

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: PRIVATIZATION OF PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
AFGHANISTAN

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This study investigates the trends, nature, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary schools in Afghanistan. More specifically, this research investigates the role of national decision-makers and international donor agency representatives in influencing privatization policies. The study focuses on 20 years, starting with post-Taliban initiatives in 2002 to the fall of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the resumption of Taliban rule in August of 2021. An instrumental case study approach that combines a review of available policy documents and interviews with key national and international stakeholders is used to conduct this investigation. Interviews are the primary instruments used to collect data.

The study draws upon international literature on privatization and aid dependency. Theoretically, this study uses a combination of Kingdon's (1995) Multiple Streams Framework and the education policy transfer literature to understand the liberalization of private school policies and the discussion surrounding them in Afghanistan. The study uses Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) continuum of policy transfer

to determine the level of coercion in educational policy transfer. It uses Cairney's concept of 'policy transfer window' to operationalize the synthesis of the Multiple Streams Framework with the educational policy transfer literature.

The study found that events in the problem and political streams opened a policy transfer window that allowed for the liberalization of private school policies in Afghanistan. These findings contribute to policymakers' and other stakeholders' understandings of the education policy transfer in fragile, aid-dependent nations. Moreover, this study is one of few in the field to focus on the critical role of policy entrepreneurs in joining together the multiple streams while also providing a nuanced view of the educational policy transfer process in a fragile state environment.

PRIVATIZATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
AFGHANISTAN

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the future generation of students in Afghanistan who deserve a peaceful existence and an educational experience based on their beliefs, values, and needs.

Acknowledgements

It is recorded that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that “whoever does not thank people has not thanked Allah.” First and foremost, I would like to thank my mother, who has been instrumental in helping me get to this point in my academic career. She is my first teacher and the bedrock of my upbringing. My two brothers have been partners who have traveled with me throughout my life and have supported me whenever I needed it. I have been blessed with an extended family that has been a source of comfort, guidance, and support; I would like to thank them all.

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List of Acronyms

ANDS – Afghanistan National Development Strategy
APS – Affordable Private Schools
ARTF – Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
CBE – Community Based Education
DFID – Department for International Development
EFA – Education for All
EMIS – Education Management Information System
EQRA – Education Quality Reform in Afghanistan
EQUIP – Education Quality Improvement Program
FTI – Fast Track Initiative
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GIRoA – Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GNP – Gross National Product
GPE – Global Partnership for Education
HDI – Human Development Index
IMF – International Monetary Fund
LFP – Low Fee Private Schools
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
MSF – Multiple Streams Framework
NDF – National Development Framework
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
SIGAR – Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UN – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO – United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
UPE – Universal Primary Education
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB – World Bank

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the problem that this dissertation addresses, and I follow this by presenting the central research questions of the dissertation. Next, I discuss the study's contribution to the field of international education policy, and I conclude the chapter by outlining the organization of the study.

Description of the Problem

In recent years, the privatization of education has emerged as a response to the increasing educational demand in developing countries, encouraged by those subscribing to neoliberal ideology. There are various privatization initiatives across the globe, with each nation attempting to develop its mixture of private and public involvement in and funding of education. A critical factor that has contributed to the role of private provision of public schooling in developing countries is the time-bound mandate and promise of universal primary education by international bodies (Adnett & Davies, 2002; Das-Gupta & Bird, 2012; Levin, 2013; Steiner-Khamsi, 2010).

This kind of education policy transfer across nations is not a unique phenomenon. The idea of learning from the experiences of other countries is a staple of modern educational systems and a key area of study in the field of comparative and international education and educational policy studies (Phillips, 2000; Phillips, 2004; Verger, 2016).

Although the phenomenon of privatization of education has been well-documented in the international education policy literature, there has been little attention paid to *how* policy transfer happens in a fragile, aid-dependent, and conflict-affected environment. To better understand how education policies spread to fragile nations, I focus on the privatization of education in Afghanistan between the years 2001 to 2021.

This twenty-year window covers a period from the fall of the Taliban and the establishment of the internationally backed Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to the GIROA's collapse and the resumption of Taliban control on August 15, 2021.

Afghanistan saw an exponential increase in primary and secondary school enrollment (including both public and private institutions), rising from approximately 500,000 in 2000 to an estimated 10 million students in 2021. During this same period, Afghanistan had a weak system of public financing, limited financial resources, and relied on international aid to fund its growing public education sector (as well as other sectors). Afghanistan was one of the world's largest recipients of Official Development Assistance (ODA), with two-thirds of its national budget and an estimated 50% of its education expenditure funded through international donor support in 2020 (UNDP, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). The Institute for Economics and Peace (2020) ranked Afghanistan as the least peaceful country in its Global Peace Index during this same period. Despite the gains made by the GIROA during the twenty years, Afghanistan remained a fragile and conflict-affected state. GIROA's fragility was made evident with the Government's collapse at that coincided with the end of this study.

Afghanistan liberalized its private school regulations in 2006 to allow individuals to open private schools across the nation (Ministry of Education, 2006). The Ministry of Education reported that over 654,000 students were enrolled in private schools by the end of 2020. During this period the percentage of private schools in the country rose from virtually zero to 12 percent of the total schools in the country (EMIS, 2021). Guided by Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (Kingdon, 1995) and education policy transfer

literature (Phillips, 2000; Phillips, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Verger, 2016), I examine the factors and the actors that influenced the privatization of schooling in Afghanistan.

Research Questions

This dissertation addresses the central question: What are the trends, nature, process, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan?

I used the following eight sub-questions to provide a more in-depth understanding of the privatization phenomenon in Afghanistan:

1. How does public education get financed in Afghanistan?
2. What is the prevalence of private schools in Afghanistan?
3. Which policies and initiatives promote privatization in Afghanistan?
4. Who are the key players advocating for (and against) the privatization of primary and secondary education?
5. How does international financing affect educational policy formulation and the locus of decision-making?
6. To what extent (and how) do donors impact the government's decision to adopt educational privatization policies?
7. How do key stakeholders assess quality, access, and equity in private versus public schools?
8. How, if at all, does donor dependency and lack of public financing catalyze educational privatization in Afghanistan?

Due to the scarcity of educational data for Afghanistan, research questions 1 and 2 seek to consolidate and organize primary financial and demographic data for the educational sector.

Contribution of the Study

Afghanistan is a fragile state in conflict and a donor-dependent nation, and these factors provide a unique case to study the nature and forces behind the educational privatization initiatives. There is a general lack of research in the international literature on the factors and motivations contributing to educational privatization in fragile states. Specifically, educational research on the effects of donor dependency and privatization on educational policy formulation in Afghanistan is non-existent. Understanding the dynamics between donor dependency and educational privatization in Afghanistan during these 20 years will add to our general understanding of the long-term effects of educational aid for fragile states. Specifically, understanding the relationship between dependency and educational privatization will lead to a better understanding of educational policy options in Afghanistan for the future.

Findings from this study will contribute to policymakers' and other stakeholders' understandings of the transfer, development, and passage and adoption of privatization policies. This study is one of few in the field of international education to focus primarily on how policy entrepreneurs (Cairney, 2012; Zahariadis, 1999) play a critical role in joining together the Multiple Streams identified by Kingdon (1995) to influence policy in fragile and aid-dependent states. Lastly, this study provides a nuanced view of how educational policy transfer and policy entrepreneurship combine to promote particular ideas and solutions to particular problems.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters, as described below:

Chapter 1 introduces the study and outlines the problem that this dissertation addresses, enumerates the central research questions of the dissertation, and discusses the study's contribution to the field of international education policy.

Chapter 2 provides a historical and integrative literature review of modern schooling and the privatization of education. This chapter offers an overview of the debate around the privatization of education, explores whether the debate is different in the context of developed versus developing nations.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework for this study. This chapter discusses how Kingdon's (1995) Multiple Streams Framework and the literature on education policy transfer guide this study.

Chapter 4 describes the research design and provides a rationale for using a single instrumental case study design. This chapter identifies the data sources, explains the data collection and analysis procedures, and concludes by describing the types of controls used to minimize bias and error.

Chapter 5 provides the context of policymaking in Afghanistan. This chapter describes the geopolitical and the demographic context of Afghanistan and discusses the effects of conflict, lack of public financing, and aid dependency on the education system of the country.

Chapter 6 reports the research findings in six main categories: the context of policymaking in Afghanistan, key privatization policies, the problem stream, the politics stream, the policy stream, and policy entrepreneurs.

Chapter 7 discusses how the findings address the research question within the international education transfer literature and the Multiple Streams Framework. This chapter also discusses the implications of findings for the education transfer literature, the Multiple Streams Framework, and policy development in fragile and donor-dependent contexts. This chapter concludes with suggestions for further research on the topic.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Privatization of Education

The debate on the provision of public vs. private education is contested on empirical grounds and loaded with ideological underpinnings. Those in support of the movement for privatization claim that opening school systems to the forces of the market increases competition, efficiency, choice, private financing, and produces better results. Opponents argue that privatization increases inequities, decreases social cohesion and civic order, undermines the right to education, increases inequalities, and does not produce better educational results. This chapter provides an overview of this debate and explores whether the debate is different in the context of developed versus developing nations.

Formation of Modern Public Schooling¹

The history of education is as old as that of humanity and as varied as the number of civilizations that make up humanity. Each major civilization has its unique model of education that dates back thousands of years. However, modern schooling is a global phenomenon that is primarily a by-product of Western religious, political, and economic forces. The non-Western world, including indigenous populations in the Western world, have, in most cases, adopted the system through colonization, efforts of modernization, and other forces related to globalization. Therefore, it is vital to understand the historical

¹ The current system of schooling does not have one common name or definition. Scholars refer to the current system of schooling as the "standard school," "modern schooling," "state-sponsored school," "the Prussian model" of schooling, and the "factory model" of schooling. I have chosen to use the term modern public schooling and define it as "government-supported schooling as it exists today."

events in the Western World to understand how modern public schooling emerged (Gray, 2008; Wilds & Lottich, 1965).

As with other social phenomena, we cannot attribute the emergence of modern public schooling to a limited number of factors. Instead, many historical forces have interacted to influence the formation of modern public schooling. In particular, three historical events significantly contributed to the development of this new system of education. Specifically, The Renaissance, Reformation, and the Age of Enlightenment provided the intellectual context, nation-states formed the political context, and the industrial revolution provided the economic foundation for establishing modern schooling (Wilds & Lottich, 1965).

The Renaissance, Reformation, and the Age of Enlightenment shaped a new social, political, and rational order in the Western World that laid the intellectual foundation for modern schooling. During the Renaissance period, the humanists' desire to recapture the greatness of ancient Greece and Rome led to a rediscovering of classical works and an appreciation of ancient philosophies, which emphasized the importance of education for the preparation of good citizens. The humanists, who were fed up with the intellectual decay of the Western World, argued for greater education of the youth in order for society to come out of the Dark Ages. The Renaissance's emphasis on the need for rational inquiry laid the intellectual groundwork for the Protestant Reformation (Wilds & Lottich, 1965).

The Protestant Reformation had as much to do with schooling as it did with how the Church functioned. Martin Luther, who started the Protestant Reformation, believed that civic schools are beneficial for both the Church and the state. Luther argued that

every believer should be able to read and understand the scripture in his and her local language, that society must provide educational opportunities to all believers, and that the civic authorities must compel parents to send their children to school. He also maintained that an educated citizenry will be obedient to authority and will benefit the overall welfare, safety, and strength of the state (Faber, 1998). John Amos Comenius, a Protestant bishop who is considered the father of modern schooling, is quoted as saying "not the children of the rich or of the powerful only, but of all alike, boys and girls, both noble and ignoble, rich and poor, in all cities and towns, villages and hamlets, should be sent to school" (Comenius, 1967).

The formation of nation-states is a critical political factor that contributed to the development of modern schooling. Before the 1500s, local feudal lords owned large plots of land and exerted considerable political and economic power over their fiefdoms. The Roman Catholic Church was the most significant transnational power and served as both the religious and political authority in most of Europe. The Church funded education in monasteries and other church-run institutions from tithe taxes. In the late 1400s, some monarchs started to consolidate their power and weaken the power of feudal landlords and the Church by aligning themselves to a growing middle class. This movement was also aided later by philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbs and John Locke, who began to argue that government can be founded on secular rather than religious authority and that the loyalty of citizens should be to the nation rather than to the Church. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) between Protestants and Catholics solidified the move towards the formation of nation-states and resulted in the emergence of sovereign nations. With the emergence of nation-states, a shared national identity became critical, and modern

schooling emerged as one of the most important institutions to replace the Church in shaping this new national identity (Verger, 2016; Wilds & Lottich, 1965).

The Industrial Revolution provided the economic platform for the expansion of modern public schooling. Adam Smith, the pioneering philosopher of free-market capitalism, advocated for mass schooling at the onset of the Industrial Revolution. He argued that education develops a more rational, orderly, and “decent” population, leading to a more stable society, which is needed for the proper functioning of a free-market economy. Although the Reformation and the newly formed nation-states started the movement towards mass public schooling, it was with the growth of industry that support for modern public schooling grew exponentially from limited provision into a comprehensive and hierarchical educational system. During this period, educational access widened, girls’ education increased, and there was a shift away from the classics towards a more skill-based curriculum.

The industrial revolution went hand in hand with urbanization. The surge of population in urban centers, the move away from an agrarian economy, and the requirement for a new set of skills all fueled the growth of modern public schooling. During this period, national wealth in the Western World grew significantly and provided the funding base for the expansion of public education for nation-states. By the beginning of the 20th century, the rationale for educational expansion started to center around the importance of schooling for national economic development and individual mobility, while continuing to postulate education’s value for creating citizens (Benson & O'Halloran, 1987; Carl, 2009; Verger et al., 2016).

Historical Arguments for the Provision of Modern Public Schooling

Before the emergence of nation-states, the aim of education in the West was primarily religious and humanistic. After the formation of nation-states, a nationalistic conception of education emerged with initial arguments for the provision of modern public schooling focused almost exclusively on the role of schooling in the promotion of social cohesion, assimilation, a unified national identity, and the promotion of democratic citizenship. Although nationalism was the overall argument, the details of the argument differed based on specific nations (Benson & O'Halloran, 1987; Verger et al., 2016).

In the early 18th century, people like Vicesimus Knox argued for public schools in Britain based on character building, national identity, virtue, and masculinity. Knox argued that all British boys should attend public school to build national character and to purge the society from effeminacy, which he claimed had become rampant, through emulation and rivalry in public schools. The French liberalists such as Condorcet, La Chalotais, Diderot, and Roland argued and successfully shaped the educational aims of France from traditional religious and humanistic aims to that of civic virtues. The civic virtues included building national spirit, fostering national security, the ability to guard's one's rights, and the proficiency to serve in civic offices (Aldrich, 2004).

Although France and Britain served as thought leaders, Prussia (historical region of northern Germany) is the first nation to fully establish a comprehensive state system of modern public schooling with ordinances for compulsory attendance of children, maintenance of an academic year, standardized curricula, requirements for methods of instruction, and the training and compensation of teachers. Arguments for the provision of modern public schooling in Prussia were intensely nationalistic.

Fredrick the Great, who believed that children belonged to the state rather than to the family, laid the foundation of modern schooling in Germany. The General Civil Code declared that schools are state institutions and can only be established with the approval of the state. The Sketch of a General Education Law for Prussia declared loyalty to the nation and unqualified obedience to the laws of the nation as the primary aim of schools, and the creation of a "nursery of blameless patriotism," a sacred duty of all school masters and mistresses. The philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who is perhaps the most influential figure in Prussian education, argued that the primary aim of modern public schools is to strengthen and preserve national welfare. He argued that the state must consciously control education to instill loyalty and service in the population, to liberate individual potentialities for national service, and help individuals identify themselves with the German nation and to subordinate themselves to society (Aldrich, 2004; Wilds & Lottich, 1965).

During the colonial period of America, the primary motive for schooling was rooted in religious ideas. However, after the United States won its independence, the prime motive for schooling became the formation of a unified national identity and an informed citizenry. The educational model in the United States was influenced by both French Enlightenment Philosophers and by the Prussian system of modern public schooling. With the birth of the United States, citizenship became a principal motive for modern public schooling. America's founding fathers argued for the necessity of schooling for both nationalism and citizenship. They argued that education is necessary for a democratic society to survive, and if the people are to rule, they must have informed opinions to scrutinize elected officials and hold them to account. Thaddeus Stevens, a

member of the House of Representatives, argued that the permanence of the newly formed democracy was dependent on having knowledgeable citizens and that it is, therefore, the duty of government to provide this necessary education to every citizen (Urban & Wagoner, 2013).

Horace Mann, who is considered the most famous advocate of modern American education, used a variety, and sometimes contradictory set of arguments to build his case for schooling. He argued for the provision of modern public schooling as a means to alleviate tensions associated with class conflict resulting from industrialization, to combat dislocation resulting from urbanization, and to assimilate immigrants into a unified American identity.

In his fifth report as Massachusetts's Secretary of the Board of Education, Mann appealed to the wealthy by quoting an industrialist by the name of H. Bartlett, that an educated workforce makes for better workers who are malleable and safe, that educated workers had superior moral values, that the common school would maintain the status quo between the rich and the poor, and that it behooves the rich to sustain an efficient system of common schools as insurance because education can serve as a police "more effective than peace officers or prisons." On economic grounds, Mann argued that everyone should support schools through taxes because modern public schools benefit the entire society. On philosophical grounds, he argued that society has a right to private property because property is a divine gift that must be used for the "benefit and subsistence of the whole race."

Mann appealed to the working class, who were reluctant to send their children to school, differently. He argued that school is the only institution that can curtail class

division because it prevents the control of capital and empowers labor. Mann argued that "education, then, beyond all other devices is the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance wheel of the social machinery" (Mayhew, 1850; Urban & Wagoner, 2013).

The original arguments for the provision of modern public schools were almost exclusively centered around strengthening nationalism and promoting democratic citizenship. Nationalism is perhaps the most significant influence on the birth and growth of the modern state-supported and state-administered public-school system. Nation-states sought to establish, fund, and administer schools as institutions that would develop, preserve, and perpetuate national identity and social cohesion for the newly formed nations.

The nationalistic aims of education have served both totalitarian and democratic objectives. Before World War II, countries like Italy, Germany, and Japan used schools to overtly indoctrinate their populations for Fascism, Nazism, and Shinto, respectively. At the same time, modern schooling has been used as a force to foster education to make citizens responsible and literate and a force to keep the government in check.

Current Arguments for the Provision of Public Schooling

At the heart of the current debate about public vs. private schooling is the role of government in the provision of schooling. As outlined in the previous section, the original arguments for the public provision of modern schooling centered around social cohesion, national identity, promotion of democracy, and right of citizens to education (Nussbaum, 2010). In the late 1960s, there was a shift where the economics of education started becoming a vital issue in the discussion about the provision of public schooling. Proponents of the public provision of modern schooling use two key economic

arguments. The first argument is that modern schooling is a merit good, and the second argument is that modern schooling has positive externalities that benefit society.

The first argument is that modern schooling is an *impure* public good or merit good, and therefore, it will not be supplied and consumed at an optimum level by the market and that the government should provide this service to enable everyone to obtain "enough" education. A public good is described as "a good whose consumption does not diminish its availability to other consumers" (Samuelson, 1954). In the strictest sense, a public good is non-rivalrous and non-excludable. Non-rivalrous means that once the good is produced for one-person, additional users can consume it at no additional costs. Non-excludable means other users cannot be prevented from accessing the good². For example, everyone benefits from streetlights, whether they pay for it or not. Since the use of streetlights cannot be easily restricted to only those who pay for it, the private sector does not have an economic incentive for putting up lights, which results in non-production or underproduction of streetlights if left to the private sector. Therefore, state provision of streetlights is warranted to correct this market failure (Daviet, 2016).

² It should be noted that the application of these two criteria is a theoretical exercise that is not applicable in its pure form in the real world. For example, although roads have classically been considered public goods, they do not strictly meet the non-exclusivity and non-rivalrous criteria and are considered quasi-public good. The classical view of roads is beginning to be disrupted. If a lot of people use roads, there will be congestion, which would diminish the benefit of the road to others. With the advent of new technology, access to roads can be controlled. There are roads now which are built by private providers who charge a fee for the use of the roads and can restrict access by employing new technologies to levy a fine on anyone who uses the roads without paying for its use. From a purely economic perspective, there is a clear economic incentive for the privatization of this public good. However, how this would affect equity and social stratification is a different issue. Nevertheless, privatization would be to a limited number of suppliers, so the government would need to regulate to ensure an efficient allocation of resources.

Modern public schooling is not a pure public good because access can be restricted through tuition and admission (it is excludable), and limited classroom capacity does not allow everyone to benefit from schooling (it is rivalrous). Some economists consider modern schooling a merit good meaning that it is a commodity which individuals *should* have based on need rather than based on ability or willingness to pay (Musgrave, 1959). Proponents of the merit good, argue that people do not have perfect information or the rationality about the long-term benefits of schooling and will invest an *insufficient amount of education*. Therefore, the government should step in and provide education for what Friedman calls “paternalistic concerns” of the state. Merit goods become public goods when the government considers them as meritorious to be supplied to people free of direct charges. From a merit good perspective, modern public schooling is considered a public good that *ethically* people *should not* be excluded from rather than a public good in which people *cannot* be excluded from technically (James, 1993).

The second economic argument for the government provision of modern public schooling is that there are many positive externalities associated with the education of individuals. A positive externality occurs when the consumption or production of a good or service creates benefits that spill over to a third-party, and the marginal social benefits are greater than the marginal private benefits.

The positive externalities argument is that schooling has both private and public benefits. The argument for private benefits to individuals include better earnings, better health, access to information, greater political participation, an increase in social status, and technical and cultural literacy. The argument for public benefits of schooling include the creation of a democratic society, national solidarity and national identity, national

economic growth, scientific progress, improved social cohesion, reduction in poverty, reduction in crime, improved public welfare, and better defense of the nation. The argument goes that since the marginal benefits of schooling are greater for the nation at large, the government, rather than individuals, should pay for the cost of schooling (Friedman, 1955; Levin, 1987).

For most of modern history, nation-states have taken responsibility for the provision, financing, administration, and regulation of modern public schooling as a moral, political, and economic imperative. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and many human rights treaties afterward affirmed that governments should provide equitable access to free education as a right to all its citizens (Nussbaum, 2010; Rizvi, 2016).

In the 1980s, the neoliberal perspective emerged as a reformulation of the *laissez-faire* economic paradigm to challenge state funding, administration, and regulation of services. In the neoliberal model, the invisible hand of the free market is believed to be the most efficient and most effective regulatory mechanism. Proponents of this new paradigm argue that the involvement of government in the provision of services and the regulation of the market should be kept at the absolute minimum because government interferences cause market inefficiency (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

As such, proponents of neoliberalism advocate for deregulation, fiscal austerity, free trade, and privatization of government services. With the emergence of neoliberal perspectives, government financing, and administration of modern schooling as the status quo began to be challenged on economic grounds, and some people began to argue for

greater deregulation and less government involvement in schooling (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Klees, 2014).

Milton Friedman's book *Capitalism and Freedom*, published in 1962, on the proper role of the government in a free society is one of the most instrumental writings that challenged the level of government involvement in public schooling. In this influential manifesto, Friedman argued in the chapter titled "The Role of Government in Education" that the level of government involvement in modern schooling is "an indiscriminate extension of governmental responsibility." Friedman acknowledged the social benefits of public schooling. He argued that the government *should* finance a minimum level of schooling because of the positive externalities, especially related to citizenship. However, he differentiated between government financing and government administration of public schools.

He argued that parents should be given vouchers that they could use at "approved" private or public schools. The role of the government should be limited to serve as a regulatory body to ensure that schools meet minimum standards; not as the administrator of public schooling, which causes market inefficiency. He argued that if the administration of public schooling is open to private providers and if the subsidy is made directly available to parents, parents will have greater choice, there will be greater competition, teachers would be forced to perform better, an educational marketplace will be created, and government involvement would be minimized (Friedman, 2009).

At about the same time, James Samuel Coleman and several other scholars were commissioned by the US Department of Education, to write a report on educational equality in the United States. The 1966 report, titled "Equality of Educational

Opportunity" (known as the "Coleman Report"), is an influential and controversial report. The Coleman Report used educational production functions to argue that the effects of students' social backgrounds were much more influential in student achievement than the characteristics or the level of funding of the school itself. At the most basic level, educational production functions are intended to show how much of the educational output, can be produced from specific amounts of input and whether the relationship of the outputs and inputs are efficient. Friedman's ideological arguments about the inefficiency of government schools and the introduction of the educational production function to estimate efficiency have become a critical component of the current debate about the privatization of modern schooling (Belfield & Levin, 2002).

The term privatization is defined as the "transfer of assets, management functions or responsibilities previously owned or carried out by the State to private actors" (Coomans et al., 2005). In terms of privatization of education, this can take several forms that include the transfer of provision, regulation, or financing of education from the state to the private sector. Examples of privatization reform in education include, but are not limited to, public school fees, voucher programs, charter schools, tuition tax credits, and low-cost private schooling in developing countries.

The movement towards the privatization of education did not take center stage until the 1980s. During the eighties, the neoliberal perspective gained substantial traction in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Milton Friedman became President Ronald Reagan's economic advisor, and Margaret Thatcher enacted neoliberal reforms in the UK. In 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A*

Nation at Risk, which sharply critiqued the condition of public education in the United States, without calling attention to the limited and declining funding

In 1990, John Chubb and Terry Moe authored *Politics, Markets, and America's School*, as a response to the controversy over Coleman's paper on the advantage of private schooling that was cited earlier. Chubb and Moe strongly endorsed the private school choice movement to remedy the failing public school system. Currently, the privatization movement of education has grown to become a global phenomenon.

The debate about private versus public administration of schooling is centered around whether competition, school choice, and the potential greater accountability of private schools to parents will lead to better quality and higher efficiency within schools. Critics of privatization contend that there is no clear empirical evidence that privatization leads to higher quality and better efficiency and question the methodology of the empirical evidence that supports the claim. Critics also highlight equity, human rights, and social justice concerns related to privatization. Finally, there is a growing literature on the use of low-cost private schools in developing countries and their implications for Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The following section tries to present a comprehensive review of the current literature on each one of the issues mentioned above.

Privatization, Choice, Competition, and Accountability

Parental choice, competition, and accountability form the theoretical foundation for proponents of the privatization of public schooling. The debate regarding school choice is whether families should decide where to use publicly allocated money for their children's education, usually through a voucher program. The efficiency argument is that

conventional public schools are inherently inefficient, whereas private schools are intrinsically efficient due to less bureaucracy and market incentives (Levin & Belfield, 2003).

Proponents of privatization argue that public expenditure on education will be more efficient if families are given a choice to "buy" the education that they see most fit for their children. At the heart of the efficiency argument is the notion that to increase student achievement, more resources are not necessarily needed, but rather with better management, the same resources can lead to higher student achievement (Hanushek, 1986). Another corollary of this argument is that by giving parents the control of where they spend their children's educational dollars, it creates competition for the public schools. The argument continues that by destroying the public-school monopoly, the market will force the public schools to become more efficient because of market competition (Hanushek, 1986; Levin, 2006; Srivastava, 2010; Verger, 2012).

The literature on school choice, competition, and accountability is vast. However, there are a few pieces of some literature that forms the basis of the arguments and shapes the ideology from which others draw upon, or what Adler et al. (1967) call "original communication." In the next section, I will outline two of the original works that have shaped the theoretical basis for the privatization arguments.

Milton Friedman's (1962) book *Capitalism and Freedom* and the chapter on the "Role of Government in Education" is perhaps the most influential work in this area with nearly 20,000 citations. Although the idea of tuition vouchers goes back to Adam Smith (Noguera, 1994) and vouchers have been used in the United States since the mid-1800s, it is Friedman who is seen as the thought leader on modern tuition vouchers (Laitsch et al.,

2016). Friedman made two simple arguments in his influential essay 'The Role of Government in Education' first published in 1955. He argued that the public-school assignment based on neighborhoods restricted parental choice. He also argued that the monopoly of public provision of schooling causes inefficiency.

He proposed tuition vouchers that would allow parents to send their children to either private or public schools. He predicted that vouchers would increase competition and result in improving the efficiency of both public and private schools (McEwan & Carnoy, 2000). It is important to note that Friedman did not argue that private schools would be of better quality (Benveniste et al., 2013). As will be discussed in the section on quality and efficiency, there is mixed evidence on this issue.

During the 1980s, there was widespread dissatisfaction with increasing costs of public education and an apparent decline in student achievements in international test scores. This environment led to a large body of literature that critiqued the efficiency of public-school administration (Hanushek, 1986; Levin, 2006). John Chubb and Terry Moe published *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* in 1990. This work has become a cornerstone of the theoretical argument for the debate on the privatization of education and is one of the most widely cited works in this area.

John Chubb and Terry Moe picked up Friedman's argument that the role of government should be limited to ensuring that schools meet minimum standards (Koinzer et al., 2017). They argued that the problem of poor academic performance and the high cost of public schooling is rooted in the institution of democratic control of school governance. They argued that political governance of schools through a democratic process introduces inherent obstacles for efficiency, and, as a result, public schools

systematically lack the conditions for effective performance compared to privately run schools. They argued that public schools are governed by a broad and extensive constituency dominated by teacher unions and special interest groups. Parents and students are only a small part of the school constituency. Democracy is inherently coercive; they argued, in a democracy the losers have to take what the winners dish out. And the winners in the public-school system are the special interest groups, especially teacher unions, and not parents and students. They argued that teacher unions want teacher autonomy and not school autonomy, and parents have to go along with what the more dominant players decide for the school agenda even if it is inefficient, which they argued is inevitable.

In contrast to the public administration of schools, Chubb and Moe (1990) argued that in a free market economy, schools are not controlled directly through democratic politics but rather through the market. Individuals and groups transact voluntarily, and schools have to offer what parents want. When markets prevail, they argued, parents and students occupy the center stage and play a much more influential role because they control the flow of money, and the owners of schools will have to please them. Parents will have the choice to switch between alternatives, and this competition will ensure that the quality of all schools will improve, and the schools that fail to satisfy will not survive.

Privatization, Efficiency, Quality, Equity, and Social Justice

There have been many studies that have tried to prove or discredit Friedman's claim that privatization introduces better efficiency and Chubb and Moe's arguments that competition introduces efficiency and improves the quality of schooling. Unfortunately, there is no clear empirical evidence on either side, and the disagreement is as stark as it

was thirty years ago. I will first outline the significant findings of the literature and then discuss the issue of the methodology used to determine effects, which I believe is at the heart of the debate and the reason for the disagreement.

Quality – Do Private Schools Produce Better Academic Outcomes?

Better academic outcome is defined as “higher academic achievement once student background is held constant” (McEwan & Carnoy, 2000). The idea that private schools achieve better academic outcomes for students because of their more efficient management practices, also referred to as the private school advantage, is highly contested in the literature. Studies that support the idea use comparatively better learning outcomes as evidence, but others argue that the studies do not control for all the factors that affect learning outcomes such as home environment, private tutoring, and a slew of other socioeconomic conditions (Macpherson et al., 2014).

Both sides argue that the evidence is not conclusive. Proponents argue for more monitoring and evaluation and impact studies to get better empirical results, and opponents contend that education does not lend itself to evaluations based on education production functions which have become a "fetish" (Ginsburg, 2012).

Coleman's original study (Coleman, 1968), which laid the foundation for predicting effects of various inputs on academic achievement based on the education production function, had two significant findings. First, that socioeconomic background, not school characteristics, explains the majority of academic performance; and second, that black students did better in white schools. His original findings were challenged because other researchers believed that he did not control for all the variables and that teacher and school characteristics do differ and do affect outcomes. Additionally, critics

argue that he used the wrong methodology to calculate the R-squared value for his study (Benveniste et al., 2013; Bowles & Levin, 1968; Hanushek, 1986).

In the 1980s, Coleman conducted a four-year study of 1,015 public and private schools across the United States. He found that students in Catholic schools did significantly better than public school students. He concluded that Catholic schools perform better because they are 'functional communities' in which the school's goals align with the values of the surrounding neighborhood and that private schools associated with workplaces would also restore these functional communities (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). His findings were once again challenged for lacking proper controls (Talbert, 1988).

