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Coaching Early Grade Reading Teachers in Afghanistan: Promises and Practices in Afghan Children Read (ACR) Intervention Schools

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Abstract
One of the rationales for the introduction of coaching in early grade literacy program in Afghanistan was to support teachers to improve their instructional practices in the classroom. However, it was not fully clear how much of this promise has been practiced in schools. The purpose of this study was to explore how coaching of early grade literacy teachers has been implemented and find out if enacted roles were actually practiced in USAID supported schools. A thorough review of literature provided the conceptual framework which guided the assessment of the coaching practice at different stages of implementation. A multiple case study design was adopted to do the investigation using interviews of multiple sources of data. Findings indicate that the coaching of individual teachers has been practiced in most of the surveyed cases. Coaches were co-planning lessons with teachers, modelling lessons as required, observing lessons to get data on how to support teachers, analyze those data to provide feedback, provide feedback and co-plan the upcoming lessons. Several conditions supported the realization of coaching teachers in Afghan Children Read Schools including school management support; training of coaches, supervisors and principals; availability of learning materials and the super commitment of teachers and coaches. Very few problems were detrimental to the implementation of coaching particularly the lack of integration of coaching support to the normal workload of coaches. It was implied that the promises of coaching can even be actualized under unfavorable contexts if relevant conditions for implementation are created.
Keywords: Coaching, early grade reading, teachers' professional development, Afghan Children Read, policy implementation
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1. Introduction

Funded by USAID, the Afghan Children Read (ACR) project was introduced to early grades (Grades 1-3) of the primary education of Afghanistan in 2016. The project was completed in April 2021 just few months before Kabul was overtaken by the Taliban on 15 August 2021. The project had three interrelated objectives. The first one was the provision of access to an improved quality education for primary aged children. Secondly, the project targeted the improvement of children's learning outcomes in reading in early grades (G1-3). Third, it was aimed to support education service delivery through building the capacity of the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to implement the reading program. The scope of Afghan Children Read (ACR) project included the improvement of reading acquisition both in Dari and Pashto languages which were the official languages of instruction in early grades in the country. Further, it covered both formal and community-based schools (CBES)[2]. The project was designed to pilot the reading program in four of the thirty-four provinces (Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat and Laghman) and to scale it up at the national level based on evidence of effectiveness. The decision to introduce the Afghan Children Read project by the Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic Afghanistan was built on the prior findings of another USAID funded Early Grade Reading Survey (Project) which reported the low level of resources, skills and capacities in early grades reading in Afghanistan.

The introduction of an early grade reading program as a potential solution to improve the low level of reading outcomes among children was not unique to Afghanistan. Graham, Kelly and Codes (2018) indicate that such interventions were common in many low-income countries. According to Graham, Kelly and Codes (2018), early grade reading interventions in developing countries employ a combination of at least five components: training of teachers; use of simplified instructional techniques and evidence-based curricula; provision of instructional guidelines; in-school coaching and monitoring for teachers; provision of supplementary instructional and reading materials; and provision of tools and training for student assessment. With reference to Afghan Children Read (ACR), the framework for implementation was drawn from the 5Ts model developed by

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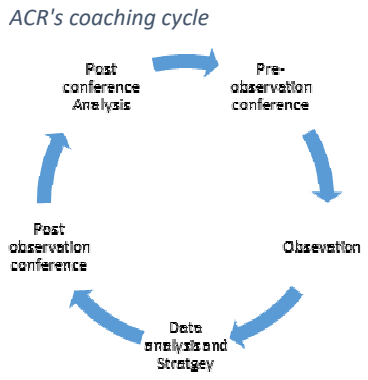
[2] CBE is an alternative approach to learning for reaching out-of-school children in hard-to-reach areas and conflict zones.

USAID. Kim et al. (2016) explain that USAID's 5Ts model focuses on five components to develop polices and direct resources toward improving reading outcomes. These are teaching, time, texts, tongue, and tests. The teaching component primarily recognizes the fact that many teachers in low-income countries do not undergo explicit or direct training in how to teach reading because many curricula do not include literacy as a discrete subject of instruction (Kim et al., 2016). Secondly, there is also a recognition that teachers in low-income countries are generally undereducated (Pryor et al. 2012). Given these gaps and the requirements for EGR teachers to teach literacy using the gradual-release-of responsibility pedagogy[1], the development of capacity and training of teachers remained a minimum standard for every early grade reading (EGR) intervention (Graham,Kelly and Codes, 2018). Additionally, many early grade reading intervention programs augment their initial training with such continuous support of teachers as school-based coaching because some teachers may face difficulties to master and use the newly acquired knowledge, and fully follow instructional guidelines from their foundational training (Clark-Chiarelli and Louge, 2016, RTI International, 2016). Instructional coaching minimizes these problems because it has the power to bridge the gaps in knowledge and skills through continuous feedback (Aguilar, 2013, Bean, 2014). It can also turn teachers into a learning society (Bentley, 2020) and build compassionate and emotionally resilient educators (Aguilar, 2013). In Afghanistan, the reading program adopted the coaching of teachers as school-based teacher support strategy from the inception of the project. However, since putting a strategy does not necessarily imply its implementation, there was a need to understand this process and examine how the strategy was directly practiced at school and classroom levels.

2. The Promises of Coaching Early Grade Teachers in Afghanistan

The shortage of trained and qualified teachers with the competence to improve student learning is choric worldwide (Pfleson, 2019). Therefore, improving the preparation of teachers and providing ongoing support is critical (Ibid). Teacher capacity development is more urgent for literacy programs in developing countries given the little-to-no training in how to teach reading and writing (Graham, Kelly and Codes, 2018). In Afghanistan, teachers do not receive training in early grade literacy in their pre-service training, and many teachers have had little opportunity for professional development. Also, many senior teachers and head teachers come to the role of coaching with little experience in coaching or literacy instruction. They also have not had a well-structured professional development program that assists them in acquiring literacy content knowledge and coaching skills. For years, teachers in schools practiced traditional methods of teaching literacy and the introduction of scientific reading methods which focused on teaching phonics, alphabetic principles, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension presented new challenges. Additionally, teachers had no teaching and learning materials to support students' reading proficiency. Communities did not recognize the potential of their significant roles in EGR education. Also, the educational policies, as well as the management systems of education in Afghanistan, were highly centralized, leaving little room for techniques that supported quality classroom instruction.

