

Background paper prepared for
the Global Education Monitoring Report

Non-state actors in education

Adult literacy and learning for social change: innovation, influence and the role of non-state actors

**Case studies from Afghanistan, China,
the Philippines and Senegal**

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ABSTRACT

The four case studies offer insights into how non-state actors in these contrasting country contexts have influenced adult literacy and learning, not only within education but across sectors. Whilst several key non-state actors reviewed here were initially invited by governments to fill the gaps in adult literacy or learning provision through contributing technical expertise or finance, they began to play a strong role in expanding the curriculum, working with different community-level organisations and/or new approaches to learning (including online). Their impact ranged from introducing innovative learning spaces and adult literacy approaches, to developing systems for quality assurance and accreditation and finding new ways to engage with previously marginalised groups. Exploring the complexity of relationships between state and non-state actors, this overview argues that changing social values that lie beyond formal development and educational institutions are influencing the kind of adult education provided by the state. There is an urgent need for strong state leadership and dedicated funding to ensure that high quality and inclusive adult literacy and learning programmes can operate successfully on a national scale and non-state actors could play a greater role in advocating for such changes.

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDIES FROM AFGHANISTAN, CHINA, THE PHILIPPINES AND SENEGAL

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INTRODUCTION

This overview provides a framework for the four case studies, comparing the main findings and exploring the implications for the provision of adult literacy and learning in these diverse contexts. Whilst non-state actors have often focused on ‘filling the gap’ in the under-resourced adult education sector, there is also evidence of their engagement with more diverse groups through innovative learning/teaching approaches, and facilitating new forms of knowledge, organisation and action. Thus, their influence may go beyond providing functional literacy or workforce skills, and can include generating new evidence for community action and wider public awareness on social issues.

Whilst there has been considerable research into the influence and reach of non-state actors in the formal education sector, particularly in relation to children’s schooling, it is worth noting that non-formal and informal adult learning has often been overlooked. For instance, Steer et al’s (2015: 23) framing paper on non-state actors in education discussed the ‘critical need for more evidence on how and under what circumstances non-state actors... contribute to quality, equitable, and efficient education service delivery’. Yet their paper is focused exclusively on children and conflates education with ‘schooling’. The research agenda has been largely shaped by debates on private schooling in low-income communities, leading to typologies of non-state and state actors in education being constructed around funding (profit versus non-profit) and governance structures, rather than types of education or specific groups of learners. The starting point of this paper is to take a broader lens on non-state actors in education, through considering adult and youth participants, informal learning and not being limited to interventions within the education sector.

In order to investigate non-state actors’ innovative practices and influence on adult learning, case studies were constructed from four countries with contrasting histories and development of relationships between non-state actors and the State in education. Drawing on Mitchell’s (1984) distinction between a ‘telling’ and a ‘typical’ case study, the aim was to identify and analyse findings that could provide new ways of understanding the roles and relationships of non-state actors within adult learning (a ‘telling’ case study), rather than to attempt to generalise from these small-scale studies to other contexts (as might be possible with a ‘typical’ case study). Within each country, cases were selected to explore a diversity of learning spaces and adult literacy approaches developed by non-state actors. These include: online informal and formal adult learning, non-formal adult literacy linked to empowerment and skill development, informal individualised literacy support and ‘hands-on’ learning for social and

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political action. An important objective was also to examine how non-state actors have promoted adult literacy and learning within sectors beyond education and the implications for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In this regard, these case studies were selected to explore the connections between adult learning and health, climate change and women's empowerment.

Conceptual framing of the case studies

Informed by the concept of literacy as a social practice (Street 1993), the research took the starting point of multiple literacies and learning as embedded in everyday practices and constructed through relationships of power. Rather than assuming that there is one universal neutral literacy and a divide between literate and non-literate individuals and societies, the social practice model recognises multiple literacies, some more dominant than others, and a continuum between literacy and illiteracy (Robinson-Pant 2016). Barton and Hamilton (2000: 8) point out that 'literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others' and that 'different literacies (are) associated with different domains of life'. The literacy learning in schools or adult literacy programmes has often been observed as disconnected from learning in everyday life, being described as 'schooled literacy' (Street and Street 1991) and often valued more highly than indigenous or local literacies. The case studies explore diverse literacies and domains – including health, environmental, enterprise, work-based, religious, 'schooled' and political.

Rogers' (2000) distinction between a 'literacy first' and a 'literacy second' approach brings the concept of multiple and 'situated literacies' (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) into the adult learning context. The dilemma for educators and educational planners is whether to start by learning 'schooled literacy' in a classroom, or by facilitating literacy learning through, for instance, an activity such as beekeeping or working in a shop. The notion of a continuum between literacy and 'illiteracy' is particularly relevant for these case studies in considering digital literacies – where a highly literate individual (in relation to academic or school literacy) might still be learning basic digital literacy. A similar conceptualisation of formal, non-formal and informal learning (as a continuum rather than as discrete categories) also informs the case studies. As Colley et al (2003) suggest, it is 'more accurate to conceive of formality and informality as attributes present in all circumstances of learning'. Drawing on Rogers' (2013: 5) proposal of a continuum 'ranging from accidental/incidental learning, through self-directed learning to non-formal and informal learning', the case studies set out to investigate different kinds of learning processes supported or introduced by non-state actors – rather than assuming all adult literacy programmes are by definition 'non-formal' learning.

The decision to explore adult literacy and learning for 'social change' rather 'development' signals an attempt to take account of unplanned (as well as planned) and spontaneous learning and change in the case studies. The concept draws on Castles' (2001: 15) discussion of development and social transformation: 'Development implies a teleological belief in progression towards a predetermined goal: usually the type of economy and society to be found in the 'highly developed' western countries. Social transformation, by contrast, does not imply any predetermined outcome, nor that the process is essentially a positive one.' Adkins (2003: 21) emphasises the role of learning within such processes, observing that: 'It is possible when there is a critical reflexive stance towards

formerly normalized – or at least taken-for-granted – social conditions’. This starting point offered a framework for analysing changing values and practices (for instance, due to commercialisation) – particularly appropriate as the remit of many non-state actors extends beyond collaboration with the state or NGOs in implementing ‘development’ interventions.

Methodology

The research for the case studies took place between July and September 2020, after approval by the University of East Anglia Research Ethics Committee. In each country, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of non-state actors to identify innovative practices and with state actors for additional data on ‘influence’. These interviews were conducted online or by phone due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on travel and face-to-face interaction. The case studies are also based on secondary data analysis of websites, curriculum materials and policy documentation. The research team consisted of the four case study researchers - Qingru Wang (China case study), Helene Binesse (Senegal), Chris Millora (the Philippines) and Mohammad Naeim Maleki (Afghanistan) – led by Anna Robinson-Pant and with critical feedback from Alan Rogers and Catherine Jere (all are members of the UEA UNESCO Chair in Adult Literacy and Learning for Social Transformation). The case studies and this overview were developed through comparative reflective discussion within the team of the emerging findings across the four different country contexts

CONTEXT REVIEW

The historical accounts reveal the long-standing involvement of non-state actors in education: in China before 1949, many traditional primary and secondary schools were run by individuals or NGOs, and mosques have been providing education to adults and children in Afghanistan for many decades. What has changed is the relationship between non-state providers and the State, and the diversity of non-state actors now engaged in adult learning in all four countries. In Senegal, there has been a clear shift from Government-run literacy programmes to a partnership with civil society organisations – prompted by the lack of sufficient national allocated budget for adult literacy. As part of their response to post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan, the Government similarly turned to NGOs to help provide adult literacy programmes, particularly in the rural areas and to promote the inclusion of ‘hard-to-reach’ groups. In China, the growing emphasis on online learning has required the support of private companies who may work in partnership with the Government or be guided by state regulations. By contrast with China where NGOs require a legal agreement to engage in adult education, in the Philippines there are weak regulatory frameworks and NGOs do not need to register formally. Whilst there are private universities working with the Government to provide adult literacy courses here, many NGOs have tended to position themselves as campaigning organisations, with a view that challenges the State.

These changing relationships and new public-private partnerships have influenced the kind of education and literacy initiatives in which non-state actors are involved. In China, the government’s lifelong learning policy has broadened from the earlier emphasis on vocational skills/training to embrace ‘non-work’ skills, encouraging private companies

to work in partnership on developing a new online learning platform (Xuexi Qiangguo) and accreditation of such learning. As well as gaining recognition and a title, learners can transfer their credits to get real-life products such as books, agricultural products or mobile data. In Afghanistan, the Government also works in partnership with non-state actors to develop accreditation systems and awards a certificate (equivalent to school grade 3) for literacy programmes provided by NGOs. In Senegal, the partnership with NGOs led to curriculum diversification, including the acknowledgement of the REFLECT approach which linked social literacies and empowerment. A model of disbursed adult education can be observed in the Philippines – more informal adult/youth learning taking place through activism and programmes provided by local and national NGOs, whereas basic adult literacy is provided through government institutions as well as private universities, NGOs and community groups that the State either hires or partners with.

Adult literacy around the world has been shaped by the minimal state budget allocation and these countries are no exception: only 2.5% of the national education budget in Afghanistan is allocated for adult literacy, compared to 0.22% reported in the case of Senegal and 0.008% in the Philippines. Whilst there is often public rhetoric that all should engage in adult literacy, very little budget is allocated by the State and this has been a major influence on the involvement and roles of non-state actors. The four case studies suggest that there are more public-private adult education partnerships in China and the Philippines than in Senegal and Afghanistan, where the majority of non-state actors are NGOs (national and local), CBOs or indigenous institutions. In the Philippines, many businesses (co)finance adult education programmes and the case study notes an example of a pharmaceutical company funding small NGOs to run training projects. The decreasing budget and reducing political priority given to adult literacy is well illustrated by the Senegal case study, where adult literacy has moved from being a separate Ministry twenty years ago to being mainly a directorate within the Ministry of Education today. The case studies also demonstrate that the lack of resources and appropriate personnel often meant that it was difficult to implement the quality assurance mechanisms which were there on paper. In Afghanistan, the interviewees suggested that the Government was unable to roll out the learner profile assessment developed by UNESCO owing to a lack of funding. Resources are not only allocated by governments: in Afghanistan, local communities contribute directly to the salary and accommodation of teachers who teach them and their children religious literacy in the mosques.

Regarding quality assurance, the voluntary nature of the formal registration system for NGOs in the Philippines makes it difficult to monitor the quality of non-state provision, or to ensure better coordination and reduce duplication of NGO programmes. The China case study illustrates the specific challenges around quality assurance for online learning provided by non-state actors (individuals and for-profit companies) – such as how to ensure material shared on health chat rooms was ‘true’. Though the government plays a strong role in regulating material, particularly with regard to their partner organisations, the rapid spread of new online learning spaces makes the monitoring of informal online learning near impossible and points to the importance of adult learners gaining critical literacy skills.

Comparing findings across these four countries, non-state actors appear to play a stronger role in provision in Afghanistan, with a greater diversity of organisations and individuals engaged in adult literacy instruction. Many are working directly under government guidance to fill gaps, though many (for instance, the philanthropists and 6500 mosque educators) are not monitored. The scope and influence of non-state actors is particularly notable in China, where companies are working closely with the government to diversify approaches to online learning, and in Senegal where civil society organisations are seen as equal partners, not only in providing literacy classes but also in influencing the curriculum and monitoring mechanisms of State provision. The Philippines case study reveals significant differences between the scope of the various non-state actors reviewed. Whilst private universities are partnering with the government to provide basic adult education, many NGOs aim to reach more marginalised groups (for instance, indigenous communities, urban poor) and challenge the Government through activism and formulating policy from the bottom-up. The following table summarises the chosen focus and scope of the case studies in relation to the type of non-state actors reviewed and relationship with government, target groups, kind of learning spaces, source of funding and cross-sectoral linkages.

Table: Comparison of the case studies

	Afghanistan	China	Philippines	Senegal
Which non-state actors are the focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National NGO • International NGO • Local NGO • Individual philanthropists • Mosques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National NGO • For-profit companies • Individual chatroom organisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National NGO • Community organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National NGO • Local NGO • Community organisation • Other civil society actors • International NGO
What is the relationship with state actors?	Government registers NGOs & guides their remit/geographical area. No monitoring of mosques	Government in partnership with companies, guides content as well as governance	Registration voluntary and not required Co-implement state youth education programmes Influences local-level policy-making through lobbying and campaigning	Committee led by Government to develop, implement coordinate and monitor activities
Where are resources coming from?	International donors Government Community (time, salary for mosque teachers and rooms)	Government National NGO Private companies Individuals (time)	Government International NGO and donor agencies	International NGOs and donor agencies Government
Who is targeted or involved?	Adult non-literate population	General adult population (including university educated)	Youth population	Youth and Adult non-literate population

What kind of learning spaces?	Nonformal classrooms, mosque classes, homes/shops	Online learning spaces	Nonformal workshops, on-the-job training and online	Non-formal classes
What kind of learning, which literacies and skills?	Basic literacy, numeracy & vocational skills Religious literacy in Arabic in mosques	Work and non-work or leisure skills, higher level academic literacy	Activism skills and literacies	Basic literacy and numeracy Vocational skills Social mobilisation/ awareness raising
How does learning connect with other sectors/SDGs?	Focus on literacy/numeracy and SDG4 (education), some NGOs focus on linking adult literacy and health, livelihoods	Link with health education, enterprise development and self-improvement	Focus on environmental action and sustainability	Focus on education/literacy. Vocational skills and health education

REVIEW OF PRACTICES

These case studies offer insights into the ways in which non-state actors – including for-profit and not-for-profit companies and institutions, INGOs, national NGOs, local NGOs, CBOs and individuals - have influenced government policy on adult learning, not only within education but across other sectors. Their impact on practices for social change extends from introducing innovative literacy approaches and new learning spaces, to developing systems for quality assurance and accreditation, and responding to diverse groups.

The influence of non-state actors on national adult education policy

The relationship between non-state actors and the Government needs to be seen as more complex than simply engaging and influencing policy in a one-way direction. As the case study from Senegal illustrates, the State has been strategic in working with NGOs as a key resource for adult literacy – valuing them not only for their strong connections with communities where the classes will be run, but also for their relationship with international NGOs and the donor communities. The partnership of civil society and the State through the ‘faire faire’ approach means that the Government could help shape priorities within adult literacy and learning, whilst also encouraging NGOs to look outwards for resources, technical expertise, professional development initiatives and interaction with international donors. An NGO’s programme needs to be endorsed by the Literacy Directorate – this is important for the NGO too and its partnership with INGOs (as they also want to be in line with Government strategy). Whereas the Government in Senegal may have begun with a more limited view of non-state actors’ potential contribution (i.e. as providers), the case study reveals that NGOs began to influence monitoring and curriculum, and significantly influenced where literacy was situated in policy institutions. In this case, the starting point was the articulation of youth literacy with skills development and this approach led to contributing a programme within the Senegal Ministry of Women, Family and Gender.