In the 1990s, Caroline Hoxby (1994) and Thomas Dee (1998) found that competition from private schools significantly raises the quality of public schools as measured by achievement levels, wages, and graduation rates. However, other researchers found no significant improvement in public schools due to competition from private schools (McEwan & Carnoy, 2000). Epple and Romano (1998) found that private schools increase sorting and benefit high-ability students. Students that remain in the public system tend to be low-ability and low-income, and they suffer as a result of the competition.

One of the major studies on the effects of privatization and competition is the Milwaukee voucher program study conducted by the School Choice Demonstration Project (Wolf, 2012). In this study, the researchers tracked the achievement of one of the United States' most extensive voucher programs. The study found mixed evidence regarding improvement in kids at private schools compared to public schools. The longitudinal study shows that charter school students graduate at higher rates, do better in

reading in the upper grades, and there seem to be some positive competition effects on public schools. However, the study also shows that charter school students do not do as well in lower grades and math in the upper grades. Furthermore, the charter school advantage in reading in the upper grades is only valid the year that high-stake tests were introduced.

Studies that have looked at competition effects in Chile have also shown mixed results. Although Catholic schools in Chile seem to be more effective than public schools, non-religious and private maximizing voucher schools are less effective, or similarly effective, than public schools, especially if the schools are outside of Santiago, the capital. Simply put, these studies do not find that the schools that were privately managed did any better in increasing student achievement compared to schools that were publicly managed. The findings suggest that private schools might produce better results, but by keeping out hard-to-manage students (Carnoy, 1997). Private schools are more likely to be selective in their admission policies, and higher achievements might be a proxy of unobserved characteristics rather than a private school advantage (McEwan & Carnoy, 2000). Many studies have concluded that after controlling for ability and peer group effects, private schools do not add any additional advantage (Adnett & Davies, 2002).

The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (2009), at Stanford University, conducted an in-depth study in 2009 entitled Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States. In this study, the authors compared the academic progress of 70 percent of charter school students to a similar demographic attending public schools. They found that although 17 percent of students attending charter schools seemed to do

better than those attending public schools, 46 percent of students did not do any better at the charter schools, and 37 percent did worse than those at regular schools. Furthermore, there was a significant correlation between student demographics and how well they did in charter schools. The percentage that did better at the charter schools were the economically disadvantaged students, high achieving students, and students learning English.

The World Bank has become one of the biggest proponents of the privatization of education initiatives internationally, although continuing to provide loans to national governments for their public school systems. Wößmann (2006) paper entitled "Public-Private Partnership and Schooling Outcomes" is one of the most often cited papers in support of privatization (Verger, 2012). Wößmann (2005) uses TIMSS and PISA scores to show that, after controlling for student characteristics, public operation of schooling is negatively associated with student achievement in math, reading, and science. There is also evidence that private schools and voucher programs in Columbia show evidence of private school advantage (LaRocque, 2008).

In recent years, there is an increase in discussions about how low-cost private schools can serve as supplement, or an alternative, to public education in the developing world's quest to reach EFA and MDG goals of universal primary education. Tooley and Dixon (2005) present evidence that students in India, Ghana, and Nigeria in low-cost private schools score better on standardized tests, after controlling for background variables, compared to public school students. Andrabi et al., (2008) also show that low-cost private school students in Pakistan have higher test scores compared to public school students, after attempting to control for student background characteristics, even though

the qualification of private school teachers and their salaries are lower than public school teachers.

There are several major rigorous reviews of the literature that have recently been published that question the evidence in support of private school advantage. OECD (2011, 2012) has conducted two large scale analysis of PISA scores and have found that a typical private school student outperforms a typical public-school student in reading by 30 points in PISA. However, after controlling for socioeconomic factors, the private school advantage drops by 22.5 points. The small private school advantage, they conclude, is related to higher autonomy over curricula and resources, and if public schools are given the same resources and autonomy, they will do just as goodwill. This finding is in contrast to Wößmann's (2005,2006) analysis of the PISA test scores mentioned earlier.

Klees (2018) also found that initial claims of the randomized control trial of Liberia's private school advantage were not as significant as it was initially claimed. Klees shows that the increase in test scores for the schools that were privately managed was on the order of 35-45 percent instead of the reported 60 percent. Additionally, he highlights that the Partnership Schools of Liberia (PSL) only increased the percentage of student post-test correct answers by 2.2 percent in English and 3.0 percent in math, which he contends might not be of much practical significance.

DFID conducted two "rigorous" reviews of the literature to determine the role and impact of non-state schools in developing countries. The first review assessed 59 studies conducted between 2008 and 2014 on private schools in developing countries (Ashley et al., 2014) and the second review assessed 61 studies conducted during the same time

frame on the performance of philanthropic and religious schools in developing countries (Ashley & Wales, 2015).

The authors of the two reviews conclude that findings on the effectiveness of non-state schools are context-dependent and very difficult to interpret or generalize. They find moderate strength evidence for better learning outcomes in both private and philanthropic non-state schools and mixed evidence for better academic performance in religious schools. Geographically, India, Pakistan, and Nepal show the most noticeable positive private effects, while countries of Africa have mixed results. However, the authors note that the studies are faced with difficulty in controlling for the social background. The review does show that there is strong evidence for better teaching in private and philanthropic schools and that religious and philanthropic schools seem to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of particular groups. Better teaching is defined as teacher presence, teaching activity, and more teacher training. Private schools have less qualified teachers getting lower salaries compared to public schools, but it is not clear whether this has any negative impact on learning. There is also little consensus about what is really good teaching and whether what is measured leads to better student learning. They conclude that the majority of evidence for quality is the perception of quality and not necessarily evidence for difference in quality. The zeal towards using learning and school outcomes ends up restricting the definition of learning and distort what schools are supposed to do.

Tooley and Longfield (2015) have critiqued the DFID rigorous review. Although they have agreed with the general characterization of the effects of the low-cost private schools, they contend that the conclusions are tempered down; that, in fact, the same

evidence shows strong support for private school advantage. They contend that the DFID review purposefully chooses an arbitrary time frame (2008-2014), which leaves out some of the more significant studies on private school advantage conducted before 2008. They also contend that some of the studies that DFID qualified as showing neutral or adverse effects of privatization are misread and should be categorized as showing positive effects of privatization.

Efficiency – Are Private Schools More Efficient?

Friedman (1962) and Drucker (1969) argued for the privatization of education to improve services, break up state monopolies, and introduce market forces to improve cost-effectiveness in education (Rizvi, 2016). Chubb and Moe (1990) argued that centralized public-school administration based on a democratic system of controls are highly bureaucratic and cause the state to spend considerable resources to figure out parent preferences as well as determine and seek to achieve local community, state, and societal needs. They claimed that market forces discourage hierarchical controls and give schools the freedom to adopt structures to meet parent demands directly, and therefore to operate more efficiently. Additionally, they argued, open markets encourage new services and products, and that instead of the state trying to determine parent preferences, parents can themselves choose the type of education they want (Benveniste et al., 2013).

In recent years, multinational corporations and global philanthropies are promoting market-focused solutions, such as educational public-private partnerships (PPP), in the quest to reach global universal primary education. These proponents of privatization claim that state provision of public schooling is ineffective, wasteful, and poorly managed, that in contrast, a free-market approach would be a more efficient

means of reaching EFA goals. PPPs are proposed as mechanisms to correct the inefficiencies in the public delivery of education and mobilize new resources (Verger et al., 2016).

Much like the debate over quality, the argument that privatization introduces greater efficiency in educational delivery is disputed. The increased costs of education for a growing population and the quest to reach universal primary education, have contributed to a greater focus on the need for better efficiency in delivering educational services (Levin, 1978; Lieberman, 1986). After more than four decades of investigation, there is no clear evidence that privatization initiatives, in and of themselves, are, in fact, the solution to achieving greater efficiency in educational provision. Proponents of privatization argue that market competition introduces greater efficiency compared to state-run schools. Opponents argue that there is no conclusive evidence to show that privately managed schools are more efficient. They contend that if the public system is inefficient, it is a result of 30 years of systematic attacks on the public sector by neoliberal economics and not an inherent quality of the public provision of education (Ginsburg, 2012).

What the research does show is that there is much more intra-sector rather than inter-sector variability. Efficiency and quality of schools are less dependent on whether the school is run privately or publicly, and much more dependent on how well the school is run within each sector. Both public and private schools produce results efficiently and effectively (Benveniste et al., 2013).

Studies of efficiency have shown that measuring efficiency is very complex due to the multitude of factors, including student characteristics, regulatory frameworks, and

standards of operation, that effect efficiency. Additionally, since efficiency is defined as attaining similar achievement levels at a lower cost, the problem of measuring efficiency is compounded by the difficulties of isolating factors related to achievement. Most proponents on both sides argue that more rigorous research is needed on input and output levels for public and private schooling options. They argue that data should be based on authentic financial data information of the entire eco-system of educational delivery and that the financial data is controlled for achievement to determine cross-sector comparisons of efficiency between privately run and government-managed schools (Ashley et al., 2014; Levin, 1978; McEwan & Carnoy, 2000; Talbert, 1988; Tooley, 2015).

Some studies have shown that private schools have a lower operating cost. For example, studies in Chile and Milwaukee have shown that non-religious private elementary schools operate at a lower cost per pupil. In the case of Chile, the non-religious per-pupil cost of private schools was 15% less, on average, than public school per-pupil costs (Carnoy, 1997). Andrabi et al. (2008) present data from Pakistan that per-pupil cost of private education is markedly lower than public school costs. And Ashley and Wales (2015) found moderate strength evidence, from their rigorous review of 120 studies, that non-state schools have a lower cost of education delivery.

However, critics argue that the lower cost of delivery does not automatically translate to better efficiency in educational delivery. Critics of privatization argue that the lower costs of privatization initiatives are because privately run schools draw upon existing public infrastructures and selectively choose not to enroll students that have special needs and require higher costs (Ashley & Wales, 2015; Belfield & Levin, 2002;

Macpherson et al., 2014). They contend that there is no rigorous evidence in the literature that shows consistent, sustained, and radically different results that privately run, or privately managed, schools deliver similar services for comparable students. Studies of privately-run educational management organizations (EMOs) in the United States and some of the international studies show that some privately-run schools have higher costs and do not end up with better results (LaRocque, 2008; Levin, 2006).

Belfield and Levin (2002) report that a rigorous review of 40 empirical studies on the effects of competition on schools in the United States shows that increasing schooling options through privatization and choice does have positive effects on a range of educational outcomes, including on efficiency. But the effects are not substantial: a one standard deviation increase in competitive pressure would only boost school efficiency by an estimated 0.2 standard deviations³. They conclude that although the literature shows that privatization does seem to show promise of greater efficiency, these findings have to be tempered and taken in context. First, only about one-third of the studies show that there are efficiency gains, while two-thirds of the studies they reviewed show no significant gains associated with privatization. Second, many privatization reforms come with additional costs in the overall eco-system of educational provision. The studies that are reviewed do not include all of these additional costs, such as costs of monitoring and enforcing regulation, in their computation of efficiency, and therefore, the efficiency gains might be inflated.

³. More recent work by Lubienski (2005) challenges the idea that competitive pressure increases efficiency at all.

The deployment of Private Public Partnership (PPP) and other forms of large-scale privatization movements introduce a considerable amount of additional costs for the government in the form of monitoring and support services. The additional support services that the government will need to introduce include bidding, quality control, dispute settlement, and mechanisms to incentivize the for-profit sector to reach the neediest populations. Additionally, the feasibility of PPPs is challenged because it is not clear if the risk-sharing between the state and the for-profit entities are transparent and fair. The risk-sharing principle states that for a partnership to be healthy, both partners must share risks equally. Critics of public-private partnerships argue that all the capital risks seem to fall on the public sector in PPP programs with very minimal risk for the for-profit entities (Verger, 2012).

Empirical evidence shows that the significant source of cost savings for privatization initiatives is hiring less qualified, or marginalized populations, as teachers with lower salaries (Andrabi et al., 2008; Ashley & Wales, 2015). The reduction of teacher salaries reduces the operating cost of private schools, but it is questionable whether hiring less qualified teachers will result in similar student achievement and hence greater efficiency. Studies in the United States show that teacher qualification as defined by their levels of education, certification, and professional development are the strongest correlates of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Because education is heavily skill-dependent, economists argue that the provision of education suffers from what William Baumol called the "Cost Disease." Baumol argued that the cost of skilled service industries rises more rapidly than inflation because industries that rely on skilled workers are mostly immune to cost-reducing technological

changes and the use of less-skilled labor (Heilbrun, 2011). The variable cost of labor in education, which is mostly teachers, is not prone to economies of scale. With increasing enrollment, the labor costs cannot be divided over more students while keeping the same level of achievement. Class sizes could be increased, but larger class sizes negatively impact achievement and consequently reduce efficiency (Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2009), or schools could hire a larger number of less-skilled teachers, which could also negatively impact student achievement (Ashley & Wales, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Technological advances that are a critical cost-reducing factor for improving efficiency in other industries do not have the same level of effect on school efficiency. Proponents of privatization argue that public school regulations are the main reason for lack of innovation in education. However, studies of charter schools and independent schools in the United States show that the absence of regulations does not lead to greater innovation. The most significant innovation in education has been online programs or e-learning initiatives. Although the introduction of synchronous (live instruction) and asynchronous (on-demand instruction) e-learning mechanisms do reduce the costs of education-delivery, the quality of online education is very questionable (Levin, 2006).

A large national study of 200 online charter schools in the United States conducted by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (Woodworth et al., 2015) shows that online charter schools make dramatically less academic progress compared to regular schools. The study found that students attending online charter schools had zero gains in mathematics achievement. According to the Director of CREDO, it was "literally as though the student did not go to school for the entire year." Additional research shows

that e-learning introduces homogenization and dehumanization for primary students, which leads to the "McDonaldization" of education (Etherington, 2008).

Sustainability of privately-run schools is a growing area of concern in the literature. If private schools shut-down operations due to financial factors or other concerns, the future of large numbers of students become uncertain and can introduce considerable costs for the state to find alternatives for the affected students. Studies on charter schools in the United States show that a significant number of charter schools close abruptly, causing concern for policymakers regarding what to do with the children who will miss significant schooling before alternatives are found.

For example, in 2008, 119 charter schools in Florida closed, with 14 schools closing without making it through the first year (Carpenter, 2015). Ashley et al. (2014) and Ashley and Wales (2015) also found that financial sustainability is a crucial challenge for low-cost private schools internationally. Even a small loss in revenue can lead schools to close, leaving the education of the affected children uncertain. However, advocates of privatization point to school closures as the hand of the market at work. They argue that school closures show that poorly performing schools are shutting down and making room for better schools. They argue that the fact that private schools are mushrooming is an indication that the accountability model of privatization is working as it should (Tooley & Longfield, 2015).

Equity – How Does Privatization of Education Affect Equity and Accessibility?

The criterion for educational equity refers to “the quest for fairness in access to educational opportunities, resources, and outcomes by gender, social class, race, language, and geographical location of students” (Levin, 1978). Equity is assessed in

terms of both input and output indicators. Equity concerns deal with whether all groups receive *appropriate* levels of resources from the state or the private sector based on their specific needs and whether all groups finish their schooling with a fair opportunity to succeed in life. The idea of equity in education is centered around the argument that in just societies, all groups should benefit equitably from educational services and that the educational system should not give certain populations an advantage over others.

All sides express their agreement that equity is important. However, the debate about equity is based on ideological differences in what equal educational opportunity means. Advocates assert that privatization increases avenues for social mobility, while challengers argue that privatization causes, or reproduces, segmentation in society. They argue that based on multiple international declarations that guarantee a right to education and the need for social cohesion, it is the duty of the state to provide free public education to all its citizens (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Jencks, 1988; Levin, 1978; Macpherson et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2010).

The empirical evidence on whether privatization improves or hurts equity is mixed because the use of empirical evidence is subject to ideological leanings and philosophical perspectives. The different sides tend to use evidence selectively to highlight their perspectives and tend to quote like-minded scholars and not critics (Jencks, 1988; Verger, 2012). There are questions on whether all groups receive equal access to private options for schooling and whether all groups equally benefit from the opportunities for success availed by the private provision of education. Evidence suggests that rural areas, students from families with lower socioeconomic status, and girls

continue to be under-represented in private schools (Carnoy, 1997; Pedró et al., 2015; Woodhead et al., 2013).

However, public education has been historically critiqued for playing a dual role, as a vehicle for social mobility and as a means of reproduction of unequal hierarchy of skills and behaviors that are required for production under capitalism. The concern that critics have is that the inequities will be exponentially increased as a result of privatization initiatives (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Levin, 1978; Rizvi, 2016).

Proponents of public education argue that despite their weaknesses, public schools offer one of the only sources of mobility for the poor and working class. They argue that privatization will lead to segmentation and segregation of society based on socioeconomic, religious, linguistic, racial, and ideological lines. They argue that this segmentation will affect student achievement, student opportunity, social cohesion, and will further reinforce class divisions because of the positional nature of education (Benveniste et al., 2013; James, 1993; Talbert, 88).

Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that urban centers are plagued by problems of conflicting interests related to class, race, ethnicity, language, and religion. They argue that this heterogeneity within the system of democratic controls that govern public schools causes unnecessary bureaucracy, which results in ineffective schools in poor urban areas. They argue that choice will create social homogeneity because the stakeholders in private schools will come from similar backgrounds. Furthermore, this homogeneity would reduce the risks of political uncertainty due to conflicting interests and therefore improve the efficiency of schools in poor and urban environments.

Critics argue that choice and market forces will create greater inequity, which can further marginalize already marginalized populations because parents with higher income can buy more education, beyond what they might receive from a voucher and more educated parents may be able to make better-informed decisions. Families that can afford it will enroll their kids in “better” private schools. The flight from public schools by more advantaged students is problematic because academic achievement is at least partially related to peer-effects (Burke & Sass, 2013). Segmentation and segregation in schools lead to segmentation in levels of academic performance. Schools with substantial portions of academically disadvantaged students exhibit diminished academic productivity compared to schools with more advantaged students (Ashley & Wales, 2015; Menashy, 2015; OECD, 2011; OECD, 2012).

Critics argue that privatization will take focus away from improving public schools, making them weaker. They argue that school choice provides incentives for private schools to recruit the more able, or at least the more economically and academically advantaged, students, also known as "cream-skimming," away from public schools. Research indicates that private schools frequently exercise selective admission through parent interviews, testing, and other means (e.g., tuition and expectations for financial contributions beyond this]. As students with higher socio-economic status and perhaps “ability” leave, the schools that serve the poor will continue to get worse (Benveniste et al., 2013; Carnoy, 1997; Pedró et al., 2015).

Advocates of privatization claim that contrary to the widely held view, privatization does not need to favor those who are well off and that private, public partnerships often target underserved populations (Carnoy, 1997; LaRocque, 2008;

Tooley, 2015). They cite programs that target marginalized populations and provide poor and special needs kids more resources than what public school expenditure would provide. They argue that concerns for equity can be remedied with these types of targeted programs, where marginalized populations and struggling schools could be allocated more funds, or that voucher programs can be made available only to the disadvantaged groups (Belfield & Levin, 2002; Benveniste et al., 2013).

However, opponents of privatization claim that there are many ambiguities about how the for-profit private sector will provide education to the most vulnerable populations. They argue that in contrast to the public sector, whose mandate is always to protect the public good, the private sector providers may promote public good when it aligns with their financial benefits but are prone to choose their benefits over the public good when there is a conflict of interest (Verger et al., 2016).

The OECD analysis of the PISA tests provides some insights into issues of equity in the countries that take part in the test. PISA results show that, in general, the country level achievement is much better when there is equity in educational access to quality education. Specifically, the data shows that countries that have a lower disparity in the socioeconomic background of student distribution between private and public schools, also have a much better overall achievement level on PISA tests compared to countries with high socio-economic disparities. The OECD reports show that both public and private schools that serve students with higher socioeconomic status have greater access to resources and do not suffer as much from teacher shortages. PISA data shows that there is a range of disparity between countries in terms of the socioeconomic background

of students in private versus public schools. In some countries, there is a very high disparity, while in other countries, there is almost no disparity at all.

The OECD reports show that the socio-economic disparity between students in public and private schools is low in countries that provide public funding for private schooling options, as opposed to countries in which the government does not regulate contribute to private school expenditure. Moreover, the disparity between private and public student socioeconomic background is half as much in countries that use vouchers to target disadvantaged populations compared to those that use universal voucher programs (OECD, 2011 and 2012).

Low-cost private schools have emerged as an avenue to deliver private education to the poor populations in developing countries (Andrabi et al., 2008; Tooley, 2015; Tooley & Dixon, 2005). Critics argue that these schools exclude and further alienate the very poor, girls, and rural populations (Macpherson et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2013; Srivastava & Walford, 2007). They cite research that low-cost private schools serve low-income households, but they are not necessarily affordable to the poorest segments of society. Studies show that low-cost private schools are generally more expensive to families enrolling their children than is the case for state schools. Critics also argue that these schools further disenfranchise girls and certain ethnic minorities. They cite research that parents in developing countries are more likely to pay for their sons to go to school due to the higher potential rate of return for boys, the existing cultural norms that discourage girls from attending school, and that upper castes have a disproportionate presence in low-cost private schools in certain countries (Macpherson et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2013).

Proponents argue that low-cost private schools give poor parents the choice to obtain more proximate and better quality education for their children, and they also provide opportunities for women to gain employment (Noguera, 1994). Andrabi et al. (2008) present data from Pakistan that teaching in low-cost private schools is one of the only means of employment for many women, especially in rural villages. Since employment opportunities are drastically lower for women, low-cost private schools hire female teachers at a fraction of the cost of what public schools pay for both male and female teachers. While proponents of privatization view the hiring of women at lower salaries as creating employment opportunities and improving the efficiency of the educational market, critics see the wage differential of female teachers as exploitive behavior (Ashley et al., 2014).

Ashley and Wales (2015) conducted an extensive review of the literature published between 2008-2014 on non-state schooling options in developing countries. They conclude that there is some evidence in the literature that fee-based private school is affordable and accessible to the poor, but not to the very poor. Additionally, some research, but not all, shows that girls are less likely to be enrolled in fee-based private schools. However, there is strong evidence that philanthropic schools (schools run by NGOs and not fee-based) and some religious schools are designed to reach the poor and marginalized. Consistent evidence exists that philanthropic schools provide access to girls in places where female access to public education is difficult. They conclude that the evidence is not conclusive and more rigorous research, disaggregated by class, caste, gender, ethnicity, urban/rural, is needed to determine who is really accessing private schools; and long-term studies are needed to track the total costs of private schooling on

lower-income households to determine the affordability and economic cost of these schools on families.

In their response to Ashley et al. (2014), Tooley and Longfield (2015) argue that low-cost private schools should be judged on whether they provide alternative options and choice for poor parents and not as a full replacement of public schooling. They argue that by definition, low-cost private schools are not "as" affordable as government schools, that they are not designed to reach everyone, and that the criteria of absolute equal access by girls and boys are misleading. They argue that low-cost private schools are "nearly as" affordable as government schools and that both government and low-cost private schools are not affordable for the poorest segments of society.

They advocate that specially targeted programs should be designed to provide vouchers and other forms of support to allow the poorest segments of society to access low-cost private schools. They argue that the presence of low-cost private schools in rural and poor neighborhoods shows that these schools have the geographic reach and benefits the poor and marginalized, but the criteria that it should be available in every single locale is misleading. Similarly, they argue that expecting that there is the absolute equal enrollment of boys and girls in a low-cost private school is a deceptive criterion, since public schools suffer from gender disparity as well. They contend that gender equity in low-cost private schools should be judged based on whether or not they discriminate against girls and whether or not they are less accessible to girls compared to government schools in the same region.

Another area of contention between advocates and opponents is how privatization affects social cohesion. Social cohesion refers to the provision of a collective educational

experience that will orient all students towards a common understanding. Critics of privatization argue that one of the primary goals of schooling is to promote social good by providing similar experiences, teaching students similar values, and helping the society to have a common outlook and to respect and value others. They argue that privatization creates segmentation and undermines these goals (Belfield & Levin, 2002).

Proponents of privatization do not deny the social aspects of education but put greater emphasis on the economic goals of education. They affirm the importance of free markets, deregulation, reduction of the welfare state, and outsourcing of public services. Critics argue that privatization renders citizens as investors and consumers, and not a member of a polity who shares certain common traditions, spaces, and experiences. Critics claim that for proponents of privatization, education is recast as an individualized, atomized, and personalized private good that benefits the individual or the household, and the societal good becomes a secondary goal (Macpherson et al., 2014; Rizvi, 2016).

The empirical evidence on the effects of privatization on social cohesion is unclear. In countries in which the government does not regulate privatization, there seems to be greater segmentation. However, in countries that provide private options through public funding, like the Netherlands, there seems to be a high level of social cohesion despite the presence of a large number of private schools (Belfield & Levin, 2002; 2011; OECD, 2012).

The heart of the debate about the effects of privatization on educational equity is ideological and depends on philosophical perspectives. The argument centers around what it means to give everyone equal opportunity and whether providing equal opportunity is attainable. Christopher Jencks (1988) classifies the distribution of equal

opportunity into three mechanisms. The first is what Jencks calls "democratic" distribution in which everyone gets access to equal resources despite their background and needs. Meritocratic distribution supporters argue that the distribution of resources without consideration of other factors is not just. In a meritocratic distribution system, resources are either distributed based on effort or achievement. Practically, since effort is not easy to measure, it ends up favoring those who achieve better. Supporters of compensatory distribution argue that those who achieve better are already advantaged and that the state should distribute resources in a way that would even the playing field for those who have suffered either social or personal hardships. Practically, supporters of compensatory distribution argue for programs that distribute resources in favor of disadvantaged populations with the aim that children from all socioeconomic backgrounds and other dimensions of difference have the same probability of success in their future lives (Jencks, 1988).

Proponents of privatization favor non-compensatory mechanisms of distribution. Proponents of privatization define fairness in terms of equal or meritocratic distribution. They argue that individuals deserve what they have earned and that the state should provide equal opportunity in terms of access with limited compensatory measures. Critics argue that privatization can generate unsustainable patterns of social inequality and that privatization has opened up participation, but opportunities are unequally distributed (Rizvi, 2016).

Privatization in Developed Vs. Developing Countries

The privatization of education has emerged as a proposed solution to meet the increasing educational demand in developing countries without the requisite increase in

nation's public expenditure and/or international funding. There are various privatization initiatives across the globe, with each nation attempting to develop its mixture of private and public involvement in and funding of education. Many developing countries are heavily dependent on international financing for their educational programs and do not have well established and functioning public finance mechanisms or the resources, given the existing international inequalities in wealth to fund an ever-increasing educational system and have to juggle local realities with demands from international donors. A critical factor that has contributed to the role of private provision of public schooling in developing countries is the time-bound but not adequately globally funded mandate, and promise, of universal primary education by international bodies (Adnett & Davies, 2002; Das-Gupta & Bird, 2012; Levin, 2013; Levin & Belfield, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2010).

The push towards universal primary education started in the latter part of the 20th century. Before the 1950s, significant portions of the non-western world were experiencing colonization. After physical decolonization and the rise of nation-states, three primary reasons contributed to the expansion of the Western model of public schooling across the globe. Modern public schooling was seen as a mechanism to develop nation-states and emulate the success of Western countries; schooling was firmly related to modernization theory and human capital development; and, pressures from the world governing bodies and multi-national organizations, either through direct means or through isomorphic pressures to mimic Western nations, contributed to the convergence towards identical world-wide schooling models (Meyer et al., 1997; Schultz, 1961; Schultz, 1963; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 enshrined the right of education for all children. During the 1960s, UNESCO held regional conferences around the world to promote the idea of universal and free compulsory education with a focus on primary schooling and adult literacy. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an increased focus on the right to education for women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified in 1989. However, a restricted agenda for educational development started to emerge with the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in 1990 and culminated with the formalization of the second Millennium Development Goal (MDG 2) in 2002 to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (Unterhalter et al., 2015).

As a result of these pressures, enrollment rates and completed years of schooling have been rapidly rising throughout the world. However, new forms of educational inequality are replacing older inequalities. The Western world has a significant advantage in educational opportunities. Just as enrollment rates were 60% for the Western world in the 1870s compared to 20% for the rest of the world, there are similar gaps between Western and non-Western countries now in terms of years of schooling completed and the quality of education. Additionally, while the Western world has been developing schooling options organically and in light of local pressures, constraints, and opportunities, the non-Western world is faced with balancing local and international pressures. While the Western world developed solutions based on local needs and local resources, the non-Western world has had to adapt already developed models to fit their existing challenges and, in many cases, based on international, rather than local, funding (Dorius, 2013; Rizvi, 2016; Steiner-Khamsi, 2010).

Historically, it has taken individual nations several generations to reach universal primary education. Given the rapid rise in demand for education and the goal to reach universal education in 15 years (initially in 2000, then 2015, and more recently 2030), privatization initiatives have become common in the developing world. The new nation-states saw public education as a crown jewel of their independence. However, starting in the 1980s due to increasing demand for education and aid conditionalities related to structural adjustment requirements restricting resources for public services, including education by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, many nations introduced privatization initiatives to meet both demands (Ball et al., 2015). As a result, the percentage of private schools in developing countries is systematically higher than in previous years.

Chubb and Moe (1990) argued that highly heterogeneous societies are prone to greater inefficiency and ripe for privatization. However, more recent research has shown that in addition to international dependency, the level of socioeconomic disparity between different strata within a country, which is usually much higher in the developing world, is a strong predictor and perhaps a result of increasing private provision of education (James, 1993).

The EFA, MDG, and SDG goals are often used by international bodies to advocate for privatization initiatives. The original EFA argument was designed to relax limits on non-state actors by arguing for affordable education and not free education. However, the pro-market groups led by the World Bank and the rights-based groups led by the United Nations clashed over the EFA mandate and agreed to a "third way" during the June 2000 follow-up EFA conference in Dakar, Senegal. The resulting Dakar

Framework for Action was based on a compact between pro-private and pro-public groups whereby "the Bretton Woods" institutions (WB and IMF) would agree to address poverty and equity issues, while the United Nation would become less skeptical of the role of the market and the involvement of the private sector in educational development (Draxler, 2016; Mundy, 2006; Srivastava, 2010).

Since 2000, the UN, along with the World Bank and other large international donor agencies, has been committed to engaging the business sector to meet the MDG goals. A crucial part of the "third-way" agreement was to include private schooling as a complement to public schooling in order to meet the increased educational demands. The EFA's Fast Track Initiative (FTI), which was led by the World Bank, initially required a 10% quota for private provision of schooling as a condition to meet universal primary education goals. FTI was critiqued as ideologically driven to promote privatization without giving sufficient voice to aid recipient countries.

FTI transformed to become the Global Partnership to Education (GPE). The GPE restructured the composition of the governing board to include developing country representatives, distanced itself from the World Bank to an extent, and eliminated the 10% benchmark for private provision of schooling as a requirement. GPE has not taken a formal stance on privatization. However, despite critique of privatization by right-based supporters within GPE, 19 out of the 59 GPE countries, including Afghanistan, have key elements of support for privatization as part of their Education Sector Plans. In general, key members of the international aid community, including the United Nations, World Bank, USAID, and DFID, have all developed policy frameworks in support of private education (Draxler, 2016; Menashy, 2015).

As Rizvi (2016) argues, most of the multilateral agencies specializing in education suggest that the public sector in the developing world cannot meet the demands and challenges of education and that educational public-private partnerships (PPP) are an effective and efficient way to meet the goal of universal primary education. Proponents argue that PPPs are not a panacea, but can become a useful tool for improving quality, efficiency, and access to education if they are accompanied by good policy design, careful implementation, and effective political management (Ball et al., 2015; LaRocque, 2008; Verger, 2012). There are many issues with privatization concerning quality, access, efficiency, and equity that have already been discussed in the previous sections. However, one phenomenon that is specific to the developing world is the emergence of low-fee private (LFP) schools.

