple text after turning ten years old does not exceed fifty percent of the population, teacher training, relevance of the curriculum, and the administration of learning institutions are the key areas of concern (Asadullah & Webb, 2024)

Afghanistan: From Fragile Progress to Catastrophic Regression

In the history of Afghanistan, the development of the education system has been marked by the eras of reconstruction and destruction due to the ongoing presence of almost

constant conflict in this country since the Soviet invasion of 1979. The years after the intervention led by the U.S. in 2001 were marked by marked though profoundly shaky educational growth: the enrolment to primary education expanded fivefold, leaving the situation of less than one million students in 2001 to comprise about 910 million students in 2020 with an additional third of them being girls, leaving nearly no enrolment at all during the Taliban rule during The contribution received by the donors to education was high and the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the bilateral donors invested billions of dollars in building schools, training of teachers and curriculum development (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

This development was however based on very shaky grounds. The issue of security was always a tense one, and the schools, in particular those of girls, were targeted by the attack. The quality of teachers was continuously at 100 percent low, and corruption was rife throughout the education system, with the so-called ghost schools, and ghost teachers stealing considerable resources without providing any services (World Bank, 2022). In August 2021, the Taliban returned to power and caused an educational disaster in Afghanistan, as the Afghan government collapsed. In few weeks, girl secondary schools were shut down; a Taliban decree formally banned all female education after Grade 6, and then universities started being shut to women (UNESCO, 2024). It is estimated that the amount of girls who missed secondary education is about 2.5 million, and the general educational system has gone through dramatic changes in the quality, access, and funding.

Comparative Analysis: Five Analytical Lenses

Table 1
Key SDG 4 Indicators — Bangladesh vs. Afghanistan (2022–2023)

Indicator	Bangladesh	Afghanistan	SDG 4 Target
Primary Net Enrolment Rate	98% (2023)	60% (2023)	100%
Secondary Enrolment Rate	73% (2022)	35% (2022)	Universal
Adult Literacy Rate	75% (2023)	37% (2022)	Substantial increase
Gender Parity Index (Primary)	1.01 (2022)	0.67 (2022)	≥1.00
Out-of-School Children (est.)	0.8 million	3.7 million	Zero
Public Education Spending (% GDP)	2.1% (2022)	3.5% (2022)*	4–6%
Learning Poverty Rate (est.)	55%	85%	Eliminate

Note: Afghanistan's education spending figure predates the 2021 Taliban takeover. Sources: (World Bank, 2024); (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2025).

Human Capital Theory: Investment, Returns, and the Quality Gap

Through the use of the human capital theory of the two cases, one can see a apparent gap between investment in education and returns in productivity. The number of educational growth in Bangladesh has been encouraging, but the standard of the education in the country has been very questionable. According to the estimates of the World Bank (2023), over half of children in Bangladesh are unable to read a simple text even by the age of 10, which means that the enrolment rates conceal a learning crisis in the country at a very high percentage. The returns to education earned as a result of quality-adjusted schooling are significantly large compared to the returns to years of attendance, thus it could be argued that the investment in human capital in Bangladesh has been compromised by quality deficits systematically. The amount that the country spends on education accounts at around 2.1% of GDP is far below the UNESCO suggestion (2023) of 4 -6, and even averages of the lower-middle-income countries.

The Afghanistan human capital system depicts an underlying dislocation: there is a complete transaction between the education-development complex. The investment in education has not only contracted totally - the foreign aid has been suspended and domestic tax collection has been lowly, but the Taliban imposes ideological restrictions on investment in female education, thus eliminating about a half the potential human capital base of the

country. The World Bank has projected that the overage loss of billions of dollars in the forthcoming decades to the noninvolvement of women in education and, in the labour force, will affect Afghanistan GDP. But the weakness of the human capital theory is no less evident: the policies of the Taliban are primarily determined not by economic rationality but by ideological needs that prioritize theological, rather than economic, maximization of policies, which highlight the shortcoming of the economic paradigms when it comes to explaining educational policy in ideological conflict situations (Giustozzi, 2019).

The Capability Approach: Freedoms Expanded, Freedoms Denied

In a way that what may be only explained quantitatively, the capability approach throws light on how wide the two cases differ. The facilitation of girls education in Bangladesh has also facilitated the improvement of female capacities: girls are now more likely to attend secondary school than their counterparts, female literacy levels have improved exponentially and the Female Secondary School Assistance Programme (FSSAP), which reimburses girls studying in rural secondary school, is credited with increasing the rate of girls enrolment and also the rate of child marriages. The presented dual capability gain is an excellent illustration of the transformative power of the properly designed educational interventions (BRAC, 2023).

