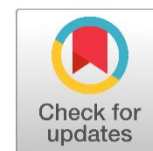




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Need Assessment of Capacity Building Trainings for the Teaching Staff of Non-Formal Schools in Afghanistan: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Non-Formal Schools (NFSs) for its flexibility and cost-effectiveness is an essential aspect of the education system of developing countries. The success of these schools in delivering quality education relies significantly on the competence of their teaching staff. This study explores the essential qualifications and the required capacity-building trainings for the teaching staff in non-formal schools of Kunar province of Afghanistan. Employing a case study qualitative research design, 31 participants from the education sector, including directors of education, headmasters and teachers, were purposively selected. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers in non-formal schools should ideally possess a master's or bachelor's degree. Additionally, the study identifies crucial capacity-building training areas, including teaching methods, curriculum implementation, lesson planning, and classroom management. This research contributes valuable insights for enhancing the educational landscape of NFSs in Kunar province and beyond.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Non-Formal Schools (NFSs) are educational institutions that are flexible in certain basic aspects of schooling to meet the needs of the target learners. These schools share similarities with Formal Schools (FSs) in delivering basic education, yet they differ in organizational structure, funding mechanisms, study programs, and the

demographic of students targeted (Ruto, 2004). This perspective is further backed by Nyaga (2016) who states that NFSs bear resemblance to FSs in adopting a formal curriculum but exhibit distinctions in terms of financial structures, management practices, operational contexts, and staffing conditions. NFSs assume a crucial role in providing basic education, particularly in developing nations. Renowned for their adaptability and cost-effectiveness, NFSs prove instrumental in facilitating basic education to out-of-school children, particularly in regions affected by conflict and societal marginalization. In the context of impoverished and inadequately resourced societies, NFSs emerge as a viable alternative for the education of children facing challenges such as poverty and a dearth of educational infrastructure (Mitra, 2014). Afghanistan, a nation grappling with the aftermath of war, confronts constraints in government resources and the establishment of formal schools, thereby necessitating alternative approaches for the provision of basic education

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especially establishing NFSs in the Mosques and in the guesthouses of the community to enrol out-of-school children.

Nonetheless, a substantial debate ensues regarding the educational quality within NFSs, with a primary contention being the incompetency of the teaching staff. This is what that significantly diminishes the educational standards within NFSs, affecting the quality of teaching/learning process. Notably, the insufficiency of pedagogical trainings for the teaching staff in NFSs exacerbates the issue (Mbilu, 2019). The pivotal role of qualified and skilled teaching staff in the success of an educational program cannot be overstated. Teachers stand as the cornerstone of educational institutes, necessitating ongoing capacity-building training for effective implementation of educational policies (Osuji, 2014). Particularly in crisis contexts, the capacity building of teachers becomes indispensable, with no compromise deemed acceptable, as it is regarded as the most productive investment in education (Cooter, 2003). Ensuring quality education in NFSs, demands the essential component of capacity development for teaching staff (Yasunaga, 2014).

Ultimately, the enhancement of teaching staff capacity in NFSs, can be realized through comprehensive and intensified capacity-building and developmental training programs (Jha et al., 2015). So, before launching capacity building trainings for the teaching staff, it is essential to assess the needs of the teaching staff in the NFSs. Hence, the study endeavours to scrutinize the capacity-building requirements for the teaching staff of the NFSs in Kunar Province of Afghanistan.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the required qualification for the teachers of non-formal schools in Kunar Province
- To assess the required capacity building trainings for the teaching staff of non-formal schools in Kunar Province

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

NFSs are alternative or second chance schools. These are educational institutions that share similarities with FSs in providing fundamental education but differ in organizational structure, financing, study programs, and the target demographic (Nyaga, 2016). The concept of capacity building in education is gaining educators attention internationally both in developed and emerging nations. Capacity building involves enhancing the abilities of individuals, institutions, or organizations to make informed decisions about specific programs (Jha et al., 2015). It is a process aimed at fortifying the capacity of individuals to effectively achieve the goals of educational institutions (Osuji, 2014).

This involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for competent job performance (Kumari, 2022). Additionally, capacity building for teachers entails their professional growth, involving the development of essential knowledge and skills required for effective teaching (Ugwoke, 2011). In the context of this study, capacity building needs pertain to the essential skills-building training required for teachers to effectively educate in NFSs. The primary objectives of the study are to examine the academic and professional qualifications of teachers in

NFSs and to assess the capacity-building training needs specific to teaching in NFSs in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

Academic and Professional Qualifications

The academic and professional qualifications of teaching staff constitute a foundational element in the efficacy of any educational institution. As posited by Boudersa (2016), these qualifications encompass the learning and training a teacher has undergone to meet the criteria for teaching in schools, encompassing knowledge acquisition, the development of teacher beliefs, attitudes, and classroom practices. Numerous studies underscore the paramount importance of the academic and professional qualifications of teaching staff for the prosperity and continuity of Non-Formal Schools (NFSs). Research conducted by Wabwoba et al. (2014) in the context of Kenya emphasizes the critical role of professional and academic qualifications in the implementation and success of Non-Formal Education (NFE). Their findings indicate a direct correlation between the level of education among teaching staff and the success of NFSs. Hamid (2016) further supports this correlation, asserting that qualified and well-trained teachers significantly contribute to the success of literacy schools, consequently elevating the overall literacy rate in the country. Similarly, a study by Nyagah and Gathumbi (2017) conducted in Kenya underscores that the absence of qualified teachers in Non-Formal Education Centres (NFECS) detrimentally impacts the quality of NFE in the region. In summation, the professional and academic qualifications of teachers emerge as pivotal elements influencing the success and effectiveness of a school, with empirical evidence demonstrating their crucial role in the implementation and success of educational programs.

Essential Trainings Required for the Teachers of Non-Formal Schools

The attainment of NFSs objectives necessitates teachers equipped with fundamental teaching skills and specialized training tailored for NFS contexts. The escalating demand for quality education underscores the indispensable role of highly skilled and trained teachers in achieving this goal. As delineated by Boudersa (2016), teacher training encompasses a multifaceted approach, involving curriculum familiarization, enhancement of critical thinking skills, knowledge expansion, and refinement of instructional strategies. Teachers are required to possess comprehensive knowledge of curriculum content, teaching methodologies, technological integration in education, and classroom management techniques (Ugwoke, 2011). Empirical studies underscore the essential nature of specialized skills and training for teachers in NFSs. A study conducted by Hamid (2016) in Pakistan identifies the pivotal role of trained teachers in literacy schools, emphasizing their contribution to achieving literacy rate objectives.

Conversely, deficiencies in the literacy programs were linked to the absence of adequately trained staff. The study conducted by Brinia and Ntaflou (2015) in Greece supports this perspective, emphasizing the need for specific skills and training for teachers in NFSs to effectively realize their objectives. Additionally, Vega and Bajaj's study (2016) in Colombia highlights insufficient training as a primary limitation for Non-Formal Education (NFE) institutions (NFSs). Given the diverse motivations, skills, knowledge, age, and social status of NFS students, teachers must

possess specific skills tailored to address these unique characteristics (Luka et al., 2015). Continuous professional development is imperative for NFS teachers, involving a constant influx of knowledge and skills through a series of well-structured training programs (Jha, 2015). Areas requiring focus in these training initiatives encompass skills development, material preparation, utilization of instructional technology, and effective classroom management (Arslan et al., 2019). Crucial aspects such as the basic concepts in education, curriculum design, lesson planning, teaching methodologies, integration of technology, and classroom management represent essential domains necessitating capacity-building training for teachers in NFE, as emphasized by the International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2022). Ultimately, to cultivate a proficient teaching staff for NFSs, educators and teachers must undergo training specifically tailored to cover foundational educational concepts, curriculum development, lesson planning, teaching methodologies, integration of technology, and effective classroom management.

Training in the Basic Concepts of Education

Effective teaching hinges upon a teacher's profound understanding of the fundamental concepts of education. Teachers are required to possess knowledge spanning the historical evolution of education, the philosophical foundations of education, the intricacies of the teaching and learning process, the teacher's role, and a comprehensive grasp of various essential educational theories. Analogous to professionals in other fields who rely on specialized knowledge, teachers must similarly be well-versed in the foundational concepts of their discipline. This knowledge not only aids in decision-making but also contributes to the development of effective teaching practices, defining what constitutes a proficient teacher. In alignment with Orchard and Winch (2015), professional educators are urged to cultivate a comprehensive understanding of the conceptual, empirical, and normative dimensions inherent in educational practice. This depth of understanding equips teachers with the ability to discern the purpose, rationale, and strategies behind their actions, fostering continuous improvement and refinement in their teaching methodologies.

