EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF AFGHAN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN TEHRAN

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Abstract - The present study is focused on the educational status of Afghan children in Tehran. This issue has raised that due to the accommodation and long endurance of the Afghan immigrants in Iran, their problems are not solved in this country and it remains unsolved, since Iran has no specific policy for the immigrants, while one of their troubles is the educational status of their children.The present study is qualitative with the content analysis, as 52 school authorities, the students and their parents in Tehran by the snowball sampling method and the deep and semi-structured interviews with them. The data analytic method is the content analysis via the inductive approach. The final results of the study included five items, i.e. economical status, cultural status, social status, political status, and personal status. The poor financial status and the lack of ability to pay the expenses of the schools, the work enforcement on the children, the lack of the residency card in Iran, the mental aggression, and the rejection of the children in the schools, where these are imposed on the immigrant children in some state schools, which are seen as the most significant problems of the Afghan immigrant children.

Keywords - Education, immigrant, afghan children.

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Immigration is always seen as a specific phenomenon across the societies, since any nation, in which the nationals immigrate to look for a better prospect, and it is chosen as the immigrants' target, where they are manipulated, however, the children or the second generation of the immigrant families face more negative and positive burdens of being abroad, one of the most remarkable concerns among the Afghan children in Iran can be mentioned as the educational matters of the children. Iran is one of the nations, which is most immigrant-receptive. There areabout 833,000 Afghan immigrants recorded and approximately 1,400,000 Afghan immigrants are not recorded, who are living in Iran. The Afghan immigrant children lack any residency card and thus they have limited access to the educational and social services. These children work under hard conditions, whereas they have low earnings and are very vulnerable to exploitation (UNICEF Portal in Tehran, 2015). The presence of these immigrants in Iran has lasted more than 30 years. There are many literature on the reasons of the refuge of Afghans and the current status of the immigrants, however, there are few studies on the Afghan children as the individuals, who have not had any role in such immigration. They are obliged to tolerate the consequences of immigration, even if they are born in Iran, they cannot require the authorities to handle and decide on their problems separately. One of the problems of the immigrant children is their educational problemThe development towards equal education may be a power mediatory to grant progress in the other contexts, e.g. public health, less poverty, gender equality, cooperation, and democracy, thus all social classes would contribute and the dimensions of the economical growth would be improved (universal report of education for all, 2009:17). Today, education is seen as a tool to promote the life quality of the public. In all human societies, the primary concern of the governments is to increment the access to the appropriate education for all children of all classes, races, genders (Sammons, Day & Ko, 2010:50). In respect to the equal educational opportunity, any discriminationbetween the people in terms of gender, race, physical status, race, age, language, and social class should be eliminated. Although the Government of Iran declares that, in the recent years, there are many abundant facilities granted to the Afghan immigrants and the number of the literate individuals has raised from six percent to sixty percent (Hoodfar, 2007:3), the status of the Afghan immigrants in Iran is not yet ideal and manyAfghan immigrant children cannot study in schools in Iran. Whereas the access to education is very important for this group and the lack of education may lead to cultural poverty and higher social aggression among this group of immigrants. Until early 1993, the refugee children in Iran could study in the state school freely via the state subsidiary paid for the immigrants. In the recent years, due tothe high populationof the refugees and the high financial burden for their preservation, the government has decided to revise the immigrant reception policies and the children, who could not participate in the census enacted by the Ministry of Interior in 1993, could not continue to study in the next years, yet in 2009, the government allowed their families to receive the Temporary Education Card and enroll in the schools, provided that the Afghan immigrant children contrary to the Iranian children, who have free access to education, should pay fees, where the fees were high for the Afghan families and their children. When the economical status of the families

is more inappropriate, the education possibility for their children would decrement and the children are more forced to work, by which they find negative impact on their childhood. Subject to these restrictions, for most Afghans, education has high priority, while the Government of IranAs there are few researches in this regard, many Afghans with three generations have lived in Iran and there is lack of planning on the education of Afghan children. It is necessary to pursue this issue critically, so the Afghan children will reach the education opportunity as their primary right. The purpose of the present study is the evaluation of the educational status of the Afghan children and what are their educational problems and obstacles in Iran?

According to the mentioned contents, the main question of the research raises:What are the educational problems and obstacles of the Afghan children in Iran?

II. OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES AND LITERATURE

2.1. Iran

One of the main research sections is the research background, because the basis of all sciences is originated from their background (Dempi Yer, 2006:1). Mohammadazim Karbalaee (1999) conducted a research titled "comparative analysis of socializing immigrated Afghan students in Iranian and Afghan schools in formation of national identity of immigrated Afghan students", this research has applied qualitative approach, in which it is indicated that the responsibility of the immigrated Afghan students in the self-governing schools to solve the problems of Afghan people and Afghanistan is more than those, who are in the state schools.

Another study is conducted with quantitative approach by Jafari and Rezaei (2004) titled "evaluation of educational problems of self-governing schools in Qom and its solutions", in which it is indicated that the self-governing schools confront many problems, e.g. recreational activity, sitting on the ground, lack of laboratorial facilities, lack of academic qualification of teachers, age difference, low hygiene, etc.

Another study is conducted with qualitative approach by Homa Hoodfar (2007) titled "Efforts of Afghan refugees to avoid marginalization", in which all problems of the immigrants, especially in the context of education, are depicted and it emphasizes on the weak identity of the second generation Afghans. The findings indicate that, the compulsory immigrations require paying attention to the educational and identity requirements of the young people in any society except their own society and there should be policy-making to overcome discriminations.

2.2.Other countries

The study of J. Dronkers and M. Deheus (2006) titled "Immigrant Children's Educational Performance in 16 countries as the members of OECD, the results indicate that a comprehensive educational system provided good performance for the immigrant children, nevertheless, the compulsory course of the primary education towards the higher scientific levels. Another study conducted by Odile Quintin (2008) titled "Education and Immigration, Strategy for Integrating Immigrant Children in European Schools and Societies", as the results indicate that the degree of the student's social and economical success depend on the specific education. Another study conducted by Dirk Jakobs (2013) titled "Educational Integration of Immigrants, What is Role of Active Practitioners in Educational Spheres?" The results indicate that in some European countries, the immigrants have lower educational level than USA. In spite of the constant topic children's access to education in EU, it requires paying attention to the economical and social disadvantages and the linguistic challenges, where it is missing. In addition to the discrimination in the native schools, it is a serious obstacle to access education for the immigrant chilren.

III. RESEARCH METHOD AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The present study is conducted on the educational status of the immigrant Afghan children and their experiences via the conventional content analysis. The qualitative content analysis is a proper approach to reach the reliable and valid results from the text data in order to establish a novel knowledge, new insight, representing the facts and the actual guidance for the action plan. The purpose of this approach is to extensively constrict and describe this phenomenon and the achievement of this analysis, the concepts and descriptive classifications of this phenomenon. Usually the purpose of these concepts or classifications is to construct a model, conceptual system, conceptual plan or classifications (Elo & Kygnas, 2008:62). The participants are sampled with the snowball sampling method, which is a non-probability random method. We have used this method, because the members of the target group were the immigrants, who could not be identified conveniently. In this sampling, the researcher first identified the subjects and, after collecting the data, the researcher asked them to introduce other subjects.

3.1. Data collection method

The data collection method is unstructured interviews, because this type of interview allows the controlled dialogue towards the target topics. In the unstructured interviews, the interviewer provides some questions, however, the questions may surpass somehow broadly. In the present study, the managers

and the teachers of two state and self-governing schools in Tehran, and theparents and the students, responded some specific questions on the educational status of these children. In the present study, 55 participants were interviewed. The response procedure of the participants led the subsequent questions of the subjective, economical, familial environment, educational dimensions, etc.

The inclusion condition of the students under the study was the age range of being at least six years old and utmost fourteen years old. The exclusion measure was any recurring data, i.e. data overload, by which it did not constructed any new knowledge or classification.

3.2.Data analysis method and credibility

The data analysis method was the content analysis method with inductive approach. The unit of analysis included all interviews in the present study, after the writings were typed, it was examined many times and therefore the units of meaning was extracted from the statements, paragraphs, and texts of the interviews and primary open codes. Then the main classifications, the themes were abstracted. The analysis mainstream was adjusted by adding each interview, codes and classifications.