However, the gains in capability in Bangladesh are partial and not even spread out. Child marriage still exists in Bangladesh one of the most prevalent countries in Asia with regard to child marriage, which limits the educational capacities of a large share of girls and especially in countryside regions and along the coastlines. This implies that millions of children graduate formal schooling without attaining the most basic levels of functionality, which are supposed to be instilled in them through a formal schooling system (Akther, 2022) And where there are children with disabilities, estimated as being the several million, formal education system continues to be closed out, which in itself is a systematic capability deprivation that is then obscured by to such a system as official enrolment statistics.

The situation in Afghanistan can be shown through the capability approach which indicates structural deprivation at a deep level. Talibans banning of secondary education, higher education of women is in the words of scholar sense an unfreedom of the most basic nature, not a capacity deficit created by poverty or inefficiency of administrative apparatus but a capacity deficit created by the sword of the Taliban (Shayan, 2025). To the Afghan girls and women, education not only has been rendered inaccessible but it is also illegal; the ability to acquire education has been revoked by the state. The key human capabilities as Nussbaum claims are senses, imagination, and thought capabilities that are proactively closed by the educational system of the Taliban to half the population. This can be seen as a qualitatively distinct type of educational injustice than the weaknesses in capabilities witnessed in Bangladesh, a type of injustice that puts international systems based on states willingness to engage in educational inclusiveness to the test, through less-than-perfect degrees of willingness to do so (World Bank, 2024).

Political Economy Analysis: Power, Interests, and Policy Trajectories

The fundamentally structural determinants of the educational policy in both countries can be revealed in the political economy analysis. The policy of school education has been shaped in Bangladesh through a unique set of triangulation of interests, each with a dominant ruling party which has used educational expansion as an instrument of legitimisation; and an NGO sector, especially BRAC, which has built itself a massive administrative capacity and has donor trust but remains ambiguously related to the lack of democratic in government, In definite reference to fragile state situations, Mcloughlin notes that politics determines what is feasible and infeasible regarding what can be accomplished in the education delivery.

There had been both successes and ills aroused by this political economy. The readiness of the state to collaborate with the NGOs has facilitated the increase of access to education on a large scale especially in the rural and remote regions where the state power is least concentrated. Nonetheless, Scholars observe that the disintegration of the education landscape between the state and the NGO providers has led to quality shocks, gaps in accountabilities, and inconsistencies in curriculum that has brought about instability in the education system in the country. There are also perverse incentives created by political economy: the enrolment statistics, being politically salient and monitored on the international level, are given much more attention than it is due to the learning outcomes, which are more challenging to measure and less rewarding to politics.

Education in Afghanistan has been completely transformed by Taliban domination of ideology in the state. To the Taliban, education is not just a development project but a location of civilisation struggle where the values of a projected Islamic state are practiced and realized at the expense of what they see as western secularisation influence. It has not been any better on the political economy side of global interaction: decades of donor-based education expansion has resulted in institutional arrangements that were completely reliant on imported resources, which were incapable of enduring to the political alliances of home-grown positions when the geopolitical landscape changed. It is the essential frailty of the aid-based educational programme which is not accompanied by political constituencies rooted at home that are revealed by the disintegration of the post-2001 educational system it is no little example of the broader critique of institution-building in weak states.

Gender and Intersectionality: Differential Exclusions, Contested Equalities

By analyzing gender, one can find out not only the achievements but also the deepest failures in each of the cases. The primary and secondary education gender parity in Bangladesh can be discussed as one of the most impressive gender equity changes in the developing world. This was to be attained by focusing on intervention such as the FSSAP stipend programme, school feeding and community mobilisation; economic structural factors such as development of female intensive garment industry; and NGO programming which specifically addressed gender barriers. The shortcomings of an enrolment-based discourse of gender equity have not gone unspecified by feminist scholars however, as one such scholar, Unterhalter has stated: access, but without quality education and education, but then with no further financial gain, is a partial, and possibly illusory empowerment. Furthermore, the intersectional analysis brings to the fore the fact that gender parity in the country level obscures a major disparity based on location, class, ethnicity especially on the communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and disability

In Afghanistan, gender does not serve as a body of differentiated lack in the existence of an otherwise operative regime but it is the order of active exclusion. The gender order adopted by the Taliban views the idea of female education as a matter that is incompatible with the social and theological, order that it tries to establish. The convergence of gender and ethnicity is especially perilous: Hazara girls and women, which are already persecuted on the basis of their ethnicity, are even more susceptible; meanwhile, Pashtun communities in Taliban strongholds are affected by the problems of gender constraints to their full extent. The impact goes way beyond the level of individual educational deficiency, as the exclusion of women means lack of education propagates poverty cycles, high fertility and maternal mortality, and child undernourishment as a systemic mechanism as reported by the HRW this is a system-wide dynamic that is entirely obscured by the provision of a technical statistic such as gender parity.