Low-fee private schools

Low-fee private (LFP) schools emerged in the late 1990s within the overall context of PPPs and the increased demand for education. Although 'budget schools' and 'private schools for the poor' have existed, the increased focus on meeting EFA and SDG goals have given the low-fee private school the spotlight in parts of the development community. The term "low-fee" is new and contested, and the definition is flexible. In general, the term refers to independently owned and operated private schools that aim to serve the socially and economically disadvantaged groups. As the concept of low-fee private schools has expanded, the definition has also grown to include large international corporations operating chains of school and, in some cases, non-profit schools run by NGOs (Srivastava, 2013; Tooley & Longfield, 2015).

LFP schools vary from country to country, and from village to village. They include a few high-profile chains and many small local single providers. The literature on these types of schools is geographically concentrated in south Asia with a fair amount of coverage on LFP initiatives in Africa. There is almost no literature on conflict-affected or fragile states despite policy emphasis on these countries. The focus of LFPs is on primary education with very little attention on middle and secondary schools. These schools charge minimal fees and pay teachers, who are often young, female, and inexperienced, low salaries to keep costs down. The LFP schools that are part of the larger chains try to leverage technology, such as scripted tablets for teachers, as an attempt to compensate for the lack of experienced teachers.

LFP schools are viewed as either irrelevant (Lewin, 2007), a trend that has to be tolerated until public schools are fixed (Härmä, 2013), or a potential alternative (Dixon et al., 2013) pathway to reach EFA goals. Ardent supporters argue that LFP schools have risen organically from within the poor communities as a local solution to address local needs and are mushrooming. They claim that LFP schools exist across the developing world, in urban and non-urban settings, and across continents. They argue some academics, and international development experts, critique LFPs because this model of bottom-up 'de facto privatization' challenges 65 years of international development status quo which has argued that government schooling is the only way forward for the poor and marginalized populations in the developing world (Ashley et al., 2014; Tooley, 2015; Tooley & Longfield, 2015).

The majority of the empirical studies on low fee private schools are focused on India, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Kenya, and Uganda (Srivastava, 2013). Tooley

and Dixon (2005) argue that private schools are contributing significantly to improving universal education in places where LFP schools are operational. Additionally, they report that there are large numbers of students in "unrecognized" schools in India, Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya that are not accounted for in the official government EFA numbers. As an example, they argue that if students in "unrecognized" LFP schools in Hyderabad are included in the EFA numbers, the percentage of out of school children could drop from 15 to 6 percent.

However, critics argue that most of the non-government provision of schooling is concentrated in wealthy and urban areas and does not reach the ultra-poor and that in the long run, LFP schools will have a small impact on EFA goals, while creating lots of problems in terms of quality and equity. A more detailed analysis of issues related to quality, equity, and access is presented in the previous sections.

Critics of privatization argue that market-based perspectives are ineffective and ideological mechanisms designed to alter the education paradigm and the role of the private sector in the developing world. They argue that privatization initiatives that have failed to show results in Western nations are being exported as best practices by a small network of education experts strategically placed in influential organizations (Spren & Vally, 2014; Verger, 2012).

Critics argue that EFAs and SDGs have legitimated an unfair system by promising education and social improvement but delivering little (including the international resources). After six decades of promises, universal primary education is still out of reach. By the time universal primary education will be reached, primary

education will not have much value, and the educational gap between developed and developing nations will continue and widen even further (Klees, 2014; Srivastava, 2010).

The reasons why countries have failed to reach EFA include fragility or state failure, conflict or crisis, and a lack of financial, human and institutional capacity (Ball et al., 2015; Verger, 2012). Critics argue that using the rhetoric of market efficiency and access, proponents of privatization want to bypass, rather than fix, state schools and to introduce the private initiative. They argue that inequality and poverty are the results of our economic system, and the argument for lack of public funding is flawed because the public resource gap is a choice, not a fixed variable. They cite comparative data that shows that the Chinese model which relies on a predominantly public system of educational provision and delivery can lead a country to universal primary education much more quickly than a system that relies on the private sector (Smith & Joshi, 2016) and argues that the best way education for all can be achieved is to improve the public provision of schooling internationally (Klees & Qargha, 2014; Pedró et al., 2015).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Policy development is multi-faceted, ambiguous, and complex, and many factors and many players influence policies. The complexity of Afghanistan, a donor-dependent fragile state, makes policy formation, adoption, and implementation exponentially more complicated. To examine the conditions that influenced the development of private school policies in Afghanistan, I use two complementary theoretical frameworks: the education transfer literature and the Multiple Streams Framework.

I situate this study in the education transfer literature (Cairney & Jones, 2016; Phillips, 2000; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Verger, 2016) and use the Multiple Streams Framework (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2007) to explain how the privatization of primary and secondary school policy evolved in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2020. Specifically, I draw upon Cairney's (2012) concept of "policy transfer window," within the Multiple Streams Framework, as an analytical tool to examine the dynamic between external actors and local policymakers in influencing agenda setting.

Since the nineteenth century, the study of educational transfer has been a foundational theme in comparative education (Beech, 2006). Most educational transfer research either focuses on the macro-level global trends or micro-level country reactions to educational transfer. The global macro-level approaches tend to undermine the agency of local decision-makers. Micro-level approaches focus on country-level dynamics of education transfer but lack a well-defined analytical strategy to study the process of policy adoption and the dynamic between national and international policy advocates (Perry & Tor, 2009).

According to Steiner-Khamsi (2016), research on education transfer is divided into normative and analytical strands. Normative research focuses on identifying,

disseminating, and evaluating the impact of "best practices"; while analytical research is interested in knowing whether, when, why, and how policy borrowing occurs. I use an analytical design for this study to explore the politics, identify the agents of transfer, and outline the processes that have led to the partial privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan. This study does not try to identify or evaluate best practices in the privatization of education that could be transferred or adopted in Afghanistan.

In this chapter, I present an overview of the major theoretical perspectives used to study educational transfer and highlight the privatization of education as a specific case of such transfer. I then outline the Multiple Streams Framework, present some of the critiques, and elaborate on how I intend to apply the modified concept of policy transfer window within the Multiple Streams Framework to understand the privatization process in Afghanistan.

Educational Transfer

The comparative literature describes how ideas and practices move from one place to another in many ways. Researchers often use terms like diffusion, convergence, borrowing, lending, copying, reproduction, appropriation, and importing to describe the process of policy transfer at trans-national, international, regional, national, or local levels (Phillips, 2000; Phillips, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Verger, 2016). For this study, I use the term "educational transfer" as an over-arching label to refer to the movement of educational ideas, structures, and practices from one time and place to another. This term acknowledges that the transfer of ideas and practices can range from explicit and imposing to implicit and indirect. The term also acknowledges that multiple

actors and processes are involved at various degrees in the act of transferring (Perry & Tor, 2009).

The idea of learning from the experiences of other countries is a staple of modern educational systems and a key area of study in the field of comparative and international education and educational policy studies. Educational systems do not exist or operate in isolation but rather interact with other institutions and larger social forces. Domestic and internal as well as foreign and external forces influence national educational systems. The rise of information technology and connectivity and aid dependency in developing countries have increased access, exposure, and sometimes pressures for local policymakers and educators to borrow and adapt various educational ideas and practices from international sources (Perry & Tor, 2009; Phillips, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Prior to the mid 20th century, most policy transfer occurred through individual educational reformers who were impressed by systems outside of their countries. However, the surge of globalization during the last five decades has created formalized global education structures and have caused a free flow of information across borders. The new global education structures have changed the locus of educational transfers from individuals to complex plurilateral players, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, bilateral donors, and many non-governmental organizations that work in international education. The effects of globalization have increased academic interest in studying how the transfer of knowledge impacts educational policy changes within countries and globally (Mundy et al., 2016; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Carnoy et al. (1999) argue that globalization has elicited two general types of educational policy reforms. The first type of reform is finance-driven reforms that seek to

make educational systems more *efficient* through concepts of free-market economics. The second type of reform has centered around competitiveness. These reforms seek to make systems *more competitive* globally by introducing initiatives such as standards, assessments, accountability, decentralization of services, and the diversification of service providers. Both finance and competitive-driven reforms are actively promoted (lending) by the international influencers within the global educational architecture and looked towards (borrowing) by nations seeking to implement these reforms (Mundy et al., 2016; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Theoretical Frameworks

Education transfer is a sub-category within the study of globalization. Although globalization studies have affected been undertaken in all fields of socio-economic, political, and cultural life, there is no agreement about the nature of the phenomenon, and the definitions vary based on the worldview of researchers (for a review of theoretical perspectives used to study the globalization of education, please refer to Parjanadze, 2009). Similar to the overall globalization literature, education transfer researchers focus on different contexts and use differing theoretical lenses to interpret and explain the extent and nature of the educational transfer.

The analysis of educational transfer can take place at a macro (global/regional) or micro (nation-state, province, or local community) level. Macro-level analyses examine global forces, trends, actors, debates, and structures that influence educational transfer or how actions of individual actors are aggregated into macro-level effects by institutionalized rules or social mechanisms. Macro-level analyses do not provide in-depth detail about the process and extent of transfer at a country level. Micro-level

analyses are more common in the studies of educational transfer and often focus on the observable social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of transfer at the country level (Perry & Tor, 2009; Phillips, 2004; Phillips & Ochs, 2003). While micro-level analyses provide a more thoughtful understanding of the processes of educational transfer at the country level, they are prone to a narrower analysis if the researcher does not connect the findings to a theoretical framework that allows the researchers to connect their findings to a broader context and dynamics (Stone 2001; Dale, 1999).

Perry and Tor (2009) identify three major theoretical frameworks common in education transfer literature: Neo-Institutionalist or social positivist, dependency, and phenomenological or culturalist. These three theoretical frameworks are grounded in differing sets of assumptions and worldviews, and each offers a different way of understanding, explaining, and predicting educational transfer. I outline the major characteristics of the three frameworks below.

The first theoretical strand is the neo-institutionalist or social positivist perspective. This perspective asserts that dominant education models have gained a status of global legitimacy, in many ways like religions. Education transfer from the outside is a natural developmental stage wherein national policy makers replace what they believe (or have come to believe) are dysfunctional policies with what some have argued are *best practice models* from the outside so that they can gain international legitimacy. Studies using this perspective focus on isomorphism in different regions of the world and point to a worldwide convergence of education systems as an outcome of a common world educational culture (Meyer et al., 1997; Ramirez & Boli, 1987).

The second theoretical strand is the dependency perspective. This theoretical strand is rooted in the critical or conflict paradigm. Scholars that use this perspective see education transfer as a mechanism for reproducing social inequality in the capitalist world system. These perspectives are grounded in a Marxist worldview and see the educational transfer as subjugating the "periphery" by the "core." This theoretical strand is commonly adopted to explain cases of educational transfer which are imposed by external agents or failed transferred educational projects initiated by donor agencies (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Dale, 1999).

The third theoretical framework is the culturalist or phenomenological perspective. Unlike the neo-institutional and dependency perspectives that focus on macro-level trends, studies from this perspective typically examine the social, cultural, historical, political, and economic factors related to education transfer at a national or local level. Scholars that subscribe to the culturalist perspective acknowledge that macro-level forces influence educational transfer at the national level, but they do not necessarily determine it. They assert that there is a conscious power struggle with the center pushing a specific agenda while at least some actors in the periphery resist the imposition. They claim that this struggle has resulted in greater educational policy convergence across the globe and decoupling between education talk and the actual education practice in many countries (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016; Verger, 2016).

One central issue differentiating factor among the three frameworks is whether they conceptualize the policy transfer process as voluntary, coercive (forced), or a combination of the two. Essentially, all three theoretical frameworks outlined above try to identify the reasons behind policy transfer. However, scholars have pointed to the lack of

a well-articulated methodology and an analytical framework as a limiting factor for operationalizing policy transfer theories (Cairney, 2012; Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Perry & Tor, 2009; Phillips & Ochs, 2004).

Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) have proposed a six-point policy transfer continuum to address this critique, as seen in Figure 1. For this study, I will draw upon this continuum as an analytical tool to operationalize the policy transfer theories.

Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) contend that establishing a simple distinction between voluntary and coercive transfer oversimplifies the process of policy transfer. They suggest that policy transfer occurs along a continuum that runs from lesson drawing to the direct imposition of a policy on one political system by another. They contend that using a continuum to describe policy transfer helps in two ways. First, since the study of policy transfer is complex, using a continuum as a practical tool helps researchers identify categories that they can use to frame their empirical work. Second, the continuum helps researchers acknowledge that many transfer cases involve both voluntary and coercive elements. Figure 1 below outlines the Dolowitz and Marsh policy transfer continuum (source Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000).

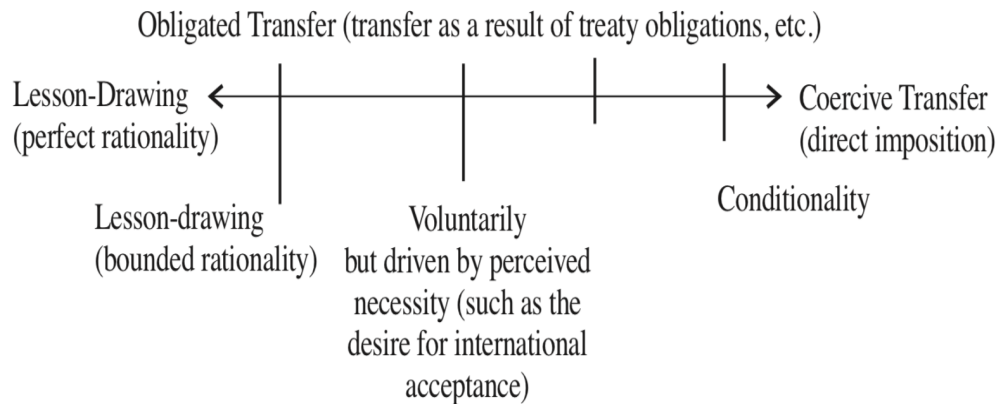


Figure 1 - Dolowitz and Marsh Policy Transfer Continuum

As Cairney (2012) explains, the lesson-drawing based on perfect rationality is at one end of the continuum. The importing country, or at least certain elites or their designees, rationally analyzes all policy options to an identified problem and chooses the best solution for the identified problem. He gives three reasons for why governments might look abroad for policy options in this scenario:

- a) Governments might be dissatisfied with domestic options
- b) They might look abroad as a “natural tendency” for better options
- c) They might look abroad to legitimize their aims (and preferred practices)

In all cases, there is no external pressure to adopt policy options, and the policy transfer is entirely voluntary and by no means inevitable. Cairney (2012) proposes that outside of the theoretical critique of perfect rationality, voluntary lesson drawing might be, to an extent, the case for countries like the United States that are world powers, but certainly not the case for developing countries that receive aid.

Direct coercive transfer of policy is at the other end of the continuum. Coercion in this scenario refers to an external actor (organization, country, or multilateral body)

setting up the transfer agenda outside of the recipient country and imposing adverse consequences it on the importing country if the country does not cooperate. Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) argue that direct imposition of a policy by an external actor on a sovereign nation is rare. However, when external entities tie aid to conditionalities (e.g., such as public management reforms, a reduction of the state's role in the economy, and the encouragement of the private sector), the transfer is closer to coercion than voluntary acceptance.

The obliged transfer is left of the conditionalities because countries usually voluntarily choose to become part of treaties. Further to the left of the obliged transfer is the transfers that are voluntary but driven by perceived necessity. These “indirect coercive transfers” blur the lines between voluntary and coercive elements of policy transfer. Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) contend that these types of policy transfers take place when importing countries feel compelled to be legitimated by the international community, do not want to be “embarrassed” and feel left out, or because they want to compete with their neighbors. The notion of perceived necessity and time boundedness distinguishes between bounded rationality and perfect rationality. The more an importing country feels under time constraints to decide, the more bound it will be in its decision-making process for adoption. The less the country feels under time pressure for a decision, the more the decision-making process moves towards the left end of the continuum towards perfect rationality but will never reach it (Cairney, 2012).

Diffusion of Privatization within the Field of Education

Fitz and Beers (2002) define privatization as "a process that occurs in many modes but in one form or another involves the transfer of public money or assets from the

public domain to the private sector. It also includes the provision of services by private corporations, enterprises, and institutions that were once provided by the public sector" (p. 139). Privatization of education has become a multi-faceted global policy process that both industrialized and developing countries are adopting to address a range of educational and economic challenges (Ashley & Wales, 2015; Verger, 2016).

I provide a complete analysis of the global trend towards privatization of education and the various policy implications that the privatization agenda affects in Chapter 2. For the purposes of this section, it is important to highlight that there is an observable convergence of privatization as a reform agenda in both developing and developed countries. Therefore, education privatization is a "suitable phenomenon to look at from a policy diffusion perspective" (Verger, 2016, p. 75).

Multiple Streams Framework

The Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) is referred to interchangeably as an approach, lens, perspective, and framework in the literature. MSF holds a prominent place in public policy research and is most often used to explain how governments form policies under conditions of ambiguity (Jones et al., 2016; White, 2015). John Kingdon (1995) initially outlined the Multiple Streams Framework in *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Kingdon (1995) and other researchers, such as Nikolaos Zahariadis (1999, 2003, 2007, 2014, 2016), have further refined and expanded the Multiple Streams Framework since its initial formulation.

The Multiple Streams Framework tries to explain how policymakers formulate policies under conditions of ambiguity and when policymakers are under significant time constraints. MSF focuses on the time between agenda-setting to adoption. MSF proposes

that problems, policies, and politics operate mostly independently in organizational systems and have their own rules and dynamics. Kingdon uses the metaphor of three streams to describe each of these factors of policy formulation. He argues that significant policy change occurs if policy entrepreneurs can link the three streams during fleeting moments of opportunity when the three streams align. He calls these fleeting moments "windows of opportunity" (Kingdon, 1995; Sabatier, 2007; Zahariadis, 2007).

In this section, I first present the key concepts and primary assumptions of the Multiple Streams Framework. I then outline the structural elements of MSF and discuss how the framework analyzes the various processes that lead to making a policy choice. I conclude by discussing some of the criticism of using MSF to understand international education policy and provide a rationale for overcoming some of the limitations.

Key Concepts and Assumptions of MSF

Kingdon adapted the "Garbage Can Model" of organizational choice for understanding the policy process to formulate the Multiple Streams Framework. The Garbage Can Model, which emerged as a critique of rational and neo-rational models of public administration, asserts that organizational decisions results from structural, cognitive, and affective processes that are contextdependent. Unlike rational decision theory, the Garbage Can Model disconnects problems, solutions, and decision-makers from each other. The Garbage Can model asserts that specific decisions do not follow an orderly process from problem to solution but are outcomes of several relatively independent streams of events within the organization (Cohen et al., 1972; Daft, 1982).

While Cohen et al.'s (1972) Garbage Can Model forms the basis of the Multiple Streams Framework, Zahariadis (2007) argues that MSF shares similarities with other

theoretical perspectives such as systems theory and chaos theories. Zahariadis contends that, like systems theories, the Multiple Streams Framework views decisions as a push and pull between several actors in which information and the presentation of information are key factors. He asserts that MSF's focus on complexity, its assumption of randomness in decision making, and its viewing systems as constantly evolving (Kingdon, 1995) provides common ground between MSF and chaos theories.

MSF theorizes at the system level and focuses on either the entire system or a specific decision as the unit of analysis. The Multiple Streams Framework tries to make meaning of the processes that precede the implementation of policy decisions. Namely, MSF focuses on activities that span from agenda-setting to the adoption of policies (Boaisako(Boasiako & Asare, 2015; Zahariadis, 2007).

Ambiguity, timing, and political manipulation are some of the main concepts in the Multiple Streams Framework. I provide a complete account of these critical concepts below.

Ambiguity. Ambiguity is perhaps the most central concept in the Multiple Streams Framework. *Ambiguity* is defined as a state of ambivalence in which there are many irreconcilable ways of thinking about the same issue (Feldman, 1989). Kingdon (1995) and other MSF theorists assert that decision-making in public administration (called organized anarchies) is not a rational choice but rather a process characterized by a) fluid participation, b) problematic preferences, and c) unclear technology.

Organizational "choice is conceptualized as a garbage can into which participants, who drift in and out of decisions, dump largely unrelated problems and solutions. No one person controls the process of choice, and fluctuating attendance, opportunities, and

attention give the process highly dynamic and interactive qualities" (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 66).

MSF theorists assert that the participation of actors within governments and non-governmental organizations that try to influence policy is *fluid* and changing with high levels of turnover. This fluidity of actors results in different people getting involved at different stages of the decision-making process. With the fluidity of actors comes changing levels of time and focus devoted to the particular policy item.

MSF theorists assert that, unlike capitalist businesses with a clear goal to make a profit, policymakers in governments have *problematic preferences*. That is, policymakers have multiple goals, do not know what they want, or make decisions despite – or aided by – confusion. Finally, how the various inputs in the overall system translate to outcomes (*technology*) is unclear within governments. Members of government, or the non-governmental entities trying to influence policy, might be aware of their responsibilities. However, they are not aware of how all the pieces should come together to achieve the government's overall goals. In many cases, jurisdictional boundaries are unclear, and turf wars exist between departments, agencies, and individuals (Kingdon, 1995; Sharkansky, 2002; Zahariadis, 2007).

Timing. The MSF theorists assert that under conditions of ambiguity where problems and preferences are not clearly defined, and it is not easy to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, policymakers can interpret information incorrectly or in a misleading way. As a result, contradictions and inconsistencies appear between policy and action. MSF theorists argue that timing is much more important than rationality in the decision-making process under ambiguous conditions. From an MSF

perspective, the critical factor in decision-making is who pays attention to what and when (Zahariadis, 2007).

Political Manipulation. *Political manipulation* is defined as an effort to control ambiguity. Multiple Stream theorists view information as the essential commodity in political manipulation (Zahariadis, 2007). MS theorists, much like critical theorists, contend that information is not value-neutral. Information is strategically manipulated and tacitly presented to pursue self-interests, create winners and losers, and make meaning out of ambiguity (Klees, 2008).

The Multiple Stream lens differentiates between those who manipulate and those that get manipulated. Policy entrepreneurs are seen mainly as goal-oriented individuals who actively work to manipulate policymakers through the presentation and organization of information. On the other hand, policymakers are seen as individuals who lack clear preferences about the specific policy option and are subject to manipulation. MS theorists contend that while the result of manipulation might serve the self-interests of the policy entrepreneur, at the same time, political manipulation serves to provide meaning, clarification, and identity for the system. Therefore, policy entrepreneurs are seen to serve as both rationalists in pursuit of their projects and meaning suppliers and identity providers for the system (Zahariadis, 2007)

Unlike the rational perspectives, the Multiple Stream perspective does not see individuals as utility maximizers who have sufficient information and a clear and consistent way of arriving at decisions (Williamson, 1985). Instead, the MS perspective contends that policymakers try to make "good enough" decisions, often sporadically, based on limited or flawed information. Unlike the constructivists, MSF theorists do not

view the policy formation process as deliberation between competing groups who try to construct meaning through argumentation (Schneider & Ingram, 1997). Instead, MS theorists contend that policymakers are driven by the cognitive and emotional power of symbols and labels (Carroll, 1985). Therefore, a primary key to achieving policy adoption is to present and organize information in a way that stokes those cognitive and emotional referents of policymakers (Zahariadis, 2007).

Three key assumptions guide the Multiple Stream framework. I outline each of these assumptions below.

Assumption 1: Individuals pay attention to and process issues in serial order, but systems can pay attention to issues in parallel order. This assumption means that individual policymakers and policy entrepreneurs can only attend to a few policy issues at a time, and they do so sequentially. However, the overall government system can entertain and process many policy issues simultaneously. This first assumption is related to Herbert Simon's bounded rationality theory. Herbert Simon (1997) contends that rationality is limited, and decision-makers seek satisfactory solutions rather than optimal solutions. He states, "boundedly rational agents experience limits in formulating and solving complex problems and in processing (receiving, storing, retrieving, transmitting) information" (Barbalet, 2009).

Both MSF and bounded rationality theorists argue that the sequence in which policymakers consider solutions strongly affects the final decision. However, MSF theorists add to the bounded rationality perspective by arguing that political systems contain many sub-systems that allow for the system to pay attention to multiple issues simultaneously. They call this phenomenon a parallel processing ability. MSF theorists

argue that when individuals' serial processing combines with the parallel processing of systems (populated by the same and other individuals), attention and search for solutions can become abrupt and disorderly from a system's point of view (Zahariadis, 2007).

Assumption 2: Policymakers operate under time constraints. This second assumption reiterates that time is an essential commodity for policymakers. The system pulls policymakers in many directions, which causes significant strain on their focus and attention. As a result, they do not have the luxury to study and entertain all possible policy solutions (or even all conceptions of the problem that needs to be solved). Instead, time constraints cause policymakers to entertain and choose from a limited number and range of alternatives (Zahariadis, 2007).

Assumption 3: The three streams operate independently within the system. This assumption is an extension of the first assumption in that if system operation is in parallel, then the specific streams can have a life of their own. This assumption means that the policies (solutions) that policymakers entertain are not necessarily in response to the concerns (problems) from within or outside the system or the broader political discourse (politics).

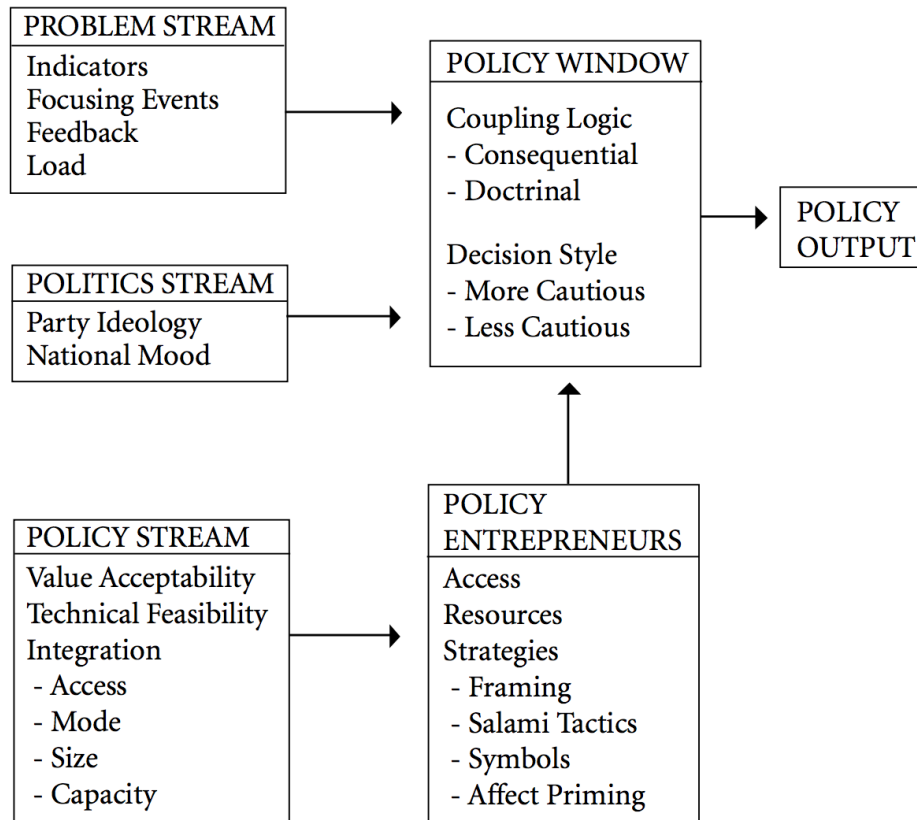


Figure 2 - Structure of the Multiple Stream Approach

Structure of the Multiple Streams Framework. The problem, policy, and politics streams, policy windows, and policy entrepreneurs make up the Multiple Streams Framework (Jones et al., (2016;), Zahariadis, (2003, 2007)). Figure 2 outlines the elements of MSF (source: Zahariadis, 2007):

The Problem Stream. Problems are conditions that policymakers and the general public see as problematic and want to alleviate. However, only some conditions become defined as problems and receive the attention of policymakers (Rochefort et al., 1994). No objective indicators determine which conditions are problems, and the perception of problematic conditions can change quickly. The MSF theorists contend that a condition gains the status of a problem based on the values and beliefs of the society at a particular

time and place. They argue that indicators, focusing events, and feedback from other programs drive the policymakers' attention to certain conditions and their transformation to the status of problems.

Indicators are measures that describe trends, the state, or the level of specific conditions impacting human beings or their environment. Policymakers use indicators to identify and monitor conditions that can become potential problems. Mortality rates, literacy rates, cost of programs, and attendance rates are indicators that highlight conditions and influence policymakers.

Focusing events are critical moments, such as crises or elections, that bring a particular condition to the attention of the public and policymakers. Wood (2006) describes focusing events as sudden events, rare and significant in scale, that policymakers and the public find out about simultaneously. Focusing events can be local or international, depending on the policy issue that needs to be addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of an international focusing event, and the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis (Minnesota) police that sparked protests about police brutality towards black Americans is an example of a national focusing event.

Feedback from other programs helps highlight what works and what does not work for policymakers and the public. Information plays a critical role in the value of feedback. Since information is not value-neutral, the general perception of the success of a policy or program can influence its utility for other arenas. If policymakers and the public see a solution successfully implemented in one sector, it can facilitate the adoption of the same policy solution to another unrelated sector. Zahariadis (2007) gives an

example of how the privatization of oil influenced the privatization of telecommunications in the early 1980s in Britain and across other countries in later years.

Policymakers have a limited amount of time and attention. The Multiple Streams Framework refers to the number of complex problems that occupy policymakers' attention as the problem *load*. The higher the load of problems that policymakers are dealing with, the more difficult it will be for a new problem to receive attention.

The Politics Stream. The politics stream is the institutional and cultural context in which policymakers consider policy ideas. The national mood, current party ideology, and pressure group campaigns affect whether a specific issue receives attention from policymakers. The national mood is how the general public feels towards the issue and is measured through polls, media coverage, or personal perceptions. If policymakers feel that the majority of the public supports an idea, they will tend to give attention to that issue. The opposite also holds. The ruling party ideology steers the focus of policymakers either towards promoting or inhibiting policy options. Therefore, change in administration or legislation provides opportunities for policymakers to focus on new items that align better with the new administration's ideology. Finally, special interest groups, or pressure groups, serve as a mechanism to signal policymakers the level of political support that a particular idea has. Policymakers will tend to support ideas that have substantial political support.

The Policy Stream. Kingdon (1995) describes the policy stream as a primeval soup in which "many ideas float around ... the ones that last, as in a natural selection system, meet some criteria (p. 123)." The Multiple Streams Framework argues that policy communities – networks that include government officials, worker unions, academics,

development workers, and researchers with similar concerns in a policy area – generate and share ideas or policy solutions in various forums and multiple mediums. There are many ideas that policy communities float in policy circles, but not all of them survive or receive the attention of key policymakers. Some ideas fade away and disappear, others get merged into new proposals, and a few survive and receive serious consideration.

MSF theorists argue that whether a policy idea will survive within the policy stream is dependent on its value acceptability, technical feasibility, resource adequacy, and the type of policy network that is advancing the policy idea. Proposals that do not conform to the values of the key policymakers (value acceptability) will have a much harder chance of surviving. Similarly, policy proposals that are perceived to be too difficult to implement (technical feasibility) or require too much capital or human resources (resource adequacy) are also not likely to survive the soup of ideas. Finally, if the policy proposal is championed by an integrated network – a network that is small, has high capacity, is formed consensually, and has greater access to policymakers – there is a higher likelihood that the policy proposal will survive.

Policy Entrepreneurs. Policy entrepreneurs are individuals or organizations that try to join the three streams to achieve policy outcomes they favor. These entrepreneurs are power brokers who seek to manipulate the problematic preferences of policymakers and the unclear technology of the system. Timing is critical for policy entrepreneurs, and they need to push their policies when a policy window opens; otherwise, they risk losing the opportunity. The success of policy entrepreneurs depends on the level of access they have to decision-makers, the resources they are willing to expend in terms of time,

money, and energy on the policy issue, and their ability to manipulate the situation to their favor.

