Supporting students through culturally responsive teaching and learning materials

Lessons from Afghanistan

CIES 2020

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The Afghan Children Read program is a USAID-funded primary education initiative:

- To improve equitable access to education and generate measurable reading outcomes for girls and boys in Afghanistan.
- To build the capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in providing an evidence-based early grade reading (EGR) program (in Dari and Pashto) for students in Grades 1 to 3 in both formal and Community-Based Education (CBE) schools.
- Implemented in four provinces in Afghanistan: Herat, Nangarhar, Laghman and Kabul
Building Capacity on Early Grade Reading

1. On the job training materials developers
2. Inservice Training for Teachers to use the new materials
3. On the job professional development through coaching and teacher learning circles
4. Preservice EGR courses
5. Organizational Capacity Building for MoE staff.
Materials Development: Collaborative Process

- Acting Minister
- Advisors of Acting Minister
- MoE curriculum team and ACR experts
- Review committee MoE
- Teachers students, PED, DED
- Advisor of Afghan President

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Materials included

1. Teacher’s guide
2. Student book
3. Student workbook
4. Continuous assessment book
Materials Development Process
Developing culturally responsive teaching & learning materials
Afghan Children Read’s Assessment of its Reading Materials

Categories of Assessment
• Content of materials
• Use of the materials
• Gender
• SEL
• Disabled students

‘For the first time in the history of education, a written test is given to Grade 3 students. Because of these books, they could give the written test, because they can write now.’

In these materials there is no content about war, conflict and guns as there were in the previous curriculum. Instead, in these materials there are topics and lessons about unity, peace, friendship, love with the country and other good topics.
• After one year of implementation, an EGRA midline was conducted and it shows increase of good readers and in significant decrease of nonreaders.
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Language and Script Adjustments

• Added list with key vocabulary to Teacher’s guide
  • Literacy related
  • Dialectal differences
• Used diacritics to make the script transparent
• Alphabetic script yet syllabic approach
Curriculum Reform – Merging subjects

• Inclusion of calligraphy in the Early Grade Reading Curriculum

• Calligraphy became part of the scope and sequence
  • Pedagogy
  • Reinforcing letters and words learned

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Inclusion of Social Emotional Learning

• SEL is included and integrated to respond to context of conflict and crises.

• SEL is included in:
  • Early Grade Reading method
  • Inservice teacher’s training
  • Coaching
  • Preservice training for teachers

“The minds of the children have become stronger – they are alert, more active than before.” (FGD participant)
Gender Responsive

- Gender sensitive
- Equal representation of genders
- Equity
- Transformative roles

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Gender: girls included
Provide model that boys and girls can do the same work and even work together.
Gender: Father replaced by Mother
Provide different role models of females: a mother can also help with schoolwork.
Gender: Females as part of meeting
Provide different role models of females: females can also be part of committees and meetings.
Father and daughter interaction
Gender: Cultural Adjustments
No hair shown of teacher (no female in books) but a happier classroom.

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Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Materials

- It is a process to develop culturally responsive materials and needs time and input from people from different walks of life
- It requires working with principles and contextualizing them
- It implies context specific cross cutting themes
- In Afghanistan, it was also a capacity building process
  - Each comment and input provided opportunities for interaction and discussion of content, illustrations (purpose), layout
- In Afghanistan it has resulted in the new Early Grade Reading Materials becoming the national materials for teaching reading and writing