In China, the Government similarly took the initiative to invite non-state actors to enhance the quality and reach of adult learning – here, a for-profit company worked in partnership to create spaces for online learning. Whilst the government created and guided much of the curriculum content, NGOs and private companies contributed technical expertise and accreditation mechanisms (offering material rewards for accumulated credits). This suggests that private companies' commercial values and practices could be influencing and transforming the Government's traditional assessment procedures. Comparing this example with the Afghanistan case study, the opposite process might be observed – with the Government offering school equivalent qualifications to adults completing the NGO literacy course. Here, the NGOs were also required to check that their goals were in line with government priorities before beginning to work in literacy, though there was stronger coordination/interaction between State and non-state actors in Kabul than in the rural districts.

All the case studies offer insights into **how** non-state actors influence state actors, and this is particularly evident in the increasing policy recognition of adult literacy as a cross-sectoral activity and priority. The case studies from Senegal and the Philippines illustrate how NGOs have greater agility than government to move between and work across sectors, exploring learning approaches that can promote greater understanding, skills and action to address areas like health, women's empowerment and the natural environment. This could make it difficult to recognise the impact of non-state actors on adult learning and literacy, as their influence may not be seen directly in the education sector but in agriculture, health or the environmental sector (as in the Philippines case study). The development of literacy initiatives with the Ministry of Women, Family and Gender in Senegal shows the potential of partnership with civil society to transform rigid institutional and sectoral barriers that are sometimes intensified by separate government ministries. These experiences suggest that education actors may not be aware of literacy development support within other sectoral skill development or extension programmes. Common assumptions in the education sector - such as the teacher needing to be a literacy specialist, or that non-literate learners should be taught separately from educated participants - may not be apparent in other sectors, where diverse groups are working together with agricultural, health or livelihoods specialists.

Another example of non-state actors' influence on government policy relates to the challenge of monitoring and evaluation in Senegal. The NGO Alphadev approached the Government Literacy Directorate (DALN) to evaluate their programme and learners' outcomes in 2018, leading to the integration of their literacy results in official national statistics. This was achieved through the coordinating body set up by the Government collaborating with non-state actors to address governance issues. Improving the assessment of the learning achievements has been the focus of UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning's research programme RAMAA (Action Research: Measuring Literacy Programme Participants' Learning Outcomes) to work with the Government on certification to standardise assessment and ensure quality. By contrast, in the Philippines, the case study NGO, Save the Philippine Seas (SPS), has worked to influence Government environmental policy through political lobbying especially at the local level, encouraging young people to campaign through experiential learning, use of social media and learning organisational skills.

The findings give insights into the often ambivalent relationship between the State and non-state actors. Whilst NGOs may be invited to contribute technical expertise, financial support and networks (international and community-level) to enhance adult learning programmes and coverage, the Government may not welcome influence on governance structures or curricula, including what kind of literacy is promoted. There are also questions related to how or whether to regulate this relationship between the State and non-state actors in order to enhance quality – as suggested by the examples from Afghanistan of philanthropists and mosque educators who operate independently and without much government support or control.

Innovation for social change

The influence of non-state actors on government policy and practice has been reviewed above in terms of their innovative approaches to governance and quality assurance. These included: new mechanisms in Afghanistan to improve coordination between providers (the LIFE networking group), ways of mobilising resources through international funders in Senegal, and China's new system for online learning accreditation. NGO providers in Senegal also made important contributions to professionalising adult literacy, through UNESCO developing systems to recognise prior learning that could enable adult learners to become certified facilitators, and providing continuing professional development opportunities for facilitators through REFLECT networks, including international visits to learn from literacy work elsewhere.

The case studies offer strong evidence of innovative approaches to teaching and learning developed by non-state actors, challenging the 'one-size-fits-all' model of many adult literacy providers. Central to innovation for social change is the idea that learning does not have to take place in a classroom, nor have to be organised by a teacher, and that adult learners bring rich skills and experiences to build on. Taking the concept of 'social transformation' as encompassing 'development' but also spontaneous and unplanned change implies putting informal learning and 'situated literacies' (Barton and Hamilton, 2000) centre stage. The Philippines case study demonstrates how an experiential learning approach – through hands-on workshops including engaging with campaign literacy practices ('situated literacies'), rather than a focus on relaying information – can help young people to learn about environmental issues and become active in political lobbying. Through pitching a project, they learned and practised the soft skills (including leadership) necessary to become active as environmental campaigners at a national as well as local level. Organised by a team of committed environmentalists, this approach seems quite different from the Afghanistan example of an individual philanthropist teaching in a man's shop. Yet the approach has some similarities in that this is also responding to the specific context and is 'customised' for the learner's everyday numeracy needs – an 'on-the-job', 'literacy second' (Rogers, 2000) or embedded literacy and numeracy approach. The more common 'literacy first' approach is often promoted by large-scale state and non-state providers, underpinned by dominant ideologies around the need to be literate in order to participate in development programmes and supported by statistical evidence of the link between women's literacy and development indicators (see Robinson-Pant 2006).

The China case study illustrates how individuals can become resource providers through online communities. Like the philanthropist interviewed in Afghanistan, the mother who facilitates a chat room for other parents explained that she did not do this for profit but more for solidarity and supporting her own community. She began by exploring information online about her own daughter's health, then realised she could set up a learning space to connect with and help other parents. The example shows how this learning space grew organically and how the manager positions herself less as a teacher and more as a facilitator of resources, calling in experts to give advice and information to the group.

The case studies reveal a diversity of literacy learning approaches promoted by non-state actors, rather than the school-like literacy instruction (in an official national language) that often characterises large-scale government programmes. In Senegal, the NGO programme recognises and promotes local languages through publishing materials after the course which can be used by learners to support reading and writing in their mother tongue. In Afghanistan, the typology of literacy approaches includes Government literacy (which might be regarded along with post-literacy as 'schooled' literacy, Street and Street 1991), and also skills-based literacy, religious literacy, customised literacy (individualised support and curriculum) and post-literacy (literacy schools for adults offering classes from 4th to 12th grade). The partnership with various INGOs led Alphadev in Senegal to link literacy and skills development and then to develop Freirean approaches to literacy through REFLECT addressing issues around health and gender-based violence. The Philippines case study differs in that the NGO is working with young people who already have basic literacy skills, but they are learning to engage with new literacy practices for advocacy purposes, including using social media to influence companies and policy makers. The case studies thus offer insights into different literacies (religious, schooled, functional, digital) as well as innovative literacy teaching and learning approaches. As NGOs usually work intensively with a relatively small number of communities, a common concern is how such context-responsive approaches can be scaled up. The Senegal and Afghanistan case studies illustrate how NGOs can collaborate with State actors to introduce innovative pedagogy and curriculum across the country. It is also worth noting that few NGOs regard documenting or disseminating their practices and experiences as a priority, preferring to concentrate their energy and resources on action in the here and now.

Impact on inclusion and learning outcomes for marginalised groups

The innovative learning spaces discussed above emerged largely in response to the need to reach groups of adult learners who have been marginalised owing to issues around poverty, language, gender, age, geography, education and/or social discrimination. In China, the rapid expansion of online informal learning has meant that different kinds of groups and individuals – whether young mothers or university medical students or migrant workers – can learn new ideas, share skills and pursue lifelong learning. As the case study suggests, the social aspect is strongly valued by participants as these online learning spaces help to create and sustain new communities.

The case studies point to how a diversity of non-state actors can encourage marginalised groups to participate in adult education programmes through providing a broader range of learning spaces, approaches and goals. In Afghanistan, indigenous and local adult education providers – mosques and philanthropists – help to provide

individualised support for adults in their areas of interest, whether religious literacy or keeping accounts in their shops. NGOs also draw on traditional gatekeepers within communities to maximise access and participation. In the Philippine case study, the NGO Save the Philippine Seas ensured that they engaged with youth environmental advocates from outside Metro Manila, particularly those from small island provinces/rural areas. They even travelled to Mindanao (the region in the Philippines with the highest poverty rates) to hold camps there, recognising that many such youth learning opportunities were often concentrated in the capital city or in urban spaces

Although non-state actors in all the case studies showed innovative approaches to identifying and responding to individual needs, there was less evidence of their involvement in trying to assess learning outcomes. In Afghanistan, NGO implementers explained that they are considering an on-going assessment: some NGOs have a three-phase summative assessment procedure throughout the literacy course. An important question in relation to inclusion and learning outcomes is around the role of non-state actors in challenging and transforming dominant adult learning structures/approaches to enhance the participation of marginalised adult groups.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This analysis of the four case studies has highlighted the important role that non-state actors have played in complementing government provision. It is notable that they were initially invited by governments to help 'fill the gaps' in adult education provision, in terms of additional technical expertise, financial resources, or extended coverage. The very limited state budget allocated to basic adult education in these countries, particularly as compared with formal schooling, has been an important factor influencing why non-state actors have been regarded as important players. However, the case studies illustrate that because both NGOs and private companies were able to operate in ways that contrasted with state actors in adult education, their input went beyond simply providing more of the same kind of adult education. In particular, private companies, community activists and NGOs had greater flexibility and community-rooted networks to identify what kind of learning opportunities adults actually wanted, and to respond by introducing innovative learning spaces and literacy approaches to engage with specific groups. Many non-state actors also demonstrated greater agility to cross sectoral boundaries, not facing the constraints often associated with Government structures: an adult literacy programme situated in the Ministry of Education would first need to address issues around budget and governance, if trying to integrate literacy into a health or agricultural extension programme. Significantly, some of the non-state actors in the case studies started from a position outside the education sector and built an adult learning approach from there – whether environmental activism in the Philippines or child health in China.

The complex interaction of state and non-state actors involved in adult learning in these four countries gives an insight into the difficulties of analysing influence. At first glance, the case studies suggest that the influence of the Government on non-state activity can be identified quite readily – for instance, through NGO registration procedures and coordination bodies in Afghanistan and Senegal, or monitoring of online material disseminated by

private companies in China. These processes raise familiar questions about political influences on adult learning and it is unusual for any Government programme to adopt a critical literacy pedagogy aiming to initiate radical social change. However, this is not just about the State's relationship with non-State actors: both sets of actors are also influenced by international donors, multinational companies and their agendas, as well as by political actors at community level, as illustrated in the grassroots' groups political lobbying and development of new community-level statutes in the Philippines. Here too, education-focused NGOs working on similar issues came together to streamline efforts and to develop a stronger voice in policy debates. The case studies illustrate the value of coordination and collaboration – formal and informal - amongst different non-state actors to enhance their influence on policy.

These multi-layered relationships and interactions have influenced adult education responses of both governments and non-state actors – whether this is the perceived need to provide measurable literacy outcomes as evidence of progress for international donors in Afghanistan and Senegal, or the shift towards adopting commercial practices in assessing and motivating online learners in the Government's learning App in China. With the diversification and scaling up of adult learning activity due to the involvement of non-state actors, new questions around quality assurance arise: whose responsibility is it to monitor the reliability of information on online platforms hosted by private companies? Could critical literacy pedagogy help empower communities to recognise and challenge 'fake news' or to understand how statistics are being used within the media? These questions have taken on a new sense of urgency during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The case studies offer rich evidence of the innovative practices of some non-state actors and their positive impact on access and participation. In particular, they demonstrate the value of embedding learning and literacy in everyday social and livelihood practices across sectors, responding to the needs of adult learners with tailor-made approaches and learning spaces, and they challenge the assumption that adult literacy is an end in itself. Looking beyond 'what works' or identifying best practices in adult literacy and learning introduced by non-state actors, the comparative analysis across country contexts and between different non-state actors has also given insights into the social values and practices that shape adult learning. The increasing influence of commercial values is particularly evident in the China case study and raises concerns not only about assessment based on material rewards, but also around whether education based on consumer demand will lead to a lack of diversity in provision (people wanting more of the same). Facilitators'/implementers' commitment, and sense of responsibility for others and for the future comes across strongly in all the accounts and points to the important role of non-state actors, now and in previous decades, in working for and within a community.

The considerable achievements in adult literacy and learning noted in these case studies have often taken place in resource-poor environments and with very limited budget available from national governments or international donors. Whilst the evidence here points to ways in which non-state actors can help to fill gaps in provision, there is no substitute for strong state leadership and dedicated funding for high quality and inclusive adult literacy and learning programmes to operate successfully on a national scale. International and national non-state actors could play a much stronger role in advocating for greater financial and political commitment to adult literacy and learning.

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LITERACY PROVISION IN AFGHANISTAN: AN OVERVIEW OF NON-STATE ACTORS' INVOLVEMENT

MOHAMMAD NAEIM MALEKI²

ABSTRACT

The wars and insecurity in Afghanistan left millions of adults and children out of school, resulting in more than 12 million non-literate adults in the country (UIS, 2020). Non-governmental organisations work alongside the Government to develop innovative adult education interventions. Among them, religious literacy in mosques, informal literacy classes in individual philanthropists' own homes, and informal literacy courses in communities by private institutions represent some non-state actors' responses to literacy challenges. Through semi-structured interviews and a desk review of the available documents from the State and non-state actors, this case-study explores the innovation of non-state actors in terms of access, participation, learning outcomes, and the promotion of different forms of literacy in Afghanistan. The findings indicate that they play major roles in provision, financing and managing of adult literacy programmes. They offered and/or supported adult literacy programmes in different capacities depending on the focus of their programmes. This case-study also found that non-state actors' innovative approaches in terms of access and participation led to providing literacy programmes to more needed communities in the rural areas.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan has a deep-rooted history of providing literacy programmes for adults. The first formal adult literacy classes were established by King Amanullah Khan in the early 1920s (MoE-Report, 2018). As a post-conflict context, Afghanistan has started the reconstruction of its education systems after the fall of the Taliban regime. The statistics from 2018 show that there are 12 million non-literate adults in Afghanistan (UIS, 2020). Although among the poorest countries in the world, Afghanistan was reported to be one of the top countries with regards to access to education as of 2001 (Shah, 2017). Through semi-structured interviews and a desk review of the available documents from the State and some non-state actors – including international and national NGOs, private institutions, charity organisations and individual philanthropists (see Appendix 1 for more details about the participants) who are involved in providing literacy programmes, this case-study aims to explore the innovation of these types of actors in terms of access, participation, learning outcomes, and the promotion of different forms of literacy in Afghanistan. It also aims to distinguish between the different kinds of non-state actors in relation to each other and the groups they reach, approaches they implement and the influence they have on the policies and programmes.