Policy Windows. When the problem, policy, and politics streams are "coupled" or joined together, a critical moment is formed conducive to policy options receiving attention. Kingdon (1995) calls these moments policy windows and defines them as fleeting "opportunities for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions or to push attention to their special problems" (p.165). Usually, compelling problems or dramatic events open windows. These policy windows are short-lived and can close abruptly. Perceived low quality of education (i.e., low student achievement in schools) is an example of a compelling problem. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a dramatic event that focuses attention on distance learning. Coupling of streams occurs during open policy windows when the policymakers in power do not require much information before reaching a decision. That is, they have a favorable decision-making style.

Policy Transfer Window. Cairney (2012) acknowledges that the three streams still have to come together to create an opportunity for policy adoption in aid-dependent nations. However, he renames this critical and fleeting moment that Kingdon (1995) calls "policy window" a "policy *transfer* window." He emphasizes that understanding the dynamic between external actors and domestic decision-makers is the key to understanding how policy transfer occurs in aid-dependent nations. In Kingdon's traditional formulation of MSF, the policy entrepreneur (or entrepreneurs) is identifiable and actively advocates for specific policies. The policymakers are also identifiable, and their receptivity to the policy idea is the most crucial element in determining if a policy is adopted. In donor-dependent states, advocacy mechanisms and the locus of decision-

making become more complicated and blurred. The policy entrepreneur is not necessarily an identifiable individual or group. Instead, the “policy entrepreneur” is the combined forces of international policy transfer with individual actors. Similarly, the receptivity of the local policymaker to the new policy is combined with the level of direct or indirect coercion by external actors that determines the policy decisions. The linking of the problem, politics, and policy streams open a window of opportunity for policy entrepreneurs and policy transfer forces to transfer a specific policy.

Limitations and Critique of the Multiple Streams Framework

Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework has substantially influenced the study of public policy and is frequently cited as an interpretive framework for understanding policy change. At the same time, some researchers have criticized MSF for its unrealistic assumptions, its lack of international focus, and the researcher's superficial use of the theory, amongst other things (Cairney & Jones, 2016; Steiner-Khamsi, 2010; Zahariadis, 2007). The 2016 special issue of the Policy Studies Journal (Weible & Schlager, 2016) and the 2016 edited volume, *Decision-Making under Ambiguity and Time Constraint: Assessing the Multiple Streams Framework* (Zohlnhöfer & Rüb, 2016,) provide a extensive discussion of the limitations and critique of the Multiple Stream Framework. I address the three critiques directly related to this study below.

Independence of the Three Streams. One of the most often cited critiques of MSF is that the assumption that the three streams are independent and distinct is not valid (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Zahariadis (2007) addresses this critique by asserting that stream independence is a conceptual device specifically used to challenge the purely rational idea that policymakers always develop solutions in response

to clearly defined problems. He argues that the assumption of stream independence allows for the possibility that solutions are designed and seek problems or even create problems to justify their use. He cites the Bush administration's policy to depose Saddam Hussain as an example. The administration refocused the problem as his possession of weapons of mass destruction, his connection to terrorists, the liberation of Iraq, democratization, and nation-building to adopt and enact its policy solution of deposing him from power. Zahariadis further contends that assumptions, by their nature, are simplifications of reality and that theorists usually accept such simplifications. He contends that "if many policy analysts readily accept the assumption that people don't have to be rational—they only need act *as if* they are rational—they can also accept the assumption that streams don't have to be independent—they only need flow *as if* they are independent" (p. 82)."

Lack of International Focus. The second critique is that MSF focuses on one place (United States), a specific period (post-war up to 1980s), limited policy areas (health and transport) and that it does not take into account processes of transnational borrowing (Cairney & Jones, 2016; Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). However, Cairney and Jones (2016) and Jones et al. (2016) show that MSF has been applied globally, across time, and policy areas. Jones et al.'s meta-review concluded that between 2000 and 2013, the Multiple Streams Framework was "applied to study 65 different countries, at multiple levels of governance, across 22 different policy areas, and by researchers spanning the globe" (p. 13)." They conclude that MSF is prolific, enjoys high scholarly visibility, and has a growing number of applications. Cairney and Jones's (2016) analysis found a rising application of the MSF to non-US policymaking. The same scholars suggest that MSF

research should refer to a broader set of literature, adopt a globalization perspective, and refer to transnational borrowing literature focusing on cross-national policy interactions and aid dependency to expand the applicability of the MSF further (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016).

For this study, I focus on a fragile, aid-dependent context and draw upon international education transfer literature to further expand and test the applicability of the Multiple Streams Framework. I use Cairney's (2012, pp. 269-271) idea of "policy transfer window" to combine MSF literature, which initially did not account for the role of external players (i.e., those from other nations), and the education transfer literature, which usually focuses on the "how" and not "why" governments import policies.

Cairney's (2012) concept of the *policy transfer window* focuses on policy transfer and the adoption of ideas within an aid-dependent political system. Whereas Kingdon's original "policy window" focuses only on domestic policymaker's receptivity to a proposed solution, Cairney's *policy transfer window* considers the role of international actors that attempt to compel domestic policymakers to adopt particular solutions. In Cairney's modified approach, the window of opportunity is still fleeting and unpredictable. However, the window depends on international actors' ability to set the agenda, the receptivity of domestic actors to the idea, and their ability to resist the idea.

MS Framework is Used Superficially. The third critique of MSF is that although Kingdon's original work (1995) is widely admired and is an often-cited work in policy analysis (cited over 24,000 times), researchers use it in a superficial way (Cairney & Jones, 2016). Although this critique is not universally valid, there is evidence that researchers often refer to MSF but do not apply it in their analysis. Jones et al. (2016)

found that out of the 1,933 citations of MSF, only 311 studies (16 percent) applied the framework.

Cairney and Jones (2016) argue that the application of MSF only makes a theoretical contribution if used correctly. They argue that MSF can lead to good policy analysis in case studies that use MSF to generate straightforward research questions followed by nuanced and in-depth analysis to explain the events related to the policy. They propose three strategies to ensure that studies that use MSF are rich and meaningful. First, they suggest that researchers should demonstrate proficiency with the Multiple Streams Framework. According to Cairney and Jones (2016), this can be accomplished by using contemporary literature on MSF and not simply utilizing Kingdon's original work. MSF theorists have conducted decades of research to advance the framework. Ignoring the contemporary writings would signal that the researcher does not have the proficiency to apply MSF correctly.

Second, researchers should speak to the MS Framework. Researchers should identify and outline the major concepts and sub-concepts of the framework and operationalize those concepts for their particular study. They should make meaning of the concepts, modify them to their context, and not simply use broad and vague language. Cairney and Jones (2016) contend that researchers will not show mastery and application of the framework unless they can relate the Multiple Streams Framework to their study.

Finally, researchers should speak to broader policy research by linking and combining MSF with other theories and perspectives to comprehensively explain phenomena. Cairney and Jones (2016) contend that, by doing so, the researcher will contribute to the field and expand the framework even further.

In this case study, I have tried to address all three criteria. I have used Kingdon's original work and contemporary MSF literature by scholars like Zahariadis, Cairney, and others. I have tried to provide a comprehensive outline of MSF, and I have related the concepts to the privatization of education in Afghanistan. Finally, I have combined the international education transfer with MSF to analyze the transfer of privatization of education in a conflict-affected and aid-dependent context.

Application of the Multiple Streams Framework. Kingdon and other MSF scholars use a case study design and rely on interviews and documentary analysis to study phenomenon through an MSF lens (Cairney & Jones, 2016). White (2015) outlines the following six steps that proponents of MSF use to study cases:

1. They categorize the actors and processes related to policy into the problem, politics, and policy streams.
2. In the politics stream, they analyze the prevailing national mood and party ideology.
3. In the problem stream, they examine how the issue captures the attention of policy elites, for instance, through newsworthy events, alarming socio-economic indicators, or eye-catching policy feedback.
4. In the policy stream, they investigate the possible responses to the issue in the relevant policy network(s), especially their value acceptability and technical feasibility.
5. They explore how the three streams have come into alignment to create an enabling environment for a specific policy.
6. They study the role of prominent individuals in aligning the three streams.

MSF has been used and tested in many settings. However, researchers have not used MSF to explain the complexity of privatization policy formation in donor-dependent fragile states. I apply the above six steps and supplement MSF with education transfer literature to explain the privatization of primary and secondary schools in a donor-dependent fragile state.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In this dissertation, I focus on how the internal/national dynamics of policymaking, along with transnational influences, have shaped the trends, nature, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan and what that tells us about policy choices in fragile, aid-dependent contexts. I specifically focus on how the local/national context, the role of international players, and the constraints of donor-dependency influence the decision-making process towards privatization. I use the single instrumental case study design to examine the trends, nature, and driving forces behind the partial privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan. Since Merriam (1998) asserts that case study research is strengthened by using a theoretical or conceptual framework based in a discipline and supported by the literature, I use a modified version of Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework and the international education transfer literature to frame the process of policymaking.

In this chapter, I describe the research design and provide a rationale for this choice. I defend the use of a single instrumental case study design in the first section. In the second section, I identify the data sources. I explain the procedures I employed for data collection and data analysis in sections three and four, respectively. I conclude this chapter by describing the types of controls I used to minimize bias and error.

The Rationale for Instrumental Case Study Design

I approach this research using a single instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995) to explain how the local context, the role of international players, and the constraints of donor-dependency influence the decision-making process towards privatization in Afghanistan.

Robert Stake (1994, 1995) classified cases into a) intrinsic, b) instrumental, and c) collective. In an instrumental case study, a case is a tool used to understand a particular phenomenon. An instrumental case study design focuses on studying a case (e.g., person, specific group, or organization) to provide insight into an issue, develop generalizations, or build theory (Mills et al., 2010, pp. 473-475). The single instrumental case study design corresponds with the needs of this study because, as Creswell (2007) explains, “in a single instrumental case study, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (p. 74).

Case studies are appropriate when research seeks to understand complex social processes (Yin, 1994), like education policymaking (Mazzoni, 1991), which has not been the subject of exhaustive research (Merriam, 1998), as is the case with the privatization of education in Afghanistan. There is a rich history of researchers using case studies in education, and specifically in comparative and international education, to gain a contextual understanding of phenomena (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). Education researchers accept the case study design as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13), and when there is a need to provide a descriptive foundation for future research (Merriam, 1998).

Privatizing education in Afghanistan is a complex and emerging phenomenon within a fragile state. The constraints of donor-dependency make it unclear where the locus, motivation, and lobbying for crucial policy decisions reside. The choice of an instrumental case-study approach is appropriate because this research attempts to explore

1. the realities of how policymakers are implementing privatization policies (Fox, 1990),
2. the specific circumstances that govern their decision making (Stake, 1995),
3. how and why, they make specific policy decisions (Yin, 2003), and
4. to gain an in-depth understanding of decision-making (Geertz, 1973).

The findings of this study will help develop a greater understanding of how policymakers make policy decisions in fragile and aid-dependent contexts.

Data Sources

Case study research requires the use of multiple data sources to lend validity and reliability to the research by triangulating the findings from different sources of information on a convergence of themes (Yin, 2003). To understand what factors influenced the development of privatization of primary and secondary school policies in Afghanistan, I relied on the following data sources:

1. Key stakeholder interviews,
2. Official government policy, financial, and demographic documents,
3. Non-governmental reports and analysis, and
4. Academic and news articles about the subject of privatization of education in Afghanistan between 2001-2020

Based MSF, I used the above data sources to identify the problem, policy, and political streams. I focused on the various actors, the resources they used to influence decisions, their motivations to exert power and influence, and the interactions and the outcomes of these processes. I examined data from these multiple sources for convergence of information.

Stakeholder Interviews

Documents do not provide an accurate account of the bargaining in the political process. As a result, “information must be gleaned from the participants themselves” (Allison & Zelikow, 1999, p. 312). Interviews are deemed one of the best methods to examine issues involved in public policy decision-making and understand what decision-making results mean to key participants (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Murphy, 1980). I conducted semi-structured interviews between February and November 2021 with five key stakeholders familiar with and involved in developing education privatization policies in Afghanistan. The interview participants included a Minister of Education, two Deputy Ministers of Education, a World Bank consultant, and the head of education programs for one of the major donor countries.

I selected interviewees based on their: “proximity to the decision-making process; potential for diverse perspectives; a reputation for knowledge and candor; accessibility; and willingness to participate” (Malen, 1985, p. 4) and those that could provide rich information about the move towards privatization in Afghanistan in general and privatization in education specifically (Creswell, 2007). I identified some of the central figures who were knowledgeable about the issue or had played a critical role in the decision-making process. I used a snowball strategy and asked participants to recommend other individuals they thought were knowledgeable about the issue (Mertens, 2005). My intent with these interviews was not to produce a generalizable study but rather to document how the privatization of education policies evolved in Afghanistan and why.

I contacted a total of 11 potential participants through e-mail, WhatsApp, or in-person to introduce the study and request an interview. Due to the political situation in

Afghanistan, some of the people I wanted to interview had either left Afghanistan or did not feel comfortable being interviewed amidst the political turmoil. I followed up with those who responded to my communication to establish a date, time and place for the interview. I shared a written consent form and a description of the study with the informants that agreed to participate in the informal interview.

Yin (1994), Merriam (1998), and Creswell (2007) advise researchers to develop an interview guide to ensure that they cover key issues and ask questions important for the study. Aberbach and Rockman (2002) emphasize that elites and professionals with technical knowledge “do not like being put in a straitjacket of close-ended questions. They prefer to articulate their views, explaining why they think the way they think” (p. 674). I followed these guidelines and developed a set of open-ended questions to elicit participants’ perceptions of and involvement in developing the private school regulations and secure information pertinent to policy formation (Allison, 1971; Allison & Zelikow, 1999). Specifically, I focused on obtaining information about their goals, motivations, resources, and strategies to influence decision outcomes.

I followed Leech’s (2002) recommendations for conducting elite interviews. Elite interviews are “interviews of people in decision-making or leadership roles” and “can be used whenever it is appropriate to treat a respondent as an expert about the topic at hand” (Leech, 2002, p. 663). Leech (2002) suggests using a semi-structured interview guide that allows “highly placed respondents” (p. 665) a “chance to be the experts and to inform the research” (p. 668).

Although I modified each interview protocol to reflect each respondent’s unique role and experience, I followed the same general outline of topics with each interviewee.

I first asked participants how they became involved in policymaking for the education sector and their familiarity with the policies and debates about the privatization of education in Afghanistan. I then asked about how they viewed the differences between private and public schools. I further asked participants what they saw as the main driving forces towards the privatization of schools and how international financing has affected the process of policy formulation. I concluded by asking interviewees to share their thoughts on whether donor dependency and lack of public financing have catalyzed the privatization of education in Afghanistan. I used probes to encourage detailed responses and to enrich the data. These probes provided opportunities for informants to enrich deepen the information, address aspects that they may not have addressed in their initial response and capitalize on their specialized knowledge by encouraging them to elaborate on comments made earlier. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Interview Protocol.

The principle of data saturation governed the total number of interviewees. Decision-making in the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan is centralized and bureaucratic. A small department handled the policies related to the privatization of education, and few people had access to the discussions and process of policy development. The five people I interviewed were people that Leech (2002) considers elite interviewees. They represented the leadership of the Ministry and international donor agency representatives who directly influenced policy or had direct access to the discussions about policy development. After the third interview, I heard similar responses from the participants but continued with two more interviews to ensure that I had reached data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Gay & Airasian, 2003).

I conducted four interviews in person and one interview via WhatsApp. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Aberbach and Rockman (2002) identify several advantages in tape-recording interviews. These advantages include facilitating a “conversational style” by reducing the amount of notetaking and “minimizing information loss” (p. 675). Woliver (2002), on the other hand, warns against tape-recording as potentially intrusive and a turn-off for participants. Yin (1994) concludes that tape-recording “is in part, a matter of personal preference” (p. 86). He acknowledges the advantage of collecting accurate information through recording but cautions that it is no “substitute for ‘listening’ closely throughout the course of an interview” (p. 86).

After obtaining explicit permission from informants, I tape-recorded all interview sessions. I conducted four out of the five interviews in English and conducted one interview in Dari. I used the Transcribe - Speech to Text⁴ application to transcribe all English interviews automatically, and I manually transcribed the Dari interview. I then went through each interview and corrected the mistakes of the automatic transcription. Once I was sure that the transcriptions were accurate, I uploaded all files to the NVIVO software for analysis.

Policy Related Documents

Official documents can provide information on institutional context, broader environmental forces, the content of decisions, officials involved in the decision-making

⁴ <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/transcribe-speech-to-text/id1241342461>

process, their positions on the issues, and chronology of events and actions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Murphy, 1980). I focused on documents related to the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan and privatization in general. I obtained documents from official bodies in Afghanistan and official documents from international organizations involved in education. These documents included governing laws, standard operating procedures, program reports, statistics, financial reports, staff memos, and decrees. I focused on financial documents and statistics from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education's financial records to understand how education is financed and budgeted in Afghanistan. I also focused on the Ministry of Education's statistics on private school prevalence across Afghanistan.

To compile these documents, I retrieved documents from the Ministry of Education, local libraries, and online databases and websites. I began by obtaining a hard copy of existing policies from the Ministry of Education. I obtained a complete dataset from 1391-1398 (2012-2020) from the Ministry of Education's Education Management Information System (EMIS) for the most updated educational statistics. I also obtained a copy of the 2020 National Budget and the 2020 Ministry of Education budget from the Ministry.

Murphy (1980) emphasizes that researchers should seek to identify and obtain documents through interviews. I asked interview participants to suggest material for further reading or to identify individuals who might have relevant documents that I should consult. I obtained some unpublished reports on the financing of the Ministry of Education through this approach. I then searched for official documents from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finances official website, the World Bank

database, USAID and OECD's official websites, and The Afghanistan Center at Kabul University's online database. I also used books, journals, news, and internet articles related to the privatization of government services and education specifically, in Afghanistan. To ensure that I had captured the most recent policies for a comprehensive dataset, I supplemented this information by conducting a Google search for other relevant documents using the search phrase "private school policy Afghanistan," "private schools Afghanistan," and "privatization Afghanistan."

In total, I collected 113 documents related to private schools. Out of these 113, 24 documents were financial documents, and 89 were policy-related documents. I excluded 26 policy documents because they were not relevant to the privatization policies, giving me a final analytical sample of 87 documents.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic process that involves examining and arranging the documents and interview transcripts to increase an understanding of the information they contain (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Analysis requires working with these data to organize them, break them into manageable units, synthesize them, search for patterns, and discover what is important and what the data tells us about the topic of study. "Analysis is [actually] a process of data reduction" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997, p. 183) used to discover what is important and what to tell others. The theoretical framework is the tool employed to analyze the data. The international education transfer literature and the Multiple Streams Framework provided the categories I used to organize and code the data. I analyzed the data by developing a case study database in the NVIVO software using Kingdon's three streams of problem, policy, and politics and the critical issues in

education transfer. Information that I gathered from documents and interviews was arranged in appropriate categories to assess the data.

Stakeholder Interviews

Following an iterative process, I analyzed all interview transcripts via NVIVO—a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. First, I read through all of the interview transcripts and created memos, including observations about the data to use in order to generate codes. Using these memos combined with the existing literature, I created an initial codebook of 27 inductive and a priori codes, including definitions and examples for each code. I included the following six parent codes with child/grandchild codes nested within:

1. Driving Forces Behind Privatization (the key indicators from the Problem Stream, and the political forces from the Politics Stream)
2. Nature of Private Schools (issues related to access, education, and quality)
3. Key Players (access, resources, and strategies used by Policy Entrepreneurs)
4. Process of Policy Formation (how integrated networks have used issues related to technical and value acceptability to shape policy discussions), and
5. Trends in Private Education (focus on education financing, number of schools, and focusing events).

For a complete list of codes, see Appendix C.

After this, I piloted the coding scheme on one of the interview transcripts, which led to the addition of one inductive code—Definitions and Parameters—to keep track of how interviewees described the various terms and their implied definitions interviewees

used. I added this code because I noticed that the interviewees sometimes used the same term in slightly different ways.

I then coded all five transcripts with the 27 inductive codes. I treated the Dari transcription in the same manner as the English transcriptions and coded the information in Dari within NVIVO. The final codebook contained 27 codes, including five parent codes, 20 child codes, and two grandchild codes. To analyze the interview data, I used NVIVO to generate descriptive information related to code presence (whether I had applied a particular code in a given interview), code application (how many times I had applied a code in a given interview), and code co-occurrence (when two codes appeared together) overall and by subgroup.

This descriptive information allowed me to observe initial patterns in the data and determine what to explore further. From this initial analysis, I selected sets of coded excerpts for further analysis. I considered the frequency with which codes were applied and subgroup patterns (e.g., when codes were applied across all subgroups or when a particular subgroup was the only group not to utilize a particular code). As I read through and analyzed these selected data, I developed an analytic memo to track emergent themes, constantly comparing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) to previously analyzed data and seeking relationships between the various codes. I then read through and synthesized this memo to determine our overall findings.

Throughout the findings, I incorporated direct, deidentified quotes from these interviews that represent more prominent themes. I translated all relevant information that I used from that interview in Dari for my reporting and analysis.

Policy Related Documents

Yin (1993) states that "...documents must be carefully used and should not be accepted as literal recordings of events that have taken place" (p. 81). I used Merriam's (1998) list of questions to help determine the authenticity of the documents. Documents can provide background information, chronologies, and names of individuals involved in the policymaking process. However, I cross-checked the information contained in documents with other documents, and I tried to corroborate findings from documents through interviews (Murphy, 1980). I also coded and analyzed the policy-related documents in NVIVO. I used the same codes and procedures that I used for the interviews to code the policy-related documents. I treated Dari documents the same as the English documents and used the same coding strategies in NVIVO. I translated all relevant information that I used from that interview in Dari for my reporting and analysis.

Controls to Minimize Bias and Error

Criticisms concerning the quality of case study research often focus on a perceived lack of rigor due to opportunities for bias and error to contaminate the research and its findings during the various phases of the research process (i.e., design, data collection, and analysis). I have tried to increase the accuracy of the data collected by including explicit criteria for selecting informants, assurances of anonymity and confidentiality, report reviews, and an analytic stance towards the research.

Bias. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), participants are not always reliable because "informants may lie, omit relevant data, or misrepresent their claims" (p. 224). Consequently, it is critical to employ strategies intended to counteract these "informant effects." I selected informants knowledgeable about the process and the

critical decision events related to privatization policies in Afghanistan. I provided them with a written assurance of anonymity and confidentiality to promote honest and candid responses (Murphy, 1980).

Informants are not the only people who may contribute to bias and error. Subjectivity is invariably present in all research, and its elimination is neither possible nor desirable. However, its recognition, conscious awareness, and meaningful attentiveness to how it might affect the research are crucially important (Murphy, 1980; Peshkin, 1988). Murphy (1980) and Merriam (1998) recommend addressing researcher bias by clarifying the researcher's theoretical orientation and underlying assumptions at the outset of the study to limit the potential for distortions in the research.

In this study, a potential source of bias and error is the proximity of the investigator's professional background to the issue under study. For many years, I occupied several professional roles in working with the Ministry of Education. I continued to consult the Ministry of Education as the Chief Technical Advisor to the Minister during the last phase of this research. Between 2006 and 2007, I worked as an advisor for the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan as part of the USAID-funded Building Education Support Systems for Teachers Project. I served as the project lead for teacher competencies, national teacher evaluation, and national teacher credentialing strategy in this project. Between 2007 and 2010, I worked as an advisor for the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan as part of the Afghanistan Higher Education Project. In this position, I served as the lead for developing national standards for teacher education and training professors in faculties of education on science and mathematics teaching methodologies. I served as the Chief Technical Advisor to the Minister of

Education under a UNDP contract in my last position. I worked directly with HE President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and HE the Minister of Education to develop a comprehensive reform framework and a new national educational policy for Afghanistan.

For the majority of my schooling, I have attended public schools. I attended public schools in Afghanistan until 4th grade. When I migrated to Pakistan, I attended a private school for one year. I attended public schools from 5th grade until I graduated high school in the United States. In 2017 I established the Mezan International School in Kabul. Mezan is one of three private international schools in Afghanistan. It uses a US accredited English curriculum and learning materials and integrates Islamic education, Dari, Pashto, History of Afghanistan, and physical education.

Education, and especially education in Afghanistan, has been a lifelong passion for me. I believe that education is a fundamental human right. However, I take a practical and pragmatic rather than an ideological approach to educational provision. I think that the privatization of education introduces serious risks to equity and social cohesion. I also believe that the claims that the private administration of schools introduces inherent efficiency and effectiveness are unfounded. However, I do believe that private school provision might solve some problems in some circumstances. These are factors that I bring with me to this research, and they color the way I see and interact with the data.

Being cognizant of what Peshkin calls "subjective Is," I applied the following strategies to reduce my personal biases. By sharing how my background could influence the research, I ensure transparency with the reader. Being aware of my subjectivity, I have attentively tried not to let my personal biases influence the presentation of this

study. I have provided what Geertz (1973) calls a "thick description" of the content to allow the reader to understand the context better. I have made a concerted effort to adopt an analytic stance towards the issue under study (Murphy, 1980) and attempt to report the methods and data clearly to provide the reader a clear picture of how I reached my conclusions. Finally, I have incorporated procedures, such as triangulation, consideration of rival explanations, and case study protocols. These strategies have served to minimize subjectivity, increase transparency, and, therefore, ensure the study's internal validity to minimize bias and error and enhance the validity, reliability, and objectivity of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Validity. Guba et al. (1988) refer to internal validity as the truth value of the research that depends on the "degree of isomorphism between the study data and the phenomena to which they relate" (p. 104). In other words, the information is internally valid if it describes a credible reality, and researchers can verify the information with other sources. I have used triangulation, consideration of rival explanations, and assessment of participant credibility to ensure the validity of this study. These strategies are suggested as mechanisms to improve the validity of case studies by many qualitative researchers (Guba et al., 1988; Merriam, 1998; Murphy, 1980; and Yin, 1994; i.e., Creswell, 2007).

Triangulation is a trademark strategy of case study research. It requires using multiple sources of data to confirm the research findings, especially those that involve "assertions" and "key interpretations" (Creswell, 2009). According to Guba et al. (1988, p. 107), "when various bits of evidence all tend in one direction, that direction assumes far greater credibility." The investigator minimizes the likelihood of bias and error,

distorting the study by obtaining information from different sources using different data-gathering techniques (Murphy, 1980). I have employed triangulation by collecting data through multiple sources and by examining the gathered information to determine the degree to which different data sources substantiated the themes, inferences, and interpretations.

Considering rival explanations is another strategy used by investigators to help ensure that the findings are accurate. In order to examine other possible and rival explanations, I have re-examined each piece of data to determine that the findings are aligned with theory and corroborated by data (Merriam, 1998). Yin (1994) advises analyzing the case study by building an explanation by establishing a chain of evidence by gradually building ideas that include entertaining other and rival explanations. To ensure that I have considered rival explanations in this study, I have re-examined data throughout the research process for other possible patterns. I have made sure that I evaluate alternative interpretations of data.

Reliability. The reliability of a study is determined by whether another researcher would arrive at the same interpretations if they were to use the same framework and data. Merriam (1998) and Yin (1994) recommend explaining the assumptions and theory behind the study and the investigator's position with the phenomenon, triangulating the data, providing an audit trail to increase reliability. I have used all these strategies to strengthen internal validity.

Providing an audit trail requires that the researcher document procedures used so that if other researchers repeat the study, it will produce similar results (Yin, 1994). However, Merriam (1998) argues, "The question...is not whether the findings will be

found again, but whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (p. 206). Guba et al. (1988) agree, "review or audit would give substantial assurance of any evaluation" (p. 122). Thus, experienced researchers (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994; i.e., Guba et al., 1988) concur that investigators need to document procedures that include descriptive detail about data collection, category development, and decision-making throughout the study so that subsequent researchers can see how the researcher derived inferences and can check those inferences. According to Yin (1994), "a case study protocol is a major tactic in increasing the reliability of case study research and is intended to guide the investigator in carrying out the case study" (p. 63). This instrument contains the general rules and procedures to conduct the study, including the interview questions. I have developed and employed a case study protocol (e.g., an interview protocol) to minimize bias and error and to increase the reliability of the case study research project. In addition, I maintained all interviews and documentation in files to support the evidence.

Ethical Considerations

This case study research relied on human subjects to provide the primary source of data. Because people were involved in the study, I complied with official guidelines for ethical research that include informed consent and the protection of subjects from harm (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). Informed consent documents describe the study, explain what the researcher will do with the findings, and include a commitment of no harm to the participants. I asked participants to sign informed consent forms before participating in interviews, and I have kept the participants' identities confidential as much as possible. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the informed consent and participant recruitment forms.

Chapter 5: Policy Context

In Kingdon's (1995) Multiple Streams Framework, contextual factors make up the "primeval soup" ingredients and directly influence policy formulation. Conflict, fragility, and donor-dependence are three critical contextual factors that affected policy development in Afghanistan. Understanding the contextual elements that have shaped the historical reality of Afghanistan and the evolution of education and public financing in the country is critical to understanding the influencing factors related to the privatization of education between 2002-2020. The roots of the privatization initiative are entwined with the nation's history of educational and public financing and the country's reliance on external revenue, most common in the form of international aid.

In this chapter, I first provide a brief geopolitical overview of Afghanistan, followed by demographic data. I then outline the history of conflict and fragility in Afghanistan, followed by the history of public financing and aid dependency. I then provide the history of education and the educational context for the period of this study. I conclude the chapter by presenting the legislative framework for the privatization of education, which was officially adopted in 2006.

Geopolitical overview of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located at the intersection of Asia and the Middle East. The approximate 250,000 square miles that make up the modern state of Afghanistan were drawn 150 years ago by the British Empire. Rugged mountain ranges which generally run from the northeast to the southwest dominate Afghanistan's terrain. Plains are more common in the north-central and southwestern regions, but mountains occupy the rest of the country. The elevation in the country ranges from 2,000 meters to more than 7,000 meters at the highest peaks in the northeastern Hindu Kush area.

Afghanistan's rough terrain has always posed a challenge for communication and an effective centralized government and for foreign invaders to succeed. Afghanistan is a highly diverse society with numerous ethnolinguistic groups, including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and Aimaqs. According to a Polish survey in the 1970s, between forty and fifty languages were spoken in Afghanistan (Lee, 2018).

Due to the country's strategic position between the Great empires of Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent Afghanistan has historically served as a central trade route for the region, through the "silk road." It has been subject to frequent invasions by the world powers. In ancient history, the Afghan people suffered from wars with the Babylonians to the Mongolians. In recent history, the Afghan people have endured wars with the British Empire, the former Soviet Union, and the recent US-led coalition of over 41 countries.

Internally, the country has suffered from long-term political instability and violent power transfers for most of its history. Violent transfers of power have caused a volatile environment for long-term policy development. Since the beginning of modern Afghanistan in 1919, power has transferred between regimes mainly through coup d'états with the leaders of the previous regimes either assassinated, executed, or exiled (Lee, 2018; Library of Congress, 2008).

Population Estimations and Country Level Demographics

Accurate population data is critical for policy development, public service planning, election preparation, and disasters response, among other things. Recent, accurate, and reliable demographic data is unavailable in many fragile and donor-dependent nations like Afghanistan. Ethnically Afghanistan has never been a cohesive

nation, and the size of the ethnic groups has been a source of contention and manipulation for both local and foreign policy entrepreneurs (Lee, 2018).

The first and only national census in Afghanistan was an incomplete exercise in 1979 that covered 67% of districts due to insecurity. In 2008, the Afghan Government and the donor community planned a census enumeration based on a pre-census household listing exercises conducted between 2003 and 2005. However, the authorities rescheduled the census for 2011 and eventually canceled the entire exercise because of security concerns. As a result, all Afghan population data is based on a bottom-up approach that uses formulas to derive population estimates from the 1979 census coupled with findings from province-level sociodemographic and economic surveys (Pinney, 2012).