Training in Curriculum Implementation

Ensuring the provision of quality education necessitates teachers to possess a thorough understanding of curriculum implementation. Central to effective curriculum implementation is the preparation of a well-structured lesson plan. A comprehensive lesson plan should encompass key components such as learning objectives, learning materials, learning experiences, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and sources of learning (Maba & Mantra, 2018). This holistic approach is vital for creating a conducive learning environment and achieving optimal learning outcomes. Maba and Mantra (2018) advocate for intensive training programs to enhance teachers' competence in curriculum implementation. Such training programs are instrumental in equipping educators with the necessary skills and insights for successful curriculum execution. Similarly, the findings of a study conducted by Nyagah and Gathumbi (2017) in Kenya underscore the critical role of training for teachers in Non-Formal Education Centres (NFECS), particularly in the context of Non-Formal Education (NFE) curriculum implementation. The study identifies the lack of training opportunities for

teachers as a significant challenge, leading to the prevalent use of Formal Education (FE) curriculum in NFECS. To address this issue, the researchers recommend the initiation of special training programs by the government, with a specific focus on enhancing teachers' capabilities in NFE curriculum implementation.

Training in Teaching Methods

A fundamental component of effective teaching lies in the teacher's knowledge of various teaching methods. Tailoring teaching methods to the specific needs of students and the nature of the learning objectives is crucial for achieving optimal teaching and learning outcomes. Utilizing appropriate teaching methods based on the characteristics of learners and their educational requirements fosters active learning (Gull, 2018). Teaching methods encompass a broad spectrum of instructional practices and exercises designed to facilitate learning and meet the satisfaction of learners. The selection of a particular teaching method is contingent upon factors such as learners' age, physical abilities (able or disabled), academic proficiency, group size, and subject matter (Dorgu, 2015). Vikoo (2003) categorizes teaching methods into three main groups: cognitive development methods, affective development methods, and psychomotor development methods. Cognitive development methods aim to cultivate intellectual skills in learners, involving practices that assist in comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. Examples include discussion, questioning, team teaching, recitation/talk-chalk, and field trips. Affective development methods focus on evoking learners' emotions and opinions, aiming to stimulate interest and cultivate proper attitudes. Methods in this category include modeling, simulation, dramatics, simulation games, and role-playing. Psychomotor development methods concentrate on refining motor skills in learners, involving activities that require students to illustrate, demonstrate, or perform. Methods in this category encompass inquiry, discovery, process approach, demonstration, laboratory experimentation, programmed learning, assignment, project, microteaching, and mastery learning. In conclusion, there exists a multitude of teaching practices, or teaching methods, each serving a specific purpose in the teaching and learning process. The selection of an appropriate method depends on the context, learner characteristics, and educational objectives.

Training in Integration of Technology in Teaching

Technology has undergone a profound transformation across various domains, particularly in education, where it has become an indispensable facet of modern learning. The pervasive use of technology, especially in education, has elevated technological literacy to a requisite skill of the 21st century (Pepe, 2016). In this context, teachers are expected to possess a foundational knowledge of instructional technology and continually enhance their skills in this domain. The seamless integration of technology into the teaching/learning process is crucial for developing quality pedagogy that aligns with the standards of contemporary education (Jan, 2017). The integration of technology in teaching/learning has emerged as a critical issue, necessitating the professional development of instructors (Kaya & Adiguzel, 2021). Research underscores the positive impact of providing teachers with training in technology integration, enabling them to effectively leverage technology in the classroom. Zhao's study (2007) revealed that training teachers in technology integration significantly enhanced

their creative and effective use of technology in educational settings. Furthermore, Abel et al. (2022) identified a lack of proper training as a key challenge faced by teachers when attempting to integrate technology into their classrooms. Consequently, investing in the professional development of educators in technology integration is imperative for overcoming barriers and fostering effective use of technology in educational contexts.