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OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT

Diversity of Non-state Actors and their Programmes

Non-state actors working on adult education in Afghanistan could be profit oriented, commercially minded, non-profit or hybrid – part profit and part non-profit. This diversity resulted in a multiplicity of literacy programmes. As a State actor, the Ministry of Education (MoE) dedicated one of its deputies to literacy in 1985 (DMoEL-Report, 2018) when only about 3.5 million people were non-literates in Afghanistan (UIS, 2020). The decades of war and insecurity left the country with millions of adults and children out of school. After 2001, when access to education in Afghanistan was at its high peak, adult literacy / education (ALE) also received great attention from both the Government and non-government organisations; and in 2002 the Deputy Ministry of Education for Literacy (DMoEL) extended its departments at the provincial and district level in most places in Afghanistan (DMoEL-Report, 2018).

Meanwhile, non-state actors provided different adult literacy courses based on the needs and expectations of the communities. The State's records show that 51 non-government organisations were involved in the provision of literacy and vocational training courses in Afghanistan in 2019 (DMoEL-Plan Report, 2019). The records also show that they were formed within different communities and at different levels. The other difference concerns the communities for which they offer courses (e.g. military personnel, prisoners, displaced refugees, returnees, local communities etc.) What is not included in the State's records of literacy providers is the religious centres and individual philanthropists. This suggests that these programmes are not accredited by the State, while national NGOs and INGOs need to sign an agreement with the Government to operate in the country.

Regarding location, non-state actors who signed the agreement have the option to either go with the Ministry's priorities or to choose the sites based on their own survey. In both cases, they should inform the Ministry about the area where they will hold the courses.

Non-state actors providing and supporting ALE programmes alongside the Government in Afghanistan are in a variety of forms. Based on the State's record and data collected from the participants of this study, non-state actors can be categorized into 10 different types:

1. *International Organisations*: supported by international donors; some offer ALE courses for refugees, military personnel and poor people (e.g. Help and GIZ etc.), some only support ALE programmes (e.g. UNESCO).
2. *National Organisations*: supported by either international donors or national organisations' profit-oriented programmes (e.g. ANAF AE); these organisations mostly offer run courses along other courses and trainings they offer for returnees, refugees, poor people etc.
3. *Local Organisations*: supported by other organisations or individual merchants (e.g. Lian Amiri); they offer adult literacy courses at provincial level for displaced refugees and poor communities;
4. *Charity Foundations*: supported by either individuals or local associations (e.g. Asem Charity Foundation); run literacy courses and other charity activities for poor people;

5. *Social Associations*: supported by members of the group and local communities (e.g. civil society, women association etc.); offer literacy courses for local communities and displaced refugees;
6. *Local Shora* (community councils): supported by local communities; support the ALE class by providing the providers with classrooms;
7. *Private Institutions*: mostly have a hybrid system; support their literacy courses in rural area with their income from other courses in the big cities,
8. *Voluntary Groups*: supported by the members of voluntary groups; offer literacy courses for needed communities at the provincial level (e.g. Laskar-e-Sawad (army of literacy));
9. *Religious Centres*: supported by local communities; offer mostly religious literacy for both children and adults in mosques around the country;
10. *Individual Philanthropists*: supported by individuals and local communities; offer literacy courses for local communities mostly in the teacher's home;

As a result of these typologies, ALE programmes are supported in different contexts throughout the country focusing on variety of communities using different teaching materials. The typology also resulted in a variety of adult literacy and training programmes, depending on the goals of the donors and providers.

According to the documents from the participants in this case-study, these programmes can be categorised into 5 types: (See Appendix 2 for more details on the typology).

1. *Government literacy*: The State calls this a '*semi-formal*' programme. Tariq³, the Programme Officer at Provincial Literacy Department (PLD) in Herat, said⁴, "the fixed curriculum and a teacher make it formal, but it is informal in terms of time and place of meeting";
2. *Skill-based literacy*: Mostly run by national and international NGOs, but also sometimes by the State;
3. *Religious literacy*: There are formal and informal religious literacy programmes. The formal programme is taught in Madrasas and has a fixed curriculum focusing on religious lessons and supported by the State; the informal programme of this type is supported by local communities and offered by a religious literacy teacher;
4. *Customised literacy*: mostly run by private providers and individuals adapt their own curriculum based on the needs of the learners; the curriculum includes lessons and materials from people's everyday literacy practices;
5. *Post-literacy*: a public school designed for adult learners who could not go to formal schooling; run by the Government and offers classes from 4th to 12th grade;

With regards to financing, there is a constraint on the budget allocation from the State's side. In an interview with Mujtaba, the Social Mobiliser Manager of the DMoEL, he explained that it was 2.5% of National Budget for Education. Abdul Bashir Khaliqi, the Director of Afghanistan National Association for Adult Education (ANAF AE), a national NGO, saw this as a great challenge. He said in the interview that "unless the State sees ALE as a national priority, we may not see significant improvement. It's because the donors also treat it the same way." Comparing children's and adult education, he stated that there are about 3.5 million out of school children, but there are more

3 All the data has been anonymized unless the respondent requested that they should be identified.

4 Has been taken from the interview held for this paper.

than 12 million adults out of school; however, the Government's budget allocation for these two programmes is not comparable.

International donors, private institutions, individual merchants and the local communities support the ALE programmes in different capacities. For example, in Herat City, the State has only 10 literacy teachers (i.e. running 10 courses), but Asem Charity Foundation (ACF), a local organization supported by Abdul Razaq Asem – a national merchant, has 93 teachers (93 courses). Mohammad said, “we keep receiving requests [from people] for literacy classes ... [and we are advised] not to reject any.” In general, 33% of the learners were covered by the State's programmes and 67% of them were taught and supported by the non-state actors across Afghanistan in 2019 (DMoEL-Plan Report, 2019).

Partnership Regulation

What initially regulates the relationship between the State and non-state actors is the agreement that should be signed when non-state actors intend to offer literacy courses for adults. If an organisation signs the agreement, they should update the Government with their activities, achievements and plans; the Government is supposed to monitor their classes, provide them with a soft copy of the textbooks, and issue certificates for their learners (DMoEL-Report, 2019). The certificate is equal to a 3rd grade degree of formal schooling.

By contrast, individual philanthropists and religious literacy centres do not need to sign any agreement. Ziaddin, the Head of PLD in Herat, said “if they [individual philanthropists] inform us, we will issue formal certificates of accomplishment for their learners and will provide textbooks, stationery and monitor their classes regularly.” However, the philanthropists in this study claimed that they had not received any of these services yet.

The DMoEL has created the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) group which brought the State and non-state actors even closer. Coordinated by ANAF AE, it has regular meetings in Kabul and a few other provinces (LIFE, 2019). The actors share their achievements, plans, concerns and challenges through LIFE. Bashir said that ANAF AE is planning to expand LIFE's coordination in other provinces too. There are also other working groups and committees through which the State and non-state actors work closely on developing frameworks and policies to enhance the ALE programmes, but they are mostly in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

Non-state actors come in a variety of forms offering or supporting different ALE programmes for different communities throughout the country. They play a huge role in literacy provision and have a close relationship with the State regarding governance, financing and management of adult literacy programmes.

ANALYSIS

The Role of Non-state Actors

In addition to offering literacy courses, non-state actors in Afghanistan also have other vital roles in supporting adult literacy programmes. For example, UNESCO-Kabul conducts research studies and supports the DMoEL with technical, financial and policy development. In addition, besides supporting the State with policy development,

ANAFAE works on piloting new programmes. They have been working on an adult literacy accelerating programme through which the adult learners can finish the 12 years schooling time in 7 years. Although they have faced with challenges regarding the teaching materials for adults, Bashir said, “we were trying to prove for the Government that alternative programmes could be tested and might work well.” ANAFAE also works on implementing literacy education for empowering women that could have impact on social structures and change (ANAFAE, 2020).

Furthermore, Help, one of the international NGOs, takes part in empowerment activities. They provide literacy sessions embedded in their Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) courses aiming to improve economic development (Help, 2017). These organisations see their role as implementing innovative interventions in the field of adult learning.

At a more micro level, individual philanthropists play a major role in empowering individual adults either in their business or in their community. Omar, a philanthropist, said “shopkeepers come with their notebooks to my home and want me to check their records for mistakes. They tell me ‘we want to be able to control and expand our business when we can read and write.’” There is very limited connection between these philanthropists and the Government. The only time when the State might be aware of these classes is when the philanthropists provide the State with a list of their learners, which the State authorities said rarely happens.

Although the cooperation and relationship between public and private organisations have enhanced the ALE programmes in terms of provision and policy improvement, these relationships were not free of challenges. Sharif, a Programme Officer in UNESCO-Kabul, said, “although the capacity in the Ministry is low, the more important challenge is lack of work motivation among their staff.” He added that sometimes this puts them (UNESCO-Kabul) under pressure to work with the State. Sharif suggested that low salary payment could be the key factor. Mujtaba agreed: “Our [DMoEL’s] salary is based on the government’s standard payment rule. Unfortunately, it’s pretty low compared to NGO’s payment.”

The challenges did not void their relationship; in fact, UNESCO had many training seminars for the DMoEL’s staff to reduce these obstacles. The roles of non-state actors in provision and financing ALE programmes supported the Government in policy and practice both at macro and micro level in Afghanistan.

Dominant Programme Run by Non-state Actors

Among the literacy programmes mentioned above, non-state informal religious literacy or ‘Quranic literacy’ is the oldest. Sami, the Programme Manager in Provincial Department of Haj and Religious Affaire (PDHRA), stated, “we don’t have any record of the exact date for Bacha Khani [religious literacy], but since it is related to Islamic lessons, it should be connected to the history of Islam in our country.” Therefore, it could be traced back to the mid-seventh century when people started practising Islam in Afghanistan (Farhang, 1988). Learners in these centres usually develop strong oracy in their local language. Conducting a research study in Iran, Street (1984) also highlighted that the learners in religious centres were very confident in speaking and used quotes from the Quran and Hadith. Similar observations could be made in relation to religious literacy learning in Afghanistan today.

Sami added that there are more than 6500 mosques in Herat Province alone. Most of these mosques offer religious literacy lessons for both children and adults. Raziq, a religious literacy teacher, said, “it’s not only in every mosque that people learn this kind of literacy but in some centres usually sisters study too.” He gave an example from the centre in his neighbourhood where his sister and mother teach women from morning till evening.

The value given to literacy in Islam could be one of the reasons why people participate in these programmes.

Jumagul, another religious literacy facilitator, gave examples from the Quran: “Are those who know equal to those who don’t? Never. In another place it says, when you are doing business with someone, you should write it down.”

Sulaiman, a philanthropist, also added that “the first verse revealed to Prophet Mohammad was ‘Iqra’, read. This shows how important literacy is in Islam.” Since people respect what Islam teaches them, Mohammad, the Head of Literacy Programmes at ACF said that they use this approach to encourage local people to participate and support their courses in rural areas. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS, 2013) also highlights the value of literacy in Islam.

The other reason people are eager to participate in religious literacy centres is trust in these institutions and the indigenous providers. Jomagul, a religious literacy teacher, saw trust as a motivational tool to attract more learners: “Trust is bringing people to our centre. It’s the same like public and private schools; people trust private more than public.” Moreover, Sulaiman, a philanthropist, explained in the interview that female learners from neighbouring families come to his home to study because they trust him and his family. Raising from among the people, these providers have built trust in their communities.

Looking through a linguistic lens, since the alphabets in Arabic and Dari-Farsi are the same (Dari-Farsi includes all the Arabic letters plus four more), when learners understand and read Arabic letters and words, they may be able to read Dari-Farsi too which fits into Jim Cummins’s theory of linguistic interdependence (see Cummins, Baker, Homberger, 2001).

Although the number of these classes might exceed the number of formal or ‘semi-formal’ literacy courses in the country, they receive no support, evaluation, monitoring, or control from either the Government or other organisations. The local communities support the teachers by providing him (the teachers are usually males) a shelter either in the mosque or close to the mosque or pay him an irregular salary to lead the prayers and teach them and their children religious literacy. People also help the other literacy providers – including the State and non-state actors – with locations for their classes, but they do not receive financial help except the religious literacy teachers.

Post-Literacy Programmes Run by the State

Upon finishing the nine-month literacy course – run by either the Government or NGOs which signed an agreement with the State, the learners in large cities can join adult education schools called ‘literacy schools’, if they receive the certificates issued by the Provincial Literacy Department. These schools are in either a Government property or in a rented building allocated only for adults and are supported by the State. There is no non-state school of this type in

Afghanistan. The literacy school that the researcher visited in Herat City had a limited number of rooms and the classrooms, desks and seating arrangement resembled children's schools. The teachers in these schools rarely have a degree in adult education. They have plenty of experience in teaching in children's schools.

They start from grade 4; this is a great opportunity for adult learners to get a qualification. However, there are two main challenges. First, there is the limited number of literacy schools. Realizing this constraint, Mujtaba said, "unfortunately, due to some budget limitations we have only five high schools [up to grade 12th] and 82 schools [up to grade 9th] for adults in Afghanistan." The State's records also show that 31672 students were enrolled in these schools and 2189 graduated throughout the country in 2019 (DMoEL-statistics, 2020).

Additionally, Tariq stated that "we have more than 100 literacy classes only from Asem [ACF] and Government in Herat City. Each class has about 20 learners; so that's 2 thousand people. But we have only one adult school, which has only one class for grade 4. How would that be possible?"

As a response, the non-state actors somehow filled this gap on their own, but this is only limited to the urban areas. For example, Mohammad from ACF explained:

"Our learners always ask, 'what's next?'. We understand that literacy schools are not enough, so we talked to a private school⁵ with branches around the city. Our graduates can join these schools too."

This shows the relationship between the private sectors. As long as their cooperation and outcomes do not contradict with the Government's policies, the State is happy with their agreement.

The second challenge is the adult schools' curriculum which is the same as that of the formal (children's) schools. This has been criticized by all the participants in this study. Mujtaba from the DMoEL said, "we know it and we are working on a new programme with new curriculum and materials for adults in our literacy schools." He also added that the Ministry is planning to increase the number of adult schools in rural areas.

In order to tackle this challenge, Sharif said that UNESCO is supporting DMoEL through a project supported by Japan to establish an Adult Community Based Education programme. This will provide learning opportunities for the adult learners who live in rural areas throughout the country.

Access and Participation

Both the State and non-state providers choose their learners from internal refugees, returnee migrants, those who could not go to school because of poverty, security, cultural or any other issues. Since most of these non-literate people are living in the rural area, providing equity of access to literacy education for all is a challenge. In addition,

5 The private school he named is a religious school and the students are mostly adults, but the curriculum is the same for children and adults. The students need to pay fees to study at these schools.

the unbalanced distribution of the country's population, where 43% of the people live in seven provinces and 47% are distributed in the other 27 provinces is another challenge (MoE-NLSP, 2013).

All the non-state actor participants in this study claimed that it is mostly the local people who come to them and ask for literacy courses in their area. On the other hand, the adult literacy teachers in the State's programme were responsible for recruiting non-literate people in their communities which Maleki et al. (2019) found was a challenge for the teachers.