This lack of population data directly affects the reliability of sector-specific surveys that use the national population estimates as their sampling frame. In addition to the lack of a census, the Afghan population data also faces reliability challenges related to a) the constant moving of a significant population of nomadic Kuchi pastoralists, b) lack of systematic and geo-coded settlement lists, c) large fluxes in both immigration and migration of populations, d) deaths due to violent conflict, and e) lack of a national birth and death registries (Wardrop et al., 2018). Therefore, demographic and statistical data about Afghanistan must be understood with these limitations in mind.

The Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020 estimates that the total population of Afghanistan for 2020 was 32.9 million, with 104 males for every 100 females. It was estimated that 71 percent of the population (23.4 million people) lived in rural areas, 24 percent of the population (8 million people) lived in urban areas, and 5 percent of the population (1.5 million people) lived a nomadic lifestyle. Afghanistan is thought to have

one of the youngest populations globally. According to the Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020 data, the majority of the country's population (59%), representing 19.3 million people, is estimated to be below 20 years of age. The youngest working-age population, ages 20 to 44, represents 9.7 million people (29 percent). The older working-age population, ages 45 to 64, made up 3.0 million people (9 percent). Finally, the 65 and over population was 9.1 million people (3 percent), (NSIA, 2021).

Conflict and Fragility

Fragile states have weak institutions, are in conflict or vulnerable to conflict, and either is failing or are at the risk of failing to carry out the essential functions of the state. The 2020 Fragile States Index ranks Afghanistan as the 9th most fragile state out of the 36 countries classified as fragile. Fontdevila et al. (2017) argue that conflict and disaster are powerful triggers and enablers for privatization and pro-market education reforms. They argue that conflict-affected localities have five features that enable privatization:

1. they are less prone to regulations and resistance to reform,
2. the conflict marginalizes traditional power players,
3. external forces can garner greater power,
4. reforms are amplified the sense of urgency and need for reconstruction accelerates, and
5. conflict and disaster redefine normalcy.

Afghanistan has been in a state of conflict for over four decades. At an estimated 1.25 million deaths, it has one of the world's largest cumulative fatality rates in the recent history of global conflicts. War and instability are the norms for the current generation, and they have never experienced security, prosperity, or peace. Trauma, foreign

interventions, and financial, military, and technical dependency shape the current population's experience (Goodson, 2011).

After four decades of relative stability between 1933 to 1978, the invasion by the former Soviet Union in 1979 started a cycle of conflict that continues today. The war between the Afghan mujaheddin and the former Soviet Union lasted for almost 14 years. The Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, but the Soviet-backed Government continued to hold power until 1992. The cost of the 14-year war was over 1 million deaths, 3.2 million disabled, 5 million refugees, 2 million internally displaced people, and 10-15 million landmines that turned Afghanistan into one of the most heavily mined countries globally (Hollifield, n.d.).

Through the first half of the 1990s, a civil war ensued between certain mujahideen factions vying for power. The bloody battles between these factions resulted in arbitrary, retaliatory, and often random violence against civilians, including robbery, torture, imprisonment, and rape. Partly due to the promise of security, the Taliban emerged in the fall of 1994 and seized control of most of the country, occupying Kabul in 1996. Under the Taliban regime (1996–2001), Afghanistan was a failed state and could not provide adequate services or protection to its citizens. The Taliban had repressive policies, which made Afghanistan into a pariah state with increased poverty, widespread human rights abuses, killings, and continued displacement and refugee movement into neighboring countries (Britannica, n.d.; Mojaddidi, 2006).

Although the Taliban had no direct part in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks of New York City, they refused requests from the United States to hand over Osama bin Laden, who was in Afghanistan, to the US authorities. Subsequently, the US

launched a series of military operations in Afghanistan that drove the Taliban from power by early December 2001. The US toppling of the Taliban created a power vacuum in Afghanistan. Along with some involvement of 40 other countries, the US helped establish an interim government, followed by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). However, the new Government struggled to secure centralized authority over the country against the Taliban insurgency (Britannica, n.d.; Mojaddidi, 2006). In August of 2021, the Taliban regained power in Afghanistan through a largely bloodless coup (Britannica, 2021; Mojaddidi, 2006).

During this 20-year period, Afghanistan made significant progress in some critical developmental indicators. Based on the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), which measures the long-term progress in three basic dimensions of life expectancy, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living, Afghanistan's HDI value increased from 0.334 to 0.511 between 2000 and 2020. More specifically, during this same period, life expectancy at birth rose by 9.7 years from 55.1 to 64.8 years, expected years of schooling by 4.6 years from 5.6 to 10.2 years, and the gross national income (GNI) per capita (2017 PPP\$) by almost 200% from \$745 to \$2,229 in 2015 (UNDP, 2018).

However, even though the cost of war and reconstruction in Afghanistan exceeded the Marshall Plan, the GIROA continued to be a fragile state and finally collapsed, with the Taliban gaining control. The public sentiment continually deteriorated during the 20 years. According to the Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People, the national mood was highest in 2012. However, people's optimism about the nation's direction continually declined, and the Afghan populations' fear for

their safety increased every year until the collapse of the Government (Akseer & Rieger, 2019).

Public Financing, Aid Dependency and Education

As Margaret Levi notes, “the history of state revenue production is the history of the evolution of the state...the greater the revenue of the state, the more possible it is to extend rule” (quoted in Bizhan, 2018). Modern states are generally categorized as tax states, rentier (oil revenue) states, and aid-dependent states, depending on the main source of the state’s revenue (Therkildsen, 2002). There is no agreed-upon definition of aid dependence in the literature (Lensink & White, 1999; Marktanner & Merkel, 2019). For this study, I use Bräutigam’s (2000) definition that: aid dependence is “a situation in which a country cannot perform many of the core functions of Government, such as operations and maintenance, or the delivery of basic public services, without foreign aid funding and expertise. As a proxy for this, we use a measure of “intensity” of aid: countries receiving aid at levels of 10 percent of GNP or above” (pg. 2).

According to the above definition, Afghanistan has always been an aid-dependent state. Afghanistan’s economic history is governed by an unstable interaction between politics and economics. There is limited reliable economic data for Afghanistan prior to the 1960s. However, it is clear that Afghanistan has relied on international financial flows of revenue since its inception (Ghani et al., 2007; Nijssen, 2010).

Although there is a substantial discussion about the potential contribution, as well as potential misuse, of conflict and fragility for privatization initiatives by way of disaster capitalism and education privatization by way of catastrophe (Klein, 2007), there is very little empirical literature on educational privatization efforts in conflict-affected or fragile

states despite policy emphasis on these countries (Ashley et al., 2014). In this section, I outline the historical development of education with the backdrop of public financing and aid dependency in Afghanistan. A more detailed historical analysis of aid dependency and public financing in Afghanistan can be found in Bizhan (2018), and of education developments, influences, and legacies in Afghanistan can be found in Baiza (2013). This section aims to provide a contextual background that affects the evolution of privatization policies between the years 2002 and 2020.

Traditional schools and traditional education

Afghanistan has a long and rich history of education prior to modern schooling. It is essential to understand the historical context of the traditional educational systems because they form a significant part of today's educational ecosystem and influence the ideology and national mood about the privatization of education.

Traditional educational systems and the madrasa system in Afghanistan are synonymous. Due to international political events in the last two decades, traditional education in Afghanistan, and more specifically the *madrasa*, has received much more attention in the Western media compared to previous periods. However, this increased focus has resulted in greater confusion and misrepresentation rather than making the various aspects of traditional education better known.

A variety of classical learning institutions, including masjid schools, public libraries, and civil servant schools, has existed within the Muslim world and within Afghanistan (Mirbabaev, et al., 2000). However, the *madrasa* is the classical institution of learning par excellence in the Muslim world (Makdisi, 1981). Traditionally, Islamic educational institutions received independent financial support from individuals through

endowments, known as *awqaf*. These endowments paid for and maintained both teachers and students. Except for the institutions connected to the mosque, the donor determined the general focus of the institution and approved the hiring of teachers (Makdisi, 1970).

In Afghanistan, the masjid schools are an extension of the Qur'an teachers. Like the Qur'an teachers, the majority of masjid schools are financed by parents and the local community. The Ministry of Education estimated that there was a masjid within a two-kilometer radius of each village that taught children how to read the Qur'an. There are no verifiable data on the number of madrasas, but the Ministry of Education estimated between 10,000 – 15,000 active madrassas across Afghanistan in 2020.

In the next section, I focus on the developments of modern schooling. I provide an overview of the history of modern schooling in Afghanistan in six phases in the context of the political and economic factors of the country. Specifically, I talk about how political pressures have driven schooling reforms and financing schooling.

Phase 1: Emergence of Modern Schooling (1901-1929)

The tributes from the Indian conquests accounted for nearly 75 percent of the state revenue during the Durrani Empire in the late 1700s. British subsidies accounted for nearly 20% of the state revenue following the fall of the Durrani Empire until the early 20th century. The British subsidies ended after Afghanistan achieved independence in 1919. During this time, the country received limited foreign aid from the Soviet Union, Turkey, Germany, France, and Italy. The post-independence Government of King Amanullah Khan pursued rapid modernization and economic centralization.

During this period, the Government set up an aggressive new tax system, and a large portion of the state's revenue came from land and cattle taxes, customs duties, taxes

on internal trade, and a poll tax on residents of Kabul. High tax rates, mandatory enlistment in the army, and Western-style social mandates such as dress codes caused people to become disgruntled with King Amanullah Khan's reforms. This disgruntlement resulted in the overthrow of the King (Bizhan, 2018).

The first phase of modern schooling in Afghanistan started in the late 19th century with two schools, the Maktabi Harbia (War School) and Mulki-Khawanin (Royalty School). In this initial phase of schooling, access was limited by definition to the royal family and the military elite and men. In the 1920s, after Afghanistan's independence, the Government initiated a movement for mass schooling outside of the military and the royal family. The Government established primary schools in major cities across the nation and four secondary schools in the capital city of Kabul. Although this was a move towards greater inclusion with minimal increased female participation, schooling remained for the elites in the major cities and within the capital (Baiza, 2013; Samady, 2001).

During this period, the Government financed the administrative and management costs and teacher salaries through the royal treasury. The education system received technical support from Turkey and India. Historical documents estimate that between 26,000 - 51,000 boys and between 300-800 girls were enrolled in 322 primary schools and four secondary schools. According to historical documents education was the third-largest budget line in government expenditure, with an annual budget of 15 million Afghani Rupees (Baiza, 2013).

Phase 2: Expansion of Modern Schooling (1930-1978)

King Zahir Shah pursued a more gradual economic modernization, which included industrialization and the spread of modern schooling. Attempts at economic modernization continued but at a slower pace until the mid-1950s. During this period, the Government attempted to gain greater political support from rural populations by lowering agricultural taxes, which was the primary source of state income. As a result, the share of livestock and agriculture tax revenue fell from 62.5 percent in 1926 to 7 percent in 1957. Until 1953, when Mohammed Daoud Khan became Prime Minister, the private sector was quite influential in shaping economic policy. Daud Khan nationalized most of the formal economy through a series of five-year development plans and decreased the influence of the private sector (Bizhan, 2018; Ghiasy et al., 2015; Nijssen, 2010).

From the 1950s onward, Afghanistan's economy became state-led and closely intertwined with the Cold War. In the 1960's foreign aid accounted for over 40% of the national budget. Between 1950 and 1970, Afghanistan received 50% of its foreign aid from the Soviet Union and 30% from the United States. Foreign aid supported 75 percent of the Government's five-year plans and above 60 percent of the overall national budget. The increase in foreign aid increased state-sponsored infrastructure projects and, at the same time, undermined the traditional social controls and reduced the Government's accountability to the populace. Due to the increased foreign aid, the state became more accountable to foreign donors than to the people for its policies (Cooper, 2018; Ghiasy et al., 2015; Nijssen, 2010).

After a brief pause, the second phase of modern schooling started with the reign of King Zahir Shah in 1933 and ended in 1979. During this phase, substantial gains in access were seen, with nearly 650,000 students enrolled in 1,200 primary and 542 secondary schools. Girls made up about 10 percent of the student enrollment. As with the previous phase, this expansion was funded through the central Government and international support with the United States, USSR, France, and Germany leading the effort. Although a more significant portion of the public gained access to modern schooling, it was not universal, and modern schooling remained elite-driven and elite-focused. This phase gained greater public support by negotiating between Islamic, cultural, and modern sentiments better than the previous phase. It is also believed that there were substantial gains in the quality of education during this phase. However, the educational landscape was once again abruptly shifted with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Baiza, 2013; Karlsson & Mansory, 2004; Samady, 2001).

Phase 3: Soviet Invasion (1979-1992)

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 marked the beginning of four decades of wars and conflict and resulted in the disruption of the country's developmental trajectory. After the Soviet invasion, official aid commitments from the West ceased, and Afghanistan became almost exclusively reliant upon the USSR for financial support. Soviet funding increased to 200 million USD annually. Between 1978 and 1992, the Soviet-backed Afghan Government received an estimated 10 billion USD in soft loans. In 1988, 32 percent of the national budget came from domestic revenue, 26 percent came from foreign aid, 6% from the sale of natural gas, and 44 percent came from domestic borrowing (Nijssen, 2010).

From 1979 to 1989, the number of primary and secondary students rose to almost 1,200,000. The majority of this increase in access came from greater enrollment of students in the major cities, including a fifty percent increase in the number of girls. However, access remained an issue for rural children due to the war's concentration in rural areas. The Ministry of Education revamped the curriculum during this phase to match the new communist ideology. The goal of schooling became more clearly articulated as a mechanism to produce a labor force based on communist ideologies. The Government continued to provide the funding for the schools, but the Soviet Union financed the majority of the education expansion (Baiza, 2013; Samady, 2001).

During this same period, another parallel educational system was at work for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran supported by the United States, the Arab States, and a host of other nations and NGOs. The curriculum of the refugee schools was a combination of the 1950/60s curricula of Afghanistan with added religious topics and a new emphasis on a culture of resistance and war. There is no clear data on the number of students and their makeup attending these schools (Karlsson & Mansory, 2004).

Phase 4: Civil War and Taliban Rule (1992-2001)

Between 1992-2001, Afghanistan's financial systems completely broke down. There was very little domestic revenue and almost all official international aid froze, and the illicit economy that had started during the Soviet occupation expanded. The weapons and humanitarian supply routes established during the anti-Soviet resistance became international terrorist and narcotics-trafficking networks (Bizhan, 2018; Nijssen, 2010).

With the fall of the Soviet-backed Government, another phase of education started. The Mujaheddin Government replaced the Soviet-backed curriculum with the

curricula of Afghan refugee schools in Pakistan. An estimated 1 million students, with girls making up 25%, were enrolled in primary and secondary schools during this time. However, in actuality, not much schooling took place because the civil war led to the closure of most schools. Historical documents estimate that active fighting damaged or destroyed 60 percent of schools in Kabul and 70 percent of the schools in rural areas (Baiza, 2013; Samady, 2001).

From 1996-2001, schooling and attendance became more regular. Documents estimate that between 500,000 to 900,000 students were enrolled in official schools at different levels across the country, with a minor fraction of this composed of girls. However, many home schools operated by NGOs served the female population (Povey, 2003). The Taliban kept the curriculum of the Mujahideen government but also added subjects from the madrasa system. The Taliban Government did not have any official international funding and financed the educational system from the national budget. However, the funding for the NGO- run home schools came from the international community (Karlsson & Mansory, 2004; Samady, 2001).

Phase 5: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2002-2020)

Between 2002 and 2020, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and representatives of over 40 countries tried to build a public financing structure for Afghanistan. However, despite national and international efforts, aid dependency, lack of sufficient national revenue, parallel systems of donor-funded projects, and the continuing growth of the illicit economy continued to plague the nation until its collapse in 2021.

As with the demographic data for Afghanistan, it is not easy to find reliable financial data for the 20 years. The lack of transparent reporting by the GIROA and the

amount of aid that the international community channeled outside of the Government channels make it difficult to find exact figures for the amount of international aid that flowed to Afghanistan during this period. According to official World Bank data, the international community pumped an estimated 158 billion dollars in aid into the country. The United States alone spent 825 billion dollars in direct military operations to “stabilize” Afghanistan (Reality Check Team, 2021).

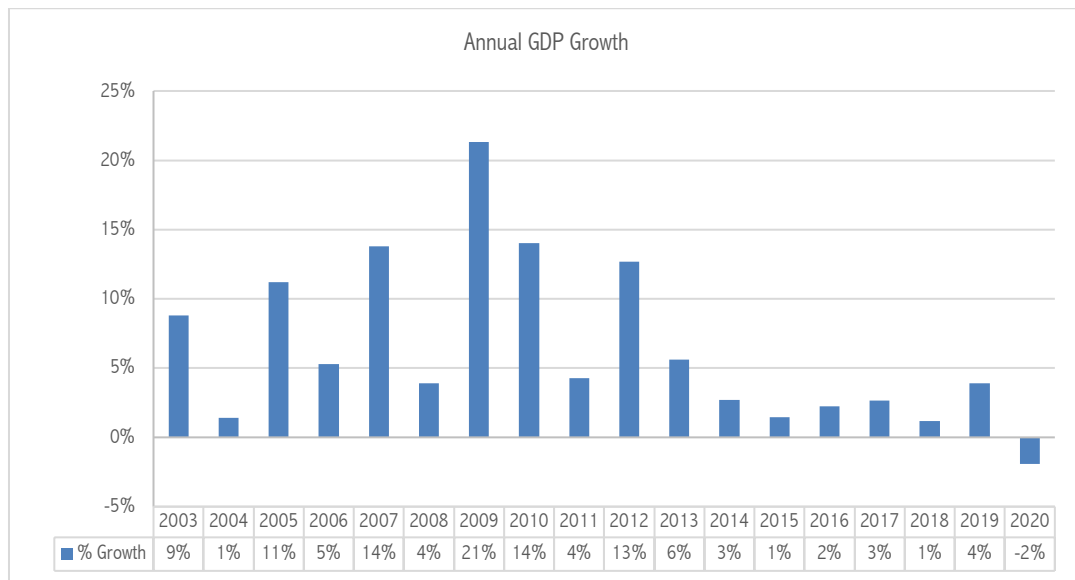


Figure 3 – Annual GDP growth rate (2002–2020)—Afghanistan.

According to Afghanistan’s Ministry of Finance, public revenues in Afghanistan came from customs on the international movement of goods and domestic taxation. The top individual income and the corporate tax rate was 20 percent. In Afghanistan, the overall tax burden equaled 9.3 percent of total domestic income and 68 percent of the

central Government’s revenue stream in 2020. As Figure 3 shows, GDP grew annually by 6% on average between 2002 and 2020⁵ (World Bank, 2021).

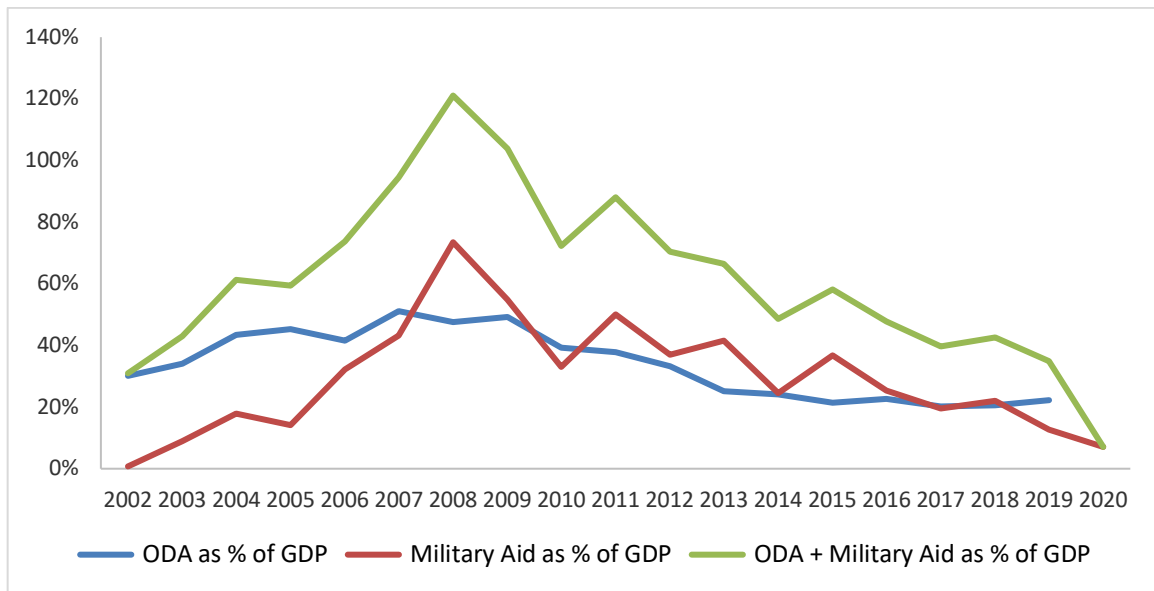


Figure 4 - Aid flows as a percentage of GDP (2002–2020)—Afghanistan.

However, Afghanistan relied heavily on foreign military and economic assistance to finance state-building and reconstruction, making it one of the world's most aid-dependent nations. As Figure 4 shows, on average, foreign aid accounted for about 34% of Afghanistan's GDP, and military aid by the United States alone accounted for 29% of the GDP. Combined, foreign and military aid accounted for 61% of Afghanistan’s GDP from 2002-2020. ODA, on average, comprised about 40% of gross national income (GNI) over this period (Bizhan, 2018; World Bank, 2021).

⁵ However, there is a discrepancy between GDP growth rates reported by the World Bank (above) and those reported by the Central Bank of Afghanistan (Da Afghanistan Bank). Between 2003-2010, the World Bank reports a 10% growth in GDP while Da Afghanistan Bank reports a 14% growth.

Bizhan (2018) notes that the impact of the aid failed to develop sustainable public financing mechanisms. He notes that between 2001 and 2010, 82% of the total aid to Afghanistan was directly allocated and managed by donors and often used to employ foreign aid workers and to purchase foreign commodities). Despite the billions of dollars spent to set up public financing mechanisms, many remnants of Afghanistan’s early economies, including the illicit economies, continued and even intensified post-Taliban era.

Ghiasy et al. (2015) note that in the absence of sustainable livelihoods and because of the strong international demand, Afghanistan’s drug economy soared during the 20 years. As Figure 5 shows (adapted from the UNODC, 2021), despite the billions of dollars spent on counter-narcotics efforts, poppy production grew from 8,000 hectares during the last year of Taliban rule to 328,000 hectares at its highest peak in 2017. Along with the black-market trade and smuggling, the drug economy rivaled the official economy of Afghanistan during the 20 years.

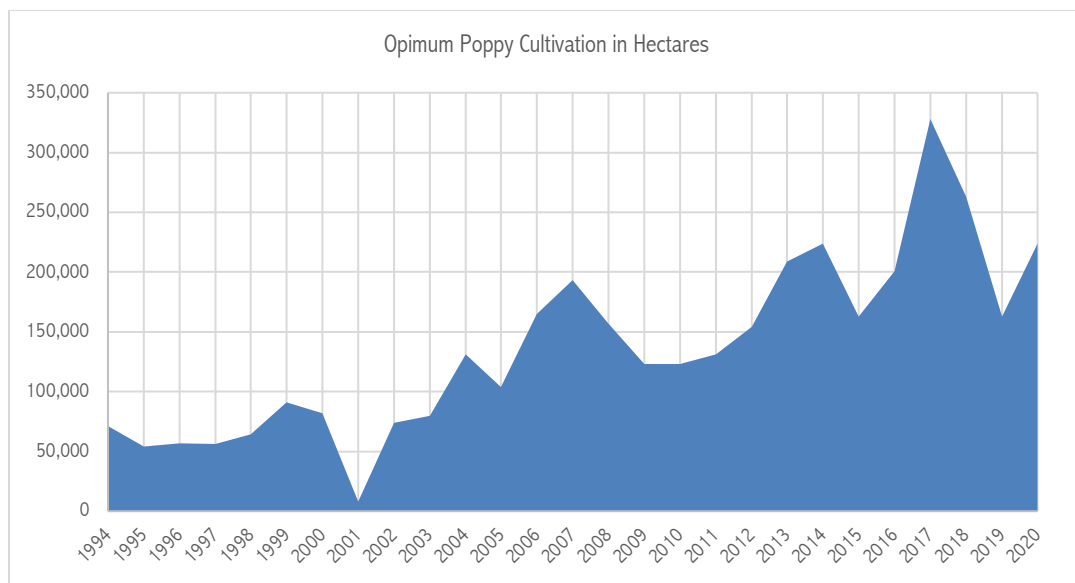


Figure 5 – Hectares of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan (1994-2020).

During this period, access to education in Afghanistan's improved significantly. The country saw a ten-fold increase in school enrollment, rising from 900,000 in 2001 to 10.2 million students in 2020. During this same period, the number of teachers grew from nearly 26,500 to approximately 221,599. The number of schools proliferated from just over 3,000 to nearly 17,000 (EMIS, 2021). Afghan children gained more access to schooling in these 20 years than in the previous one hundred and forty years of modern schooling combined. The education system also made significant improvements in reducing the gender parity gap. Female enrollment increased from 30.2 percent of the student population in 2002 to 40% in 2020 (EMIS, 2021; UNESCO, 2016).

Despite the substantial gains in access, Afghanistan's education sector continued to face significant challenges during these 20 years. Afghanistan's Human Development Index (HDI) for average mean years of schooling for 2020 at 3.9 years and mean female years of schooling at 1.9 years were well below the international averages. Afghanistan remained a "low development" country in terms of enrollment throughout the 20 years. Illiteracy continued to be a massive challenge for Afghanistan's development. Afghanistan continued to rank 155 out of 160 countries in terms of literacy. Adult literacy rates in the country stood at an estimated 38% for the general population, with 52 % of males and only 22 % of females able to read and write. This rate is much lower than the median literacy rate for low-income countries, 70% for males and 57% for females (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019).

According to the Afghanistan Education for All (EFA) report, the country had a severe shortage of teachers. The national target was to have one teacher for every 35 students (Ministry of Education, 2014). However, in 2020, there was one teacher for

every 51 students in public schools, with primary grades having disproportionately higher student-teacher ratio (EMIS, 2021). Although some research has dismissed the effects of class size on achievement (Hoxby, 2000), a significant amount of international research has shown that a low student-teacher ratio is critical for improving student academic achievement (Ehrenberg et al., 2001).

Reducing class sizes remained a considerable challenge for the Afghan educational system. The Ministry of Education needed to hire more qualified teachers, add more classes, and provide schools with more supplies to reduce class sizes. These factors introduced significant cost increases for the sector. Additionally, finding qualified teachers, the most crucial factor in benefitting from smaller class sizes, continued to be a challenge, even if the cost was not a factor.

Although enrollment rates were high, the dropout rate was a significant concern for the education sector. In 2013, the dropout rates for grades 1, 2, 3, and 4 were 4.9 percent, 7.2 percent, 7.1 percent, and 8.4 percent respectively. The survival rate to grade 6 was 60 percent for boys and 54 percent for girls. This meant that over 40% of the students enrolled in first grade dropped out before they reached 6th grade (Ministry of Education, 2014).

The shortage of textbooks was another critical challenge for the educational system. In 2015, the MoE distributed approximately eight million fewer textbooks than its target (Ministry of Education, 2016b). Given the steady increase in students, the shortage of textbooks continued to be a challenge for the Ministry of Education. One of the main areas for public-private partnerships for the Ministry of Education became the publication and distribution of books. However, until the very end of the GIRoA, book

publishing and distribution remained a source of corruption for the Ministry (personal communication, officials from the Deputy Ministry for Administration and Finance, 2020).

The demographic profile of Afghanistan created further challenges for the already overstretched education sector. Afghanistan had the youngest populace in South Asia. According to population estimates, 63% of the Afghan population was below 25 in 2020. Meeting the educational needs of this growing young population was a monumental challenge for the Afghan educational system. The system had to keep expanding its reach in access while at the same time trying to improve the quality of education (World Bank & UNESCO, 2016).

The World Bank and UNHCR estimated that the Government would need to increase its investment in the educational sector by 12 percent annually to maintain the same level of educational services without any improvements. Additionally, the labor market would need to absorb 400 thousand new job seekers into the workforce every year. This was a considerable challenge in Afghanistan, where the unemployment rate was 22.6 percent, and an estimated one and a half million-male youth were unemployed. This high unemployment rate of youth was a grave concern for the country's stability. A large body of international literature directly correlates conflict with large youth populations that do not have socioeconomic growth opportunities (World Bank & UNESCO, 2016).

Chapter 6: Findings

In this chapter, I present the study findings organized in two sections. In the first section, I present the findings from interviews and documentary analysis to the following four out of the eight research questions:

1. How does public education get financed in Afghanistan?
2. Which policies and initiatives promote privatization in Afghanistan?
3. What is the prevalence of private schools in Afghanistan?
4. How do key stakeholders assess quality, access, and equity in private versus public schools?

Due to the lack of available data, in the first section I focus on consolidating and building on the limited data to develop a foundation for the discussion of the processes that have led to the liberalization of private school policies. In the second section, I present the findings for the remaining four research questions. I focus on the process of policy formation by describing how events and conditions in each of Kingdon's (1995) three streams (i.e., problem, policy, and political) contributed to the promotion of the private school policies and how policy transfer helps explain the proliferation of privatization initiatives in Afghanistan.

Education Financing in Afghanistan

Because we expanded drastically without looking into the possible challenges that we would face, we [now] have 18,000 schools all over the country. Can we continue funding them? Definitely not! (senior ministry official)

As the quote above illustrates, aid dependency is the Afghan educational system's most salient characteristic. According to UNESCO's 20-year review (UNESCO, 2021), external aid represented 49 percent of Afghanistan's education expenditure, and the

Government spent 12% of its overall budget on education between 2002-2020. However, there is no agreement on the extent of the aid dependency, the total educational expenditure, or how much of the total budget the Government allocated to the education sector. Part of the reason for this lack of clarity is that Afghanistan’s national budget is complex. Part of it is due to the lack of consistent and transparent financial reporting by the GIRoA and the donor countries. Figure 6 illustrates the organization of Afghanistan’s budgeting system (revised from Rade et al., 2014).

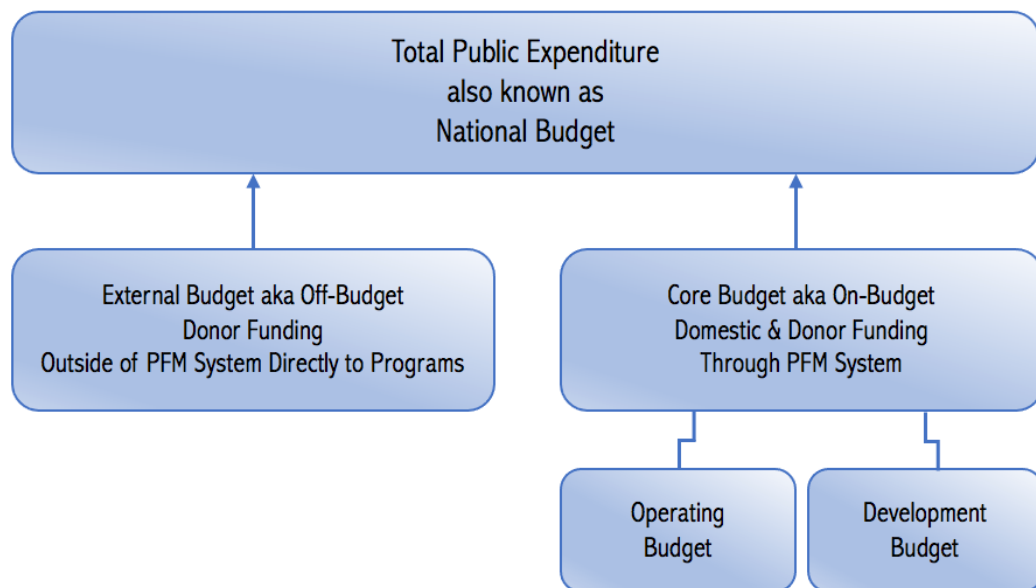


Figure 6 – Afghanistan Budget Structure.