The credibility measure is used as the content validity by applying the different strategies, e.g. the variation of participants in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, residence duration in Iran, etc. and the various data were collected (observations, writings, and written materials) and the data was reviewed frequently. In order to control the transferability (the reliability of findings), the review approach of the member check and the frequent revisions were used.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the current study, 55 subjects were interviewed, as 44 subjects were interviewed in the state schools (female and male schools), inducing 8 managers and teachers and 16 students. In the Afghanistan self-governing schools, 18 subjects were interviewed, as well, including 8 managers and teachers and 13 students. In addition, 13 parents were interviewed, including 3 males and 10 females. The final research findings includes 5 themes or main classifications, as each oneincluded the numerous subclassifications. The main classifications included: economical status, cultural status, policy, social status, and subjective status, as each one included some classifications, we discuss in the next sections.

One of the chief measures on the Afghan students' education in Iran is the "economical status". In 2009, the free education of the Afghan nationals was ceased and these individuals had to repay the state subsidiaries, where it influenced the continuance of the Afghan children's study.

4.1. The "economical status" includes the following classifications:

4.1.1.Family income: One of the extracted classifications was the family income. In the present study, it is indicated that the under study Afghan families faced low income and financial problem. These families could not afford to prepare good and mental nutrition for their children, for example, there were some students, who had no worry or delay; however, due to familial poverty, deficiencies, and the lack of the educational tools, they could not use some facilities, e.g. attending training or extra classes.

{Neither me nor my sister had fetched any home given nutrition at school, I only ate the milk the school gave, at the last school session, due to my starvation, I could not focus on any lesson} (10-year-old girl, some student at state school).

{My daughter is weak in math and science, while we should pay an amount of money for the extra classes, I could only once pay for my daughter} (38-year-old woman, some student's mother)

In reviewing the above discussion, we can conclude that the educational development of the students is related to the economical status of the families. There are many factors, e.g. improper housing, low-income, plurality of children, etc. which affect the children's educational status.

4.1.2. School fees: There are many families, who could not afford and abandoned their children from coming to the state schools or they enrolled in the self-governing schools or, among their few children, they enrolled one or two children at school.

Two years ago, my son and daughter had to leave school. The enrollment fee was heavy for us and we could not afford it (40-year-old woman, some student's mother).

4.1.3.Training facilities accessibility: In the state schools, all students, either foreigner or Iranian, can use the educational facilities and all can use the educational facilities, e.g. library, sports space, etc., however, some Afghan families faced financial limitations, where they could not enroll their children in the training or extra classes and the school camps. In the Afghan self-governing schools, there was a lack of the facilitations, which lied to the dropout of the students. {These schools are located in the poor districts and they are active surreptitiously in small houses, which are inappropriate for the training of the children. The lack of the facilities, the irregular training space and the high number of the students in the classes, sometimes 60 students, the lack of the extra curriculums, comprise the problems faced by the Afghan immigrant families in the self-governing schools} (29-year-old man, some teacher at self-governing school).

4.1.4.Employment of children: Most children's lack of access to the official education and the failure to finance the educational expenditure along with the economical problems of the Afghan families in Iran altogether have forced the children to work in the streets.

{I would like so much to study at school, but I do not believe that I can go to school anymore, because I have to work, so that we can finance the expenses of my brother's wedding. I would like to become a teacher, yet I cannot afford the school expenses, I cannot continue my study and I should work} (12-year-old boy, some dropped-out pupil).

Among the regular expenses of the families, the educational expenses of the children is one of the expenses, which leads the low income families out of the curriculum circulatory and they are forced to work.

4.2.One of the chief measures on the Afghan students' education was the "cultural status" including the following classifications:

4.2.1.Cultural environment of family: One of the important factors in the student's educationaldevelopment or dropout include the familial and cultural environment factors. The cultural environment in the study include the portents' education status, low quality of parental training and manners, parental physical punishment, fearing the parents, familial disagreement and crowded families. {My mother can only help me in writing, Quran and Persian, however, she is weak in math, sciences, work, technology, etc. and cannot help me. I am forced to go to my aunt' home at weekends} (12-year-old girl, some student at state school). {When my wife handles my son' courses and tasks, my son writes handwriting with left-hand, so he protects himself, when my wife attacks him. This action has led to my son's disinterest and bad treatment} (42-year-old man, some student's father).