The Afghan Ministry of Education decided that it had to work with USAID to improve the educational attainment of early grade students in reading based on the findings of the previously mentioned USAID funded Early Grade Literacy survey. Accordingly, the Afghan Children Read project was designed to focus on three main technical components: development of EGR learning materials and teacher guides, the training of EGR teachers, and community awareness raising and mobilization. Each one of these components covered various sub-components, but the training of teachers was structured into pre-service, in-service and school-based-continuous professional development including teachers' individual and group of coaching. The integration of coaching to teacher capacity development drew its background from the view that teachers needed direct and consistent support to deliver the reading competencies introduced by the new reading program.



In practice, coaching individual teachers in ACR's model involved a one-to-one conversation between the coaches and the teachers to improve instructional matters that arise from lesson observations by coaches. The role of coaches was to support teachers (modeling lessons, co-planning, co-teaching, providing feedback etc.) in reading instruction and coaches did not supervise. Every classroom observation in ACR's coaching model had to be preceded by a pre-observation conference where the coach and teacher met to develop a framework that govern classroom observation, establish positive relationships, review the observation tool, and exchange perceptions of current student strengths and areas of concern. Observation was carried out by the coach using an observation tool which rated teacher and student activities on a scale

[1] Commonly known as "I do it", "We do it", "You do it together", and "You do it alone" pedagogy, requires that the teacher shift from assuming "all the responsibility for performing a task to a situation in which the students assume all of the responsibility" (Duke and Pearson, 2002, P.211).

ranging from one to five. This tool also had open spaces for additional comments by the coach. After observation was completed, the coach analyzed data and built a coaching strategy. Data analysis involved summarizing information into meaningful patterns of teaching behavior discovered in the course of teaching and identifying critical incidents that had noticeable effects on the teaching and learning process. Following data analysis and strategy development, the teacher and the coach met for post-observation conference. This was a session for feedback and reflection on classroom observation, and co-planning of relevant actions to improve the process of instruction. In post-conference analysis, the coach had to reflect on his/her own performance and efforts, and gets ready for the next cycle.

Individual teachers were supposed to be coached at least once every month by a trained coach who is a senior teacher in the same school. The Afghan Children Read model puts the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of coaching on the school principal. The principal is responsible for assigning coaches, advocating and providing all the necessary support including materials. For all intents and purposes, the integration of coaching in Afghan Early Reading program was to improve teacher's instructional practice because there was a recognition that teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling (Johnson, 2016; Wolf et al., 2015). Much research also supports that there is a strong relationship between student achievement and teacher quality, and that the nature of teachers' interactions with students is a critical component of quality instruction (Mashburn et al., 2008; Ganimian & Murnane, 2014). However, the translation of these promises to the desired outcomes depends on how enacted roles were practiced by various actors at different levels of implementation. This is because in low-income and conflict-affected countries like Afghanistan, support for teacher professional development often falls behind other educational priorities such as building schools, buying materials and textbooks, and training new teachers (Wolf, et al., 2015). In this study, the goal was to analyze how teacher support was prioritized by taking coaching as a case for investigation.

3. Research Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of this study was to explore how the coaching of teachers in early grade reading was implemented in Afghanistan and understand what enacted roles were actually practiced in schools supported by Afghan Children Read project. The objectives of the study were:

- Describe the implementation of individual coaching of teachers at the main stages of the coaching cycle comprising the pre-observation conference, classroom observation, post-observation conference.
- Review the main conditions under which the individual coaching of early grade teachers in ACR supported schools was implemented.
- Discuss outstanding challenges to the implementation of individual coaching of teachers in ACR supported schools in Afghanistan and draw lessons for further practice.

4. Research Questions

The overarching question leading the study was the following: How effective was the coaching of early grade literacy teachers in ACR supported schools in Afghanistan? The subsequent main research questions included:

- How did the implementation of individual coaching of early grade reading teachers go in ACR supported schools in Afghanistan?
- What were the conditions under which the individual coaching of teachers was conducted in ACR supported schools in Afghanistan?
- What were the outstanding challenges faced in the implementation of teacher coaching in ACR supported schools in Afghanistan?

Asking these questions and finding their answers was important because this activity had to take place under conflict situations where there was high uncertainty for implementing the program in Afghanistan. Further, using non-traditional methodologies including the coaching of teachers to teach reading was a new practice and it was significant to understand how well this new role or approach was accepted among teachers and coaches.

5. Frame of Analysis

5.1 Concept and Significance of Instructional Coaching

Instructional coaching is in a period of sustained growth in both developed and developing countries (Bean, 2014; Pfleson, 2019; Johnson, 2016; Graham and Kelly, 2018). Van Nieuwerburgh and Barr (2016) indicate that coaching in education can be introduced using various portals including educators, leaders, students and the community implying different practices and initiatives for coaching. However, there is an overwhelming agreement among teacher educators that instructional coaching involves an onsite, job-embedded and sustained professional development for teachers (Pfleson, 2019; Bean, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Van Nieuwerburgh and Barr, 2016). According to Pfleson (2019), coaching is a strategy for providing teachers with the ongoing support they need to improve their instruction as well as student learning achievement. Through coaching, teachers receive continuous support to help them acquire and master new knowledge and skills.