The total public expenditure, also termed the National Budget, is divided into a Core Budget and an External Budget. The Core Budget (also referred to as on-budget) included domestic revenue and donor assistance provided to the Government. It was developed by the Ministry of Finance and approved by the Afghan Cabinet and Parliament. Line ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, proposed their annual budget to the Ministry of Finance but did not control the final approved budget. Funds for the Core Budget flowed through the Government’s treasury system and were subject to

the Government's Public Financial Management (PFM) systems. The Core Budget was further divided into an Operating Budget and a Development Budget. Domestic revenues largely financed the Operating Budget. The Development Budget was co-financed by domestic revenues and foreign aid. "The operating budget is predominantly and most importantly used for the purpose of paying wages to civil servants ... The development budget is used to implement development projects" (Khan, 2015).

The foreign aid for the Development Budget was further divided into discretionary and non-discretionary financing based on conditionalities imposed by the donor agencies. Donor contributions to the Core Budget were mostly channeled through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), administered by the World Bank on behalf of 33 major donors. The External Budget (also referred to as off-budget) were the expenditures disbursed directly by donors and are outside the Government's PFM system (Panda, 2011; Rade et al., 2014).

The documentary analysis showed that the overall budget expenditure on education continued to decline during the 20 years. A UNICEF Education Financing Brief (2020) reports that the education budget declined from 25 percent of the overall national budget in 2010 to 11 percent in 2019/20. UNESCO (2021) reports that the education expenditure was 12% of the total national budget and that the Government expenditure on education had "increased regularly to reach 3.9 percent of GDP in 2010".

However, there is no agreement on the exact numbers. For example, the official government budget for 2020 shows that the overall education expenditure is 8.3% (Ministry of Finance, 2020) and not the 11 or 12 percent reported by the two UN reports. An Education for Development report (Strand, 2015) cites Ministry of Education data

with 16 percent overall expenditure on education in 2010 and not the 25 percent reported by UNICEF.

Similarly, Strand (2015) reports different numbers for overall educational expenditure for 2011-2014 compared to what Rade et al. (2014) report for the same years. Additionally, both Strand (2015) and the World Development Indicators report fluctuating GDP expenditure and not “steadily rising” as the UNESCO (2021) report claims. The World Development Indicators show that the highest level of GDP expenditure on education was in 2014 at 3.7 percent and that the percentage continuously declined to 3.2 percent in 2019 (World Bank, 2021).

The one theme that constantly emerged in both documents and interviews was that donor dependence caused the educational financing system to be fragile, fragmented, and unstable. The Deputy Ministry of Education for Finance and Administration highlighted the instability of educational financing in a 2009 radio interview by saying that “without foreign aid, we wouldn’t even be able to pay our teachers’ salaries” (Farangis, 2009).

An Oxfam and Swedish Committee sponsored report highlighted that off-budget Official Development Assistance (ODA) support was fragmented and overwhelmed the institutional capacity of the Government to monitor donor financed projects effectively. The report revealed that over two-thirds of the aid –around 20 billion USD in total – bypassed the Afghan Government. The report highlighted that:

Over 30 different international donors disbursed aid in Afghanistan, each with their own agenda and aid agreement with the government, and effective donor coordination and harmonization is not a practice adopted universally ... Yet there

are still major issues of fragmentation, with donors bypassing government systems in multiple areas of the development sector, and it is this fragmentation that leads to ineffective aid. (ATR Consulting, 2018)

The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), managed by the World Bank, was the largest vehicle for managing on-budget donor funding in Afghanistan, especially for the Ministry of Education. Between 2002 and 2017, ARTF managed over 10 billion USD of donor funding. In a 2018 audit of the ARTF, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found that:

The World Bank restricts donor and public access to how it monitors and accounts for ARTF funding, leaving donors, and their taxpayers, without important information necessary to understand the activities they fund. As the beneficiary of ARTF funding, the Afghan government is also responsible for helping monitor and account for ARTF funding. However, it is still unable to fully support and document how and why expenditures are eligible for ARTF reimbursement and to conduct fiduciary controls on all ARTF expenditures. (SIGAR, 2018)

Karimi (2020) conducted a comprehensive review of Afghanistan's aid dependency between 2001-2020. He corroborates the above findings and highlights that donor's spent 79 percent (113 billion US\$) of the aid through off-budget funding mechanisms and created a parallel public sector that undermined the legitimacy of the Afghan Government in carrying out its core responsibilities.

Most of the sources highlight that creating parallel structures raised domestic spending power artificially. They argue that this massive aid flow fueled corruption

rather than develop the country, because too much aid flowed too quickly without proper mechanisms for oversight (Karimi, 2020; SIGAR, 2018; Strand, 2015).

The corruption, inefficiencies, and lack of oversight of the national budget were transferred and mirrored at the Ministry of Education. According to a UN and GPE sponsored Education Sector Analysis in Afghanistan, donors funded at least 41 percent of the Ministry of Education's budget (Rasmussen & Kelly, 2016). A Global Partnership for Education report in 2011 highlighted that there was no framework for mutual accountability between the donors and the Ministry of Education. Specifically, the report mentions that:

No formal document is in place that describes the sector collaboration structures that engage the Ministry of Education. No specific aid effectiveness targets have been agreed yet for the delivery and management of aid for the education sector among the partners of the Local Education Group. (GPE, 2011)

The lack of accountability and reporting meant that the Ministry did not know how much donors were spending on education outside the Core Budget. For example, a 2016 SIGAR audit found that the Department of Defense had funded nearly 1,000 education projects, but there was no transparent financial tracking of these projects. Senior Ministry of Education officials also lamented the lack of educational financing data. A senior ministry official highlighted the lack of information on the financing of education outside of the regular budget:

I don't think prior to my coming any information was actually even attempted to be collected to address this particular question. However, one initiative was led by Amrullah Saleh, the Vice President of the country, to track UN agencies'

expenditures and projects across various sectors of the Government. That was an initiative to understand what percentage of our money coming into the country was spent via national government driven such as EQRA [ARTF funds] versus the NGO sector, but I don't think we have that data available. I don't think we ever really had that data available from day one.

The interviews and documents highlighted the importance for the Government to wean itself off of donor dependency to improve budget effectiveness for the nation in general and the education sector specifically. Another senior ministry official clearly articulated this need in the interview:

I think Afghanistan need(s) to get rid of donor dependency, at least in education, if not any other sectors. Because I am not very confident that we will be able to generate any other good instead of the human resource. So, I think Afghanistan needs to invest on its human resources and that human resource will make us.

The lack of control over the External Budget coupled with the lack of domestic financing made educational management and planning fragile and an almost impossible task. Bizhan (2018) argued that 75% of donor aid should be on-budget to make the state fiscally larger than the donors in terms of public service delivery. Rade et al. (2014) stressed that efforts to improve budget effectiveness in the Ministry of Education are unrealistic “if the GIRoA does not have sufficient discretionary authority over the national budget, especially in light of stagnant domestic revenues.”

The GIRoA had very limited avenues for financing education. Domestic revenue for education came from taxes and, custom imports, and while a small portion came from Ministry of Education fees on private school licenses and school certificates (IBF

International Consulting, 2019). According to the 2020 Core Budget, nearly 90% of the Ministry's expenditure was on staff salaries and benefits. The revenues generated from the Ministry of Education fees accounted for less than .005 percent of the Ministry's expenditure (Ministry of Finance, 2020).

A large share of the GIRoA's domestic funding came from corporate and personal income taxes directly related to the inflated aid economy. Private and personal taxes rose in the 20 years, but the massive influx of foreign aid formed the tax base. When foreign aid decreased, so did the tax revenue (Karimi, 2020). The United States Institute of Peace warned about the stability of this source of revenue in 2018: "concerns are increasingly serious that striving to collect more and more revenue from a narrow tax base (mainly imports and a few larger and medium-sized businesses) in a weak economy will have an adverse impact on private-sector incentives and investment" (Byrd & Farahi, 2018).

During the last part of his presidency, President Ashraf Ghani planned to find domestic funding for the Ministry of Education. He was contemplating reinstating agricultural and land taxes of the 1920s and earmarking all the funds for education (President Ashraf Ghani, personal communication, June 2020).

Privatization Policies

Popalzai (2012) points out that "the post-Taliban state-building exercise in Afghanistan facilitated and led by the United States and, to a degree, sustained by the Europeans has been informed by an overwhelming emphasis on an enabling environment for the markets." Major Afghan policy documents such as the National Development Framework (Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority, 2002), Securing Afghanistan's Future (GIRoA, 2004), and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (GIRoA,

2007) proposed a state-building exercise within the modalities of private sector-led economic growth.

The promotion of private sector development was part of the aid conditionalities placed by donors on the newly formed Government as part of the structural adjustment programs. The Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (2002) prepared the National Development Framework (NDF) jointly with the Afghan Interim Administration. The NDF was the basis for the 2002 Tokyo conference, which set out the agenda for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The NDF outlined private sector development as one of three pillars for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The private sector development strategy sought to ensure that the newly established Government would “seek to outsource all non-core services to private enterprise and privatize state assets wherever appropriate.” Furthermore, it would “minimize government intervention in the market and ensure that necessary interventions are aligned with market forces.”

A primary vision for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008-2013 was “a society of hope and prosperity based on a strong, private sector-led market economy, social equity, and environmental sustainability” (GIRoA, 2008). This same document tied the goals of poverty reduction, improving human development indicators, and progressing towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) all to a private-sector-led market economy. At the 2014 London Conference on Afghanistan, the Government acknowledged “improving Afghanistan’s business enabling environment” as their top priority (Ghiasy et al., 2015).

The promotion of a market-based economy was a central pillar of the Afghan economic strategy for the entire period of this study. An OECD policy brief in 2019

highlighted that private sector development was one of GIROA's central growth priorities. The report acknowledged that since 2015, the GIROA made significant efforts to create conditions for more dynamic private sector development, which helped Afghanistan rise 16 places on the World Bank's Doing Business indicators in 2018-19 (OECD, 2019).

The move towards privatization was also evident in the education sector. The Education Sector Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2007), which set out the overall strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals for education in Afghanistan, highlighted the need for engaging the private sector to meet the increasing demand for education. The document argued that since the Government lacked the financial resources and the technical expertise to reform and develop the education system, it would need to cooperate with donors, international development partners, and the private sector to meet the enrollment targets of the MDGs. The document outlined that the Ministry would encourage the development of private schools. The Education Interim Plan 2011-2013 (Ministry of Education, 2011) further elaborated that the Ministry would encourage private sector companies to participate in education services delivery in running private schools, supplying goods and services, and constructing schools.

The privatization of education in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2020 is a phenomenon that is directly related to the influx of aid, the pro-market strategies, and the need for the Ministry of Education to meet EFA and then MDG enrollment goals. Table 1 outlines the official Government policies for establishing private primary and secondary schools during the last fifty years.

Table 1 - Private School Policies in Afghanistan 1968 - 2020

Year	Government	Policy Document	Legal Articles
1968	The Kingdom of Afghanistan	Legislative Decree	Article 10: The Government can allow foreign citizens to establish private schools based on a separate regulation. Only foreign citizens can enroll in these schools.
1986	The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan	Primary School Statute	Article 58: Embassies and foreign representatives that have opened special (khas) schools can hire Afghan teachers to teach their children in these schools after establishing the need and obtaining the agreement of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Children of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan are not allowed to be enrolled in these schools.
2001	The Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan	Education Law	Article 4: a) Afghan citizens have the right to establish religious madrasas based on this law; b) private general education schools, vocational courses, and modern schools (madaris uloom asri) can be established with the permission of the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan. Article 14: The Emirates will permit Muslim foreign nationals to establish private schools based on a separate set of regulations. Only foreign nationals can use these schools.
2006	The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	Private School Regulations	5 Chapters and 44 articles Article 2: The goals of this regulation are: a) Access to quality and equitable education and the development of this goal through private enterprises. b) Expansion of general, vocational, special, and literacy education within Islamic principles through establishment and strengthening of public private partnerships. c) Mutual learning from the private and public pedagogical experiences. d) Provision of more facilities and educational resources for students. Article 4: National or foreign natural and legal persons are allowed to open private

			education institutions based on the ruling of this regulation. Article 6: Natural and Legal persons, that are for-profit or non-profit, national or foreign, can establish [private schools].
2008	The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	Education Law	Article 11: National or foreign natural and legal persons can establish national, international, and mixed private education institutions with national and international standards for various levels of education outlined in this law, for national or international students, based on the related regulations.
2010	The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	Private School Regulations	4 Chapters and 57 articles Addition of the following two goals to the 2006 regulations: a) Outlining the regulations related to establishment, curriculum, educational plan, and the conditions for enrollment of students, and hiring of teachers and instructors in private schools. b) Monitoring of private schools Article 53: Foreign natural and legal persons can establish private international schools based on this regulation.

The first change of policies about private schools appears in the Education Law during the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan's regime (1996-2001). As is evident from Table 1, Government policies restricted private schools to foreign nationals living in Afghanistan until the 1990s. The 2001 Education Law opened the doors for establishing private schools for Afghans. However, there were not standard operating procedures, and those interested in opening private schools had to obtain a special permission to do so from the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan.

The policy environment drastically changed in favor of the privatization of schools with the GIRoA. The 2006 Private School regulations allowed national and foreign natural or legal persons to open up private schools in Afghanistan. The 2008

Education Law further liberalized the private school policies and allowed national and foreign persons or entities to establish private schools. However, until 2017 the Ministry would not let Afghan nationals establish, and officially Afghan children were not allowed to go to international private schools. In practice, Afghan nationals did attend international private schools. The confusion arose because the Ministry did not interpret legal articles from previous regimes that restricted Afghans from attending schools established by foreigners (personal communication, Department of Private School officials, 2018).

In 2010 the lack of monitoring of private schools became a concern. The 2010 Private School Regulations added clauses about private school monitoring and outlined regulations related to curriculum, enrollment of students, and hiring practices. Specifically, the 2010 regulations added that private schools could not restrict admission based on religion, ethnicity, or sex.

In 2020 the Private School Regulations went through additional revisions. The significant revisions were focused on better mechanisms for registration of private schools, clarification of what non-profit private schools meant⁶, and clear mechanisms for international private school registration and monitoring. The Asia Foundation, which was running a USAID project supporting private schools, lobbied the officials in the Department of Private Schools to include special provisions and tax breaks for low-cost

⁶ There was much confusion about the meaning of non-profit private schools. The majority of people in the Ministry of Education and within the judiciary system believed that a non-profit school meant a school that did not charge students fees and was supported by a donor. I worked with the leadership of the Ministry of Education to define non-profit private schools as schools that invest all their “profits” back into the school, and the owner does not take out the profit except in the form of a salary from the school.

private school, which they called Affordable Private Schools (APS), as part of the revisions to the Private School Regulations. However, the leadership of the Ministry decided to take out the APS provisions from the document because the definition of APS was vague, and the additional provisions had the potential of being abused. The Ministry sent the proposed revisions to the Judiciary for approval, but before they could be approved, the GIRoA fell.

Prevalence of Private Schools 2002-2020

A ministry official in the Planning Department responsible for compiling education statistics shared with me that most of the data he reported to the Government and donors was fictitious and based on formulas given to him by the Ministry's leadership. He shared that he continued to be amazed that the international donors who reviewed the EFA and GPE reports did not realize that the numbers keep increasing by the same percentage each year (personal communication, Planning Department official, 2017).

Reliable, verifiable, and accurate empirical data on education statistics in Afghanistan is minimal. The study of privatization is almost non-existent. Although private schools had to register with the Ministry of Education, the total number of private schools is at best an estimate. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) improved considerably over the years, but its data remained questionable. According to the World Bank Country Report for Afghanistan, early efforts to establish the EMIS system started in 2005, and the system continued to evolve during the years. However, despite improvements, the report ranked the quality of data and the system's soundness as

2 (emerging) based on a 4-point scale. Specifically, the report cautions about the accuracy of the EMIS data:

There are doubts about the accuracy of Afghanistan’s educational data. Data in Afghanistan’s EMIS are based on self-reported data from school principals. As some funding measures (like EQUIP II School Grants) are linked to enrollment figures, principals may be tempted to inflate their numbers, and ... data verification methods have not yet reached the stage where inflated figures are caught. (SABER, 2017)

In 2016, President Ashraf Ghani instructed the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development to verify Ministry of Education data on key educational indicators before the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (October 4 -5, 2016). The third-party verification study found serious discrepancies in the EMIS data for the number of schools, the number of staff members, and the number of students (AHG, 2016).

SIGAR and other sources continued to report “ghost” schools, teachers, and students (Khan, 2015; SIGAR, 2016a; SIGAR, 2016b). Issues related to the accuracy and reliability of EMIS data continued to plague the Ministry of Education until the end of the GIRoA. In 2020, the President ordered the Ministry of Education and the National Statistics and Information Authority to geo-tag all public schools in the country because the Government continued to doubt the number of schools. However, the two entities did not complete the geo-tagging exercise before the fall of the GIRoA.

The EMIS’s focus was on public schools. The private school data in the EMIS system was based on self-reports from private school owners. Unlike public schools, the EMIS team did not conduct actual data collection or verification of private school reports.

Therefore, it is impossible to know the exact number of private schools in Afghanistan. There are sporadic reports of private school data before 2012, but the EMIS system allegedly had a complete dataset for private schools from 2012 to 2020. Despite these limitations, the data does show an average annual increase of 20% in private schools during this period.

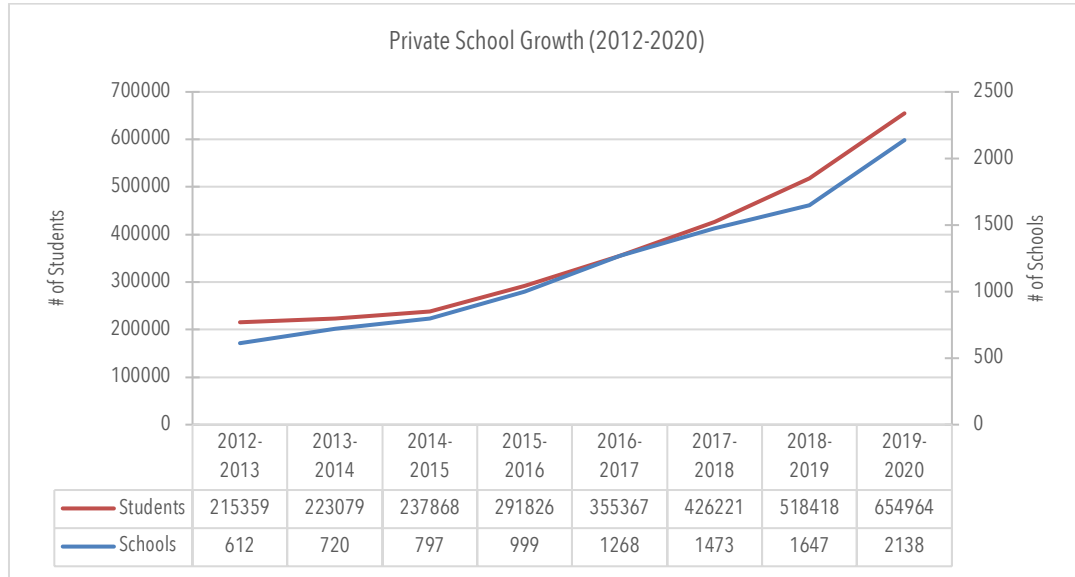


Figure 7 - Private School Growth in Afghanistan 2012-2020

Some news sources report that the first private school was opened in Kabul City as an entrepreneurial initiative in 2004 (Lucas, 2020). The Ministry of Education’s 2008-2009 Education Summary Report states that, nationally, 186 private schools enrolled 32,335 boys and 8,089 girls in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008b). Figure 7 above shows the growth of private schools (right axis) and the growth of students in private schools (left axis) from 2012 – 2020 based on figures from the EMIS database. As stated earlier, the number of private schools and students in these private schools is unreliable, but the graph shows the general trend.

Participants in interviews expressed that under-reporting and over-reporting could be a problem with the EMIS data. A senior Ministry official shared that she had received reports of many unregistered private schools operating within the major cities of the country: “The Kandahar education Provincial Director told me that 55 schools were operating in Kandahar without even registering. And then, we had several cases of unregistered schools in operation in Jalalabad, Nangarhar”. When I probed the reason for the unregistered schools, she shared that the bureaucracy in registering a school and the associated corruption could have been some of the reasons. She stated:

People just wanted to skip all of that and open up their schools. They knew that the audience or the clients they were trying to recruit into their schools did not necessarily understand how systems worked. They saw a sign in front of a building that said a school, and they would just go and take their kids and enroll them without necessarily doing a cross-check of making sure whether this is a legit school or not.

The same senior official expressed that some registered private schools might not be active:

I think that number [EMIS private school figures] is not to be believed because many registered schools probably were not operating at all in the first place ...

Many schools were registered for the founders to have a name and some link to an institution that was somehow officially recognized by the Government. And the Ministry of Education didn't have any mechanism of monitoring to make sure that each of our registered schools was actually operating as a school.

Quality, Access, and Equity in Private Schools

There are no empirical studies that focus on private versus public administration of schooling and issues related to quality, access, and equity. There is one master's thesis that discusses privatization in general terms and looks at issues of equity superficially (Sherani, 2014). A few comparative studies on the effectiveness and efficiency of community-based schooling versus public schooling exist, but not on private schools (Burde & Linden, 2013). Cost analysis studies are also limited and rely on disparate data from donor and Government reports at a very macro level (Strand, 2015).

Access and Equity

The criterion for educational equity refers to "the quest for fairness in access to educational opportunities, resources, and outcomes by gender, social class, race, language, and geographical location of students" (Levin, 1978). The EMIS data and interviews with the key stakeholders provide us with some insights in terms of issues related to access and equity based on geographic location, gender, and to some extent, resources and social class. The Ministry of Education committed to EFA mandates to increase boys' and girls' net enrollment rate in primary grades by 75% and 60%, respectively, by 2010. It committed to the MDGs "to ensure that all children in Afghanistan, boys, and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education by 2020" (Ministry of Education, 2007). The quote by a senior ministry official below illustrates how Ministry officials have had to juggle the requirements to expand access with limited resources and limited capacity.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Education needs to be thinking of creative ways of making sure that everyone has the opportunity to access education. Possibly, one

of the options could be that we strengthen private education in city level, and then we can divert our resources to the rural areas ... My belief is that if some people are not sending their children to school, because there is no school, we [still] have a responsibility to provide them schooling. But for us to be able to reach those who are unreached, we need to have some of our luggage taken away from us so that we find ourselves competent enough to reach that far. But if we have taken all the load on our shoulders in the cities, how would we be able to reach a far distant village? (senior ministry official)

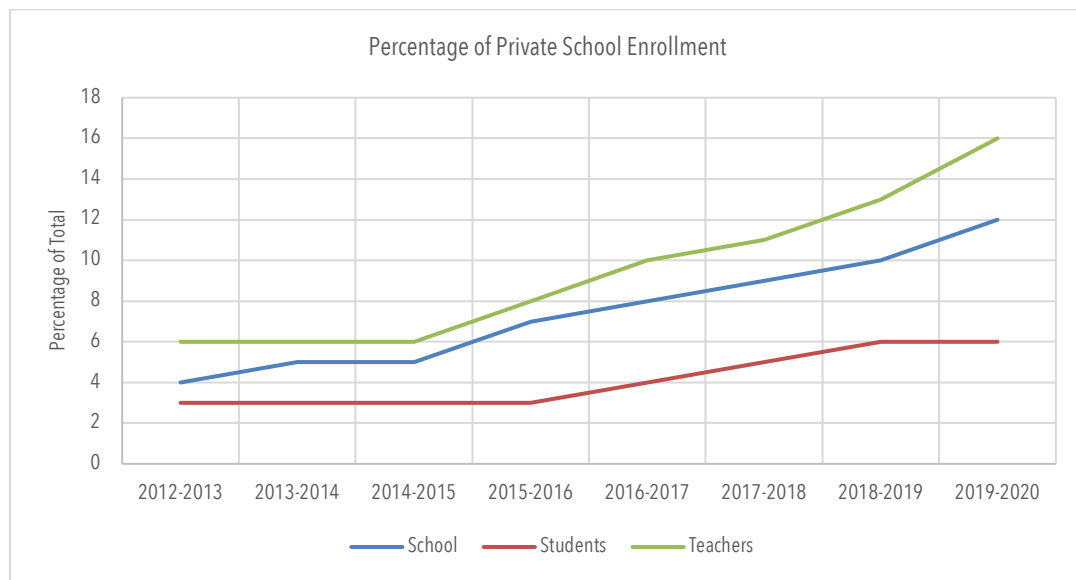


Figure 8 - Percentage of Private School Enrollment

Figure 8 shows that although private schools account for nearly 12% of all schools in the nation and the percentage of teachers in private schools account for 16% of the total teacher population, student enrollment in private schools seems to have leveled off at 6% of the total student population.

As Figure 9 illustrates, the concentration of private schools in the EMIS data is overwhelmingly in Kabul, followed by Herat, Nangarhar, Balkh, Ghazni, and Kandahar.

Since 2012, Kabul, , which accounts for about 50% of all private schools each year, and two to three additional provinces are the outliers. The majority of the remaining 30 provinces have less than ten private schools. Nooristan, Panjshir, and Urozgan provinces do not report any private schools.

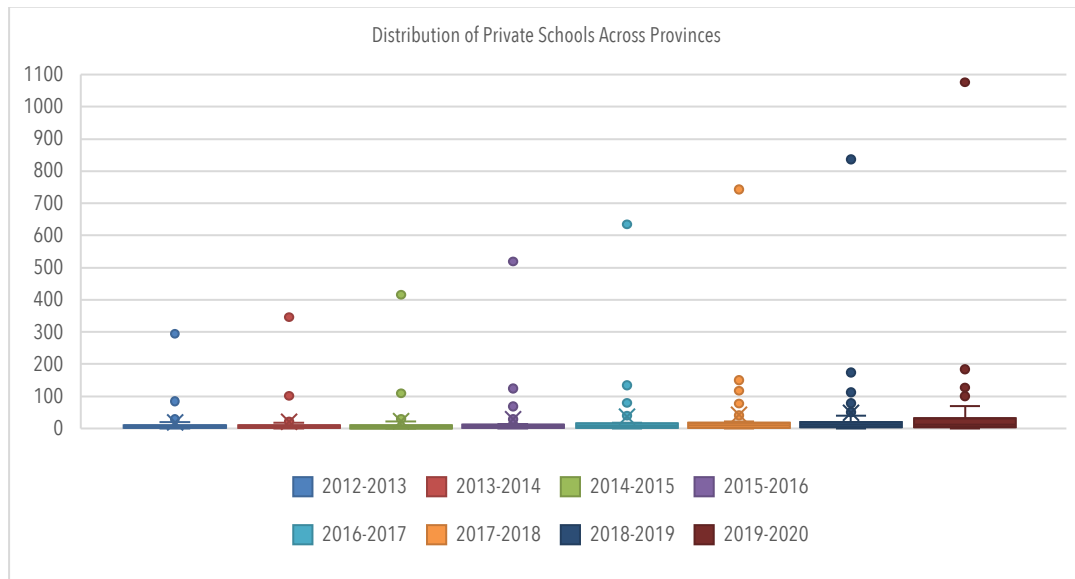


Figure 9 – Box and Whiskers Distribution of Private Schools by Province

The key stakeholders that I interviewed expressed concern that private schools might increase gender disparity because families, especially poor families, are likely to invest in their sons' education compared to their daughters'. One senior Ministry official articulately expressed this concern as follows:

We will end up with two challenges, the rural challenge and the girls' challenge, because unfortunately, unfortunately in this country, people invest in their sons, because they believe that that is going to be the bread earner for them. For them, this is a kind of life insurance, a kind of investment. It's a very selfish approach that this society unfortunately has. With the limited resources available to families, they want to invest it strategically so that they can get the revenue back.

And by investing in boys, they feel that they will be able to get that revenue back. By investing in girls, they believe that even if they generate revenue, the revenue will be generated for somebody else. (senior ministry official)

The EMIS data corroborates the concerns of ministry leadership. As Figure 10 illustrates, girls make up about 40 percent of the student population in public schools, and female teachers make up 33 percent of the teacher population. In contrast, girls make up 28 percent of the student population in private schools, but female teachers make up about 55 percent of their teacher population. It is clear from these data that families choose to invest in private education for their boys compared to their girls.

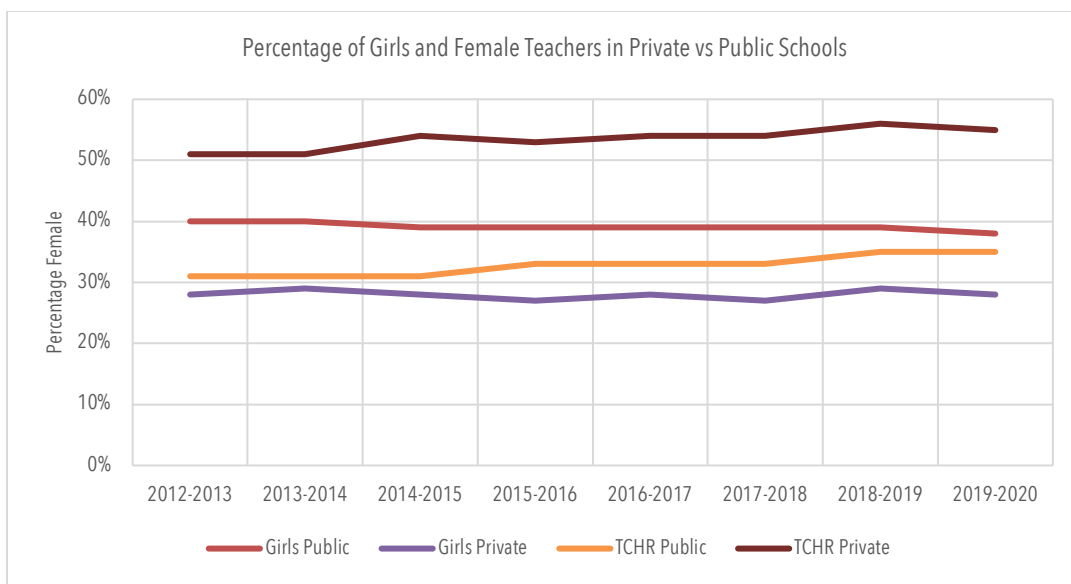


Figure 10 - Percentage of Girls and Female Teacher in Private Schools

The people I interviewed agreed that the majority of the people sending their children to private schools are from the NGO community, business owners, those that worked for international organizations, high-ranking government officials, and generally the relatively affluent members of society. However, one senior Ministry official pointed out that she had noticed that older government officials tended to send their children to

public schools. She reasoned that the older generation had better experiences with public schools from previous regimes than the younger generation.

Interview participants were cognizant that private schools provide choice to families but really only provide choice to those who can afford it. They expressed that the Government needs to put in place mechanisms to ensure that the education system does not become “wealthy friendly” and that “those who have resources, get quality education, and those who do not have resources, they get bad quality education.”

A member of the donor community shared her recollection that, like the Government officials, the donor community saw private schools as a mechanism to increase access or, in the case of higher education, limit access to those who can afford it:

Sometime in 2015, we had a discussion in the donor group about how much demand for higher education in Afghanistan has soared. More and more students are completing secondary school and wanting to go to higher education. Several donors thought the best solution to [the increased demand] was to make sure it’s private, and people have to pay for it. [They argued] this would exclude people that could not pay for higher education, and we will have enough [spots] for those who can actually pay for it. And for me, it demonstrated how different ideologies we as donors come from because I obviously come from a country where higher education is free.

Participants shared mixed views regarding the effects of private schools on social cohesion. Participants were worried that private schools could become a source of further division in a fragile and conflict-prone country like Afghanistan. One senior Ministry official articulated this concern as follows:

You are opening up yourself to another new can of worms, which is more division linguistically, religiously, ethnically across the country. And then, various nations involved with various ethnic groups will start influencing the various schools and various parts of the country. Then you are educating a divided nation. So, it has that political ramifications in a place like Afghanistan. There is no system of checks and balances for making sure that the system is controlled to ensure that it is fair, equal, and pro the unity of Afghanistan and not the other way around.