New Institutionalism: Path Dependencies, Isomorphism, and Institutional Fragility

The new institutionalist analysis sheds light on the determination of the path-dependency of developments that have defined the current educational systems of the two

countries. The institutions of education in Bangladesh bear the experiences of British colonial rule, centralism of the Pakistanis and the complication of state and civil society that ensued based on the liberation struggle in the year 1971. (Aslam & Muzaffar, 2025a; Aslam & Muzaffar, 2025b) The colonial legacy was to create a dualist system of education, formal secular schools and madrasas, which continue to this day causing perpetual disputes around the subject of curriculum, credentials, and the connection between religious and secular education. The institutional arrangement that was formed in Bangladesh, where BRAC takes a sort of a quasi-government in the provision of education, explains a path-dependent reaction to the limited capacities of the state at independence, and has been very persistent with changes of the government and shifts in the priorities of the donors.

The notion of isomorphism is also educative in both instances: Bangladesh has followed the formal institutional frame of governance according to SDG education points, a National Education Policy (2010), sector development programmes and a strong monitoring and evaluation system, the standard normative feedbacks of the international development community. However, the institutional forms adopted are not then necessarily substantively implemented as noted; in the case of Bangladesh, decoupling between formal policy and the reality of operation is still rampant in the running of the education. The period after 2001 in Afghanistan was the time of the theatrical performance of the institutional building - the creation of a Ministry of Education, national frameworks of studying curricula, development of teacher education, all of this templated by the international donors. These institutions have proven to be extraordinarily fragile, virtually on the verge of the collapse even with the Taliban back in power, and it is indicators of the sheer limits of institutional designs which are not built on the basis of indigenous political legitimacy but instead on the foundation of out-of-pocket financing along with expertise.

Synthesis: Comparative Analytical Framework

Table 2
Multi-Lens Comparative Analytical Framework

Lens	Key Question	Bangladesh	Afghanistan
Human Capital Theory	Does education investment translate to development gains?	Moderate — high enrolment but persistent learning poverty (World Bank, 2023)	Collapsed , conflict severs the education-development nexus (
Capability Approach	Who can exercise real educational freedoms?	Partial , FSSAP expanded girls' capabilities; disability & ethnicity remain blind spots (Unterhalter, 2019)	Severely constrained — Taliban decree constitutes categorical unfreedom
Political Economy	How do power structures shape policy?	NGO-state co-governance; donor dependency; enrolment-bias in political incentives	Ideology overrides rationality; aid-dependent institutions lacked domestic legitimacy
Gender & Intersectionality	Who is excluded and why?	Girls lead in access; rural, ethnic minority & disability intersections persist	Girls systemically excluded; ethnicity & geography compound vulnerability
New Institutionalism	Are institutions enabling or blocking SDG 4?	Functioning ministries; path-dependency from colonial bifurcation	Institutional collapse; isomorphic forms lacked indigenous roots

The comparative synthesis results in the appearance of a number of general results which develop the academic comprehension of the SDG 4 implementation in various political conditions. First, both instances affirm that educational development towards SDG 4 is not a simply linear or technology-focused process but the highly political one, which depends on the allocation of power and character of the state, as well as ideological structures on which education is cherished or battle-grounded. Second, the examples indicate the central role of the political stability and institutional continuity: in Bangladesh, the imperfect but functioning institutional ecosystem has facilitated the process of educational gain accumulation and consolidation over the years whereas the experiences of

Afghanistan reveal that educational gains can be quickly overturned in the event when the political foundations of the educational government give out (Giustozzi, 2019)

Third, the two cases explain the inability of SDG metrics that are globally standardised to capture the qualitative aspect of educational justice, especially the capability aspect which is not measurable in the rates of enrolment or even completion statistics (Unterhalter, 2019). Fourth, the comparison throws light on the gender aspect of educational justice as an issue that is both political in nature. The gender parity gains made in Bangladesh brought an artificially determined result of premeditated political decisions in certain economic and social settings; the gains of gender disaster in Afghanistan of properly determined political decisions, in a specific ideology setting of religious power and patriarchal social structure as well. The comparison indicates that gender equality in education cannot be met after the provision of technical interventions but rather needs to be maintained by the consistently sustained political determination and in certain cases of severe gender conservatism, radical shifts in the balance of social and political power which agree with the intersectional approach to structural oppression uses to analyse the issue.