Mujtaba said, "The demand for having literacy courses in the rural area is so high but unfortunately due to [lack of] security and budget we cannot have classes there." As an innovative approach to mitigate the risk, the DMoEL hires the teachers from the local area; however, the challenge remains with monitoring the classes. Ziaddin said, "we cannot put the life of our observers and monitors at risk."

Compared to State providers, non-state actors seem to have better access to local communities. The State believes that these local organisations' familiarity and knowledge of the communities and context place them in a better position to provide literacy programmes for local people (DMoEL-Report, 2019). For example, both ANAF AE and ACF mentioned in the interviews that they first approach the elders, the head of the village and the Imam (the person who leads the prayers in the mosque) to discuss holding literacy classes. Then, they talk to the village Shora (village council) to see for the possibilities and support. They run the courses upon their agreement and support.

The private organisations reach different groups through the provision of education. For example, since ACF helps poor communities with food, clothing and other supplies, so most of their learners come from among these communities. ANAF AE provides courses for displaced refugees and returnees. The NGO Help mainly provides courses for unemployed and poor youth (over 15 years). In addition, as an innovative approach in terms of access, Help has mobile centres where TVET and literacy courses are offered in different villages every six months.

Regarding the teaching materials, non-state actors who sign the agreement have the option to include some extra subjects and modules based on their programmes' needs. For example, in their TVET-literacy courses, Help adapted the State's curriculum and included health and life-skill subjects; and ANAF AE added income generation and economic initiatives.

As a supporting partner, UNESCO helps the Government with developing and publishing curriculum materials. They developed language (Dari-Farsi and Pashtu), Maths, and Quran textbooks in 2017. Sharif asserted that the books were designed and developed considering all the standards from successful models from elsewhere. He added, "In designing the books, with the support of international consultants we were able to develop a competency based curriculum and instructional materials. It was first time in Afghanistan, the phonic approach introduced. Different examples including textbooks of Pakistan, Iran and South Africa was reviewed. Then the current book with the Afghan Experts developed."

The learning outcomes differed greatly, depending on the programmes' focus. Those who implement the Government's curriculum, expect their learners to be able to read, write and do basic numeracy so that they can

pursue their education at a higher level at schools. By contrast, Amin from Help said that their vocational training courses aim for the learners to be able to read the manuals and operate with the machines and working tools. The learning outcome in the individual philanthropists' courses differs considering each learner's needs. They meet with them individually either in their home or in the learners' shops. The goal cited by Sulaiman is, "... for the learners to be able to record their business on a paper, to calculate what they buy and sell, to read the signs when they go to a doctor and etc." But there was an issue around who would check the quality of such learning.

The State documents suggest that as a kind of quality assurance mechanism, there should be a national evaluation system to evaluate the progress level of literacy nationally and individually (MoE-NSPL, 2013). However, in practice, even monitoring is rarely happening. The local organisations and individual philanthropists in this study said that their courses are rarely monitored by the State. Tariq said, "in some districts, we have only two monitors who are also our teachers." Considering the number of literacy courses, the number of people monitoring the districts' courses are not enough. On the other hand, the national and international NGOs have three different delegations from internal and external (donors and State) monitoring and assessing the quality of the programmes periodically.

Regarding the learners' assessment, the non-state actors have an on-going assessment procedure to evaluate the learners' understanding. Some NGOs (e.g. ANAF AE and Help) have a three-phase summative assessment process (at the beginning, middle, and end of the course) to measure the learner's knowledge. UNESCO also developed a learner assessment portfolio in form of a book in which the learners' progress could be recorded throughout the course. However, the book was not published because of the budget shortage in the DMoEL. The interviewee in the Ministry said that they plan to shorten the contents of the book and publish it for the future courses.

COVID-19 has resulted in many education programmes around the world to be put on hold. In Afghanistan, the State developed multiple procedures to maintain access to literacy education. Mujtaba said the Ministry tried broadcasting the literacy lessons on national TV, giving the families a package including textbooks, running small group classes while keeping the social distance and wearing face covering. However, he asserted that none of these strategies were successful. On the other hand, non-state actors, for example, ANAF AE followed the same procedures and were happy with the results.

Non-state actors not only support the Government in implementing their adult literacy programmes, they also supported and provided adult education programmes that are valued for the local communities which were hard for the State to cover (e.g. religious literacy). Additionally, although challenges such as lack of good security, cultural values, and poverty persisted, non-state actors used innovative approaches in accessing individuals who were deprived of formal education. However, literacy as a continued education after the nine-month course is still a challenge for both the State and non-state providers.

CONCLUSION

As a post conflict context, Afghanistan has been successful in mobilizing both the State and non-state organisations to work together in developing innovative adult education interventions. Introducing and presenting the literacy courses in line with people's values and beliefs, piloting new models such as accelerating literacy programme, supporting the State with technical and policy development, and being active members of working groups (i.e. LIFE network group) are among a list of innovative activities and roles that non-state organisations play in provision and governance of ALE in Afghanistan alongside the Government. Their generation and use of evidence for policy such as piloting new education models and their existence in high level decision-making committees and groups has had a positive influence on the State's policies. Accreditation of NGO programmes takes place but not of individual philanthropists and religious literacy centres.

In addition, different actors were seen to implement different types of programmes and provisions targeting different groups of adults which resulted in variety of literacies (e.g., business literacy, religious literacy, skill-based literacy, semi-formal literacy etc.) Despite the existence of security, poverty and cultural barriers in most rural areas, non-state actors use of innovative approaches such involving local communities and tribe leaders in the provision process, using mobile classes, having classes in their own homes, offering literacy lessons in individual's shops have placed them in a better position than the State regarding access and provision. Moreover, people's trust in non-state actors such as philanthropic and religious literacy providers has enhanced these actors' reach in terms of access and provision.

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APPENDIX

Information on Participants

No	Name	Position	Organisation / Centre	Experience / Field of study & Degree
1	Ghulam Mujtaba Paykar	Social Mobiliser Manager	Deputy Ministry of Education for Literacy	- 9 years in the Ministry - MA in adult education
2	Ziaddin Zia	Head of Lit Department	Herat Provincial Literacy Department (PLD)	- Head of Provincial Literacy Department for 6 months - literacy teacher for 15 years - BA in Theology
3	Tariq Asad	Provincial Programme Officer		- 7 years in PLD - BA in Agriculture.
4	Mohammad Sharif Ahmadi	Programme Officer	UNESCO-Kabul, International NGO	- 9 years in Adult Education (AE) - MA in Educational Planning and Management
5	Mohammad Ali Soroosh	Programme Manager	Help Germany, International NGO	- 8 years with Help - MA in Law
6	Amin Ziaee	Programme Officer		- 10 years with Help - BA in Construction Engineering

7	Abdul Bashir Khaliqi	Director of Programmes	ANAF AE, National NGO	- 15 years in AE - MBA degree
8	Mohammad Danish	Head of Lit programmes	Asem Charity Foundation, Local NGO	- 11 years in education and 2 years in literacy - BA in Administration.
9	Mir Ahmad Atayee	Funder & Founder & Head of Programme	Atayee Learning Centres	- 18 years in general education, 5 years in literacy - BA in Law
10	Sami (pseudonym)	Programme Manager	PDHRA, a branch of the Ministry of HRA	- More than 10 years in PDHRA - BA in Theology
11	Abdul Raziq Moradi	Religious Philanthropist	Hazrate Osman, Local Mosque	- More than 9 years in religious literacy - BA in Arabic Literature
12	Jomagul Atayee	Religious Philanthropist	Khaje M Taki, Local Mosque	- More than 10 years in religious literacy - BA in Islamic Theology.
13	Sulaiman (pseudonym)	Individual Philanthropist		- More than 25 years as a literacy and school teacher - High school degree - Teaches literacy both in a mosque and at his home for his neighbours (women).
14	Omar (pseudonym)	Individual Philanthropist		- More than 20 years as a literacy and schoolteacher - High school degree - Teaches literacy both in a mosque and at his home for his neighbours (men).

Typology of adult literacy / education programmes in Afghanistan

No	Programme	Description	Financial support and more
1	Government Literacy Programme	It consists of three literacy books: Language (both in Dari-Farsi and in Pashtu), Math, and Quran (in Arabic). The programme is for 9 months focusing on reading, writing and numeracy. The language and mathematics books are taught in the first three months and then Quran is added to them. All the Government literacy centres, some national and local organisations, and some non-government philanthropists (both associations and individuals) follow this programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually funded by the Government and international donors
2	Skill based literacy	Some organisations (national or international) design their own programme and develop their teaching materials which fit their goals. These are tailored to help non-literate life and vocational skill learners to understand their skill related materials (e.g. manuals, guidelines etc.). The focus is on reading, writing and numeracy in specific disciplines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The books are different from the Government's curriculum on contents and focus. • Usually offered and supported by international NGOs.
3	Religious Literacy	This is also called Quranic literacy where learners learn the reading skills in Arabic language, but the explanations are in the local language. The centres teaching this kind of literacy are mostly mosques, but some are also in rented rooms. Some of these centres also offer Urdu language courses beside Arabic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly supported and run by the local people. • 6500 registered mosques only in Herat Province which offer Quranic literacy for adults and children.
4	Customised literacy programmes	There are many private institutions and individuals who use their own materials for teaching literacy to adults; however, all focus on reading, writing, numeracy and most of them also have Quranic literacy embedded into their teaching materials. Some use the State's curriculum with some changes to fit their own focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported and run by the private institutions or individuals with some support from locals.
5	Post literacy Programme	It is a kind of adult public school which has up to grade 9 th or 12 th high school. When ALLs finish their 9 months literacy course, they can join these schools from 4 th grade. The curriculum is the same as the formal schools' one.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported and run by the Government. • The number of these schools is very limited.

Acronyms

MoEDL: Ministry of Education Deputy for Literacy

PLD: Provincial Literacy Department

ANAFAE: Afghanistan National Association for Adult Education

ACF: Asem Charity Foundation

PDHRA: Provincial Department of Haj and Religious Affairs

OALC: Ostad Atayee Learning Centre

ALF: Adult Literacy Facilitator

ALE: Adult Literacy Education

MoE: Ministry of Education

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NSPL: National Strategic Plan for Literacy

TVET: Technical Education and Vocational Training

THE INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN ADULT LEARNING: A CASE STUDY FROM CHINA

QINGRU WANG⁶

ABSTRACT

With the development of the internet, multiple forms of intentional and unintentional learning now occur online in China. Supported by the government, diverse non-state actors such as private companies, community-led groups and individuals are engaged in providing lifelong learning and developing new learning spaces to fulfil the needs of diverse groups such as young adults, the elderly, non-governmental employees and young mothers. This case-study gives an overview of intentional and unintentional online learning practices that have developed and the role of non-state actors. It argues that while the creation of these new learning spaces has increased access and participation and allowed individuals to be both learners and teachers, the providers of these platforms need to be more socially responsible for the content they facilitate. This case-study reveals the impact of private companies on the promotion of new knowledge and the creation of informal learning spaces as well as the partnership between the government and non-state actors.

INTRODUCTION

In China, non-state actors are playing an increasingly important role in the adult education system. In light of the current widespread promotion of online adult learning by private companies, this case-study focuses on innovation in online provision in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes, across formal, non-formal and informal adult learning (Malcolm et al, 2003). With increasing engagement through virtual platforms in the current health crisis, the government has been supporting the development of online learning platforms. The report begins with a historical overview of the regulatory framework and existing typology of adult learning provision in China. Within this framework, the case-study highlights innovative features of online adult learning and the influence of diverse non-state actors (NGOs, private companies, community-led groups and individuals). Adopting an equity perspective, it investigates the ways in which online platforms are enabling the creation of innovative informal learning spaces (such as the learning app and the medical chatgroup) and engaging a range of different groups (young adults, non-governmental employees, the elderly, young mothers). To conclude, the report comments on the impact of these new channels of knowledge exchange, their relationships with the public and considers the implications for quality assurance.

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THE INVOLVEMENT OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN ADULT EDUCATION IN CHINA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In previous decades, China was said to be conducting ‘the world’s largest and most promising experiment in using adult education in social change’ (Bhola, 1990, p. 11). Throughout Chinese history, the type of non-state actors involved has changed from local public, nongovernmental enterprises or community-led organizations to large commercial companies. Under the guidance of the State, non-state actors have played a vital role in educational development, especially in adult education.

Since 1949, the government has encouraged non-state actors to develop different levels of adult education, from basic literacy learning to adult higher education. With the founding of the new China⁷ many educational problems that had existed historically remained, such as non-literate adults and insufficient school places for children. In addition, many former primary and secondary schools (run by individuals or NGOs) were deemed unsuitable for the modern world (Zhao & Liu, 2019). From 1952 to 1954, the government focused on taking over and reforming old primary and secondary schools (all became state schools), developing part-time schools for farmers and workers, and encouraging members of the public to set up private primary schools (ibid.). In the 1950s, various evening and part-time schools for workers and peasants were provided by the government. Nationwide, literacy programmes were launched to reduce the 80% illiteracy rate (Sun & Chang, 2019). Taking responsibility for the prevention/eradication of illiteracy, the government prioritised primary education, enlarging it but also encouraging members of the public to establish new primary schools (Bhola, 1990). As the number of state schools could not fulfil people’s needs, private schools were allowed to be built by individuals at their own expense (Zhao & Liu, 2019). In the 1980s, social forces (also known as civil society actors including governmental/non-governmental enterprises, public organizations, charities, private companies etc.) were encouraged by the government to provide on-the-job training for employees (Ministry of Education, 1988a). Practical skills were emphasised in vocational training to shift the social trend of blindly chasing certification. Meanwhile, adult literacy and practical technology were focused in rural area (ibid.). The State Council declared that all non-literate or semi-literate citizens over 15 years old, had the right and duty to take literacy education (Ministry of Education, 1988b). Also, the State Council committed to the eradication of illiteracy and semi-illiteracy in the age group 15-40 by 2000 (Ministry of Education, 1994). Different standards of literacy were tolerated, depending on occupation and location. The Regulations of Literacy Programmes clarified the criteria for individual literacy: peasants should recognize 1500 Chinese characters, employees of urban enterprises and urban residents should recognize 2000 characters (Ministry of Education, 1988b). In addition, they all needed to demonstrate the ability to read simple newspapers and articles, to do easy accounting and to write basic notes/articles for practical purposes. For the minority nations, local governments were

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The People’s Republic of China, which was founded on 1st October of 1949.

obliged to adjust the outcomes and ensure that it suited local circumstances (ibid.). To achieve the literacy goals as well as develop non-certified education for employees, diverse forms of adult educational provision included: adult primary/secondary/higher education, adult literacy programmes, training in applied technologies in rural areas and continuing education (on-the-job training, television universities, self-learning examination system). Funding for adult literacy work came from multiple sources, such as village and township government, urban communities, local enterprises, state organizations, other organizations and the rural educational levy. All levels of local government were required to support literacy work through providing necessary subsidies. Civil society actors and individuals were encouraged to offer financial help on a voluntary basis (Bhola, 1990).