Another official lamented that privatization had already divided education along ethnic lines. He commented that teachers and students in private schools in different parts of Kabul City seem to be segregated based on ethnic group. Other participants expressed that private schools are a double-edged sword. They expressed that, on the one hand, segregation creates social divisions. The private school skimming of better teachers and students will negatively impact the disadvantaged communities who rely on public schools. However, at the same time, private schools provide a mechanism for minority groups within society to preserve their culture and ethnic identity.

Quality of Private vs. Public Schools

As the UNESCO (2021) twenty-year review of the education sector points out, there is no internationally agreed-upon definition or measurement for what constitutes a good quality education. Quality is usually measured by comparing the conditions that shape teaching and learning (e.g., school facilities, school resources, or the qualifications of teachers), the educational processes (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy, assessment), or student academic performance. Afghanistan does not have standardized performance

tests, and there are no empirical studies that compare the learning achievement of private vs. public school students.

A 2013 study conducted in 23 private schools and 21 public schools in Kabul found that classroom facilities, parental involvement, completion of syllabi were better in private schools and that private schools provided students with additional textbooks on science and taught them computer science and English language. The same study found that teachers in public schools had more experience in teaching than teachers in private schools (Sherani, 2014). The only comparable indicator at the national level for both private and public schools is the student-teacher ratio. As Figure 11 shows, the student-teacher ratio in private schools is considerably lower than in public schools.

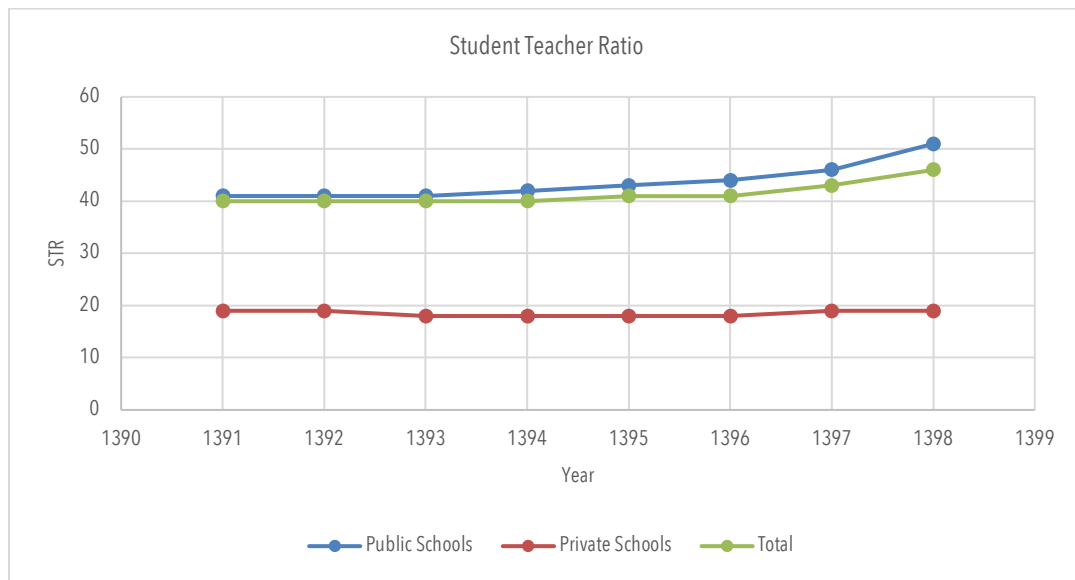


Figure 11 - Student Teacher Ratio - Public vs. Private

Almost all participants expressed that there is no way to compare the quality of private and public schools given the lack of empirical national-level data. The one thing that all participants reiterated was that there is intra-sector rather than inter-sector variability in quality within both public and private schools. Participants expressed that

they had seen excellent private schools that helped students learn to read and write in first grade, and they had seen excellent public schools.

Participants expressed that the intention behind the school was the determining factor for quality in private schools. They expressed that if the private school founder is interested in profiting, he will shortchange his teachers and focus on the profitability of his school rather than on the quality of teaching. They were adamant that the teacher and the intentions of the school administration were determining factors for quality. A senior Ministry official expressed this sentiment as follows:

My personal experience is that in Afghanistan, the quality of schools is directly related to the intention of why the school is being established rather than the resources. Those who came with the education intention are much more focused on quality as compared to those who established schools for profit motives. Those who are established for profit, they were able to sell themselves well, and make their fees very high and probably earn quite a bit of it, but not really provide the quality that an investment of like \$300 a month would require them to. So, to me, the fee is not the factor for quality. The intention is more of a factor of quality, and there are schools with low fees, but good quality in there are schools with high fees and low quality.

Another senior official added:

There are certainly units or pockets of better-quality private schools than public schools. I'm not going to deny that. However, there [are]is no data to support that the private school sector, in principle, or in general, is better than public schools.

An interesting finding emerged from the interviews: people believed that private schools were generally better in primary grades, whereas public schools were generally better in upper secondary grades. Additionally, some participants shared that they have seen a trend where families enroll their kids in private schools for primary grades and then shift them to public schools when they reach the upper grades. Although there are no data to back this claim, the claim might have some merit. The highest student-teacher ratios in public schools are for primary schools. According to UNESCO data, the student-teacher ratio at primary grades in public schools is 62 students per teacher. Most private schools are primary schools because the regulations require all schools to start as primary and work their way up to becoming secondary schools. The average student-teacher ratio in private schools, as stated earlier, is about 20 students per teacher. So, the smaller class sizes might be a factor in favor of a better-quality primary grade experience for private schools.

In upper grades, three factors might play a role in giving public schools an edge on quality. The first is that upper grades require teachers with subject-specific knowledge. Anecdotal data shows that private school teachers are usually fresh graduates with lower academic qualifications (Safi & Habib, 2011; Sherani, 2014), whereas public school teachers have better qualifications (UNESCO, 2021). The second factor is that upper-grade subjects require laboratories and more equipment, which private schools usually lack. Finally, the student-teacher ratio is considerably lower (40) in upper grades in public schools compared to student-teacher ratio of public schools in primary grades.

Additionally, although legally private schools are supposed to have the same access to international scholarships as public schools, in practice, the scholarships tend to

favor public school graduates. One of the participants expressed that families send their children to private schools for primary grades and then strategically shift them to public schools for secondary school where they can easily graduate at the top of their class and have better opportunities for scholarships.

Multiple Streams Framework

In this section, I describe how events and conditions in each of the three streams (i.e., problem, policy, and political) contributed to promoting private school policies within the Ministry of Education. I further describe how the Government's commitments to promoting the private sector and the Ministry of Education's commitments to EFA and MDG enrollment goals played a role in these processes.

Conditions in both the problem and political streams allowed a policy transfer window to open. Forces related to conditionalities, external pressures on policymakers, advocacy by private school entrepreneurs, and a leadership that was open to the idea of privatization worked together to pass the private school policies in Afghanistan. I illustrate these processes in Figure 12 on the next page (revised from Cummings et al., 2021).

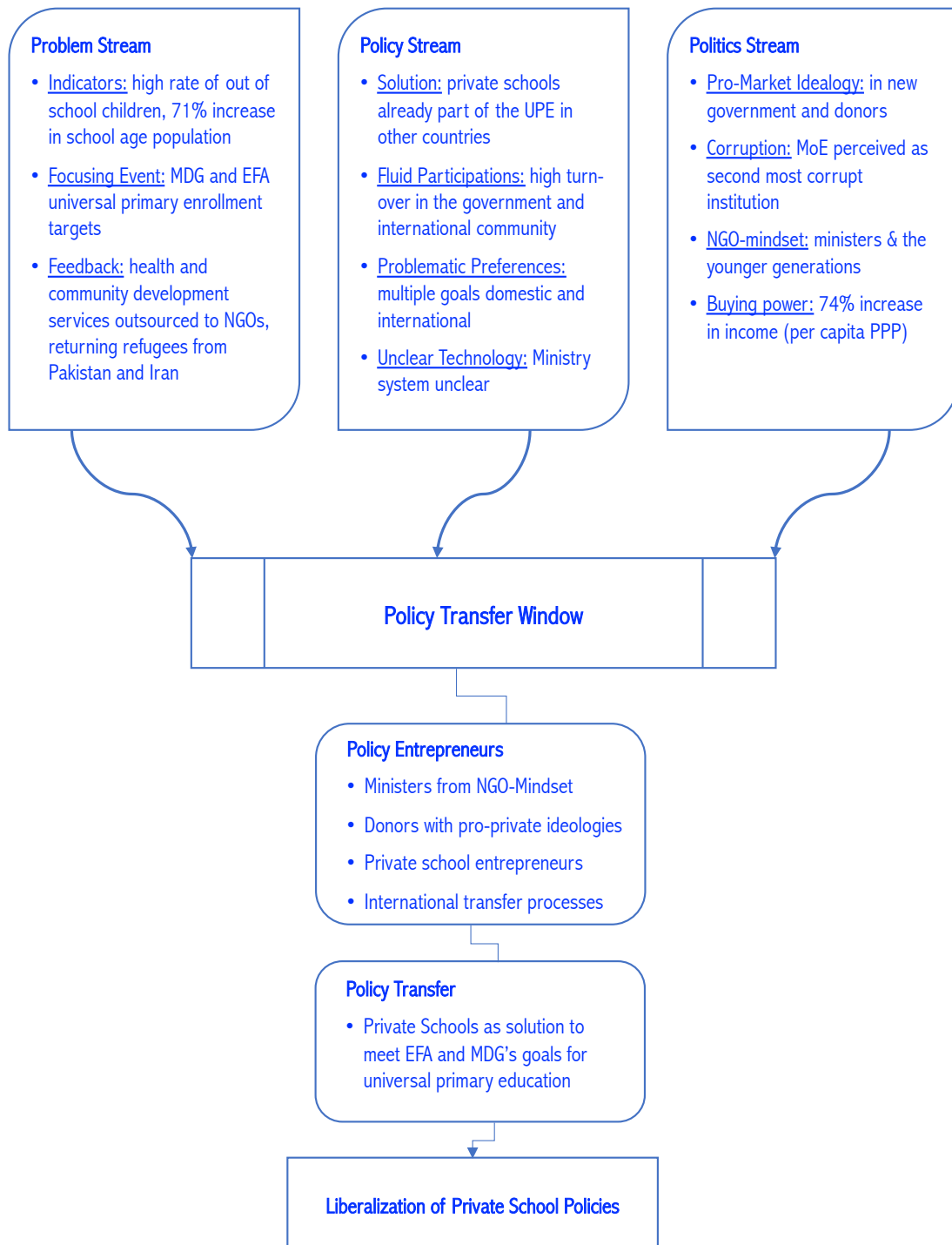


Figure 12 - Liberalization of Private School Policy Process (MSF)

The Problem Stream

The problem stream centered around the lack of access to education for the growing school-aged population in Afghanistan, especially after the Government committed to the international community to increase enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools as part of the EFA and MDG goals for universal primary enrollment. Documents and interview participants cited the need to increase educational access as one of the primary factors contributing to the establishment of policies supporting expanding private schools.

Kingdon (1995) distinguishes between conditions and problems. MSF theorists contend that no objective indicators determine which conditions become defined as problems. Instead, a condition gains the status of a problem based on the values and beliefs of the society at a particular time and place. They argue that changes in indicators, focusing events, or feedback about the operation of existing programs drive policymakers' attention to certain conditions and transform them into problems. As shown in Figure 12, interviewees and documents described a combination of these factors that helped elevate the limitations to of access to schools from a condition to a pressing problem in Afghanistan.

First, while low enrollment of school-aged children in primary and secondary schools had been an ongoing condition in Afghanistan for decades, policy documents and interview participants referenced the need to meet EFA and MDG enrollment targets as the key focusing event that transformed the low enrollment of school-aged children from a condition to a problem that the Ministry needed to address. The Ministry of Education had committed to ensuring that by 2015 *all* school-aged children in the country would

have access to and complete primary education (Ministry of Education, 2015). The Education Strategy Plan (Ministry of Education, 2007) cited the need to meet enrollment targets as the primary factor for encouraging the development of private schools:

Cooperation with donors, international development partners and the private sector will be essential in order to meet the enrolment targets stipulated in the ANDS and the Millennium Development Goals since Afghanistan still lacks the financial resources and the technical expertise and capacity to reform and develop the education system. The Ministry will encourage the development of private schools.

Interview participants also reiterated that increasing the number of private schools would help the Ministry disburse some of the responsibility to the private schools, especially in major cities, to allocate more resources to the rural areas. One senior Ministry official argued that “the public sector cannot reach everybody. So, it [private schools] is actually decreasing the load of the public sector in order to be able to have a manageable, public sector, that can reach the rural areas”.

Second, coupled with the dramatic political shift post-2001 and the Governments commitments to EFA and MDG targets, the growth of the school-age population served as a worrisome indicator for policymakers. The growing population forced the Ministry to look for alternative ways to increase access to education. According to the World Development Indicators, the Afghan population almost doubled from 21.6 million in 2001 to 38.9 million people in 2020. More worrisome for the education sector was that the school-age group (5-19 years) increased by 71 percent in the same period, according to the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

Lastly, MSF theorists contend that *feedback* from other programs helps highlight what works and what does not work for policymakers and the public. Since information is not value-neutral, the general perception of the success of a policy or program can influence its utility for other arenas. If policymakers see a solution that seems to be successfully implemented in one sector, it can facilitate the adoption of the same policy solution to another unrelated sector (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2007).

The perception of successful service delivery through non-governmental pathways in other sectors was critical in opening a policy transfer window for promoting the “solution” of expanding private schools to meet the increasing educational demand. Bizhan (2018) notes that post-2001, many government services were outsourced to the private sector. He goes on to say:

In the first few years after the fall of the Taliban regime, some government functions were fully or partially contracted out to the private sector. These included procurement, delivery of basic health services, and community development programmes. After building the initial capacity, the state restored some of these functions, such as procurement. But some services like the delivery of basic health services and community development projects continued to be delivered by NGOs, using the government budget and procurement system.

Although prior to 2001, Afghanistan had almost zero experience with private schools, interview participants and documents cited the experience of refugees who attended and saw the prevalence of private schools in Pakistan and Iran as another critical factor in changing the perception of private schools as an alternative pathway to increase access to schooling. Additionally, documents cited the country's experience with NGO-

run educational programs pre-and post-2001 as a successful alternative service delivery model that could increase educational access.

UNICEF and many other international donors funded community-based education (CBE) programs before 2001 and continued to do so during this period. NGOs ran CBE programs and offered children in primary grades education within their communities. The Accelerated Learning Program (ALC) was a part of the CBE programs and offered older children the opportunity to complete the three-year cycle of primary schools in 1 year. According to the Ministry of Education (2019), 16 NGOs administered 11,407 CBE and 1,280 Accelerated Learning Program classes for nearly 350,000 children across the nation in 2019. The Ministry of Education claimed in a report to the Global Partnership for Education that:

CBE is the only education modality in Afghanistan that has successfully provided educational services to more girls than boys; it has a proven track of being able to narrow the country's educational gender gap. CBE models also appear to have transcended the security challenges that exist in many parts of the country.

Politics Stream

The politics stream is the institutional and cultural context in which policymakers consider policy ideas. The national mood and the current ruling party ideology are vital factors that affect whether a specific issue receives attention from policymakers. Events and circumstances in the politics stream in Afghanistan further contributed to opening a policy transfer window for the expansion of private schooling.

The national mood is how the general public feels towards the policy issue and is usually measured through polls, media coverage, or personal perceptions. If policymakers

feel that most of the public – or at least certain segments of the public – supports an idea, they will tend to give attention to that issue. Two issues related to the national mood played a significant role in swaying policymakers towards promoting private school policies.

First, during these twenty years, the buying power of the average consumer increased drastically, especially in larger cities. According to the World Development Indicators, the GDP per capita (current US \$) rose from \$179 in 2002 to a high of \$641 in 2012 (during the height of the US military campaign) and back to \$508 in 2020. According to UNESCO (2021) the per capita income in terms of constant purchasing power parity, rose by 74% from 2002 to 2012 but stagnated from 2012 to 2017 and has declined by nearly 10% since then. With the increasing demand for education and the greater buying power, private schools became an alternative that relatively affluent urbanites, including Government and Ministry of Education staff, started considering for their children (World Bank, 2021).

Second, while the demand for education was increasing, people's confidence in the Afghan Government's ability to deliver public services dwindled. According to the 2018 Integrity Watch National Corruption Survey, the Ministry of Education was perceived as the second-most corrupt institution in Afghanistan. According to a 2019 Transparency International report, corruption in the Afghan schooling system took place from the ministerial to the school level. Individuals who paid bribes were appointed by the Ministry in public schools, whereas trained teachers who did not pay a bribe could not find work. Extreme nepotistic and political party influences characterized the Ministry of Education. Common vices were bribery, non-competitive procurement practices,

embezzlement, data falsification, and the “ghost school” phenomenon (Bak, 2019). As a result of the [perceived] endemic levels of corruption in the Ministry of Education, public trust in the education system continued to decrease. As one senior ministry official expressed:

Unlike other countries, privatization did not evolve naturally in Afghanistan. A large portion of society started to feel that a few people monopolized public services. They started to turn to the private sector to create an environment for themselves. Privatization grew as a reaction to the corruption in public services or a reaction to not having representation in the Government. Initially, the Ministry of Education did not look favorably at privatization, and it created obstacles for private schools. Now we see that the situation has gotten out of their hand. Now the Ministry sees privatization as a source of income and a way to lessen its load.

In addition to the national mood, the ruling party ideology steers the focus of policymakers either towards promoting or inhibiting policy options. Change in administration or legislation provides opportunities for policymakers to focus on new items that align better with the new administration’s ideology. According to Klein (2008, as cited in Pherali & Sahar, 2018), in fragile states, where the relationships between the state, society, and the market are ruptured, development aid often imposes assertive neoliberal policies involving privatization of services and deregulation of market activities. Many of the documents cited that enabling a pro-market environment that favored privatization of government services informed the post-Taliban state-building exercise (Bizhan, 2018; Karimi, 2020; Popalzai, 2012). This pro-market environment

created a politically fertile ground for promoting private school policies within the Ministry of Education.

Although non-governmental organizations are not directly related to privatization, they help pave the way towards moving public services from the Government to non-state actors in two specific ways. First, NGOs function more like businesses, without the profit motive. As Desai (2014) points out, “they are mainly private initiatives, involved in development issues on a non-profit basis.” Second, critical theorists see NGOs as an increasingly important part of the international regulatory system of global capitalism. Joachim Hirsch (2003) argues that NGOs weaken the state by moving public services to non-state actors and making the state apparatus dependent on international donors. Specifically, he writes: “NGOs harness (scientific) knowledge and understanding [and financial means], which state bureaucracies do not possess. They play a significant part in identifying and defining social problems and threats. They thus find themselves involved in setting the agenda for political negotiations and decision-making.”

According to the International Center for Non-Profit Law, by the end of 2020, there were over 2,000 national and international NGOs operating in Afghanistan. The same source reports that over 5,000 NGOs have been closed by the Government for lack of activity since 2005 (Moballegh, 2021). Interview participants cited the “NGO mindset” of ministry officials as a critical factor that enabled the pro-privatization policies. The first three education ministers were against liberalizing private school policies, according to interview participants. The expansion of private schools started with Minister Muhammad Hanif Atmar in 2006. It continued with Minister Ghulam Farouq Wardak. Both Minister Atmar and Minister Wardak had extensive backgrounds

working for international donor organizations and running NGOs. Their “NGO mindset” made these two ministers more pro-privatization than previous ministers. One senior Ministry official who was involved with the Ministry since 2002 commented:

I think the international community remained silent on the subject. I remember it [expansion of private schools] was raised in a couple of conversations. I remember Minister Qanuni said that we are not ready for competition from the private sector. Then the subsequent ministers also had the same opinion. The first minister who started this [move towards privatization] was Minister Atmar. Minister Atmar started it in a light way, and he opened the path for this [expansion of private schools]. He was followed by Minister Wardak, who was also from an NGO mindset. He pushed it [private school policies] and said expand it. So, this is how this huge expansion happened.

Policy Stream

As Kingdon (1995) explains, an issue’s chance for becoming the focus of policy rises on the agenda dramatically if a solution can be attached to it. The Multiple Streams Framework argues that policy communities – networks that include government officials, academics, development workers, and researchers with similar concerns in a policy area – generate and share policy solutions in various forums and multiple mediums.

In the early years of the post-2001 state-building exercise, the policy community in Afghanistan was not easily identifiable. The policy community around the privatization of education initiatives consisted of Ministry of Education officials and mid-level bureaucrats, the political elite and interest groups from both within the country and outside, the newly emerging business community, national and international non-

governmental agencies, and representatives of more than 40 international countries as well as dozens of multi-lateral and bilateral donor agencies.

Kingdon's (1995) description of the policy stream as a primeval soup is an apt description of the policy community that influenced policy decisions in the Ministry of Education. There were dozens of policy influencers that seemed to have gathered per the circumstances of a state-building exercise in a fragile, conflict-affected, and donor-dependent nation. Most of the policy influencers were visibly active, while others influenced policies behind closed doors.

Iran was an interesting influencer in the Ministry of Education in the early years. A RAND Corporation report titled *Iran's Balancing Act in Afghanistan* noted, "Iran's myriad interests in and ties to Afghanistan have led it to pursue seemingly contradictory policies in Afghanistan" (Nader & Laha, 2011). During 2006 and 2007, I worked for a USAID project with the Ministry of Education. During this period, I noticed Iranian officials holding high-level policy meetings with Ministry officials on several occasions. When I asked Ministry colleagues about these meetings and who the Iranian officials were, one Ministry official showed me a couple of unmarked offices in a corridor and said that Iranian education experts are housed in those offices and are actively advising the Ministry. However, because of the sensitivities with the United States, they have to do so without being noticed.

MSF theorists assert that the participation of actors within governments and non-governmental organizations that try to influence policy is *fluid* and changing with high levels of turnover. This fluidity of actors results in different people getting involved at different stages of the decision-making process. With the fluidity of actors comes

changing levels of time and focus devoted to the particular policy item. Besides the fluidity of actors, as illustrated by the involvement of the Iranian officials, turnover of staff was a constant feature within the international community within organizations in Afghanistan. According to a 2011 US Senate Report, the staff turnover rate for the USAID's Mission in Kabul was more than 85 percent a year (Committee on Foreign Relations, 2011). Interview participants also echoed the issue of high staff turnover. One participant from an international organization commented:

When it comes to the high turnover and people having to leave, you know, there is a learning curve when you first arrive ... I think it is beneficial for me, having been here five years ago. [This helped me] maybe not be as frustrated as others because I could actually see, I could see progress. I could see what has happened, what has worked, what does not work in a more long-term perspective. I think you would miss [this perspective] coming in as a year engagement. You do not see that the whole discussion leads up to something. If it is something controversial, there might have been a long discussion about it, and your first reaction might be, what is this fear against this intervention without understanding the background.

In the Multiple Streams Framework, the policy entrepreneurs are individuals or organizations that act as power brokers to achieve policy outcomes. They play a critical role by manipulating the problematic preferences of policymakers and the confusion within the system to join the three streams and promote a specific policy outcome. If this network is a small network with access to policymakers, it has a higher chance of guiding the policy towards ratification (Zahariadis, 2007).

The focus shifts from domestic actors to international processes in the education transfer literature. Policy entrepreneurs can be international “experts,” supranational institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations, international policy communities connected to professional organizations, specific donor countries, or the illusive policy transfer processes themselves as discussed by Meyer et al. (1997). As Dolowitz and Marsh’s (2000) transfer continuum outlines, these agents can suggest or coerce specific policy outcomes from recipient countries (Cairney, 2012).

Additionally, in the transfer literature, the transfer process of a policy solution can be led by domestic players who either manipulate the international community’s requirements for their own needs or voluntarily emulate and adopt international practices to gain legitimacy. Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2004) argue that some developing countries balance their need for international educational development funding and maintain their educational autonomy by presenting their educational system with the buzzwords of the donor agencies while implementing other models. In this manner of “double-talking,” they manage to gain donor support without forfeiting their autonomy to the international “dictatorship” of educational models. On the other hand, Ramirez and Boli (1987) argue that developing countries adopt international educational models because they want to gain legitimacy in the international arena as respectable nation-states.

Evidence from document analysis and interview data show that in promoting the private school expansion policies in Afghanistan, a myriad of the abovementioned forces and actors played a role. Interview participants shared that no clear groups advocated for

or were against the privatization initiatives. One participant commented that “overall, we did not have very strong groups advocating in favor or against one another.”

However, several actors and international forces for the privatization of schools seem to have come together to support private school policies. The pro-market ideologies that I discussed in the politics stream also played a critical role in the policy stream. The conditionalities placed on the Afghan Government and the commitments of the Ministry of Education to the EFA and MDGs developed an environment favorable to private school policies. A small group of local entrepreneurs started establishing private schools for either for-profit purposes or as an alternative to the public-school system. However, the direct advocacy for private school policies happened from a small group within the Ministry and the international donors. A senior Ministry official shared that he pushed for easy licensing of private schools to encourage the expansion of private schools in the early days as a “creative way for making sure that everyone has the opportunity to access education.” The donor community was critical in advocating for policies that were pro-private schools. One participant recollected that:

Neo liberalization, the market economy, I do not know what is the best word for it, was the prevailing paradigm of the West and the international donors. So, at the policy level, not so much at the program level, I remember that international donors were pushing for private school policies. For example, UNESCO was in favor of private school policies. So, when we were developing the Education Strategic Plan, they said that private schools should be part of the strategic plan.

The process towards policies in support of private school expansion can be classified in the Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) continuum as a combination of indirect

coercion where domestic policymakers wanted legitimacy; obligated transfer by commitments to support private schooling as part of EFA and MDG goals; and coercion through conditionality as part of the commitments towards pro-market environments as part of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

From an international transfer perspective, factors related to wanting to adopt educational models to gain legitimacy in the international arena (Ramirez & Boli, 1987) and the power difference between local and international players (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) played a role. From an MSF perspective, time constraints which made it difficult for policymakers to make a well-informed decision combined with the resources that international agencies spent on developing policy documents, influenced the policy decision (Zahariadis, 2007). One participant elaborately described this dynamic as follows:

I think it was an issue of resource and power and also of knowledge and capacity. The problem was that many of these policy decisions were not discussed enough. There was not enough deliberation, and there was also the time factor. And they [international organizations] spent a lot of money and resources for the policy development process. Many of these policy decisions were indirectly imposed on the Ministry. But both sides were happy because I did not see significant resistance to many of these very important policy decisions. For example, the international community promoted a policy for student-centered teaching. Everyone at the Ministry started advocating for shagird mewar (student center) teaching. Even Minister Qanooni was very excited and said that this was the best strategy for the Ministry. He ordered all teachers to be trained in this student-

centered approach within one year. But I was suspicious of this policy because I was unsure what that meant for Afghanistan. The decision was impulsive because no one really knew what that policy meant, but everyone was excited about it because it came from very prestigious organizations like UNESCO and USAID. So, they accepted it, and there was no objection to it. The same thing was true with private school policies. It was indirectly imposed but without any resistance. I have not seen any kind of resistance from the Ministry about privatization. Minister Atmar was the Minister at that time. He was supportive of private school[ing]. But I did not see major input from outside, from the international community, on subjects like literature and religious studies. I think they were very careful about these sensitive areas.

MSF theorists argue that policy ideas survive within the policy stream if the policy proposal is aligned with the policymakers' values, if the policy is technically feasible and easy to implement, and if the implementation does not put resource constraints on the organization. The implementation of private school policies did not put any technical or resource constraints on the Ministry. As quoted above, Ministry officials believed that expanding private schools reduced the burden of the Ministry. Perhaps the most significant contextual factor that helped in instituting policies that promoted the expansion of private schools was the change in value acceptability.

As presented in Table 1 at the beginning of this Chapter, although traditional madrasas were always operated privately, private schools were restricted to foreign nationals residing inside Afghanistan for most of Afghanistan's history. The first shift in policy towards allowing private schools emerged in the educational policies of the

Taliban government in the late 1990s. However, establishing private schools required special permission from the Islamic Emirates even then. The significant change in the value acceptability of private schools came with the move towards a free, competitive, market-based economy as part of the newly internationally supported Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan post-2001.

Afghanistan adopted a new constitution in 2004, which mandated a market-based economy. Article 10 stated: “the State encourages and protects private capital investments and enterprises based on the *market economy* and guarantees their protection in accordance with the provisions of law.” The most crucial document that set the policy framework for Afghanistan was the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). ANDS provided the overarching framework for the development of GIRoA’s policies. The ANDS outlined that both the GIRoA and the international community see a “successful transition to a competitive market economy” as the bedrock for weaning the country from aid dependency, achieving poverty reduction, building a democracy, and promoting basic human rights and freedom. Specifically, the ANDS document stated:

Our economic vision is to build a liberal market economy in which all Afghans can participate productively ... To do this, we will develop an enabling environment for the private sector to generate legitimate profits and pay reasonable taxes ... Ultimately, we want to move beyond dependence upon international aid and build a thriving legal private sector-led economy that reduces poverty and enables all Afghans to live in dignity

A significant part of the rationale for establishing the rule of law, a functioning judicial system, and promoting education in the country, according to the ANDS

document, was that these are critical factors that would enable a functioning and thriving free market economy. Interview participants also echoed that there was a significant shift in the value acceptability of private school policies. One participant stated:

We had this big stigma about starting and expanding private schools. I remember in 2004 when we were talking about private schools. Everyone thought we were favoring the rich people. Everyone started shouting, how can you let private schools operate. Education cannot be privatized! That stigma is no longer present. In the last 20 years, we had this fight between the old government bureaucratic mindset, which was a communist-dominated mindset and was completely against the private school, and another totally different mindset. The NGO mindset came from the development community. That was a move towards more of a Westernized mindset. There was a fight between the democrats, the liberalist, and the communists. The liberalists' approach of allowing private schools won.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation intended to explore the trends, nature, processes, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan using the combined lenses of educational transfer and the Multiple Streams Framework. By focusing on Afghanistan, I hoped to understand the dynamics of policy transfer in a fragile aid-dependent state in conflict. By exploring the phenomenon of educational transfer through the Multiple Streams Framework, I hoped to operationalize concepts of policy transfer within a well-established analytical lens.

In this chapter, I revisit the central research question and discuss what the findings of this study mean for the application of the Multiple Streams Framework in educational transfer research. Next, I look at the implications of the study's findings for the privatization of education in fragile and aid-dependent nations. I conclude this chapter by suggesting areas for future research and reflecting upon educational policy transfer in fragile and aid-dependent nations.

Addressing the Central Research Question

The previous chapter outlined the findings related to the eight specific research questions. In this chapter, I combine the responses to the individual questions and address the central research question. Specifically, I discuss the trends, nature, processes, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan in light of the theory and literature that guided the study.

The document review and interview data revealed that the educational policy environment in Afghanistan changed drastically in the twenty years between 2001-2021, primarily due to the need to meet the MDG goal for universal primary enrollment. Before 2001, policies restricted private schools to foreign nationals living in Afghanistan. Post-

2001, the GIRoA liberalized private school regulation to actively encourage the expansion of private schools as part of the Government's overall strategy of promoting a free-market economy and to meet the MGD goals for universal primary enrollment. The number of private schools grew at about 20% annually for the 20 years. However, the majority of the private schools remained in three to four major urban centers, with 50 percent of the private school concentrated in Kabul City. This finding corroborates other research in the international education literature that suggests universal primary enrollment serves as a central driver for privatization in developing countries (Unterhalter et al., 2015).

Private school enrollment for girls was on average 12 percent lower compared to public schools. Girls made up only 28 percent of the student population in private schools compared to 40 percent of the student population in public schools. However, private schools hired 20 percent more female teachers than public schools. On average, female teachers made up about 55% of the teachers in private schools and 33% in public schools. Similar to findings in other developing countries, interview participants suggested that the disparity in girl enrollment in private schools was driven by families' preferences to invest in their boys' education because they saw a long-term economic return to the family from their boys' success (Macpherson et al., 2014; Srivastava, 2013).

