



MONITORING
TRENDS IN
EDUCATIONAL
GROWTH
IN AFGHANISTAN:
CLASS 6 SCHOOL
FACTORS 2013

ACER

IN 2013, the Learning Assessment Unit of the Afghanistan Ministry of Education, in conjunction with the Centre for Global Education Monitoring at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER-GEM), launched the Monitoring Trends in Educational Growth (MTEG) study in Afghanistan. Class 6 students in 13 provinces in Afghanistan were assessed in the domains of mathematical, reading and writing literacy. In total, 5,979 students took the test and completed a student background questionnaire in either Dari or Pashto, depending on their language of instruction.

The principal from each assessed school also completed a school background questionnaire. This school questionnaire collected information on the characteristics of teachers and schools as well as on school policies and resources. Completed questionnaires were received from respondents and matched to student data from 110 schools, which was 83% of schools in the survey, representing 81% of the student population.

The results presented here, in brief, provide information on the relationship between school-related factors and Class 6 student achievement outcomes for Afghanistan.

The results of MTEG 2013 Class 6 indicate that:

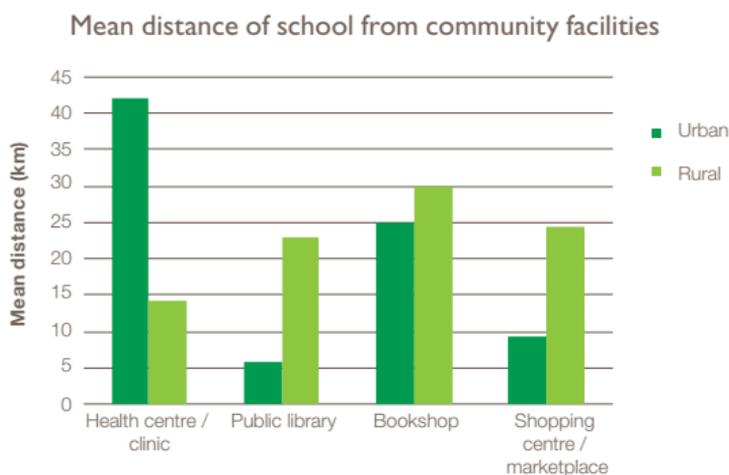
- Several school characteristics, policies and resources are associated with higher achievement levels of students. However, many of the differences observed in student achievement can be explained by the fact that higher achieving students tend to come from schools that are better resourced and belong to families that have access to greater resources. This finding is important to consider when reading the other results presented.
- Supplying schools with greater physical infrastructure, and more importantly, ensuring schools have appropriately trained teachers, would be expected to improve the learning environment for students.

By providing information on the school and student level factors that are associated with achievement, MTEG can assist in the development of policy and practice. This information can be used by education policy makers, donors and educational practitioners to identify how to support the growth of student achievement in Afghanistan.

School characteristics

School location

Principals were asked to indicate where their school was located and its proximity to different community resources. More than a third of students (37%) attended schools that were in or near a large town or city, and just under a third attended schools in a rural area (32%). Smaller proportions of students attend schools in a small town (18%) and remote settings (13%).



Students attending schools in urban settings (in or near a large town or city) have higher levels of achievement in reading and writing literacy than students from non-urban settings. However, once the socio-economic differences of the schools and students from these areas were taken into account, these differences were no longer significant. In other words, equally wealthy students in equally wealthy schools tend to have similar outcomes in reading and writing literacy no matter where the school is located.

The greater the distance of a student's school from community facilities, especially shopping centres/marketplaces, the more likely it is that the student will have lower achievement in reading and writing.

Language of instruction

82 per cent of students received instruction at school in the same language as they speak at home. Students taught in the same language they mainly speak at home are more likely to perform better in writing, but not in reading or mathematics.

School policies

Almost all students attended schools with some form of student and teacher attendance monitoring with a school improvement plan.

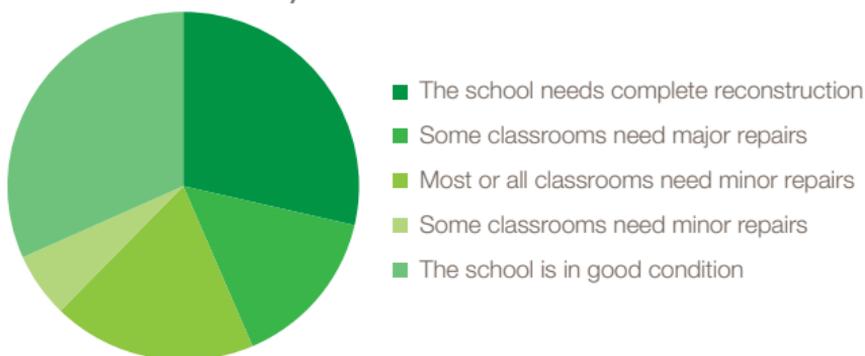
- Students attending schools that monitored student attendance had significantly higher levels of writing literacy achievement.
- Students attending schools that monitored teacher attendance had significantly higher levels of mathematical, reading and writing literacy achievement.
- Students attending schools with a school improvement plan had higher levels of mathematical, reading and writing literacy achievement.