During the 1990s, these organisations and individuals were encouraged to respond to the needs of society by playing an active role in adult education and vocational education (Ministry of Education, 1991; 1994). Lifelong education was tackled in this period and on-the-job training for employees became a priority in the adult education agenda. Modern enterprises' responsibility to provide in-service vocational training had been clearly enshrined through legislation, the government providing support through special subsidies and long-term loans (Ministry of Education, 1996). Meanwhile, the government announced that schools established by non-state actors should be non-profit (Ministry of Education, 1998).

In the 2000s, the top priority in China was stated as building a harmonious socialist society by providing learning for life (CPC, 2006; Sun & Chang, 2019). The government stated that education was not only for the purpose of earning money but more importantly, for improving life and well-being as well as constructing social culture: everyone should have the opportunity to learn throughout their lives through formal, informal, non-formal educational opportunities, which would help to build a learning society (Sun, 2009). This denotes an important shift in perspective in that the purpose of education was seen not simply as about earning money.

Adult education became viewed as 'an effective vehicle for building a learning society' (Sun & Chang, 2019). The idea of promoting the establishment of learning communities and learning cities to facilitate lifelong learning system was introduced (Ministry of Education, 2004). During this time, community education focused on adult lifelong learning and developed flexible and diverse learning opportunities to meet local people's needs. Adult distance education made great progress via the use of radio, television and web-based multimedia programmes (Sun & Chang, 2019). From 1999 to 2007, the Television University learning programme enrolled 4.58 million students, with 2.38 million students graduating. Over 40 million learners accessed non-degree education and practical technical training. In 2006, about 43.7% employees joined diverse training and academic programmes (Zhu, 2009).

Since 2010, the government has promoted private-public partnerships with a diverse range of non-state actors, such as private companies, non/governmental enterprises and charities, in order to establish lifelong learning provision and build a learning society (Ministry of Education, 2010). Since then, online education has been emphasized in adult education, with non-state actors (mainly private companies) playing an increasingly active part. The number of online users in China is rapidly increasing, with over 900 million people using the internet (data collected in March

2020 by CNNIC). With the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, 423 million users are now taking online education (including 265 million all level students), an increase of 110.2% compared to 2018 (CNNIC, 2020). Multiple learning types of online education have developed, not only formal online courses for certification, but also various informal learning for personal interest and improvement, such as cooking, game playing, childcare and relationship management.

The main shift in the involvement of non-state actors in adult education has been from basic literacy learning to vocational/practical technical training, and from adult formal education to non-formal and informal lifelong learning. The government has historically provided direction and guidance for non-state actors, especially civil society actors, to provide various learning resources and platforms and support the development of adult education. In online education, however, informal learning initiatives have increasingly been developed to fulfil learners' needs rather than governmental requirements.

NON-STATE ACTORS' INNOVATION IN ADULT LEARNING

To discuss the innovations being developed by non-state actors in adult learning, this section draws on interviews with key informants. Firstly, the intensive teaching approach used in formal vocational training is described before going on to examine non-formal and informal learning innovations, particularly in the domain of health emergency.

1. Formal learning in private training institutions

Formal adult learning provided by non-state actors is usually in the form of training courses, rather than learning for wellbeing or cultural improvement, especially vocational training (both online and offline). Provision is mainly in for-profit private training institutions, with the capacity to teach practical skills for specific outcomes (e.g. examination, certification). According to an interview with Zhao⁸, an experienced designer enrolled on an offline adult vocational training course in virtual design, private educational companies aim to improve learners' practical working abilities through intensive learning. This kind of training differs from school learning in that it concentrates on employability, so the focus is on teaching transferable skills, basic software operations and theoretical knowledge in a short time period.

'It (this training course) is suitable for beginners but not for experienced designers, like me ... What you learnt in school is not what you are asked to do at work ...a training institution's course is expensive but much more effective ...with a big investment of time and money, you will be facilitated to practice a lot during a quite short period, after that you can immediately find a job' ⁹(Zhao interview 5/7/2020).

8 The names mentioned in this paper are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, except for participants who ask to be named.

9 Translated from Chinese.

This intensive learning, or as Zhao phrased, ‘cramming learning’ is not perfect but helps adult learners who expect to change their positions after leaving/finishing school education (Zhao interview 5/7/2020). The drawback of this kind of intensive training, Zhao explained, is that learners complete all the design tasks with the help of tutors and so do not develop their ability to work independently. Nonetheless, as Zhao pointed out, it is a good starting point: ‘Find a job through a private training institution, then you can collect professional experience and improve your skills and knowledge while working’ (Zhao interview 5/7/2020). The existence of for-profit private training institution responds to adult learners’ specific needs, which did not appear to be met by schools or governmental organizations.

2. Non-formal learning through NGO’s online platform

In contrast to formal online/offline courses, the National Lifelong Learning Public Service Platform¹⁰ supports learners to pursue their own interests by providing resources and learning materials. The platform is organized by the China Adult Education Association (CAEA) and managed by the Ministry of Education. CAEA was established in 1981 as a national non-profit social organization formed by nongovernmental enterprises, governmental institutions, social organizations and individuals, with the aim of engaging in adult continuing education and related work. With the technical help of BCE Technology (a private technology company), this lifelong learning platform provides learning materials, including articles and pre-recorded videos, pertaining to community education, family education, vocational education, education for the third age and rural education. A Learning Community (learning material centre) has been established on the platform and topics include politics, literacy, healthy lifestyles and vocational skills. Users can join any course they like for free, without any assessment, requirements or limitation. When COVID-19 broke out, the online learning platform provided detailed epidemic prevention knowledge for the public and specific guidance for care homes, children’s charities and funeral agencies¹¹. This learning platform is an example of partnership between the government and NGOs in that it indirectly supported the government’s social agenda and provided helpful information to relevant non-governmental organizations.

Aside from its work with CAEA, BCE Technology has cooperated with over 1500 organizations, including many state departments and education-related NGOs. It has also designed 10 learning Apps in Apple Store. The extensive contribution of private technology companies like BCE Technology in providing multiple platforms and supporting online users’ daily learning, particularly during lockdown, indicates that for-profit private companies in adult learning have the opportunity to collaborate with other organizations and governmental departments as long as they make efforts on improving online learning experience.

3. Informal learning via multiple online platforms

During lockdown, all school students were asked by their institutions to use multiple functional software such as Ding Talk, Cloud Class, WeChat for Business, MOOC, to continue their curriculum learning at home. However,

¹⁰ See the details: <http://www.goschool.org.cn/zt/fy/>.

¹¹ Information comes from CAEA official website: <https://www.caea.org.cn/wzsy>.

compared to online courses, non-formal and informal online learning has proved more popular with young adults.

Zhou, a second-year medical student, reflected that:

‘these applications are convenient and useful, I really like MOOC, it has rich learning resources, but I prefer WeChat (a popular social software) articles from Doctor DX (a private medical-related Internet company) and Emergency & First Aid platform (nongovernmental organization managed by Hainan Medical University)’ (Zhou interview 13/8/2020).

Another student, Cui, also liked Doctor DX’s WeChat articles and short videos on Douyin (also known as TikTok), because ‘their explanations are professional and easy to understand ... topics are common, everyone may encounter in daily life’ (Cui interview 15/8/2020). However, Qian preferred the content provided by the official governmental WeChat platform rather than an unknown private account. So, she regularly checked WeChat articles from Shanghai Government and Shanghai Education since she works for a private educational company (Qian interview 13/7/2020). Similarly, Sun mentioned that she often read WeChat articles from the National Health Commission and World Health Organization during lockdown for updates about the epidemic, because they were official platforms. As a staff member of a health-related governmental organization, Sun reflected that ‘short videos are really popular now and it can be an effective way to publicize basic health knowledge’ (Sun interview 26/7/2020). Multiple online platforms supported young adults’ formal and informal learning, but the innovative health-related news, articles and short videos from both official and nonofficial accounts were evidently popular and well-accepted by all adult learners interviewed.

Much of the above learning can be seen as intentional learning, but much unintentional informal learning is happening online too (Rogers, 2014). Young adults (and their parents) often use mobile applications (WeChat, Weibo, Douyin etc.) not just for entertainment but for information. Medical student Deng reflected that her mother is keen to get health-related information via her smart phone and often shares relevant videos and articles with her through WeChat, even if she herself does not open the link. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, Deng said ‘I automatically search relevant news online to find out what is going on’ (Deng interview 15/8/2020). Sometimes those applications send notifications, ‘wherever you are you will see the epidemic related information’ (ibid.). According to Deng and her mother, the elder and younger generations receive health knowledge through smart phones, thus engaging in intentional and unintentional learning. The difference is that the elder generation may need technical help at the beginning, while the younger generation learn by themselves.

NON-STATE ACTORS’ INFLUENCES ON ADULT LEARNING PROVISION

Encouraged by government, non-state actors not only provide lifelong learning-related services to individuals and community-led groups, but to the government itself.

At the start of 2019, the government created a new online learning platform for the public named Xuexi Qiangguo. This platform, provided and designed by the Publicity and Public Opinion Research Centre (a government department), offers diverse app-based and web-based self-learning resources that citizens can easily download for free. It contains many free courses and reading materials, operas, films and TV series. The contents are uploaded and managed by PPORC, but many materials are contributed by governmental and non-governmental organizations. This online learning platform rapidly became very popular by the end of 2019. It is a practical experiment of building a credit accumulation and certification system for lifelong learning (Ministry of Education 2004; 2010). It contains a competitive point-collected learning mode, where multiple forms of learning are provided to collect points, such as articles, videos, audio recordings, quizzes and comments, which increase users' learning motivations. The learning credits could be transferred to real life products such as book vouchers, movie tickets, agricultural products and mobile data. The platform collaborates with diverse organizations and companies to supply the rewards. In addition, according to the amount of accumulated credit, there are ten different levels with differing titles, which relates to the personal ranking in a national context. Medical student Zhou said that the university asked them to register and use this platform as often as they could for earning credits, so she regularly uses it to watch cooking videos and TV series, and sometimes uses it to follow the news. She pointed out, 'when COVID-19 broke out in January, the first time I saw the news was on Xuexi Qiangguo' (Zhou interview 13/8/2020). This widespread learning app is a good example of the leadership and engagement of the government in education as well as partnership between the government and private companies. It demonstrates that it is not just NGOs (like CAEA) that benefit from the non-state actors, but also the government.

Non-state actors' involvement in adult education has also influenced community learning. As mentioned, WeChat is a popular social software in China, with around 1.151 billion monthly active users by September 2019 (Tencent Tech, 9th January 2020). Users create different chat groups for diverse aims, such as exchanging information, seeking help, keeping in contact with friends. For example, WeChat group manager/owner Li, has helped the development of non-formal and informal adult learning through providing a space for people to discuss issues they care about (Li interview 12/8/2020). Li organizes many children-related chat groups for mothers ranging from topics such as reading and writing to facilitating a second-hand book exchange. One key area is medical advice. In collaboration with hospitals and clinics, Li liaises with medical experts and regularly invites doctors into the groups to directly respond to mothers' needs. She also organizes online lectures, Q&A or group discussions on particular topics such as children's eye protection, skin problems. The lecturers are doctors from famous public hospitals or private clinics. Sometimes Li invites the expert in a specific area whom she has to pay a fee. To cover this cost, members are asked for an annual fee of CNY 36.5 (about GBP 4). Li explains, 'I want to make sure every member's specific needs can be met ... an annual fee helps to select members and improve the quality of groups ... my WeChat groups are non-profit, everything I do is because of personal interests and the willingness to help others' (ibid.).

There are nine medical chat groups in total, and most chat groups have at least one doctor (Li asks them to join and help for free). Li has her own rules about answering questions:

‘Mostly, members are young mothers and they can solve the problems by discussing with others ... sometimes, doctors cannot give professional suggestions if you just post a photo and say your child is ill ... normally, I will just refuse to answer those unclear questions and ask them go to the hospital, I must protect my doctors’ (Li interview 12/8/2020).

In return, Li reflected that doctors always provide useful information and help mothers make decisions:

‘For example, during the lockdown, children were using digital devices every day, so blue-tinted glasses suddenly became popular and many mothers try to order it. However, our eye doctor pointed out that it is not necessary for children nor does it prevent blue light. Then, we all saved money!’ (ibid.).

Because of Li’s management skills, this WeChat-based online learning group has become a popular place for young mothers to exchange information, seek help and learn health-related knowledge.

Platforms like WeChat and Douyin have become important for individual online informal learning in China, supporting everyone in becoming not only learners but as teachers as well. While university students Zhou, Cui and Deng use online platforms for daily learning and entertainment, as medical students they also contribute WeChat articles about health-related topics such as smoking cessation. Zhou explained, ‘as medical students we have the duty to support the national health plan ... if we have more followers, it can have a social benefit ... it is meaningful’ (Zhou interview 13/8/2020). She also reflected that the process of collecting literature when writing articles is a good way of learning. However, Zhou also commented that, ‘not all online articles are scientific, we are serious about writing, but many others just post unreal or unclear information online while readers cannot distinguish’ (ibid.). When talking about how to achieve the national health goals, Zhou stated that ‘external factors like us [resources providers] and relevant policy, government’s encouragement and engagement are important, but the most crucial factor is learners’ willingness to receive knowledge’ (ibid.). As the most popular online platforms, WeChat and Douyin provide learning and teaching opportunities to everyone, but regarding health education, the constraint is that not every learner has the critical health literacy to distinguish what is true. So that is why learners like Qian and Sun prefer official accounts from governmental organizations and reliable non-state actors.

CONCLUSION

In the Chinese education system, the government has always taken the lead, with non-state actors playing an active part, under governmental guidance. During the pandemic, nongovernmental organizations like CAEA and private technology companies such as Tencent and Alibaba, have supported the Chinese public in learning and working from home. Multiple types of learning have been supported through the internet; formal, nonformal and informal online

learning resources have been provided by NGOs and the government with the help of private technology companies. Adopting an equity perspective, the innovative spaces described in this report are successfully engaging diverse groups in adult learning, thereby facilitating both intentional and unintentional learning and are popular among a wide range of adult learners, including young adults, the elderly, young mothers and non-governmental employees. The development of technology supported by the government, NGOs, private companies, the learning community and individuals is creating new learning spaces, such as Xuexi Qiangguo, Douyin, WeChat groups and articles, that are increasing participation in learning.