The level of education and the familial culture similar to the other factors in carious specific forms affect the educational development or dropout.

4.2.2.Educational and administrative corruption: Administrative or bureaucratic corruption is a sort of behavior, by which someone seeks more interests and welfare or better position and acts against the legitimate framework of the governmental role and breaches or favoritism, etc. (Rasouli, 2009:3). In spite of the imagined inclinations in some societies, the education confronts some problems, e.g. financial restrictions, poor management, low efficiency, resource wasting, low quality of services, etc. (Rasouli, 2009:4). During the present study, it was shown that some Iranian schools receive an extra amount of fee from the Afghan students.

The school official told my children, you should pay fees. When we asked for what should we pay? The school manager said, the school equipments are exhausted and we should gain assistance from the parents, however, we could not afford the expenditure, so we decided to abandon the education of our children. The school was associated to the state, yet it received expenditure from the families (48-old man, some student's father).

4.2.3. Sexual aspects: Another dilemma is the ever-increasing distance from the schools, where thefamilies have a negative attitude towards the schools and the education among the traditional families and/or the poor social classes. Sometimes, the families have no positive attitude on the study of their children, in particular their daughters. It is seen among the Afghan immigrants, where it has led to the girls' early leave of education.

{This is our catastrophe. Increasingly the school fees and our problems increment, I am thirty five years old and I have four little children, I have the literacy of the primary school class five, because my mother did not allow me to study more and she told my father, if a girl seeks higher education, she will lose her mind and will not appreciate her family any more. I married, when I was 18 years old. During my marriage, I wanted to study, when my husband did not allow me, because my husband is a bit aggressive, he works in a mechanical repair garage and he has inadequate earnings, where we cannot pay the children's expenses. The school receives money for different grounds. Despite these concerns, my first son is studying at high school and sometimes works as a salesman, selling schals, somehow paying his school expenses. My husband believes my daughter has studied at the eighth grade, so it is not necessary to study more, if she goes to school, she will find a boyfriend and become hardnosed, where the Afghan boys are not well-educated, after all, she will marry a laborer!} (35-year-old woman, some student's mother).

The defusing cultural factors lead to disqualification in marriage, false reasoning, elders' prevention, masculism and familial trails, which are the basics of the female students' leave of education. Furthermore, the familial poverty and the reliance on the girls, when the fathers have no good jobs, the traditional governance on the incompetency of the education for girls, the parental vulnerability to each other, are seen as the factors of the female students' leave of education.

4.3.One of the chief measures with the high impact on the Afghan students' leave of education is the "political status" categorized as following:

4.3.1.Policies: The education system is lamely restricted to receive fees from the low income families and the residency card incur the issue for most of the Afghan children out of the education circulatory and then they enter the work era, so that

this education system has become more flexible, after the Leader of Iran ordered the permission of the study of the Afghan children whether they have had a document or not.

{The legal order was given in 2015 for the enrollment of the Afghan children. When it was administered in five days, when two days was Thursday and Friday and most families thought the schools are closed and they did not refer and in the remaining two days, due to crowding and the requirement of the identity documents, the families could not enroll their children. Most children did not have any custodian. The information of the enrollment should had been released by the mass media, TV or radio, unfortunately it did not occur} (36-year-old woman, some teacher of self-governing school).

According to the interviews, it is clarified that any mechanism for the correct education of the Afghan nationals and children without identity card was not planned. When some problems are not solved during 30 years and we aim to solve it during five days, undoubtedly we confront many problems, which should be solved.

4.4.One of the factors was the "social status" as one of the chief concept of the Afghan children's education in Iran. The social status is categorized as following:

4.4.1. Discrimination and social exclusion: The negative attitude and discrimination of some people in Iran and the personalization of some education officials in Iran is one the most important reasons of the deprivation of the Afghan children. The interviews on the manner of the managers, teachers, and officials suggest that the cultivation is not done on the manner of how native people behave towards the immigrants and this negative attitude is not seen among those individuals with less literacy, but even those who are occupied in the education, it is not seen among the cultural classes, even there is sometimes some effective attitudes and behaviors in the enrollment of the immigrant children, so that the school manager was not interested to enroll the deprived children.