Training in Classroom Management

Continuous training for the professional development of teachers in classroom management is crucial, particularly for those who are new to the profession. Managing a classroom effectively poses challenges, especially for new teachers, making ongoing training essential. New teachers should receive training in creating a positive classroom environment, actively supervising students' engagement, implementing classroom rules, employing behaviour reduction strategies, optimizing classroom time, and fostering effective student interactions (Oliver & Reschly, 2007). Emphasizing the importance of short training sessions, designed to enhance basic classroom management skills, is a priority in capacity-building training programs, as highlighted by Strand (2015). These training programs are particularly relevant for the Ministry of Education (MoE) in recent years. Research underscores the significance of classroom management training for teachers, advocating for ongoing professional development in this domain throughout their careers (Stough et al., 2015; Cooper et al., 2018). Regular training ensures that teachers remain equipped with the necessary skills to create a conducive and well-managed learning environment, contributing to the overall effectiveness of their teaching practices.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section delineates the comprehensive methodology employed for the study, encompassing research setting, research design, population of the study, sample of the study, research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

Research Setting

The research was conducted in Kunar province, Afghanistan, consisting of 15 districts with Asadabad as its provincial capital (Sharma & Afzali, 2018). Kunar, located in the northeast, spans approximately 4339km², primarily comprising mountainous terrain. As of 2022, it is home to around 0.5 million people, known for being the birthplace of renowned Afghan scholar Allama Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani.

Research Design

A qualitative case study design was employed, offering a nuanced exploration of the capacity building needs for the teachers of Non-Formal Schools (NFSs) in Kunar province. The entire province served as the unit of study to comprehensively examine the capacity building needs for the teachers of NFS in Kunar province.

Population of the Study

The study population comprised officials from the education sector, headmasters and teachers in Kunar province of Afghanistan.

Sample of the Study

Purposive sampling was utilized to select 31 participants in 10 districts of Kunar Province. The participant included the provincial director of education, 10 provincial directors of education, 10 headmasters and 10 teachers in Kunar Province of Afghanistan.

Research Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were used for the data collection. Semi-structure interviews offer flexibility while collecting in-depth data. Interview items, along with probes and prompts, were developed based on prior research instruments in the field.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, starting data collection at the provincial-level, and progressing to district-level. Data was gathered in the native language of the participants i.e., in Pashto language, and later transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Once the data was collected and prepared for analysis; subsequently, the data was analysed using thematic analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework, was employed. The steps included data familiarization, initial code creation, theme exploration, theme revision, theme nomination, and report production. Participants' anonymity was preserved using pseudonyms, with thematic findings categorized and presented.

Data Analysis Related to Objective No. 1: Teachers' Academic Qualification

Based on the first objective of the study i.e., to investigate the required qualification for the teachers of non-formal schools in Kunar Province, the following themes emerged from the analysis of the data as shown in figure 1.

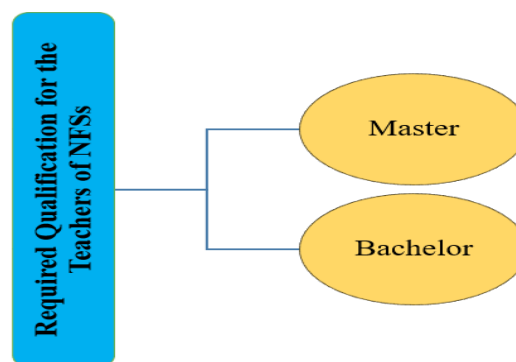


Fig. 1: Themes Based on Objective No. 1

Theme No. 1: Master's Degree Holders

This theme indicate that the academic qualification of the teaching staff at NFSs needs to be master's degree. Majority of the participants suggested that the more a teacher is qualified, the better he/she is to teach in these NFSs. They suggested that priority should be given to the

one with higher education. The following are some of the participants' remarks that elaborate on this.

PD1 suggested as:

"It is 2023, so looking to the needs of the current era, a master's degree holder should teach in these schools. These are primary schools and is the foundation, so when the foundation of a building is well built then the rest building will also be perfect..."

DDE3 remarked as:

"If well qualified teachers teach in these schools, it is essential and better. Because when someone is well qualified then he/she can teach better compared to others. So, if possible, master teachers should teach in these classes".