With reference to literacy programs, Bean (2014) and Johnson (2016) note that coaching can facilitate and accelerate improvement in teacher instruction and children's acquisition of literacy skills, if correctly implemented. Indeed, many studies from various countries demonstrate that instructional or pedagogical coaching is effective in improving teacher instruction and student outcomes in reading programs. For instance, Pfleson (2019) and Bean (2014) summarize results from several studies in the United Sates and Africa to report how coaching teachers has been effective in literacy programs and language learning. In the United Sates, Pfleson (2019) and Bean (2014) refer to the meta – analysis of 44 studies of diverse coaching programs, a longitudinal study on teacher coaching to support a large-scale reading reform effort, and a study of early childhood education teachers in almost 300 locations and conclude that coaching is an effective means of improving either teachers' instructional practices, student academic outcomes or both. From Africa, Pfleson (2019) refers to recent studies in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya to report improvements in students reading skills and/or teachers instructional practices. In 2018, the World Bank published the results of a survey of the effectiveness of 18 early grade reading interventions, occurring across a large variety of contexts, including four World Bank regions in several countries (Graham, Kelly and Codes, 2018). Findings from the study show that early grade reading interventions were consistently effective, indicating large majority of programs had highly significant impacts on at least one reading subtask on Early Grade Reading Assessments. Overall, these evidences suggest that coaching, when coupled with formal training, is emerging in both high-and low income countries as a significant power to improve teachers' skills of classroom instruction and students outcomes in reading programs.

5.2 Roles, Levels and Models of Coaching

Although there seems to be no agreements upon the descriptions of what coaches do, there is consensus that coaches are those who provide professional development or training, resources and other necessary support in order to help teachers improve instructional practices and student learning outcomes (International Reading Association, 2004; Bean, 2014). In some resource limited environments coaches may play both a coaching and supervisory roles (Bean, 2014). That means coaches may be in positions that require them to coach and to monitor or supervise the activities of teachers (Piper & Mugenda, 2013; Sailors et al., 2012). However, there is a general consent that coaching is based on establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between coach and teacher. When coaches are in supervisory roles, or asked to report on teachers to supervisors or administrators, it is difficult to develop trusting teacher-coach relationships (Bean, 2014).

The rise of coaching to prominence in reading programs stems from the recognition that a one-off workshop or conference is not sufficient to gain a deep understanding of a specific reading program and develop the capacity to implement it (MacNeil, 2004; Bean, 2014). Teachers need more than an initial workshop instruction, and thus, efforts were made to include coaching to improve the quality of reading instruction. Bean (2014) refers to several studies to show that there are three models or approaches of coaching operating in a continuum, and two levels at which coaching is implemented. The three models include *soft coaching*, *hard coaching,* and *balanced coaching*. In soft coaching, guidance is minimal, and the teacher is more reflective and responsive. Hard coaching promotes fidelity of implementation and the enforcement of certain approaches. Thus, the coach is responsible for directing teachers in learning to implement these approaches. Coaches may move between responsive and directive coaching, providing what is called balanced coaching. Balanced coaching responds to teacher needs while promoting specific instructional approaches or practices. Pflepsen (2019), who refers to other recent studies on coaching, corroborates that a balanced approach of coaching is helpful in low and middle-income countries. Initially, the focus might be on teachers' fidelity of implementation, but over time, coaches can also assist teachers to reflect on their own practices, needs, and goals. The two levels at which coaching is implemented include individual coaching and group coaching, and the combination of both approaches is the most effective for enhancing instructional practices (Bean, 2014).

According to Bean (2014) individual coaching activities that are identified as significant predictors of student learning include: conferencing with teachers, administering and discussing assessments, modeling for teachers, observing and providing feedback, and co-planning with teachers. Group coaching refers to practices by coaches for meeting with a group of teachers. In some initiatives in developing countries, coaches lead meetings of teacher groups to transmit knowledge to multiple teachers at once, and then provide differentiated guidance in follow-up work with individual teachers. In meetings with coaches, teachers often share information on experiences with specific reading activities and discuss problems and possible solutions (Pflepsen, 2019). In this study we focus on individual coaching organized in early grade reading instruction.

5.3 Effective Coaching Practices

The influence of coaching for improving teaching practice (Knight, 2009; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Snyder et al., 2015) and thereby student learning is well documented (Bean, Knaub, & Swan, 2000; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Snyder et al., 2015). Referring to literacy

programs, several reports from both developed and developing countries provide strong proof that coaching can positively improve teacher practices and lead to increases in student performance (Bean et al., 2010; Biancarosa et al., 2010; Elish-Piper and L'Allier; 2011). For this reason, researchers' advice that coaches have to spend sufficient amount of time in practically coaching teachers to maximize its benefits (L'Allier et al., 2010).

The Pierce (2015) model defines effective coaching practices from four perspectives: observation, modeling (also referred to as "demonstration"), performance feedback, and alliance-building strategies. For Pierce (2015), observation is a cycle which entails straight monitoring of individual teachers in the classroom, providing performance feedback as well as offering direct support, such as modeling, to teachers. Modeling occurs when a coach demonstrates how to use a procedure which is not correctly practiced by the teacher or is not known to him/her. During feedback, the primary purpose of the coach is to provide information to the teacher inferring from the collected data during observations. In order to improve the practice of teaching, feedback has to be specific, positive, timely, and corrective (Pierce, 2015: Scheel-er et al., 2004; Solomon et al., 2012). Several delivery mechanisms like face-to-face, verbal or graphical presentations in post-observation conferences and videos can be used to deliver feedback (Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Conroy et al., 2014, Israel, et al., 2013). According to Pierce (2015) and several others (Ippolito, 2010; Mraz et al. 2008; Shanklin, 2006; Wehby et al., 2012) alliance building involves creating a context to enhance the practice of coaching. This strategy implies that effective coaching is also the function positive relationships between teachers and coaches and that maintaining the unity of purpose among teachers and coaches is vital for establishing a productive environment for early grade reading instruction.