I have done all my tasks and referred to the school and the school manager said without any reason, "we do not enroll you". I enrolled in a self-governing school (11-year-old boy, some student of self-governing school).

Belittling behaviors and the officials' antagonism often lead to most students' dropout in the worldm while the immigrant children often experience harder conditions than the others, therefore the improper behaviour of the school officials harms them spitirually and mentally.

{I have 3 sons and 1 daughter and I have observed that behaviour of the school managers and teachers with the Afghan chilren in Iran, even a teacher once told the children, "if you do not study hard, you become similar to Afghans who are laborers} (39-year-old woman, some student's mother).

4.5.One of the factors was the "subjective status" as one of the basic concepts in the educational status of the Afghan children in Iran. The subjective status is categorized as following:

4.5.1. self-esteem, 4.5.2. capability and motivation of students, 4.5.3. communication skills

the mentioned factors all affect the immigrant children's educational status and all factors are related together. One of the important factors is the communication skills, as the efficient communication skills have important role in the students' educational success and lead to the students' efficiency and progress. A student, who has efficient communcation skills, communicaties positively with his/her teacher and peers and generates a good environment for his/her learning (Ahmadi, 2013:10). In some interviews, it was shown that some children do not have good communication with teacher and student and the school and classroom are not a good environment for these children, while it adversely affects the students' educational progress, self-esteem and motivation.

{In the classroom, when the teacher asks me, I am shy to respond and I never raise my hand, if I have any question, I do not ask my teacher or peers} (11-year-old boy, some student in state school).

Some immigrant students, due to the peers' bias and the morphological shape and their family conditions, have low self-esteem and hollow feelingm, when any slightest thing is said to them and, when they make any mistake, they resent themselves, consequently they feel incompetent and they do not feel obliged to make effort and they lose their motivation.

Main theme	Main classes	Subclasses	Examples
Educational status of Afghan children	Economical status	Family income	Two years ago, my son and daughter were forced to leave education. We could hardly afford their education expenses, because we had low income (41-year-old woman, some student's mother)
		School fees	I observed some cases where the families could not really pay the fees and the children left education (50-year-old man, state school manager)

		Educational facilities	We do not have any special facilities and we do not have bench or desk in the class (10-year-old girl, student in self-governing school)
		Employment of children	Whatever my earning, I hand it to school (11-year-old boy, student at state school)
	Cultural status	Cultural environment of family	My father has 5-class literacy and my mother has 1-class literacy, there is nobody who may help me in my lessons (11-year-old girl, student at state school)
		Educational and administrative corruption	I enrolled my daughter last year, I paid more than the enrollment fee (32-year-old woman, student's mother)
		Gender views	When low-income families face these fees, they do not enroll their children in school, in most cases, the daughters are victims in these families (48-year-old state school teacher
	Political status	Policies	We have come three years ago and we do not have residency card, so we cannot enroll in the state schools (12-year-old boy, self-governing school student)
	Social status	Discrimination and social rejection	I liked all my teachers, except the second-class teacher, when children talked and made fun, if I was there, he only punished me and told me "stand at a corner" (12-year-old girl, state school student)
	Subjective status	Communication skills	Primary school children rather pay attention to their friends' attraction and prestige than novelty, unfortunately some Afghan children are not attractive in their views, so they are less attentive or friendly (56-year-old female state school teacher)
		Student's ability and motivation	My best students in the school were the Afghan students, although their parents had less literacy, they are telented, courteous and good learners (49-year-old female state school teacher)
		Self-esteem	I am a bit shy, when the teacher asks me something, I respond her quietly and the teacher tells me to speak louder, yet I am shy, because I am afraid that my friends would joke me (9-year-old female state school student)

Table 1. Summary of inductive approach of themes; the examples of the classes

CONCLUSION

In Iran, unfortunately, the status of the Afghan immigrants is not treated with adequate competency. As an example, the educational status of the Afghan students can be mentioned. If the educational problems and troubles of these children could be solved, their sociability and responsibility could elevate and thereby their life problems and deficiencies in their subjective and social life would mitigate through their sense of belonging and class elevation in the society, empowerment and higher subjective and social skills. Furthermore, this decision can make the context to lower the losses resulted from poverty, immigration, employment of children and life problems in a foreign country and certainly this decision can have very positive impacts on the implementation process to secure and synchronize the society.

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