However, there remains the issue of how to ensure quality. Informal online learning is an important part of adult learning, but the quality of online resources is not guaranteed. As compared to formal online courses which are provided by universities or known governmental/nongovernmental organizations, anyone can upload articles and short videos which may be interesting but not necessarily evidence based or scientific. In addition, although there are policies about online schools and courses (especially those that focus on young students), no specific policy exists to regulate online informal learning. Instead, once individuals register on the platforms, everyone can be a learner as well as a resource provider. Mass online resources are difficult to supervise; therefore, adult online learning needs to provide learners with the tools to recognize the quality of information. There also needs to be more regulation in terms of platform requirements and the social responsibility and accountability of resource providers needs to be enhanced.

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APPENDIX

Profile of Respondents

Name	Zhao	Qian	Sun	Li
Position	Private company employee, participated in adult certified-education and private workforce training	Private educational company employee, self-learning adult higher education courses for certification	Staff member of health-related governmental organization	Working mother, WeChat medical-groups manager
Name	Cui	Zhou	Deng	
Position	Second year university student, smoke cessation research group leader	Second year university student, smoke cessation research group member	Second year university student, smoke cessation research group member	

Note: Pseudonym are used in this research, except for Cui and Deng - they asked to be named.

INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

CHRIS MILLORA¹²

ABSTRACT

Experiencing impacts of constant natural disasters, non-state actors in the Philippines have developed a range of educational responses to the climate emergency. Taking a proposed typology of non-state actors as a starting point, this paper explores the ways by which non-state actors in the Philippines have co-implemented (and/or co-financed), initiated and influenced the country's adult (and environmental) education programmes; and whether and how these engagements have been mediated by the government's regulatory frameworks. By taking an NGO-initiated youth environmental education programme as a case study, this paper illustrates how a non-state actor implemented innovative programming in terms of participation, access and learning outcomes; and influenced local authorities in adult (environmental) education through campaigning and strategic partnership. These findings suggest that for adult learning to cultivate social change, there needs to be an increased understanding of the social, political and cultural contexts in developing adult education provisions that could be founded on equity and inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is one of the top five countries in the world to have experienced long-term exposure and vulnerability to extreme, climate-related disasters (Eckstein, Hutfils, & Wings, 2019) leading to a myriad of impacts in the education sector: destruction of school buildings, difficulty of returning to school especially among low-income students; and emotional stress on teachers and administrators (Dahl & Millora, 2016; UNDRR, 2019). Non-state actors have developed a wide range of educational responses to the climate emergency, using online and offline tools for public awareness campaigns.

This background paper will explore the role(s) of non-state actors in adult education and learning in the Philippines in general and in youth environmental education in particular. The first section will present a typology developed to capture the diversity of non-state actors in the country and the roles they may take in adult education provision and financing. A brief history follows, discussing how these actors developed, as well as relevant regulatory and policy frameworks including quality assurance.

The second section will then focus on a case study of an environmental education programme provided by a non-state actor: the Sea and Earth Advocates (SEA) Camp initiated by the Philippine national NGO Save the Philippine Seas (SPS). The SEA Camp “is an intensive environmental education and leadership program” that focuses chiefly on

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coastal and marine issues, and seeks to empower “young SEAtizens as leaders in conservation¹³”. The case study was developed through semi-structured interviews with SPS’ leaders, SEA camp facilitators and participants (see Appendix A for the methods). Publicly-available SEA Camp documents, including those in the SPS website, were also collected and analysed.

NON-STATE ACTORS IN ADULT EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Like many developing countries, Philippine policies and public opinion place a high priority on the potential of education to address development issues – for instance, in mitigating the effects of climate change or redressing inequalities. Even prior to the introduction of public education in the Philippines through American occupation, education was already provided by non-state actors including through parochial schools brought by Spanish colonisation (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2013; Jimenez & Sawada, 2001). As such, participation in educational opportunities, such as adult learning, provided by a variety of non-state actors, are ever increasing.

To capture such diversity, Table 1 proposes a typology of these non-state actors and the roles that they have played in adult education and learning. Adult education programmes in the country engage with a range of topics: from basic literacy to livelihood and entrepreneurship skills development, health education, agricultural skills and, similar to the case study below, in environmental education (cf World Bank, 2018). Civil society actors include peoples’ organisations, church-based or sectarian groups, faith-based organisations, local and international NGOs, aid agencies and self-help groups. For-profit actors include private business and corporations. Their roles could be described as, (co)implementing, initiating and/or influencing.

Table 1. A proposed typology for understanding the types and roles of non-state actors in adult education in the Philippines

Roles in the provision and financing of adult education				
		(co)implementing	initiating	influencing
Type of Non-state actors	Civil Society Actors	e.g. NGOs, church groups contracted by the government to implement Alternative Learning System and TVET training	e.g. Save the Philippine Seas (a national NGO) designing, raising funds for and rolling out its own environmental education programme	e.g. E-net Philippines (or Civil Society Network for Education Reforms) lobbying for education policies

13 <https://www.savephilippineseas.org/seacamp>

For-Profit Actors	e.g. Businesses that own a Higher Education Institutions, co-implementing government-mandated curriculum	e.g. Unilab (a pharmaceutical company) pioneered a programme to engage and train youth towards the achievement of SDGs	e.g. Private businesses sitting as stakeholders and advisers in government TVET programme
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Developed from: Diokno & Pe Symaco, 2016; ADB, 2013; de la Torre, 2007; Oposa 2015

The roles and activities of non-state actors may vary and some NSAs, depending on the nature of their group or their advocacy area, identify themselves more strongly with a particular role above. For example, E-net Philippines (see also below), which could be dominantly described as a social movement, concentrates on political lobbying and awareness campaigns (i.e. influencing). For-profit companies may decide to partner with government’s TVET programmes by providing opportunities for apprenticeship and internships in their offices (Syjuco, 2007). Religious organisations and NGOs have been known to sponsor adult learning classes for more marginalised groups such as indigenous people (UNESCO, 2015). According to UNESCO (2015, p 41), literacy programmes implemented by local NGOs in the country, have the reputation of reaching communities that “are often afflicted by poverty and unreached by formal education”.

Non-state actors have partnered with the government to *co-implement* state-led adult education programmes both in formal and non-formal settings. Co-implementation could come in the form of co-financing, contracting or through public-private partnerships. For instance, private education institutions are being contracted to roll out the government’s Alternative Learning System (ALS): a non-formal basic literacy and equivalency assessment programme especially for marginalised adults (Department of Education [DepEd], 2019; World Bank, 2018). Under the ALS’s Unified Contracting Scheme, community groups, public organisations and local government units are hired by the Department of Education to offer ALS classes following a national curriculum (World Bank, 2018). In 2013, 31% of all ALS clients were served through programmes implemented by the department’s partners and contracted companies hires (UNESCO, 2015).

While education often receives the lion’s share of the country’s budget, the adult learning component receives only a small percentage. In 2018, the ALS programme received 0.008% of the sector’s 674.4 Billion Peso budget (see DBM, 2018). As such, other local governments and NGOs partner with the Department of Education to co-finance ALS programmes at the local level such as those in conflict areas (World Bank, 2018). Partners such as the Philippine Science Centrum conduct ALS classes through exhibits and galleries, while the Philippine Information Agency uses radio, television and print media. Due to the diversity and dispersion of the ALS service delivery models, monitoring has been a challenge as each provider conducts its own monitoring and assessment mechanism (World Bank 2018). Recently, the Philippine Senate passed a bill to ‘institutionalise’ ALS by establishing Community Learning Centres in every municipality and city and allocated teaching positions for literacy facilitators (Reganit, 2020).

Other non-state actors initiate and finance (or seek funding for) their own educational programmes. While government policies call for the integration of environmental education in the formal education curriculum (see Appendix B), many non-state actors themselves design and implement environmental education and training for youth and adults – ranging from community-based classes to simulation exercises with local groups (Luna, 2001). For instance, the pharmaceutical giant Unilab’s Ideas Positive programme trains young people to develop projects to address the SDGs, including climate change mitigation¹⁴. Dela Torre (2007) observed that adult learning provisions by NGOs and other civil society actors were largely responsive to the needs of the individuals – including livelihood training programmes and entrepreneurship education. These types of learning activities, which could be described as ‘filling the gaps’ of the state provisions, seemed to be less regulated by the Philippine government (c.f. Clarke, 1995, ADB 2013). Formal registration of NGOs and other groups, for example, is voluntary.

Non-state actors have also had a strong role in influencing government policies in the country. The Civil Society Network for Education Reforms or E-net has been successful in influencing public opinion through evidence-based advocacy, including raising issues of out-of-school youth and the ALS in the government’s reform agenda (Diokno & Pe Symaco, 2016). E-net began in 2000 when a group of civil society actors noted that non-state groups were allowed little involvement in the country’s Education for All activities and monitoring – which was then the top priority in the Philippine’s education agenda¹⁵. They formed a coalition to consolidate efforts in political influence and engagement. According to the UNDRR (2019), the role of non-state actors is not reserved to delivery of services, but they also have a seat in the table during state-sanctioned policy development and evaluation processes in the Philippines (see also Clarke, 1995). Several NGOs and grassroots movements have also campaigned for adult education to be more effectively mainstreamed into the government’s policy agenda (c.f. dela Torre, 2007).

Recognising that there are a multiplicity of non-state actors, this section highlights what several researchers have described as the ‘vibrant’ civil society space in the Philippines (Aldaba, Antezana, Valderrama, & Fowler, 2000; Asian Development Bank, 2013) and the many configurations of role(s) that they may take in the country’s education provisions and financing. These roles are not mutually exclusive, and certain non-state actors may serve multiple roles in terms of co-implementing and co-financing, initiating and influencing the state and other stakeholders – further galvanizing their potential contributions to the sector. Regulatory and quality assurance frameworks are in place. However, these are dependent on whether the NSAs chose to be accredited by the state and/or on the extent by which non-state actors partner with and/or are funded by the government.

SEA CAMP: EMPOWERING YOUNG SEATIZENS THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

14 <https://www.unilabfoundation.org/ideas-positive>

15 <https://enetphil.org/who-we-are/>

To further illustrate how non-state actors innovate for social change and influence stakeholders and the public, this paper will focus on the SEA Camp – an intensive, week-long environmental education programme which aims to “raise awareness on coastal and marine issues; promote pro-environmental behaviour, and build a network of marine conservationists in Southeast Asia.¹⁶” SEA Campers were also tasked to design and pitch an environmental project, five to ten of which were given seed funding (US\$200-500) for implementation. About 50 of these projects, led by young people (19-23 years old), came into fruition.

The Camp is the brainchild of Save Philippine Seas (SPS), a national NGO that started as a social media campaign against illegal wildlife trade in 2011 and then focused on a range of environmental education and advocacy activities on marine conservation. To date, eleven SEA Camps – fully-funded by State Department grants by the US Embassy – have already been implemented across the three regions in the Philippines, each catering for about 30 participants. The analysis will be divided into three themes: i) participation and access, ii) learning outcomes and iii) influence.

‘How do we get them to love the sea? By throwing them in the water’

Experiential learning at the heart of participation and access

While the state’s concern around environmental education chiefly lies on how it can be integrated into formal schooling, it likewise recognises the importance of promoting environmental awareness among youth and adults outside schools. The SEA Camp put forward an innovative solution by designing curriculum and teaching approaches that were context-based and responsive to real-life issues about and around marine conservation. According to SPS’ founder, Anna Oposa¹⁷, SEA Camp’s approach to environmental education was anchored on experiential learning:

“...how do we get them to love the sea? By throwing them in the water! In designing the programme, I make sure the youth I train get the on-the-ground experience.”

– Anna, SPS founder

Looking into SPS’ intensive training design, a variety of hands-on workshops and excursions were interspersed with sit-down lectures. For instance, after listening to a talk on the importance of marine-protected areas, young people went snorkelling, interacted with community tourism leaders and observed coastal-based tourism sites. All interviewed participants cited this approach as effective, particularly because the activities allowed them to observe some abstract concepts such as conservation or marine preservation concretely. Participants who studied conservation-related courses found this approach to be starkly different from what they have experienced through their formal education. Katrina, a Marine Biology graduate, shared that “in school, there was so much information and mostly, they were theory-based. In the SEA Camp, it was more of real-life.”

¹⁶ <https://www.savephilippineseas.org/seacamp>

¹⁷ Anna Oposa agreed to be named in the report. The rest are pseudonyms

As SEA Camps were not implemented on a mass scale, there was a conscious effort to achieve diversity among participants in terms of gender, organisational affiliations, discipline and geographical location. Slots were set for young people outside Manila (the capital city) and those from small islands. SPS leaders recognised that reaching marginalised groups continued to be a challenge; however, they were hoping that engaging a diversity of individuals would have a multiplier effect. Many interviewees identified this as a strength, particularly because the diversity brought about varying perspectives during discussions:

“They don’t have hard science backgrounds... some were in music, theatre, arts – but they were passionate about the environment... that was why they were very keen at learning.”

– Bobby, SEA Camp facilitator

Taken together, experiential learning was at the heart of the innovation in the SEA Camp. Apart from strategies such as outdoor learning, the programme also framed young people’s previous experiences as a resource. As such, measures were put in place to diversify each cohort to maximise learning.

‘Education alone does not lead to behavioural change’

Learning outcomes beyond the technical and informational

According to the interviews, the kind of learning young people engaged with was not only information-based (e.g. definitions of environmental terms, components of the marine ecosystem) but what could also be described as practice-oriented skills (e.g. budgeting, project development, public speaking, campaigning and stakeholder communication). For SEA Camp facilitator, Bobby, these learning outcomes elevated knowledge from the level of awareness to that of action (as encapsulated in his quote in the title of this subsection). Many interviews revealed similar sentiments: this practice-oriented learning was considered more useful in real-life situations and had been applied to their current work as government officials, teachers, development workers and environmental activists.

“I give credit to the SEA Camp for my work ethics... It’s more than the conservation knowledge, it’s learning about empathy, grit and leadership.”

– Liz, former SEA Camp participant

The study by Oposa (2015) noted that the SEA Camp also led to an increase in positive attitudes towards pro-environmental behaviour, which influenced the development of civic responsibility among the young participants. Many participants attributed these learning outcomes to the project pitching activity (as described above) that helped them understand the complexity entailed in implementing a conservation project or advocacy campaign – from project design to communicating to potential funders. Still, many interviewees shared that there were unintended learning outcomes too, which were as important as those charted by the facilitators at the outset. These included developing friendships and professional and personal networks that went beyond the Camp.

“I think it’s an effective environmental education programme because aside from the one-week camp, we were also encouraged to participate in some of the projects in SPS and volunteer so we can continue learning and growing.”

– Stella, former SEA Camp participant

Taken together, the intended and unintended learning outcomes from the SEA camp illustrate that their innovative approach to environmental education not only involved imparting conservation-related knowledge but also soft skills, tools and networks that were needed so that learners were able to use this knowledge to facilitate action and remain active actors in conservation.