The practice of coaching also benefits from other forms of teacher professional development, particularly clinical supervision. Both coaching and clinical supervision are designed to improve teacher's classroom performance based on data taken principally from events of classroom (Segiovanni, 1995). The most typical strategy for data collection is systematic observation, but there are a cycle of activities before and after observation. According to Sergiovanni's (1995) and Ubben and Hughes's (1997), for instance, the cycle of clinical supervision include pre-observation conference, observation, data analysis and strategy, post observation conference and post observation-analysis. Pre-observation conference is about developing the framework for observations while observation is about collecting data from teachers in action. Data analysis is about converting the raw data from observation into meaningful and manageable information. The post-observation conference is a stage for providing specific feedback to teachers based on the collected data while the post-conference analysis is about the coach's assessment of the coaching experience and improving her/his efforts. ACR's model of coaching assumes this later perspective.

5.4 Conditions Influencing the Implementation of Coaching

Based on the summary of a large body of literature, Bean (2014) categorizes factors affecting successful coaching in a school or district into *contextual*, *content*, and *coach preparation factors.* Contextual factors refer to various educational, political, economic, and social structures affecting how coaching is implemented. Among contextual factors reported to have influence on the implementation of coaching, the following are included: the priority given to coaching by school or district; early involvement by the Ministry of Education; school principal and teacher support; teacher readiness and content knowledge; and motivation and structure. Another contextual factor is the climate or culture that exists in the school, or "internal social capital," defined as the interactions and relationships among teachers and administrators in a school that promote a common and shared vision for students. Bean (2014) mentions that the impact of coaching on teacher practices is also influenced by program content from three perspectives. First, the quality of the program chosen matters for implementation, teaching practices, and student outcomes. The more the objectives and contents of a literacy program are established in advance, the more coaching is likely to have an impact on teacher practices and student learning. Secondly, effective coaching also requires other support and ideas in addition to content-focused coaching; teachers may need assistance with classroom management, differentiated instruction, student motivation and engagement, classroom and school environment, and instructional strategies. Third, coaching support for teachers must be targeted or identified based on student assessment results (e.g., standardized tests, samples of student work, books read). When coaches use assessment results as the center of their work with teachers, attention is focused more on student issues without failing to address instructional and teacher problems. In addition to teaching experience at the level at which they are to coach, the significance of preparing coaches in terms content and pedagogical knowledge of both literacy assessment and instruction, and the specific program being implemented is paramount. Moreover, initial preparation of coaching needs to be augmented by more opportunities to continue learning through mentoring, experiential learning, networks, and study circles. In somewhat similar fashion, Pfleson (2019) indicates that the coaching approach; recruitment of effective coaches in terms of knowledge, skills and characteristics; coach roles and responsibilities; coach preparation and support; and the frequency and duration of coaching influence the effectiveness of coaching.

6. Research Methods

6.1 Research Design and Instruments of Data Collection

A qualitative multiple case study of information-rich schools having individual coaching of teachers was conducted in Afgan Children Read Intervention Schools. The aim was to generate in-depth information about the experience of those who were involved in individual coaching of teachers in the course of implementing the ACR model. Each kind of information was obtained from multiple sources (coaches, teachers and principals), providing the opportunity for triangulating data. Each of the schools was treated as a single case, thus, the totality of cases studied makes up a multiple case study or a case survey (see Merriam, 1998). The study was planned to capture the contemporary reflection of real-life situations in the intervention schools since individual teacher's coaching were on-going during the process of data collection (see Patton, 1987).

Interview guides and field notes were used for data collection. Interview Guides (IG) were designed to seek information from teachers, coaches, and principals on major issues. Field notes and documents were used to get additional information wherever required. Most important documents selected for this task included research reports carried out by Afghan Children Read, annual and quarterly reports produced by the project. The researcher was an insider, who used his experiences of the ACR for providing information to fill gaps of any sensitive data.

In the interview guide, data collection focused on the regularity of classroom visits by coaches; the relationship between coaches and teachers; and the implementation of the coaching cycle. Further, questions were also included which focused on conditions that influenced teacher coaching including school management support, the coaching environment, contributions of coach-training and problems encountered in implementing individual teacher's coaching. Field notes were used as additional tools to cover any informally observed information providing further inputs to interviews.

6.2 Sample Selection

A four-stage-non-probability sampling procedure was adopted by the Afghan Children project for selection of the required samples. These involved the selection of provinces, districts, schools and respondents. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan comprised 34 provinces of which 4 provinces were targeted by Afghan Children Read project. All of these four provinces, namely Herat, Kabul, Nangarhar and Laghman were included in the selection. In each of the provinces were included all target districts (N=12) which were identified as either urban or rural. Thus, in Herat 4 districts, in Kabul 2 districts, in Nangarhar 4 districts, and in Laghman 2 districts were included. Schools were purposely selected where individual coaching of teachers were implemented. Overall, these were 26 schools with 13 urban and 13 rural.

Within each school two teachers (N=2) were purposefully selected for the teacher interviews. Thus, the total number of interviewed teachers was 52. Two coaches (N=2) were interviewed in each of the schools. If schools had more than two coaches, only two were randomly selected using the lottery method. If a school had only one coach, this coach was interviewed. In individual interviews, all principals of each school in the study sample were also included (N=26). In case a principal was also a senior coach, he/she was also interviewed in this role.