There were no specific data on why private schools hired more female teachers than public schools. However, anecdotal data suggests that the location of private schools, the level of the private schools, and salary expectations could have contributed to the higher number of female teachers in private schools. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the private schools were located in urban centers, which were more favorable

to female employment. Although there was a general lack of reliable data about the specific nature of private schools, interview participants and anecdotal references in documents suggested that the majority of the private schools were primary schools. As a cultural practice, there were more female teachers in the lower grades in Afghanistan. Finally, some anecdotal data suggested that private schools paid teachers lower salaries compared to the Ministry of Education. It is likely that given the cultural norms and the rampant corruption in gaining an official teaching position within the Ministry of Education, women preferred to work in private schools compared to public schools. These findings also corroborate the general trend in the international literature that private schools tend to offer greater employment opportunities for females, but at reduced salaries (Noguera, 1994).

Both document and interview data revealed no clear distinction between the quality of teaching in private vs. public schools. Interview participants repeatedly remarked that there was intra-sector variability in terms of quality rather than apparent differences between private and public schools. However, some of the interview participants suggested that based on their observations, they had seen better quality of teaching in at the primary school level within private schools compared to public schools. The significantly lower-class sizes support this observation in private schools. On average, there is one teacher for every 20 students in private schools, whereas the teacher-student ratio for primary grades in public schools is one teacher for every 62 students. Some reports suggested that private school teachers were, in general, less qualified than teachers in public schools; however, there were no data to corroborate or reject this claim. These findings are also in line with findings in other developing

countries. Benveniste et al. (2013) outline that in terms of quality, there are usually more differences within the sector rather than between private and public schools. They also point to comparatively better performance in primary level private schools compared to public schools because of the lower student-teacher ratio, which could come at the price of lesser qualified teachers.

Interview participants had interesting insights regarding how privatization of education affected equity. Although there was unanimous consent that private schools favored the more affluent members of society, participants differed in their opinions about the effects of private schools on ethnic and cultural opportunities. Document and interview data showed that private schools were self-segregating along ethnic lines. This finding is in line with Belfield and Levin's (2002) findings that privatization tends to create segregation in developing countries.

However, participants had mixed feelings about the effects of ethnic segregation. Although everyone acknowledged that the segregation would likely work against building a unified national identity, several participants remarked that private schools allowed minorities to maintain and promote their cultural and linguistic differences compared to public schools. This sentiment for creating homogeneous environments for each community echoes Chubb and Moe's (1990) argument that private schools create homogeneity, which could lead to a better experience for the communities.

Two major factors influenced the process of liberalizing private school regulations. The first factor was the conditionalities related to promoting a free-market economy attached to the structural adjustment programs and commitments to universal primary education (UPE) as part of the EFA and MDG programs. Prior to 2001, the

international community's engagement with Afghanistan was almost non-existent. Post-2001, the level of engagement of the international community in Afghanistan surpassed the level of engagement in any other part of the world. As discussed in the Findings chapter, the 2002 National Development Framework, which was developed by international representatives and representatives of the interim government, made the promotion of a free-market economy and the facilitation of transferring some government services to the private sector a condition for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

At its peak in 2010-2012, more than 40 countries were involved in Afghanistan, with over 120,000 foreign troops on Afghan soil. This international presence was coupled with nearly one trillion dollars of aid and military expenditure. The foreign engagement in Afghanistan was attached with conditionalities for the GIRoA to promote the private sector as part of a free-market economy. In the education sector, the international community's engagement coincided with the 2002 goal of achieving universal primary education (UPE) by 2015 as part of the year 2000 Millennium Development Goals. The move towards UPE was combined with a commitment to promoting private schools to increase enrollment. The World Bank led Education for All Fast-Track Initiative originally required recipient countries to have a minimum of private schools as a condition for receiving aid.

Second, changes in politics and ideology during the 20 years normalized privatization for the general public. The influx of aid and military expenditure artificially increased the buying power of ordinary Afghans, especially in urban centers. The increase in the per capita GDP was coupled with a change in the value acceptability of private schools as an option.

Prior to 2001, the general population had a very negative opinion about private schools for Afghan citizens. From 1950s to the 1970s, Afghanistan had a state-led economy, even though the country was an aid-dependent nation. Modern schooling was seen as a government service. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-1989) a free-market economy was actively impeded in terms of regulations and ideology. After 2002, refugees returned to the country after spending two or three decades in neighboring countries of Pakistan and Iran and a small but influential population of Afghan refugees from the West. These returning refugees, especially from Pakistan, had experienced private schools and favored privatizing education both as a business and an educational experience. The returning refugees from the West usually occupied critical positions within the Government. They were much more inclined to a liberalized market economy than the older bureaucrats exposed to communist ideologies during the Soviet era.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became a regular provider of traditional government services with the start of the Soviet occupation in the refugee camps of Pakistan and ballooned post-2002. Some estimates put the total number of NGOs at over 10,000 at its peak, while more conservative estimates report 700-800 active NGOs (Mitchell, 2017). The “NGO mindset” normalized public service delivery outside of the government structure for the general population.

Documents and data from interviews highlighted the complex nature of privatization and the multiple driving forces behind the liberalization of private school regulations. Privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan did not occur through a single process or one actor. In accordance with Kingdon’s (1995) Multiple Streams Framework, a policy transfer window (Cairney, 2012) opened when the

problem of universal primary education was coupled with a changing political ideology. The liberalization of private school regulations resulted from both coercive pressures by the international community and diffusion through learned global experiences of the changing population.

Theoretical Implications of the Study

In this study, I combined Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework in the context of education transfer literature to understand the process of how and why policies in general, and policies related to the privatization of primary and secondary school in Afghanistan in particular, transfer to fragile, aid-dependent, conflict-affected nations. This study highlights how combining several theoretical lenses can help us understand the process of educational transfer better. This study makes three specific contributions to our understanding of policy formulation and policy transfer.

First, the study highlights that combining multiple theories to understand the process of policy transfer provides a more nuanced understanding of the transfer phenomenon at the micro-state level and helps us understand the macro-level global dynamics of educational policy transfer. Second, the study showcases that the use of Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework, in particular, can extend our understanding of policy transfer. Finally, the study tests the applicability of Cairney's conception of a policy transfer window in a fragile and aid-dependent environment.

Benefits of Synthesizing Multiple Theories

Multiple scholars have highlighted at least three benefits of using multiple theories to understand a specific phenomenon:

1. Using more than one theory to look at the findings of a study provides a level of assurance that the researcher has not created a tunnel vision by relying solely on one particular theory to explain a complex phenomenon. The combination of theories is similar to using triangulation to increase the reliability of data.
2. Using more than one theory allows the researcher to understand that different theories have comparative advantages. Drawing upon those advantages allows for a more nuanced exploration of the phenomenon.
3. Using multiple theories forces the researcher to question the assumptions of the various theories.

All of these factors come together in this study to allow the researcher to contribute to advancing the various theories (Cairney, 2012; Sabatier, 2007).

Cairney (2012) explains that there are two strategies that researchers can use to combine multiple theories in practice. The first strategy is to synthesize insights from two or more theories to understand a phenomenon better. The second strategy is to use the theories separately to provide multiple comparative perspectives. I have used the synthesis strategy of multiple theories to understand the nuances of policy transfer in fragile nations.

I have synthesized theories at two different levels. First, instead of relying on one particular theory of educational transfer, I have used a combination of neo-institutional, dependency, and culturalist lenses to explore the privatization of primary and secondary schools in Afghanistan. Document analysis highlighted that concepts from neo-institutional, dependency, and cultural/phenomenological perspectives were all active in

the move towards liberalizations of private school policies. From a neo-institutional perspective, forces of isomorphism and convergence was clear in what members of the “NGO community” and the refugees from Pakistan saw as the “best practice” in educational service delivery, especially in attempts to increase access to education. The conditionalities that forced the Government to promote a free-market economy, reducing the role of the state, and encouraging the private sector to flourish highlights some of the concerns of the dependency theorist. These conditionalities translated to promotion of private schools and outsourcing services such as book publishing to the private sector. The Ministry’s attempts to make meaning and interpret the MDG and the Fast-Track Initiative mandates in a way that would solve their own problems by reporting false numbers can best be understood from the cultural/phenomenological perspective.

Additionally, I have applied Dolowitz and Marsh’s (2000) policy transfer continuum as an analytical tool to understand whether policy transfer in Afghanistan has been voluntary or coercive, and therefore, where in the continuum of policy transfer it falls. Using multiple policy transfer theories highlighted coercive pressures (dependency) and voluntary emulation (neo-institutional) are not mutually exclusive. Document and interview data highlighted that at the macro-level, the conditionalities of aid by World Bank and the IMF, and the initial conditionality of EFA’s Fast Track Initiative to increase the private school population by 10%, followed by the MDG commitment to universal primary enrollment were coercive. These forces were in line with the dependency theories of policy transfer. These coercive elements combined with a shift in the population’s mindset due to the forces of immigration and globalization, which were closer to the neo-institutionalist’s ideas of isomorphisms and convergence. The

combination of coercive and isomorphic diffusion made the potential for transfer stronger. At the micro country level, policymakers tried to balance these forces to address the specific educational needs of Afghanistan.

Second, I have combined the theories of educational transfer with Kingdon's Multiple Stream Framework. The combination of these two significant theories highlighted that the process of policy transfer combines both national-level policy formulation mechanisms (the why) described by the Multiple Streams Framework and global level dynamics of policy transfer (the how) within an aid-dependent environment.

Using MSF to understand policy transfer

The MSF framework contends that policy decisions in bureaucracies are not rational but instead based on multiple factors that come together at an opportune time. The concept of ambiguity, meaning that uncertainty governs policy decisions, is central in MSF. Kingdon (1995) characterizes ambiguity in fluid participation, problematic preferences, and unclear technology. Document and interview data highlight that the state of ambiguity was a central characteristic of the Afghan educational system in general and specifically characterized the process of deciding about liberalizing private school regulations. The decision-making process in the Ministry of Education was centralized and revolved around the Minister. During the first ten years, the Ministry went through six changes in leadership. Both domestic and international players had fluid participation. On the international side, various actors influenced policies at different times. The case of Iran's involvement in un-officially influencing policy is a good example. Additionally, the average staff posting for international organizations was less than one year. While in Afghanistan, the international staff rarely left their compounds. This fluid participation

brought key actors, with their varied preferences, in and out of the decision-making process.

Besides their fluid participation, key actors had what Kingdon calls problematic preferences. The policymakers in Afghanistan did not agree on one clear end goal for the liberalized private school policies, used the policies for multiple goals, and made decisions despite and sometimes aided by confusion. In the first ten years, the Ministers of Education saw their position as primarily a strategic step for future leadership roles. The teachers, high school students, and the staff of the Ministry of Education constituted the largest civilian voting bloc in the country. At least two of the Ministers had plans to run for the post of President, while others were placed strategically in the position by other candidates to campaign for them. Although on the surface, the private school regulations were supposed to help reach universal enrollment, the leadership of the Ministry saw the decision in terms of its political implications.

I recollect two incidents that highlight the problematic preferences of both domestic and international decision-makers. While working as part of one USAID project, I disagreed with the rationale of spending 94 million dollars over five years to primarily train existing teachers in a two-week program on buzzwords like student-centered learning. One afternoon, I brought up my disagreement with the Chief of Party, an educationalist. He shared with me that he agreed that we were wasting tax-payer money on a project with very little educational value. However, he expressed that his hands were tied because the US Embassy had told him to implement this training program, not for its educational value, but because “it could help make the Minister the next President of Afghanistan.”

On a second occasion, several years later, when I was working as part of another USAID project, I attended a meeting at one of the US military bases just outside of Kabul on behalf of the Project's Chief of Party. The US military's counterinsurgency task force led the meeting. The presenter, who I believe was a General or Colonel, instructed us that the primary goal of all USAID-funded projects was counterinsurgency. He further instructed that all projects must develop a clear strategy for implementing counterinsurgency initiatives to continue receiving funding. My concerns that tying educational programs to military operations go against the educational and development goals of the project fell on deaf ears.

Even if the key actors wanted to bring about a clear outcome from the policies, it was not clear how the various inputs in the overall system within the Ministry should come together to achieve that goal. As I outlined in the Findings chapter, internal forces and outside pressures supported liberalized policies. However, no precise mechanism brought all the pieces together to achieve the overall goal.

Kingdon (1995) argues that timing is the most critical factor in passing policies in a state of ambiguity. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the international intervention in Afghanistan was the most significant focusing event for the liberalized private school policies. The international intervention brought stipulations for promoting free-market economics. The interventions led to a change in the Government's leadership. It facilitated the return of refugees who were more open to the idea of supporting a free-market economy. The favorable political environment (politics stream) made the liberalization of private school regulations (policy stream) seem like a good solution to meet the commitment of universal enrollment (problem stream). The joining of these

three streams opened up a window of opportunity that allowed for the transfer of liberalized private school policies to Afghanistan.

Testing the concept of Policy Transfer Window

Cairney (2012) proposes the concept of a ‘policy transfer window’ as a mechanism to apply Kingdon’s (1995) Multiple Streams Framework to the transfer of policy ideas. Specifically, Cairney aims to draw upon MSF to explain the promotion and adoption of ideas to demonstrate how and why transfer takes place and then to use the transfer literature to explore the extent to which the adoption of the ideas is voluntary. Cairney (2012) only briefly discusses the idea in his writings, and there are few references to the concept in academic literature. However, no papers operationalize the concept as part of actual research. This study is one of the first to operationalize the ‘policy transfer window.’ I drew open Cairney’s suggestion to operationalize the policy transfer window to three streams in the MSF but “with an emphasis on the role of external actors on influencing the agenda, producing solutions, and (in some cases) the pressure to act” (personal communication, Cairney, June 2020).

The traditional MSF asserts that policy entrepreneurs, who are domestic actors, manipulate the problematic preferences of domestic policymakers through their access, resources, and strategies such as the divide and conquer salami tactics and affect priming to push their policy agendas. Cairney suggested that the policy transfer window will allow for the expansion of the concept of the policy entrepreneurs to include external actors. The application of the concept in this study revealed that the policy transfer window also helped redefine the role and nature of the policy entrepreneur when I combined concepts of educational transfer with the MSF model.

Document and interview data showed clearly that the external actors had as much, if not more, role than domestic actors in influencing the agenda to liberalize private school policies. However, the policy transfer window also showed that policy entrepreneurs are not specific individuals and identifiable groups. In addition to the domestic and external actors, the global education infrastructure's global forces served as subtle "policy entrepreneurs" which influenced the agenda. These global forces included illusive concepts of policy diffusion in terms of isomorphism and convergence and the more heavy-handed coercive elements of conditionalities and obligations.

Policy Implication for Educational Transfer in Fragile States

Osaghae (2007) defines a *fragile state* as "a distressed state that lacks the elements necessary to function effectively." He further elaborates that fragile states have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Weak, ineffective, and unstable political institutions and bad governance, loss of state autonomy, and privatization of state services.
- Inability to exercise effective jurisdiction over its territory, leading to the concept of 'ungoverned territories'.
- Legitimacy crisis, occasioned by problematic national cohesion, contested citizenship, violent contestation for state power, challenges to the validity and viability of the state, and massive loss and exit of citizens through internal displacement, refugee flows, separatist agitation, and civil war.
- Unstable and divided population, suffering from a torn social fabric, minimum social control, and pervasive strife that encourage exit from rather than loyalty to the state.

- Pervasive corruption, poverty, and low levels of economic growth and development, leading to lack of fiscal capacity to discharge basic functions of statehood.

In short, fragile states do not have a functioning nation-state structure. State fragility is often accompanied by aid dependency, over 10% of the country's GDP being from international funding. This study sheds light on three aspects of educational policy for fragile states. First, state fragility is directly related and transferred to educational fragility. Second, aid dependency carries many negative consequences of the privatization of education in more stable and tax-financed nations. Third, time-bound mandates such as MDG and EFA goals can exacerbate the pressure of fragility and contribute to lack of sustainable educational development, reliance on "easy fix" solutions, and an increase in the potential use of education as a source of conflict. I deal with each of these three policy implications separately below.

Does public education exist in fragile states?

Afghanistan fits all characteristics of a fragile state. Public schooling in fragile states like Afghanistan takes a different character than in stable societies. Although there is still a differentiation between private schools and government-run schools, the characteristics of government run schools in fragile states are different than public schools in stable societies. The modern school system developed in the Western world under specific conditions and goals, organically and within its own pace. However, neither those conditions nor the goals of modern schooling necessarily translate to fragile country contexts.

As discussed in Chapter 2, modern schooling developed as a response to specific intellectual challenges of the West in the early 18th century. Specifically, modern schooling developed within the context of stable nation-states that had political and financial independence and economic growth. The conceptualization of public schooling in stable states is directly related to the domestic financing of public schools. *Public schooling* is defined as the nation-states' provision, regulation, and financing of education. Fragile states like Afghanistan rely on external actors for all three of these functions.

Most importantly, as this study has highlighted, fragile states depend on external actors to finance their educational systems. Financial dependence introduces conditionalities and external commitments that, at best, diminish the control over provision and regulation of education. Therefore, within these constraints, the definitions and the debates about public vs. private education must be re-imagined and recalculated.

Is aid-dependency another manifestation of privatization?

The rationale for the provision of public schooling has historically centered around three major themes. The first argument is that public schooling develops social cohesion. This social cohesion results from a system of internal checks and balances. The public funds the educational system through taxes which makes the system accountable to the public. In return, the educational system regulates the educational experience to impact the national identity of the population.

When international donors fund the educational system, the system becomes accountable to the external actors first and then to the public through emotive means. There are no checks and balances between the educational system and the nation's

citizens – or even government officials – in fragile states. The educational system is not primarily accountable to the citizens, and the educational experience is influenced more by external actors than the local population. In states of fragility, it is not clear whether schooling leads to social cohesion. As seen in the case of Afghanistan, the goals of counterinsurgency, western conceptions of democracy, and control of the political outcomes that were tied to the education system by international actors served as sources of contention, or at least as propaganda tools, by the insurgency which labeled the Government and its institutions as puppets of an occupying force.

The second argument for public provision of schooling is centered around the issue of economic benefits and the individual and societal externalities of schooling. In fragile states, when the Government fails to provide services and corruption is rampant, the externalities and economic benefits of schooling become less viable. At best, the personal benefits of education are questionable in fragile states where employment opportunities are minimal and based on corrupt practices. As discussed above, the externalities of education in terms of social cohesion are not guaranteed. The economic externalities of education are, at best, a conceptual idea, but it seldom comes to observable fruition for the nation.

Finally, the debate about private versus public education centers around the role of the Government versus the “free market” in regulating educational experiences. However, neither the state nor the market is free or functional in fragile states. The fragile aid-dependent state is accountable first and foremost to its donors. As seen in the case of Afghanistan, the regulations and policies are governed by international actors as much as, if not more than, the Government. Again, as seen in the case of Afghanistan, the market

of fragile states is governed by a false economy propped up by international interventions and by an illicit economy governed by warlords and drug smugglers. These factors introduce a series of questions about the basic conditions needed for a free-market economy to function.

In fragile states, the traditional arguments for the provision of public schooling do not apply because, in fragile states, the definition of public schooling does not apply. Government run schooling does not necessarily promote social cohesion and might work against it if schooling is seen as a source of conflict. The economic benefits of public schooling are not observable for the individual and the nation. Furthermore, the international actors often overshadow or share the national Government's power. We need to ask whether the debate about private vs. public education centers around these three issues makes any sense in such scenarios.

Do we sacrifice sustainability and ownership for MDG and EFA goals?

This study has highlighted that EFA and MDG goals for universal enrollment are at the heart of the push towards liberalizing private school regulations. Time-bound mandates such as MDG and EFA force fragile nations to expand educational services at alarmingly high rates, as seen in the case of Afghanistan. Fragile states have weak and ineffective educational systems, making it virtually impossible for the state to effectively expand educational services at the rate mandated by the time-bound commitments to MDG and EFA goals. By necessity, the state outsources the provision of services to non-state actors. These non-state actors are usually NGOs and increasingly privately run schools. This outsourcing exacerbates the pressures of fragility and further weakens an already weak state.

Fragile states already have a legitimacy crisis. These states are usually amid a violent contestation for state power centered around national cohesion and independence of the nation-state. The population of fragile states is unstable and divided about their national identity. As demonstrated in this study, easy-fix solutions of outsourcing the provision of schooling to non-state actors create parallel systems that are usually propped by the fragility of international involvement. These parallel systems are, in fact, not systems but donor-driven programs. As soon as the programs close, the educational system collapses—the case of Afghanistan after the US withdrawal is a sobering example. The international community spent over 2 billion USD on educational programs in Afghanistan. However, because sustainable systems were not developed, the entire infrastructure virtually collapsed in days.

Finally, education and schooling are contested fields in fragile states. As discussed in the previous section, expansion of the schooling system was done to promote free-market economics, counterterrorism and promote certain social norms within a Western paradigm. The exponential expansion of education was interpreted by the forces opposing the GIRoA as hegemonic expansion, and they used this as propaganda to further weaken the fragile state's legitimacy.

As Ball et al. (2015) highlight, historically, developed countries took several generations to reach universal primary enrollment. These countries expanded their educational systems at their own pace and constraints. The time-bound mandates of MDG require fragile and aid-dependent countries that already lack most of the structures of a functioning state to complete this task in 15 years. Requiring fragile states to accomplish this seems like an absurd proposition. As of now, no time-bound mandate for

universal enrollment has been met by the international community (Klees, 2017). In such a scenario, we have to debate the purpose and usefulness of these time-bound mandates for fragile nations.

Areas for Future Research

This study used an instrumental case-study design and Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework with educational transfer literature to explore the factors that influenced the adoption of private school policies in Afghanistan. By design, this was an exploratory study. Specifically, I used Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) continuum of policy transfer to determine the level of coercion in educational policy transfer, and I used Cairney's concept of 'policy transfer window' to operationalize the synthesis of the Multiple Streams Framework with the educational transfer literature. To further refine the concepts that were explored in this study, I propose four specific areas for future research.

Additional case studies should be conducted in other fragile state environments to further understand the dynamics of policy formulation, adoption, and transfer. Additional cases will advance our understanding of whether the dynamics uncovered in Afghanistan are observed in other fragile states.

To my knowledge, this was the first use of Cairney's concept of a 'policy transfer window.' This study showed that the concept can be operationalized to synthesis MSF with the educational transfer literature. An interesting finding from this study was that by using the concept of the policy transfer window, the role and nature of the policy entrepreneur expanded. Future research should use the concept of policy transfer window

within other developing countries to see if similar results can be replicated and further refine the mechanisms of operationalizing the policy transfer window.

One of the problematic areas that this study uncovered was whether the assumptions and characteristics of public schooling in stable societies hold up and have the same meaning in fragile state environments. Future research should further explore the intricacies to differentiate between aid-dependent government provision of schooling, private schooling, and domestically funded public educational systems.

This study was one of the first comprehensive studies that explored the dynamics of educational policy formulation, adoption, and transfer within Afghanistan. Specifically, this study explored the newly emerged private school phenomenon in Afghanistan. Other research should delve into the differences between private and Government-run schools in Afghanistan. Additionally, right after the end of my fieldwork in Afghanistan, the regime in the country changed. Future research should explore how the change in the regime affects the findings of this study.

Conclusion

This study investigated the trends, nature, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan. More specifically, this research investigated the role of national decision-makers and international donor agency representatives in influencing the liberalization of private school policies. The study drew upon international literature on privatization and aid dependency. Theoretically, this study used a combination of Kingdon's (1995) Multiple Streams Framework and the education policy transfer literature to understand privatization policies and the discussion surrounding them in Afghanistan.

The study found that international involvement in Afghanistan post-2001 brought conditionalities in the form of structural adjustment plans that conditioned aid on a free-market economy, amongst other conditions. Additionally, in 2000, the global education organizations committed to universal primary education by 2015 as part of the Millennium Global Development goals. The MDG's commitment to universal primary education coincided almost precisely with international involvement with Afghanistan. The conditionalities placed on GIRoA to promote a free-market economy and the commitments to UPE were the primary factors that influenced the Ministry of Education's decision to liberalize private school regulations. At the same time, Afghanistan's political leadership changed, non-governmental organizations became a primary source of public service delivery, and millions of refugees returned to Afghanistan from neighboring countries of Pakistan and Iran. These factors, combined with the conditionalities and UPE commitments, came together to create the opportunity for adopting more liberalized private school policies for the nation.

On a theoretical level, this study highlights several key elements of the policy process, mainly how certain conditions come to be defined as a pressing problem in need of a solution in a fragile state. At the same time, it showcases how Kingdon's (1995) Multiple Stream Framework can extend our understanding of theories of policy transfer. More specifically, this case study showcases the practical use of Cairney's concept of 'policy transfer window' and Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) policy transfer continuum to understand policy formulation and adoption in fragile state contexts.

As the international political and policy contexts become increasingly complex in aid-dependent nations and seek ways to scale up successful educational interventions, it

is critical to understand why and how specific reforms move through the policy process to become law. In the case of liberalizing the private school policies in Afghanistan, the policy, problem, and political streams joined together. As a result, a policy transfer window opened to change the private school landscape in the country drastically. On the one hand, the emergence of a new political reality that was much more favorable to privatization reforms enabled a “softening up” of the policy space so that expansion of private schools shifted from a stigma to an acceptable ideological alternative. On the other hand, international policy entrepreneurs and policy transfer forces played an outsized role in influencing the adoption of liberalized private school policies common in other developing countries to Afghanistan, which had previously vehemently opposed the expansion of private schools.

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Background Questions

- Tell me a little about your background.
 - How long have you been involved with the education sector in Afghanistan?
 - Please describe how you are involved (or have been involved) in the education sector. Do you currently or have you worked with the Ministry of Education directly? Do you currently work with any international organizations that are focused on education in Afghanistan?
- Have you been involved in policymaking for the education sector? If so, please describe it in detail.
- Are you familiar with the debates about the privatization of education in Afghanistan?
- Are you familiar with privatization policies related to education in Afghanistan?

Policy Questions

- Can you please describe how public education get financed in Afghanistan?
- How familiar are you with the proliferation of private schools in Afghanistan?
 - If you had to guess, how many private schools are in your neighborhood?
 - Do you know the fee structure of private schools? If so, please describe it.
 - Who are the people that attend the private schools in your neighborhood? What percentage of your neighborhood can afford to send their kids to private schools?
 - How do you assess the quality of private vs. public schools?
 - Are there any equity and access concerns that private schools introduce?
- Are you familiar with the policies and initiatives on privatization in Afghanistan?
 - In your opinion, do the current policies promote the privatization of education in Afghanistan?
 - What are your thoughts on the privatization of education in Afghanistan? Can privatization of education solve some of our educational problems?
 - What are some of the positive consequences of the privatization of education, specifically in Afghanistan?
 - What are some of the negative consequences of the privatization of education, specifically in Afghanistan?
- Who are the key players advocating for (and against) privatization of primary and secondary education?
- Do you think that international financing affects educational policy formulation in Afghanistan? If so, please describe it.
 - What role do international donors play in the education policy decision making?
 - Do you know of any conditions that international donors place on their funding for education? If so, please describe it.
 - To what extent donors impact the government's decision to adopt educational privatization policies? Please describe
- How, if at all, does donor dependency and lack of public financing catalyze educational privatization in Afghanistan?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Project Title	<i>PRIVATIZATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AFGHANISTAN</i>
Purpose of the Study	<i>This research is being conducted by Ghulam Omar Qargha at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are knowledgeable about the subject matter. The purpose of this research project is to investigate the trends, nature, and driving forces behind the privatization of primary and secondary education in Afghanistan. More specifically, this research will investigate the role of international donor agencies and national decision-makers in the promotion and discussion of privatization policies.</i>
Procedures	<i>You are being asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will take no more than 30 minutes. This study involves the audio taping of your interview with the researcher. The tapes will be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions are checked for accuracy. A sample question that you will be asked is: “Who are the key players advocating for (and against) privatization of primary and secondary education?”</i>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<i>There are no known risks. You can skip any question that you do not want to answer.</i>
Potential Benefits	<i>There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of key issues regarding privatization of education, specifically in Afghanistan, and more generally in fragile nations.</i>
Confidentiality	<i>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a secure location such as: locked office, locked cabinet, and password protected computer.</i> <i>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.</i> <i>Only the research team will be able to listen to the audio tapes. Transcripts of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.</i>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not</i>

	<p><i>to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</i></p> <p><i>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ghulam Omar Qargha 9307 Deborah Court, Manassas Park, VA 20111 - USA oqargha@umd.edu +1 571-432-6433</p>	
Participant Rights	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p><i>For more information regarding participant rights, please visit:</i> https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants</p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>	
Statement of Consent	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF PARTICIPANT	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Appendix C: Codebook

Name	Description	Files	References
% of National Budget		7	7
Aid		6	7
Driving Forces for Privatization		51	281
Borrowing		8	11
Competitiveness		10	16
Efficiency		7	12
Feedback	MS (Problem Stream) Feedback from other programs helps highlight what works and what does not work for policymakers and the public. Information plays a critical role in the value of feedback. Since information is not value-neutral, the general perception of the success of a policy or program can influence its utility for other arenas. If a solution is seen as successfully implemented in one sector, it can facilitate the adoption of the same policy solution to another unrelated sector.	12	18
Lending		28	70
Load	MS (Problem Stream) Policymakers have a limited amount of time and attention. The number of difficult problems that occupy policymakers' attention is referred to as the problem load in the Multiple Streams framework. The higher the load of problems that policymakers are dealing with, the more difficult it will be for a new problem to receive attention	12	24
National Mood	MS (politics stream) The national mood is how the general public feels towards the issue and is measured either formally through polls or through non-formal means like media or personal perceptions. If policymakers feel that the majority of the public is in support of an idea, they will tend to give attention to that issue.	17	39
Party-Ideology	MS (politics stream) The ruling party ideology steers the focus of policymakers either towards promoting or inhibiting policy options. Therefore, change in administration or legislation provides opportunities for policymakers to focus on new items that align better with the new administration's ideology.	23	91
Nature of Private Schools	Quality, Access, Equity, Financing, Borrowing or Lending or Copying	31	205
Access	Access to Private Schools	16	40
definitions and parameters		11	23
Equity		20	61
Quality	Quality of Private vs. Public Schools	20	80
Process of Policy Formation		27	112
Integrated network	MS (Policy Stream) if the policy proposal is championed by an integrated network – a network that is small, has high capacity, is formed consensually, and has greater access to policymakers – there is a higher likelihood that the	2	4

	policy proposal will survive. (Donors - private school business men - etc)		
Key Players (policy entrepreneurs)	Access, resources, strategies - framing, salami tactics, symbols, affect priming	22	86
Interest Groups	MS (politics stream) Finally, special interest groups, or pressure groups, serve as a mechanism to signal to policymakers the level of political support that a certain idea has. Policymakers will tend to support ideas that they feel have substantial political support	2	2
Technical Feasibility	MS (Policy Stream) policy proposals that are perceived to be too difficult to implement or require too much capital or human resources (resource adequacy) are also not likely to survive the soup of ideas	5	12
Value Acceptability	MS (Policy Stream) Proposals that do not conform to the values of the key policymakers (value acceptability) will have a much harder chance of surviving	5	10
Trends in Private Education	Information about number, quality, access, financing, policy status (but not about policy decision)	53	273
Educational Financing		35	160
Financing PVT SCHOOL		11	24
Focusing Events	Multiple Streams (Problem Stream) Focusing events are critical moments, such as crises or elections, that bring a particular condition to the attention of the public and policymakers. Wood (2006) describes focusing events as events that occur suddenly, are rare and large in scale, and policymakers and the public find out about the event at the same time.	10	20
Indicators	Multiple Stream (Problem Stream) Indicators are measures that describe trends, the state, or level of specific conditions impacting human beings or their environment. Policymakers use indicators to identify and monitor conditions that can become potential problems. Mortality rates, literacy rates, cost of programs, and attendance rates are examples of indicators that highlight conditions and influence policymakers	13	41
Number of Schools	Number of Private Schools	19	52

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