HM7 commented as:

"Those teachers should teach in these schools who has higher qualification. If we could find master teachers, it will be better".

Theme No. 2: Bachelor's Degree Holders

This theme indicate that bachelor's degree holders can teach at the NFSs. Several of the participants argued that it is good to have highly qualified teaching staff in the NFSs; however, in case if we do not have highly qualified staff, then bachelor's degree holders are also suitable candidate to teach in these NFS. The following are some of their comments that elaborate the theme.

DDE1 commented as:

"Those teacher should be hired here who have got higher education. The teacher who teach in these schools should be at least Bachelor's degree holder..."

HM4 remarked as:

"Looking to the needs of the current era, these teachers should be at least Bachelor's degree holders .."

T8 expressed as:

"If bachelor's degree holder could teach in these schools, it will be better".

Data Analysis Related to Objective No. 2: Required Trainings for the Teachers

Based on the second objective of the study i.e., to assess the required capacity building trainings for the teachers of NFSs in Kunar province, the following themes appeared from the analysis of the data as depicted in figure 2.

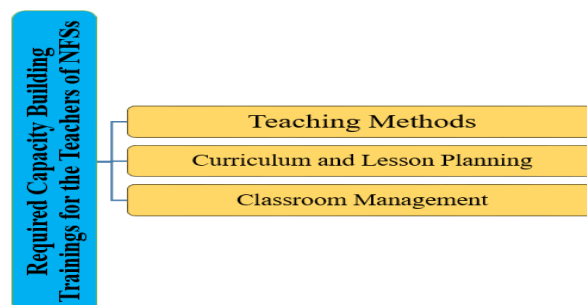


Fig. 2: Themes Based on Objective No. 2

Theme No. 1: Teaching Methods

This theme represents teaching methods as an essential and required area of training for the teachers of NFSs. Majority of the participants suggested that the teachers of these NFSs should be trained in the teaching methods. They considered the teaching methods as an important area where these teachers could be trained in and they have presented various reasons in support of their point of view. The following are some of their comments that elaborate this sub-theme further.

PD1 recommended as:

"In my opinion, the teachers should only be given a training workshop in the field of teaching methods, because they will teach children and they have to know how to teach them".

DDE5 suggested as:

"So, in the first phase, focus should be given to the teaching methods, it is very important, and the teachers should be trained in it. Similarly, trainings in pedagogy are also very important and teachers should be trained in it".

HM2 recommended as:

"Well, these teachers must be trained in the teaching methods and should be provided with teaching assisting materials. Moreover, the teachers should teach the students with such a teaching methods which could be comprehensible to the students. This is possible when the teachers have enough knowledge of the teaching methods".

Theme No. 2: Curriculum and Lesson Planning

This theme represents curriculum and lesson plan as the required area of training for the teachers of NFSs. Many participants commented that the teachers of these NFSs should be trained in the curriculum and lesson plan. They believed that the curriculum and lesson plan is an important area where these teachers require to be trained in. The following are some of their comments that explain this sub-theme.

DDE10 suggested as:

"Besides other essential trainings, a teacher need to be trained in curriculum and lesson planning. A person who is graduated from teacher training college or university, he/she has already studied the curriculum, however, if

they still have any issue in the curriculum, that could be cleared in these trainings”.

HM3 recommended as:

“Well, I think the teachers should be trained in curriculum and lesson planning. They should be trained in curriculum and should be asked where they have issue in the curriculum. Their issues should be then solved. Both areas i.e., trainings in curriculum and trainings in lesson planning are important for a teacher. A teacher who have issues in the curriculum will not be able to teach effectively. Similarly, a teacher who does not have lesson planning skills will not be able to effectively teach”.

T9 commented as:

“Among the training programs for the teachers, the teachers need to be trained in curriculum and lesson planning. The teachers should be trained in these two areas as these are the areas which matter the most in effective teaching”.

Theme No. 3: Classroom Management

The theme represents classroom management as the required area of capacity building for the teachers of NFSs in Kunar Province. Some participants who advocated that the teachers of these NFSs need to be trained in classroom management. The following are some of the participants' comments that elaborate the theme.

DDE8 suggested as:

“I think along teachings methods and lesson planning, they should be trained in classroom management. The classroom management is very important because a teacher should know how to control and organize a classroom. All these programs are essential for a teacher”.

