

Research:

The Education in Afghanistan underwent significant improvements under the rule of King Zahir Shah between 1993 and 1973, making primary schools available to about half the population under 12 years and expanding the secondary and tertiary education systems. Education was encouraged for both men and women and widespread literacy programs were introduced, however a large percentage of the population remained illiterate.

Beginning with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, successive wars virtually destroyed the education system, with most teachers fleeing the country.

In 1996, the Taliban regime banned education for females, and the madrassa (mosque school) became the main source of education. However after the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, the Afghan government received international aid to restore their education system. In 2003, it was estimated that 57% of men and 86% of women were illiterate.

Planning curricula and school programs is difficult for the Ministry of Education because a significant amount of their budget comes from external donors, due to lack of government funding. Some Afghan parents refuse to let their daughters attend school due to schools being set up in unprotected structures (like tents) because the Taliban have destroyed most proper schools; and some don't want their daughters to be taught by men due to a lack of female teachers. Just over 42% of the Afghan school-age population do not attend school.

Link to encountering conflict:

The context "encountering conflict" is linked to the struggling Afghan education system. The Soviet invasion of in 1979 sparked the beginning of successive wars in Afghanistan, and this type of violent conflict has virtually ruined Afghanistan's education system with buildings being destroyed and many civilians (including teachers) fleeing the country.

Conflicts between the Afghan government and the Taliban were also to blame for the destruction of the education system implemented by King Zahir Shah- with the Taliban physically destroying most proper schools and banning education from girls.

Link to The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif:

Education is linked to the text by Najaf's discussion of the dynamics of the Australian primary school his daughter Maria attends (p43-44). You can see the obvious contrasts between the information about Afghan education and Australian education. Unlike Afghanistan, Najaf's daughter is *allowed* to be in school (unlike Afghanistan under Taliban domination), Maria's school- as well as every other Australian school- is held in a proper building, the general vibe of Maria's school is lively and happy (contrary to how Afghan schools are described in the text where teachers are very strict, discipline with violence and the children dread school). Also, it's compulsory for all Australians under the age of 16 (year 10 and below) to attend school. In Afghanistan, education is still optional, and in the text, Najaf dropped out of school at age 12.