6.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Afghan Children Read (ACR) researchers, together with staff members of the Teacher Education Department of the Ministry of Education Afghanistan, as well as and staff members of the Teacher Education Colleges conducted data collection. Prior to data collection, data collectors received two days of training including a practicum. A preliminary review of literature and program documents provided the basis from which research questions were generated. During individual interviews, ACR carefully documented the acquired information using recorded notes. These recordings were fully transcribed, developed, reviewed, and edited at the end of every day; and if any information was missing, data collectors called the interviewee to complete the information. Each of the field data set generated from respondents and informal observations was separately coded and documented into separate Microsoft Excel files. This was followed by the review of data sets, cleaning of unnecessary and repetitive data, and the reformulation categories and constructs for analysis. Since data were collected on similar questions from different sources, the triangulation of information in each data set and the interpretation of results was necessary to validate the obtained data. We juxtaposed information and used a phenomenological approach for reporting results rather than organizing reports by data sources. Data collection did not happen at the same time in all provinces due to security reasons. Rather, they were collected in two cycles, first in Herat Kabul provinces, and then in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces.

7. Major Findings of the Study

7.1. Coaching Individual Teachers in Practice

Coaches were asked if they regularly called for a pre-observation conferences with teachers before they did observations. Teachers were also separately asked if they regularly participated in a pre-observation conferences

with the coach before observations took place, and both teachers and coaches were asked to describe what they commonly did during this conference.

Most coaches and teachers indicated that they participated in pre-observation sessions before classroom observations were made. Few coaches and teachers reported that they did not do a pre-observation conference before classroom visits.

Coaches who did pre-observation conferences provided details of how they conducted the conferences. For instance, one of them said he shares his thoughts with the teacher and teachers present their version of the lesson and this leads to an agreement or framework for observations:

> Yes, I share my proposal or thoughts with teachers before conducting observation of the classroom to reach an agreement on the focus of their observation. Teachers also present their plans for discussions and I give my comments or express my agreements and comments. I conduct observation based on an agreement.

Another coach said that he jointly plans his observations with the teacher before conducting classroom observation. This coach also said he does rehearsals with teachers on important concepts and techniques of lesson presentation following the teacher's guide:

> The pre-observation conference with the teacher is a very important stage in my coaching. I meet with the teacher before observation and we develop a plan jointly with her/him. This plan is an agreement in how we manage the observation. The teacher models his lessons and I provide comments or do demonstrations as required.

When teachers were asked about the pre-observation meeting, many of them reported that their coaches informed them about their visits before the classroom observation, shared their proposals with them, asked them about their version of the lesson to be observed and advised them to make necessary preparations. Here is how one teacher explained:

> I have a very collegial relationship with my coach who is an experienced teacher by herself. In our training, we were informed how much coaching is important in reading instruction, about tools used for classroom observation, and the roles coaches and teachers play for quality instruction. Based on this, I and my coach always met before observations. In this meeting we agree on a particular topic for observation and we plan details of the observation. The coach usually asked me to briefly present or rehearse the basic points of the lesson and provided comments or did demonstrations if required. We also fix the time and space for the observation.

In few cases, coaches reported that observations took place without the pre-observation meeting and planning. One of these coaches said,

> I visit the classes without pre-planning and without informing the teachers in advance, because teachers are well informed about coaching during training programs. Once the school schedule is set, we do on-spot observation to check how teachers deliver instruction.

There are also coaches who did not do preservation conferences due to heavy workload. They argued that coaching is an additional activity on the top of the full load of teaching in their schools and they run short of time to cover all cycles of coaching. Teachers also confirmed that in some cases there were no pre-observation conferences before classroom observations, and coaches neither informed nor met with them to talk about the classroom observations. One teacher said that" there was no pre-planning meeting, and her coach usually came to observe classes without any advance notification though a pre-observation conference is mandatory in her school regulations".

The above data in general show that in most cases pre-observation conferences were taking place as planned before classroom visits. These conferences were used for developing a common framework for observations and for reaching agreement between the coaching and the teacher governing the process of the upcoming observations. In few cases, however, coaches were not calling the pre-observation meeting with teachers. Such coaches observed the teacher in a form of spot-checking without having a meeting and sometimes even without informing them that they will come for a coaching visit.

In order to gauge if and how much classroom observations have been carried out, coaches were asked how often they visited classrooms, what they usually did to prepare themselves for observations, and how they provided support to teachers. Teachers were asked to describe how often they were visited and supported by coaches, and how they prepared themselves for classroom observations.

Most coaches indicated that they regularly visited the teachers without missing their schedule. Some of them gave details of what they were doing during observations. Here is what one coach reported:

> Monthly observations took place based on notifications to the teachers according to the plan set for coaching at the school level. During observation I focus on teacher actions, what he/she says and how students respond. I follow our observation tool which guides us to observe the content of the lesson, the specific methods used, materials provided, and the classroom arrangement. Teachers are aware of what is needed for observations because of the pre-observation meetings. I check and analyze the observation

data after it is done and provide the teachers with feedback in friendly manner.

Consistent with the coaches, most of the teachers reported that coaches visited their classes once a month and provided support. The coaches were looking at issues and problems during classes and helped teachers to refine their teaching. One of the teachers said:

> The coach observes my classes once a month, he observes my teaching and provide support as needed. The coach brings an observation rubric or form to collect information while visiting the class. His observations are regular and on time. He gives verbal appraisals and appreciation to me.

Coaches indicated that they prepare themselves for observation by arranging the necessary tools and materials. Such materials include the teacher guide, observation tools, and field notes. One respondent said, "I prepare the observation form, and review the textbook and the Teacher Guide." Coaches also reported that they observed a whole lesson. One coach said, "As per the school plan we do observations after our own teaching hours. And, we observe an entire lesson from the beginning to the end."

When teachers were asked about their preparation for observation by coaches, they reported that they do get prepared based on the agreement reached with coaches in the pre-observation conference and according to the teacher guide. One of the teachers said that "preparing for observation influences my instruction because students get ready and become active during the lesson since they are also observed by the coach." Most teachers said the early grade reading project provides materials and their students don't have problems. They have textbooks, supplementary reading materials, workbooks and teachers are expected to use these materials following the teacher guide. This use of materials is a good indication in early grade reading instruction because instructional activities and exercises are highly dependent on them.