School resources

Types and condition of classrooms at school

Three-quarters of students attended schools where the principal indicated there were permanent classrooms. A substantially smaller number of students attended schools where the principal indicated there were open-air teaching areas (38%) and temporary classrooms (21%). Most students attended schools where the principal either indicated that 'the school needs complete reconstruction' or alternatively that 'the school is in good condition'.

Proportion of Class 6 students attending schools by condition of classrooms



Availability of textbooks

Students were more likely to have access to their own textbook than to share a textbook for both mathematics and Dari/Pashto subjects (both 76%). When students have access to their own textbooks in class, they are significantly more likely to have higher achievement in mathematical, reading and writing literacy.

School facilities

Principals indicated which school facilities and types of equipment were present or absent in their school. Statistical analyses identified three broad groups of facilities¹:

- **Building facilities:** The most common building facilities were a science laboratory and a library (78% for both).
- **Classroom and administration equipment:** A photocopier was the most commonly found piece of equipment in schools (48%), followed by a television (29%).
- **Infrastructure for basic needs and other miscellaneous school facilities:** The most common facilities were a computer (71%), electricity (66%), piped water (63%) and a sports area / playground (56%).

Students from schools with greater access to resources related to 'Infrastructure for basic needs and other miscellaneous school facilities' were more likely to perform better in reading and writing. Again, this finding supports the need to ensure that schools have sufficient resources to support learning.

Teacher characteristics

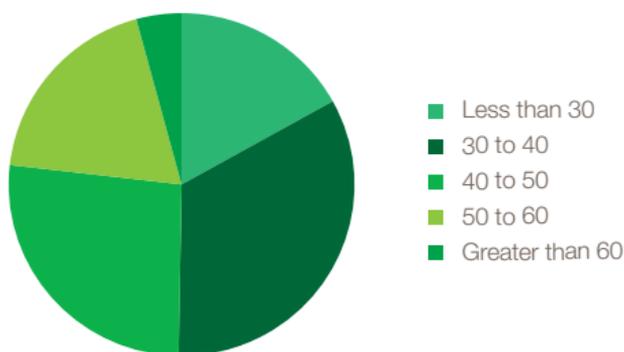
Gender and contract type of teachers in schools

On average, 60% of all teaching staff at schools were female. Most teachers were on a permanent contract (85% of female teachers and 90% of male teachers). No relationship was found between teacher gender or contract type and student achievement.

Ratio of teachers to students

The majority of students (60%) experience student-teacher ratios ranging somewhere between 30 students per teacher and 50 students per teacher. Only 17 per cent of students had ratios of less than 30 students to a teacher. Just under a quarter of students were at schools with a ratio of 50 students per teacher or more.

Mean proportion of student-teacher ratio at each school



In this study, no relationship was observed between the student-teacher ratio and achievement. However, it is important to note that this measure of student-teacher ratio is only based on the total number of students and teachers in the school, and does not measure the ratio for Class 6 students.

Teacher education

Principals reported that teachers were most likely to have completed their education between Grades 10 and 14. A smaller proportion were educated at a university level, and relatively few were educated at Grade 9 or lower, or only received Home Islamic education.

Students attending schools with higher proportions of teachers with university education had higher levels of achievement in reading. This reinforces the importance of recruiting educated teachers in increasing student's learning outcomes.

Teacher professional development

Students in schools where higher proportions of teachers undertook professional development/in-service training within the last year were more likely to have greater achievement in writing. This finding highlights the importance of investing in ongoing development of teaching staff.

The initial results from MTEG provide a baseline for monitoring the learning outcomes of students in Afghanistan in the years ahead. Testing of the Class 3 and Class 9 cohorts will add to the picture of Afghan students' educational outcomes.

Understanding the student and school level factors that are associated with achievement provides important information that can contribute to decisions about resources, policies and practices to improve student achievement in Afghanistan. The results have indicated the importance of ensuring schools are well resourced – both with greater physical resources, but more importantly, with non-physical resources such as trained and motivated teachers.

Having taken the important step of implementing an assessment of reading, writing and mathematical proficiency, Afghanistan has recognised that high-quality education is fundamental to addressing the needs of its population, now and in future generations. MTEG data collected now and in subsequent assessments can inform education policy and practice and form an integral part of the Ministry's work towards providing Afghanistan's students with the skills, knowledge and understanding to succeed on the global stage.



For more information on the results of the 2013 MTEG assessment of Class 6 students in Afghanistan, please refer to *Class 6 School Factors in Afghanistan 2013*, *Class 6 Proficiency in Afghanistan 2013* and *Class 6 Girls and Boys in Afghanistan 2013*, all available at <https://www.acer.edu.au/gem/key-areas/system-strengthening/mteg>

More information about ACER-GEM is available at <http://www.acer.edu.au/gem>

¹ A full description of the different facilities and equipment within each of these three groups can be found in *Class 6 School Factors in Afghanistan 2013*.