HM3 expressed as:

“Well, the teachers of these schools could be trained in many essential areas especially the classroom management which I think is very fundamental area to work on. The teachers should be trained in classroom management to train them how to control a class”.

T2 commented as:

“In my opinion the most important training program for the teachers of non-formal schools is classroom management. Because they will teach the children and should know the art of managing the classrooms”.

Discussion

The study sought to evaluate the capacity building needs for the teaching staff of Non-Formal Schools (NFSs) in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Specifically, it delved into the requisite qualifications of NFS teachers and assessed the necessary capacity building trainings for their professional development. Employing a case study design and qualitative research methodology, the study included participants from the education sector, headmasters, and teachers in Kunar province. The sample comprised of 31 individuals who were purposively selected that include the

provincial director of education, 10 district directors of education, 10 headmasters, and 10 teachers. Semi-structured interviews used for data collection, and thematic analysis was employed for data analysis and interpretation. The findings underscored the significance of qualified teachers in NFSs, emphasizing that academic qualifications of at least a master's or bachelor's degree are essential for delivering quality education. The study aligned with what found by Nyagah and Gathumbi (2017) in the context of Kenya, highlighting the adverse impact of unqualified teachers on the quality of Non-Formal Education Centres (NFECs). Additionally, Hamid (2016) emphasized the influential role of qualified teachers in the teaching/learning process. Furthermore, the study identified key areas for capacity building, emphasizing the need for training in teaching methods, curriculum implementation, lesson planning, and classroom management for the teachers of NFSs in Kunar province. This aligns with Ugwoke's (2011) assertion that training in curriculum, teaching methods, and classroom management is essential for teachers and contributes to the success of an educational institution. Hamid (2016) concurred, emphasizing that schools can only achieve their goals when the teaching staff is well-trained. These findings collectively underscore the importance of qualified and well-trained teaching staff for enhancing the quality of education in these NFSs and establishing the recognition of these NFSs.

Findings

The findings of the study indicate the critical importance of qualified teaching staff in NFSs. Specifically, well-qualified teachers, holding at least a master's or bachelor's degree, are deemed more effective in these educational settings. The findings of the study suggest that teachers' level of qualification has a notable association with their effectiveness in teaching. Moreover, the study emphasizes the necessity of capacity building training for the teachers of NFSs in Kunar province, identifying key areas such as teaching methods, curriculum, lesson planning, and classroom management. Providing capacity-building trainings in these areas is deemed essential, as it is anticipated to enhance teachers' skills, improve teaching methodologies, and ultimately contribute to the delivery of quality education in NFSs in Kunar province of Afghanistan. The study advocates for investing in the professional development of teaching staff as a means to elevate the overall educational quality and outcomes in NFSs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the study advocates for the engagement of well-qualified teachers in NFSs in Kunar province of Afghanistan. The study suggests that teachers with academic qualifications of at least a master's or bachelor's degree are better suited for these educational settings, with a notable association between higher qualifications and teaching effectiveness. Additionally, the study concludes that capacity building trainings are imperative for the teaching staff of NFSs. The findings elaborate that capacity building trainings such as trainings in teaching methods, trainings in curriculum, trainings in lesson planning, and trainings in classroom management are essential for the teaching staff of NFSs to enhance their skills, thereby fostering improved teaching practices and overall quality of education in NFSs in Kunar, Afghanistan.

Recommendations

Drawing from the study's findings and conclusions, a set of recommendations is put forth for the consideration of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Afghanistan. It is recommended that the MoE may prioritize the recruitment of qualified teachers for the NFSs. This includes a focus on candidates holding at least a master's or bachelor's degree, as the study indicates a positive correlation between higher academic qualifications and teaching effectiveness in NFSs. Similarly, it is strongly advised that the MoE may initiate capacity building programs for the teaching staff of the NFSs. These programs may specifically address areas such as teaching methods, curriculum implementation, lesson planning, and classroom management. By investing in these training initiatives, the ministry can empower the teachers of NFSs with enhanced skills and competencies, fostering improved teaching practices. Ultimately, this approach is envisioned to contribute to the delivery of quality education within NFSs, particularly benefiting marginalized children who may access education through these non-traditional educational settings.

Conflict interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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