Another question posed to coaches was whether the coaching tools (observation rubric and field notes) were clear and easy to use. Responses from respondents were similar in that all considered the coaching tools clear, easy to use, and appropriate. Here is what one of the coaches said:

> We are happy with the observation form and the note taking tool for the site visit. The form is well-developed, and the contents are sequential and logically organized. The observation rubric is an appropriate tool for observing lessons through which skills, knowledge and weak points can be assessed very nicely.

The above findings indicate that classroom observations were regularly taking place in the selected schools. Both teachers and coaches prepare themselves for the observations, and instruments of observation were also properly used without problems. It was also found that learning materials are available for use during instruction.

Regarding the analysis of data from observation and how they conduct post-observation conferences, coaches were asked if they did data analysis, consistently conducted post-observation conferences with teachers and provided feedbacks. In all cases, interviewed coaches confirmed that they did data analysis, held post-observation conferences, provided feedback to teachers and jointly developed improvement plans for the next classroom. Here is what a respondent said:

> After observation, I once again meet with the teacher outside the classroom to identify corrective points so that he/she considers those points in his/her future lessons. I provide feedback to teachers in private and solve their problems in very friendly manner. I use an office or somewhere else to provide feedbacks to them.

The contents of discussion included both strong and weak points in the instruction process and the need to improve their practices. For example, one of the coaches explained his experience as follows:

> I do share my views with all teachers after observation. Firstly, I tell them of their strengths and then instruct them to further improve their work. I make these points as specific as possible by giving examples based on my observation. I also emphasize things that can be changed as per the teacher guide.

Another interviewee provided almost the same response and said:

> I share my comments with all teachers' post-classroom observation. I take them individually out of the classroom and talk to him/her in a separate place. I tell them their strengths and then I point out their weaknesses that need improvement. I give feedback at a time as much closer as I made observation not to forget much of the data I got from observation.

A coach indicates that he provides two types of feedback: written and oral in the post-observation conference. In very few cases, coaches indicated that they do not provide feedback. Here is what a coach said, "Last year I used to give individual feedback, but this year I give group feedback for the teachers who request it." It seems that the more teachers accumulate experience in reading, the less is the need for coaching and mentoring. However, coaching is always required even if there is enough experience since the need for instructional improvement is constant.

When teachers were asked about getting feedback from the coach after the observation, with few exceptions, they confirmed that the coaches were providing feedback to them. These teachers explained that the feedback starts with positive points and they also point out issues that need attention. Many teachers reported that they are called to the office and provided feedback.

Interviewed teachers reported that some coaches provided their feedback shortly after the observation is completed. Some teachers also reported that their coaches reported their feedback to the school administration. And there are also very few teachers who reported that their classes were not observed, and the coaches did not have any feedback for them. Although there were some inconsistencies in data from teachers and coaches regarding post-observation conferences, in general it seems that most coaches and teachers appreciated the post-observation conference. Most teachers also reported that the feedback has been two-way in which they were also given opportunities to assess their own experience and express their opinions about the coaches' comments. Overall, teachers indicated that post-observation conferences have been constructive, and they were encouraged to teach reading.

7.2 Conditions Influencing Individual Coaching of Teachers

Both coaches and teachers were asked to comment on any conditions including contextual, cultural, training, subject-matter, project or the school that have facilitated the coaching of teachers' in their respective schools. Most opinions revolved around four main factors: coach, principal and teacher training, the collegiality or cooperation between teachers and coaches, and management support in the school.

With reference to coach-teacher collaboration, interviewed coaches indicated that there was a high level of cooperation between teachers and coaches while coaching was taking place. For instance, one coach said that "teachers render full support during coaching. Teachers get ready and ask us for observations, and that feedback points be shared with them." One of the main reasons why teachers request observations had to do with the friendly relationships built between the two parties. Another coach further elaborated that the cooperation was the result of several elements including teacher preparation for teaching, following instructions of coaches, and exchange of feedback. He said:

> Teachers do cooperate. They come well-prepared and listen to our instructions and views. Not only do I provide them with feedbacks or reflections and views, but I also seek their views for my personal improvement. This helped our links to be cordial.

Teachers' cooperation also involved various activities related to creating a good instructional environment, according to one of the respondents. Here is what the coach said:

> Teachers' inform and motivate students about the planned observation, arrange the class properly, and organize or bring learning materials as needed. On the other hand, the teacher delivers the content of the lesson as indicated in the guide. We have established good, professional, and friendly relationships.

The above responses indicate the emerging interest and encouraging atmosphere for coaching teachers in schools supported by ACR in Afghanistan. As one coach said, "all teachers were cooperative and interested". All coaches reported friendly and professional relations with teachers.

To cross-check the responses between coaches and teachers, teachers were also asked to comment on coach-teacher collaboration. Responses indicated that the relationship was positive, and teachers confirmed that coaches were cooperative, helped with teaching, provided examples, and did demonstrations. Furthermore, teachers confirmed that the teacher-coach relationship was collegial and open to discussion and listening to each other. Overall, the data indicates that the relationship between coaches and teachers was positive and cooperative.

Referring to school management support, coaches explained how the school management supported coaching in a variety of ways. These include monitoring, encouragement, guidance, appointment of replacement teachers, scheduling, provision of facilities, creation of a secure and friendly environment, and participation in coaching itself. No case was reported by coaches where there was not total support for coaching by school management.

With reference to monitoring support, coaches said that school management provided support through classroom visits, advice, and facilitation of activities. One of the coaches expressed:

> The school management monitors teacher's activities during observations. It also advises teachers that classroom observations and feedback are useful to them. The principal monitors and oversees the coaching process performed by coaches. She facilitates the conduct of affairs. The school management instructs us to hold meetings with teachers and consistently observe lesson delivery on time.