Social media for social good and writing letters to leaders

Strategies for influencing the state and the public

A key aim of the SEA Camp was to cultivate a sense of leadership among young people to pursue their conservation-related advocacy. Sessions on communication and awareness campaigns were in place. Most of these, according to my interviews with the SPS leadership team, related to influencing leaders at various levels of the government and the wider public. For Anna, SPS’ founder, using social media for social good had been a core tool in their organisation’s campaigns. However, she clarified the importance of “creating content that people would want to read.” In other words, they tailor-fitted every campaign, social media post and/or education material to the audience they wanted to reach by employing strategies drawn from, for instance, science communication, storytelling and theatre. SPS also rolls out a teacher education programme that shares some of their experiential learning approaches (for instance, through contextualising teaching materials) to publicly-funded schools.

While many of the interviewees did express discontent on how state institutions have been handling environmental education programmes in particular and climate change issues in general, there was also a strong recognition of the need to partner with the government so that their shared advocacy could be pushed forward:

“I can’t achieve the vision that I want if I don’t work with the government, so I always have to be strategic and respectful. If I vilify them at the outset, they will not work with me...”

– Anna, SPS founder

This framing of the state as a partner in climate change advocacy was integrated into the various tools that participants were introduced to during the SEA Camp. The programme did not appear to polarise non-state actors’ efforts (such as that of the NGO and youth activities) and that of the government, rather frame them as complementary and collaborative. For instance, participants were asked to pen a letter to leaders over an issue that they felt needed to be addressed in their community. ‘Writing Letters to Leaders’ was a strategy that encouraged

young people to “stop global whining and speak up!¹⁸”. Many of the participants expressed that this was a concrete first step on how to potentially influence leaders not only in government but also in corporations and businesses.

“...in our city, I noticed that there were still some restaurants using plastic straws and cling-wraps despite government ordinance prohibiting single-use plastics. I wrote a letter addressed to the head of the establishment – not the manager. After a week, they were already using metal straws. I sent letters to about ten establishments, and I noticed that all of them complied!”

– Stacy, former SEA Camp participant

These insights showed that young people learned the importance of communication in raising awareness of the public toward environmental issues and then potentially getting the attention and support of key state and non-state leaders. It can be inferred that embedding these strategies within environmental education further galvanised the role of non-state actors in influencing other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Taking the proposed typology (Table 1) as a starting point, this paper has explored the ways by which non-state actors have co-implemented (and/or co-financed), initiated and influenced adult education and environmental education programmes in the Philippines. By taking the SEA Camp as a case study, this paper has illustrated how a non-state actor (in this case a local NGO) was able to assume a multiplicity of these roles, implement innovative programming and influence local authorities and practices in adult (environmental) education.

The non-state actor in the case study *initiated* and sought funding for its own youth (environmental) education programme that was innovative in terms of participation, access and learning outcomes. The innovation of their work lies in the centrality of experiential learning in their approach to educational participation and access. This exposed young people to the complexities and realities of marine conservation work in the country through context-responsive curricula, interactive facilitation approaches and building upon the diversity of every cohort as a resource of learning. As such, learning outcomes were not only reserved for learning factual information and concepts, but could be described as more holistic and practice-based – equipping young people with the necessary tools to continue their advocacy.

Central to these approach were the ways by which young people can partner with the government, industry leaders and the wider public and influence their work in various ways and scales – particularly through targeted, inclusive communication both online and offline. As such, in times of environmental crisis, they have strategically created and maintained relationships that influenced their local authorities on environmental issues and in developing strategies

18 <https://www.savephilippineseas.org/letters-to-leaders>

in implementing more context-based environmental education practices for young adults (e.g. through their teaching training programme).

Taken together, the experience of non-state actors in the Philippines and the work of SPS through the SEA camp suggest that for adult and youth learning to cultivate social change, there needs to be an increased recognition of the wider social, political and cultural complexities within which these activities take place – including whether and how they mitigate and/or enhance inequalities. This way, non-state actors may be able to influence and work with the government in developing adult education provisions that are founded on equity and inclusion, context-responsive and relevant to the needs of the citizens.

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APPENDIX A - METHODS

Data presented in this paper was collected through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The interviews lasted for 30-45 minutes, via an online messaging platform. Interviews were recorded following the participants' consent. Interviewees included leaders, facilitators of SPS and former participants of the SEA Camp as well as two individuals who have worked with non-state actors in the country (a founder of a local NGO on disaster risk reduction and a climate activist) and could provide more general perspectives on the topic. The interviews revolved around their experiences in leading, facilitating or participating in the Camp and also their wider views around the roles of NGOs, private businesses and other non-state actors in the country's environmental education programmes.

Interview participants:

1. Angela, 24, female, former SEA Camp participant and now is engaging in further studies. She has also volunteered as a camp facilitator
2. Bobby, 29, male, one of SPS leaders and SEA Camp facilitator. He now works in a development organisation
3. Katrina, 23, female, former SEA Camp participant and now works at the central office of a government institution concerned with environmental programmes
4. Lily, 29, female, climate change activist
5. Luisa, 41, female, worked in disaster reduction education and other development initiatives for over 15 years
6. Anna, 29, female, one of the SPS founder and in charge of designing SEA Camp programme and overall direction of the organisation and currently works as a development consultant
7. Stacy, 22, transwoman, former SEA Camp participant and now works as a project officer for a small island project.
8. Stella, 21, female, former SEA Camp participant and now works as a primary school teacher. She has also volunteered as a camp facilitator
9. Stephen, 20, male, former SEA Camp participant and later camp facilitator.

10. Wes, 22, male, former SEA Camp participant and now works in a company

As SPS is a tight-knit community, names have been anonymised, and some characteristics have been fictionalised to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

The documents analysed included materials posted on the SPS website on the SEA Camp and their other campaign activities. A study by Oposa (2015) on the effects of SEA Camp to the participants was also referred to, including the programme of activities that were cited in its appendix.

All interviews and documents were analysed, and emerging themes formed section 4 of this paper. To illustrate some findings, excerpts from some interviews were included.

APPENDIX B – SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES’ ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EESD) POLICIES

A. Chronology of official programs

1977	PD 1121 and 1152 mandates that the DECS should integrate environmental education in the school curriculum at all levels
1987	Executive Order 192 mandates EMB to aggressively promote EE
1988	Multi-sectoral consultations resulted in the Philippine strategy for sustainable development which was sent to UNCED in Rio, 1992 EMB prepares a National Strategy for Environmental Education NEEAP 1992-2002 EMB updates NEEAP for 2005-2014
2008	The Philippine Congress passes RA 9512, “An Act to Promote Environmental Awareness through Environmental Education and for Other Purposes”

B. NEEAP curricular framework

In the freshman year, students take up the NSTP which includes EESD
In subsequent curricular levels, EESD is integrated in various courses, especially in natural and social sciences as well as professional subjects
A synthesizing course specifically for the environment, is a requirement in some universities

C. Significant programs

Undergraduate and graduate degree programs with an environmental focus are offered by many academic institutions
Two national networks exist to promote environmental education: the EENP and the PATLEPAM
Training programs are offered by government agencies and individual institutions
The DGS program of EENP, a whole-school approach in delivering EESD and an accreditation program to accelerate the “greening” of the academy

Source: Galang, A. P. (2010), p.176.

A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT TO ENCOURAGE LITERACY ACTIONS - A CASE-STUDY IN SENEGAL

HELENE BINESSE¹⁹

ABSTRACT

In Senegal in the 90's, adult literacy was a major priority. The State called on the civil society organisations to develop and implement literacy projects to utilise the substantial financial support from the international community. The outsourcing approach *faire-faire* was created through the collaboration of the State and non-state actors. From 2007, adult literacy provision progressively changed, leading to a decrease in the literacy rate. Reasons for this change included: a political shift that placed the financing of literacy on direct budgetary support, meaning that the budget allocation to youth and adult literacy became insufficient; large programmes funded by the international community ended, and there had been poor coordination and quality control of literacy projects. Within this context, the NGO AlphaDev developed its identity through REFLECT, a participatory approach to adult literacy based on Paulo Freire's principles. This case study explores the role and potential of AlphaDev as a non-state actor that collaborates with both the State and international NGOs to implement and promote literacy for sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1993, non-state partners have played a major role in adult literacy in Senegal through the outsourcing approach known as *faire-faire*²⁰. This case-study aims to present the founding principles of the approach that remains central to today's Senegalese youth and adult literacy policy, and how these principles encourage and coordinate the involvement of the various actors.

The case-study first provides an overview of the regulatory framework and analyses the existing typology of non-state adult education provision and outsourcing policy in the country. The study does not analyse the *faire-faire* results but illustrates the government and an NGO's collaboration within the framework that promotes different forms of literacy. This collaborative relationship led to non-governmental organisations' involvement in the youth literacy provision and political lobbying.

19 Contact: H.Binesse@uea.ac.uk

20 Word-for-word translated as "make somebody do something"

AlphaDev²¹ is an influential local NGO that has been providing youth and adult literacy classes based on the REFLECT approach²² since 2003. The case-study examines this innovative type of provision in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes, as well as policy influence. The analysis draws on primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with actors from the NGO, former officials of the Literacy Directorate at the Ministry of Education, representatives of civil society coalitions and UNESCO Dakar office to identify innovative practices. Some references to policy documents and reports complement the primary data.

OVERVIEW OF THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND ADULT EDUCATION PROVISION

State and non-state actors' efforts to address youth and adult literacy needs in Senegal have been substantive since 1993. To tackle the low literacy rate (26.87%²³), the State established the Office of the Delegate Minister for Literacy and Promotion of National Languages in 1991. Between 1994-2006, large programmes supported almost 3 million citizens, including the Pilot Female Literacy Project (PAPF²⁴) funded by the World Bank (12,6 million US\$) and the two phases of the project to support the action plan support programme in basic education for youth and adults (PAPA²⁵) funded by CIDA²⁶ (26,5 million US\$²⁷). These projects contributed to a paradigm shift from "State conducting literacy activities" towards a "Pilot State for its sector in partnership with Civil Society"²⁸.

The President of CNOAS (National coordination of literacy operators) Mamadou Konté²⁹ presented the *faire-faire* approach and the actors:

"The State needed a strong Civil Society. Through the symposia in Kolda (1993) and in Thiès (1995), the roles and responsibilities of the State and the CSOs in literacy were defined and the CNOAS was created to become the interface between the operators and the partners. The State was at the strategic level, the partners were at the financial and technical level, and the operators (CSOs), organised within the CNOAS, developed and implemented the projects, provided literacy and facilitator training. The procedures manuals were consensually developed. In 2003, we were 500 operators, today 300, active in the 45 departments of the

21 <https://ongalphadev.org/about-us1/> ; https://fr-fr.facebook.com/pg/ongalphadev/posts/?ref=page_internal

22 REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) is an approach pioneered by ActionAid, which uses Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) visual methods for facilitating community discussion and planning as a basis for literacy learning.

23 In 1988 as per World Bank data
<https://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMTendanceStatPays?langue=fr&codePays=SEN&codeTheme=4&codeStat=S E.ADT.LITR.ZS>

24 Projet Alphabétisation Priorité Femmes

25 Projet d'Appui au Plan d'Action

26 Canadian International Development Agency

27 1 XAF=0.001955 USD in 1996, source fxtop.com

28 <https://www.oecd.org/countries/senegal/48888140.pdf>

29 According to the respondents' preferences, the researcher is using the real names for all respondents in this case-study

country. To implement the large projects, the CNOAS regularly organised trainings and workshops to strengthen operators' capabilities to better address the specificities of the projects." (interview 2/09/20, translated from French)

Mamadou Ndoye³⁰, the Deputy Minister who implemented and promoted the outsourcing approach, stated in an ADEA³¹ study "the participatory approach adopted through the *faire-faire* constitutes a break with the vertical, directive or even authoritarian approaches which have predominated in the past [...]. Indeed, the political dialogue option chosen by the government fully involved the various actors and beneficiaries from the start and throughout the development of the policy." (Ndiaye *et al.*, 2004).

Though the private sector was not originally included in the partnership in 1993, it has been associated to the management of the CNRE, National Centre for Educational Resources with the State and Civil Society. The Centre was a component of the PAPA (phase I) management plan in 1997, it was mainly created to technically and financially support all actors in non-formal education (République du Sénégal, 2014).

There has been an unequivocal political commitment towards literacy effort at the institutional level. Indeed, in 2001, Senegal enshrined in the constitution the mobilisation of all to engage in literacy: "All national institutions, public or private, have a duty to make their members literate and to participate in the national literacy effort in one of the national languages" (article 22 paragraph 4).

However, institutional changes have weakened the sub-sector, as Mamadou Mara, retired official at the Literacy Directorate and former member of the Secretariat of State's Department for Literacy and National Language Promotion, explained:

"Educational policies, and those related to literacy in particular, have greatly suffered from changes, not to say institutional instability. Of course, all of these changes and reforms always had the objective of improving the situation; but they sometimes created, whether we like it or not, untimely breaches. For instance, the Secretariat State's Department for Literacy and National Language Promotion supported the Literacy Directorate and the National Centre for Educational Resources in bringing literacy cause to the attention of the government and financial partners. In 2017, it was eliminated. Because of its weak institutional foothold, the sub-sector is not viewed as a fully-fledged part of the education system. The illiteracy rate is high, 54%, mainly among women³² and the budget dedicated to the EBJA is not sufficient to address the literacy needs of the country." (from interview on 20/08/20, translated from French)

The sub-sector faces the following challenges and constraints:

30 Minister attached to the Minister of Education, in charge of Basic Education and Promotion of National Languages (1993-1998)

31 Association for Development of Education in Africa

32 National Agency of Statistics and Demography projections based on the census in 2013

a) lack of an effective system for measuring and evaluating the learning of youth and adult literacy learners; b) lack of qualified staff to monitor and evaluate the quality of EBJA programmes; c) insufficient financial resources allocated to literacy programmes; d) lack of convincing advocacy that could guide policy makers and development partners in their actions in favour of literacy (République du Sénégal, 2013; UIL, 2016). Since the completion of the large programmes funded by the international community in 2007, the budget dedicated to EBJA has been less than 1% of the Education budget³³ (République du Sénégal, 2019).

To address some of the challenges, UNESCO Dakar office and UIL through CapED³⁴ and RAMAA³⁵ programmes have been working along with the State and CSOs to strengthen the professional development framework for literacy facilitators and the monitoring and evaluation of literacy programmes. The aim is to ensure the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for literacy facilitators, promote their professionalisation and to implement measurement tools recently developed through RAMAA. The teacher training component is now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to strengthen and harmonise the quality of provision and its monitoring.