Conclusion

The article has made a systematic comparative examination of education policy and SDG 4 development in Bangladesh and Afghanistan, using a multi-lens analysis framework to enlighten on the interlocking political, economic, social, and institutional factors that determine educational outcomes. Contrasting these two situations indicates possible solutions to a problem: regular changes at both extremes of a spectrum of educational governance: Bangladesh, a weak democracy with severe institutional shortcomings, yet maintaining a direction of educational growth based on the complex ecosystem of state-NGO-donor interactions Afghanistan, a failed state, where an educational system has been used by a theocratic regime not only against the population it

A number of general conclusions are drawn. The advancement of the educational goals in SDG 4 is not a technical accomplishment but a fundamentally political accomplishment, and this will depend on the state goodwill to invest in inclusive education. No educational framework surveyed in this paper better reflects qualitative aspects of the educational justice at greatest stake in both scenarios than the capability approach, which, in its various variations, views school access, education quality, and retention rates as the resultant consequence of partial capabilities demonstrated by many Bangladeshi citizens lacking access to adequate education, or the complete denial of capabilities faced by the excluded girls in Afghanistan. Gender equity in education is not only a measure of development but also a political borderline, which takes a decade of political dedication and radical changes in the structure of social and political power. And the structural weakness brought about by these two instances is the urgency to invest in domestically legitimate, politically embedded education institutions that can stand politically shock.

The fact that these two cases are quite different and, thus, should not induce complacency on either side; however, the example of Bangladesh demonstrates that the admired successes are concealing systemic injustice and lack of quality that need to be tackled down while the case of Afghanistan is a global wakeup call of how swiftly and profoundly the international community working in the field of education faces a call to design frameworks that can sustain the educational promise under the broadest possible political circumstances - fragile democracies, ideologically repressive regimes - which define the international system in which SDG 4 needs to be implemented.

Recommendations

For Bangladesh

By focusing intensively on the quality deficit that is hampering the achievements of immensely good accesses, Bangladesh needs to take a drastic action. This will necessitate the radical redirection of the governance of education to learning outcomes instead of figures of enrolment which should involve investment in the quality of teachers, assessment and school infrastructure. State spending on education, which is now at around 2.1 percent of GDP, should be much higher within the recommended threshold of 4 to 6 percent of GDP by the international community; there should be a higher rate of equalisation of the quality of education in urban and rural areas and between mainstream and madrasa (Kibria & Hasan, 2014). Intersectional equity analysis, which is sensitive to the dimensions of exclusion should be institutionalized to the educational monitoring systems in Bangladesh so that any gains at the national level does not obscure the existing exclusions against children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and the ultra-poor.

Both the state and the NGOs sector ought to relocate their governance through the renegotiation of a model of enhanced state accountability and more rigorous quality assurance without compromising the adaptability and community sensitivity which has made the NGO model successful. Lastly, the issue of restructuring access to education into actual ability growth, especially to girls and women, needs to take the connections between educational programs, work organization structures, and the change of gender norms as required by the capabilities-based approach of educational policy.

For Afghanistan

A dilemma in Afghanistan about how to continue educational delivery of Afghan children, especially girls, remains unresolved so far to the international community as the de facto governing force is ideologically bound to exclude female children in terms of education. There are a number of options on strategic directions that can be taken seriously. Continued spending on community-based, non-formal, and distance education model could offer education continuity to girls out of school but continues to be a high security risk and quality limitation. The assistance provided to Afghan educational refugees such as around 6 million Afghans displaced at the moment should be increased significantly, with a specific focus on offering secondary and higher educational opportunities to the girls and young women of Afghan descent in the countries of settlement (UNESCO, 2021). Any dialogue between countries and Taliban governments on educational matters has to be approached cautiously: the organization of the principles of delivering education could create fissures, but currently, there is no sign that Taliban leaders can be convinced to produce ideological adherence to female education with the help of words only. Better long-term alternative is perhaps continued funding of Afghan civil society, especially women based groups and education networks, whose ability to perpetrate social norms in favor of female education may be the key to any subsequent post-Taliban political transition, as scholars notes that development gains would not last without the backing of domestic legit charges of political actors.

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