Coaches also indicated that the school management supported the cooperation of teachers with coaches. According to one of the coaches:

> The school management helps coaches and always encourages teachers to cooperate with coaches. Notices are posted in classrooms that observations will take place. Teachers are advised to listen to the coach calmly and assistant teachers are assigned to cover the classes of coaches. The principal holds meetings with coaches every week and always provides directions or recommendations about coaching.

As already alluded to by the previous quotation, some school management also assigns a replacement teacher for a coach while doing his/her coaching activities. Another one of the respondents said:

> As a coach, I observe another teacher while teaching. So, the school management appoints another teacher to teach my own class. However, there is no recommendation in any of the regulations of the

> MoE that establishes classroom observation as a part of my workload.

A principal also reported that he could serve as a substitute for a coach in case of the absence or unavailability of the coach, or in case of a heavy workload. Here is what he said:

> The management supports the coaching process. Whenever the coach is not available, the management takes up the responsibility and conducts the process. I often cover the coach's class, so that the coach can observe other classes. We have a timetable for the coaches to observe the classes.

One of the coaches explained that the school management encouraged coaches to visit classrooms in accordance with their schedule and urged them to conduct the coaching process on time and properly. There was an acknowledgement from coaches that the school management provided them with appropriate time and schedule. There were also reports that school management provided teachers with facilities and helped coaches in assessments. Coaches said that the school principals paid visits to the classroom to supervise coaching activities and listen to teacher views, as well as to support continuous assessment. Coaches further indicated the role of school management in providing a secure, friendly atmosphere and in directly participating in coaching activities. One of the coaches said:

> The atmosphere is friendly; we exchange our ideas in a collegial manner. The school management allows sufficient time for meetings and sometimes assesses how the coaching has been going by gathering information from teachers and students. Sometimes the principal also participates in co-teaching with the teacher or in demonstrations of some procedures.

All interviewed principals confirmed that they had supported individual coaching of teachers in a variety of ways, including assignment of coaches; provision of suitable places for coaching, distribution of learning materials, substituting/replacing the coach; motivating, scheduling, advocating, visiting/monitoring; and creation of an active work environment.

Principals expressed in different ways that they ensured the assignment of appropriate coaches with standard workload to teachers. Here is what one of the principals said:

> I am doing the calculation for teacher distribution based on this ratio of 1:6. I meet teachers one-by-one on the 25th of each month. I provide information and guidance to the teachers, but each teacher has her/his own coach.

Another said:

> I fully support them, assign coaches for all teachers, and give them instructions. I have appointed proper coaches for all teachers and assigned them based on teacher choice. Yes, I hold meetings with coaches every Thursday and give them instructions.

School management has also provided support by creating good working environment and by granting supplies and psychological assists. A principal reported:

> The management has offered a suitable place for coaching and provides learning materials and logistical resources. I have established an appropriate and active environment here for the conduct of coaching. I have assigned my active female teachers for early grades literacy, and I encourage all my teachers to pay attention to their obligations.

Principals provide incentives to coaching through praise, information, follow-up, monitoring, and sharing ideas for resolving problems. One principal said, "I try to encourage teachers and coaches, because I want a good implementation of the program." Similarly, one of the principals remarked, "I am monitoring the coaching process. We don't have any specific attendance monitoring, but I let the coach know that I will participate in coaching." From the above data it is possible to conclude that management support is a key aspect for the implementation of coaching. Several mechanisms have been used, including programming, assigning, incentivizing, and monitoring the process of coaching.

The preparation and training of coaches was the other point raised by teachers and principals to have positively influenced the implementation of coaching. Coaches praised their training in terms of the quality of training materials, observation tools, training delivery as well as the timetable of the training programs.

With reference to the quality of training materials, interviewed coaches generally expressed positive opinion about the content, organization, and presentation of the materials. For instance, one coach said, "the contents of training materials are good, and they are well organized, and the activities are also useful." Coaches also commented that the delivery of training for coaches, teachers and principals in terms of the allocated time and competence of trainers were satisfactory. Referring to the duration and timetabling of the training, most coaches reported that they were sufficient, appropriate, well-structured and convenient to follow. From these interviews it is possible draw that the preparation and training of coaches, teachers and principals was positively assessed as a main force for the implementation of the individual coaching of teachers in early grades reading in Afghanistan.

7.3 Problems of Implementing Individual Coaching of Teachers

Both teachers and coaches were asked about challenges they experienced when the individual coaching of teachers was implemented in their respective schools. Many of the coaches indicated various types of problems

associated with the individual coaching of teachers. These included a shortage of time for coaching, lack of a suitable place to meet with teachers, inadequacy of refined materials, inadequacy of some teachers' to apply literacy skills, and security issues. Among those who mentioned the shortage of time, one coach said: "The major problem is the shortage of time because a coach has both the responsibility of teaching and observation of classrooms. Coaching is not factored into our work load".

Problems related to the shortage of a meeting place and the unavailability of materials were also mentioned by coaches. One coach explained his problem related to materials as follows: "The only problem that we have is the lack of the observation checklist and field notes, and our request is for the provision and distribution of these tools as soon as possible." Normally, these problems can be due to lack of transportation of formats, lack of power to print materials or lack of printing capacity at local levels. Referring to a meeting place, one coach simply said, "We need a proper place for the meetings because we do not have it." This would be a meeting place for the pre- and post-conference meetings. There were also coaches who proposed the need for more time for training of teachers, particularly in Grade 3. Here is how it was presented: "More professional training of teachers and coaches is needed. Particularly, coaching Grade 3 is difficult for me because I haven't been trained on it". In ACR, all literacy teachers and coaches got professional training for all grades in cycles, so this coach might have not been reached by content training at the time the data have been collected.

Teacher skills for few teachers in delivering EGR is another problem that was emphasized by coaches. A coach said:

> Sometimes there are special problems with some teachers when they are teaching even if they have undergone training. We take notes of problems and when we give feedback to the teachers, we identify the problems and provide the teacher full support. In Teacher Learning Circle meetings, we also discuss these problems and find ways to solve them.