In response to the lack of coordination and quality control through the *faire-faire* approach, since 2012, the local and regional authorities have become accountable for literacy provision with the support of operators that become their partners, such as local NGOs and economic interest groups (e.g. women's groups). The budget allocated to EBJA limits the number of classes open per year (around 600 classes (République du Sénégal, 2019a, p.14)), the literacy programme lasts 9 months and does not include post-literacy classes. Therefore, to meet literacy needs, the mobilisation of various actors remains highlighted in the last education policy PAQUET-EF³⁶ 2018-2030 (Quality, Equity and Transparency improvement programme - Education and Training). The objective of the programme is to develop basic education provision sufficiently diversified and adapted to demand that can support youth and adults left behind by the formal system and, as such, raise the literacy rate of the population. In doing so, one of the strategies is "the development of a functional partnership framework allowing the mobilisation of the potential of local authorities, CSOs and the private sector for the diversification and expansion of the basic education offer for young people and adults". Spaces for dialogue, exchange and consultation are created to ensure the participation of the non-state actors representatives at key stages of the programme, for instance the National Group of Education and Training Partners³⁷ (République du Sénégal, 2018), as detailed below.

The partnership framework has changed over time as the literacy budget decreased, despite the substantial needs that persist. The participation of CSOs is key, collaborating with international NGOs and other Ministries (e.g.

33 (République du Sénégal, 2019, p. 65) the budget allocated to EBJA in 2020 is \$ 2 112 540, let 0,22% of the Education budget

34 Capacity Development for Education Programme

35 Action Research: Measuring Literacy Programme Participants' Learning Outcomes

36 Programme d'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Équité et de la Transparence -Education/Formation

37 Groupe national des Partenaires de l'Éducation et de la Formation (GNPEF)

Ministry of Women, Families and Gender) to provide literacy; its intervention is compensatory and complementary to the State efforts.

THE NGO ALPHADEV'S RESPONSES TO YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY

AlphaDev was created in 2003 (and became a registered NGO in 2009) and is based in Malika, in the suburbs of Dakar and has been implementing literacy classes for urban and rural disadvantaged communities, mainly women. The core team members worked together as facilitators with the Evangelical and Lutheran Church in Senegal (EELS) to provide literacy classes within the Pilot Female Literacy Project (PAPF). Following satisfactory results, EELS funded literacy classes for 2 more years and established a partnership with ActionAid to use REFLECT. Based on Freirean principles, the approach uses Participatory Rural Appraisal visual methods for facilitating community discussion and planning as a basis for literacy learning³⁸. Djiby Gaye, the programme manager explained:

“This is an easy-to-use approach that does not require a lot of resources. We use the material that is locally available, objects to illustrate a problem. With a produced REFLECT tool, we progressively introduce the written code. Everyone has the right to speak, position is important, we sit in a circle so that everyone has a vision, an idea and gives his/her opinion. The whole community is invited in the reflection sessions, educated people come to participate because it is for the local development. For me, REFLECT is the key to development.” (from interview on 1/09/20)

Convinced by the potential of the approach and its results within the communities, Mor Diakhate³⁹ and his colleagues created their own structure to sustain their literacy activities in line with the orientations of the State and their vision of literacy for sustainable development. Since its creation, the NGO has maintained an 18-month duration for literacy classes and continued developing their journal *Jokkoo*⁴⁰ in national languages⁴¹ to sustain the literacy acquisition.

The team expanded with facilitators from the area. Marème Khol, the Wolof facilitator, is a former literacy learner in the Pilot Female Literacy Project (PAPF) in a neighbouring town. She had attended secondary school in French and explained: “One day I saw a paper in Wolof, there were letters I did not know, I was doing nothing at home, I told myself that I had to learn to read and write in Wolof.” She learned fast and became able to replace her facilitator when he was absent. She was then introduced to AlphaDev to be trained as a REFLECT facilitator and joined the team. In 2018, with eight other colleagues at Alphadev, they passed the RPL test organised by the Ministry and

38 <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/policy-and-research/research-and-publications/reflect>

39 Executive director of Alphadev

40 “Communication” in Wolof

41 By Article I of the 1971 Senegalese constitution, “all codified languages are national languages”. As of this writing, 22 languages have been codified. The languages mentioned in this case-study are codified so considered as national languages

UNESCO (mentioned above). The recognition of their prior learning gives them the opportunity to teach in formal education as well.

The team carried on running literacy classes in Malika and the surroundings, and joined PAMOJA,⁴² the West African REFLECT network, to share experience and build on their practices. In 2006, the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation organised an exchange mission. AlphaDev welcomed and trained Canadian volunteers in the REFLECT approach and the following year, members of the NGO visited Quebec to share their practices with members of the Popular Literacy Group in Quebec. This exchange reinforced the NGO's positioning and AlphaDev became the national reference point for REFLECT. The NGO gives a particular attention to complying with public policies such as empowering women in the market and political field. The REFLECT women's groups in literacy classes generated discussions and actions to create a social and solitary-based shop and a network of female local councillors from Malika and the neighbouring towns. The NGO supported the women's groups in these actions, thereby diversifying its literacy provision to promote lifelong learning.

The platform established through the *faire-faire* created space for the CSOs to engage in literacy actions with communities and collaborate with the State actors, and this still exists today. Between 2001 and 2006, Mor Diakhate joined the steering board and the national office of CNOAS, the coordination of literacy operators. He participated in the elaboration of procedures manuals (i.e. PAPA for literacy classes and community-based classes) and in debates to ensure the diversity of literacy initiatives.

This experience had a positive impact on the AlphaDev / Literacy Directorate (DALN) partnership. AlphaDev is today a member of the National Group of Education and Training Partners composed of representatives of the administration, the civil society, technical and financial partners, local authorities, teachers' unions and associations for the parents of students, and the private sector. In 2018, the role of the group was to guide, supervise and validate the provisional and final documents of the revised PAQUET, the current education policy. El Hadji Omar Diop, former official at the Literacy Directorate (DALN), coordinated the commission to revise the EBJA section, he explained:

“During the review of the PAQUET, CSOs participated in the discussions on the strategic orientations, the identification and planning of the activities. For each new literacy programme, for example PALAM⁴³, bridging classes, CSOs are involved from the beginning of the process: discussions, budget, monitoring and evaluation. I worked in other education sectors but the opportunities EBJA offers to the CSOs to involve in the policy making, elaboration and implementation of projects, I have seen it only in this sub-sector.” (from interview on 2/09/20)

42 <https://www.pamoja-west-africa.org>

43 Literacy and vocational training programme to fight against poverty – Ministry of Women, Family and Gender and Islamic Development Bank <https://palamsenegal.sn/>

Selected for the CONFINTEA VI fellowship programme in 2017, Mor Diakhate developed the *faire-ensemble* – do together – strategy encouraging diversified and multisectoral approaches to youth and adult learning and education for a more realistic vision of local and sustainable development. In September 2020, he participated in a workshop organised by the Literacy Directorate (DALN) to elaborate the programme on the recent policy directions and strategies, national languages and financing. He also chaired the commission on strategic directions.

While following the State’s strategic orientation, the NGO AlphaDev has developed and strengthened its literacy activities using REFLECT. As part of its long relationship with the Literacy Directorate, the NGO engages at the policy level, participating in review and discussions.

LINKING YOUTH LITERACY AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, ADULT LITERACY AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

To address the identified demand for vocational and technical training in the EBJA programme, AlphaDev developed a popular learning centre (CAP⁴⁴) for out-of-school youth (15-20 years old) in Malika and the local areas. Mor Diakhate, the executive director, described the process:

“In 2008, vocational training was not part of our activities, we were unexperienced to respond to the demand. We set up a team with experts from the DALN (Literacy Directorate), Apprenticeship Directorate and Terre Des Hommes to think with them and build together the vocational programme articulated with literacy. In 2011, we opened the CAP. The Ministry of Employment, Vocational Training, and Crafts acknowledged the centre and provides the certifications to the learners.” (from interview on 17/08/20)

Within its area of action, right to education and protection of children, the international NGO Terre Des Hommes Switzerland has been technically and financially supporting AlphaDev since 2011. Thus, AlphaDev has provided 3-year-apprenticeships to 206 youth (134 female) in mechanics, sewing, carpentry, metal construction, hairdressing and electricity, and literacy in French and Wolof using REFLECT. Throughout the three years (3 hours, 3 days a week, totalling 1000 hours), Marème Khol, the Wolof facilitator, covers several activities in her class related to students’ professional specialisation to better manage their future activity. This includes developing a business plan, as well as covering health and human rights themes. She explained:

“With the students, we organise animations about gender-based violence. For instance, here, there are a lot of rapes, but the families don’t want to report. How to stop rapes in the neighbourhood? We discuss the causes, the consequences and how to stop them, the students give examples using the problem tree⁴⁵. Then

44 Centre d’Apprentissage Populaire

45 Participatory tool to analyse problem with the visual representation of a tree and part of the REFLECT approach/PRA methods

they organise debate in the neighbourhoods with other young people to share with them.” (from interview on 1/09/20)

In 2012, as part of the elaboration of PALAM, a literacy and vocational training programme to fight against poverty, the Literacy Directorate (DALN) invited Mor Diakhate to run a workshop to present how literacy can be articulated in vocational training. Within this programme, AlphaDev has started classes in Thiès⁴⁶ for 200 out-of-school youth (9-15 years old), of whom 65% are female. They are using REFLECT in their literacy classes and have incorporated topics on the theme of gender-based violence and health.

The positive impacts of REFLECT in the literacy and development project are also acknowledged by Horizont3000, an Austrian NGO, in its food and nutrition security programme⁴⁷, an overarching network of 8 projects. AlphaDev joined it in 2016 to strengthen a literacy component that was “too classic, we needed literacy classes that guide the beneficiaries towards economic activities, management of their household and their daily life,” explained Ismael Ndao, Horizont3000 national coordinator, in an interview with the researcher (27/08/20). To evaluate the literacy learning and monitoring, AlphaDev asked the Literacy Directorate (DALN) to conduct the evaluation in 2018. Satisfactory learning outcomes, positive feedback from the communities and the presence of an effective monitoring system working with the Education and Training Inspectorate encouraged Horizont3000 to carry on the partnership with AlphaDev. Through this evaluation, AlphaDev’s results have been added to the national literacy statistics.

The COVID pandemic has disrupted the dynamics of gatherings, and the impacts of this are not measured yet. However, the students and the facilitator of the vocational centre managed to maintain the communication through a WhatsApp group. Marème Khol explained:

“I take a picture of an exercise I wrote on a paper and share it in the WhatsApp group with a time limit. For example, write a small text on a specific topic, a maths exercise: make a receipt. They do it on a paper, take a picture and share it in the group. I first let them comment and correct among themselves, then I mark. It lasts an hour because they are at home and have tasks to do especially the girls.” (from interview on 1/09/20)

The students in tailoring produced face masks that were distributed to the communities working with the NGO. AlphaDev translated posters in national languages and, together with ENDA-santé, partner of the Horizont3000 project, they developed a special edition of their journal. Since July, the circles can meet again respecting the physical distancing.

With its experience and network, AlphaDev is always part of the actions led by the civil society to advocate on literacy and national language promotion. For instance, with COSYDEP, a civil society platform in education, they

46 Second largest city, 70 kms East of Dakar

47 <https://www.horizont3000.at/senegal/projets>

initiated LABO Alpha⁴⁸, a citizen board to encourage the use of the codified alphabet developed for national languages and raise awareness on the literate environment. “If literacy provision is based only on a state perspective, we cannot go far; the illiteracy rate in Senegal must worry and mobilise us”, insisted Cheikh Mbow, the president of COSYDEP in an interview.

Since 2006, without financial support from the State, the NGO AlphaDev has managed to collaborate with international NGOs and ensure the continuity of literacy classes with REFLECT. In doing so, the NGO AlphaDev identified potential partners in livelihood and sustainable development, studied their needs and highlighted what the NGO could add to development projects through literacy.

CONCLUSION

The horizontal State / society relationship created by the *faire-faire* framework, has allowed various actors in literacy to find their place at the policy-making and implementation levels, and together address the challenges together at their scale. The NGO AlphaDev was created and developed in this collaborative environment and this has shaped its current relationships with the Literacy Directorate as well as with other non-state actors.

Drawing on its experience, AlphaDev has managed to partnership with international NGOs to articulate literacy within a development project or vocational training for out-of-school youth, making the cross-sectoral connections a key point in their projects. They initiated the curriculum development together with experts from the Literacy Directorate (Ministry of Education), Apprenticeship Directorate (Ministry of Employment, Vocational Training, and Crafts) and the international NGO Terre des Hommes Switzerland. With the Austrian NGO, Horizont3000, the REFLECT circle meetings have become the starting space to bring community members together to discuss specific points of the overarching development project and carry on with literacy with those who request this support.

The REFLECT approach has patterned and strengthened their interventions. The regional and international gatherings of REFLECT networks had an impact on their adult literacy training and professional development. It encouraged them to develop innovative approaches and exchange experience. The use of REFLECT to raise awareness on human rights themes such as gender-based violence is fully part of their literacy provision within projects with NGOs but also with the Ministry of Women, Family and Gender with the literacy and vocational training programme to fight against poverty, PALAM.

The teaching experience of some NGO’s facilitators has been acknowledged recently through an experiential accreditation system developed. This is an important step for those who had taken the chance to learn literacy in their national language.

AlphaDev is a good example of how socially significant the contribution of NGOs’ expertise, conviction and intelligence can be. They not only enrich and support the State’s efforts, but also address gaps in provision and to

48 <http://cosydep.org/labo-alpha/> Laboratoire Alphabétisme – Literacy Laboratory

open new participatory ways towards acknowledging and meeting people’s needs, with a gender sensitivity and considering cultural identities. However, and despite these combined efforts being implemented with critical and creative thinking, all the interviewees concurred that there was a need to substantially raise the State budget allocated to the sub-sector, which today amounts to only 0,22% of what has been assigned to the Ministry of Education.

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APPENDIX

Profile of respondents*

NGO Alphadev	Mor Diakhate, Executive Director
	Djiby Mamadou Gaye, Programme Manager
	Marème Khol, Wolof Facilitator
UNESCO	National Programme Officer, Dakar office
COSYDEP	Cheikh Mbow, Executive Director of the Coalition of Organisations in Synergy for the Defence of Public Education

Former officials at the Ministry of Education	Mamadou Mara, retired official at the Literacy Directorate and former member of the Secretariat of State, Ministry of Education
	El Hadji Omar Diop, former Programme Coordinator at the Literacy Directorate (DALN), Ministry of Education
CNOAS	Mamadou Konté, President of the National Coordination of Literacy Operators in Senegal
Horizont3000	Ismael Ndao, National Programme Coordinator

* According to the respondents' preferences in their signed consent form, the names above are the real ones. In the case of UNESCO, the Programme Officer consulted preferred not to be named.