Interviewed teachers indicated that they do not have problems with coaching and the coaches are doing their classroom observation and provide feedback to the teachers. However, some of them pointed that there were some special problems. These included low capacity of coaches, workloads of coaches, and very aged coaches who are too frail or lack the energy to work with teachers. Coaches' low capacity was attributed to selecting the wrong people as coaches, and was expressed as follows:

> It will be good if the coach is introduced based on objective criteria and well-trained. There are many teachers who work better than the current coaches and the assignment of coaches should be based on the criteria and not on relationship. The coach should have knowledge of the materials and contents, and should not misguide the teachers.

This coach implies that some coaches were selected based on their relationship with people at higher levels rather than on the selection criteria provided. The respondent-teachers indicated that the workload of coaches is high since coaches often have their own classes as well as coaching teachers. Besides these, it was indicated that there are coaches who are old and have little energy, and capacity to do all the related tasks. They indicated that it would be better to select younger people to be coaches. It was also reported that some of the coaches did not share their findings from instructional observations with teachers. A few of the teachers also reported that District Education Departments (DEDs) and the project should have closely monitored the coaches, and that it would be good to have attendance monitoring for coaching as some of the coaches did not do classroom observations. Overall, the data indicate that the implementation of individual coaching has gone well except some concerns regarding the workload and capacity of coaches. The capacity of coaches is related to their age and the selection of some coaches based on relationships rather than the stipulated criteria.

8. Discussions and Implications

8.1 Discussions

The overarching goal of the current study was to gain insight into how well the coaching of teachers was implemented and explore how effective the coaching was for teacher's professional development. The EGR coaching model used a balanced approach, aiming to ensure that teachers would implement the new EGR curriculum well while at the same time providing space for reflection and professional development (Bean, 2014; Pflepsen, 2019). Furthermore, it took advantage of research which indicated that coaching teachers is very effective for enhancing teacher's instructional practices and student learning (Bean, 2014; Pflepsen, 2019). The study used case studies in order to explore coaching practices, conditions under which coaching was implemented as well as issues limiting the implementation of teacher coaching. The objectives of the study were converted into three basic research questions in order to get the required data. Next, we follow those questions in order to discuss the results and draw implications for further practice.

Findings regarding the actual practices of coaching teachers in schools indicate that in most schools the individual coaching of teachers was implemented well. Coaches, principals and teachers have described what went well during the various stages of the coaching cycle in ACR supported schools. The first and most important stage in coaching is the pre-observation conference between the coaches and the teachers, and most of

the interviewed coaches and teachers reported that they have participated in the pre-observation conferences before classroom observations. Only very few coaches and teachers indicated that they have not had pre-observation conferences. Those who participated in the conferences recounted that the pre-observation conference was a meeting for drafting and agreeing on the blue print of the upcoming observation. This finding is consistent with the purposes of a preservation conference before lesson observations. For instance, in the cycle of clinical supervision, Sergiovannai (1995) indicates that a pre-observation conference is an important event to create a framework for observations and reach consensus to conduct the direct monitoring of teachers in the classroom. According to Ubben and Hughes (1997), the purpose of pre-observation conference is to provide focus to the upcoming observation. Coaches and teachers have also shown that the pre-observation conference is an interactive process where coaches and teachers either exchange their plans for the lessons to be observed or do joint planning and rehearsals. This again is consistent with a balanced model of coaching where coaches provide guidance for fidelity of implementation, but with strong inputs from teachers' regarding instruction. According to Bean (2014) balanced coaching responds to teacher needs while promoting specific instructional approaches or practices. Coaches may be directive, but also seek teacher inputs and provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their work. In few schools, there were issues in that pre-observation conferences did not take place. There can be different explanations for this, but, it may be related to misunderstanding the purpose of coaching which does not imply the tradition of on-spot or informal supervision. According to Sergiovanni (1995), informal supervision is a causal encounter by supervisors with teachers at work and is characterized by frequent, but brief and informal observations of teachers.

The observed success in actual implementation of the individual coaching of teachers was explained in terms of a combination factors in this study. The most important in this respect is the preparation and training of teachers, coaches, and principals in EGR coaching. Additionally, strong school management support and coach-teacher collaborations were some of the major conditions identified to have facilitated the actual implementation of teacher-coaching. While most interviewees praised the high quality of the training of coaches, principals and teachers, the collaboration between coaches and teachers was highly acknowledged. Research from other countries suggest similar reasons why coaching is perceived as being positive (Bean, 2014). Regarding the preparation of coaches, Bean (2014) notes that coaching programs are more successful when coaches have content and pedagogical knowledge of both literacy assessment and instruction, and the specific program being implemented. In Afghanistan, the training of literacy coaches comprised a 12-day content and methodological training, and a 3-day coaching training. The literature indicates that a good training program be aligned in objectives and content to the literacy program, specific to the task of the coaches and provide tools and resources that reflect what coaches will be doing (Bean 2014). Findings in this study indicated that the training program succeeded in this respect. The content was perceived as relevant to the task and coaches have had user friendly observation tools.

Strong implementation in coaching early grade literacy teachers in the project supported schools in Afghanistan was strongly linked to the school management support. Principals and coaches explained a variety of ways in how the school management supported coaching. These include monitoring, encouragement, guidance, appointment of replacement teachers, scheduling, provision of facilities, creation of a secure and friendly environment, and participation in coaching itself. The role of management support for effective coaching is very well acknowledged in research (Bean 2014, Pfleson 2019). According to Bean (2014), effective coaching requires a context in which principals and other educational leaders support and understand how coaching can improve instruction. This means developing schedules that provide time for coaching, encouraging teachers to work with coaches, and supporting the non-evaluative nature of coaching. In Afghanistan, school management support has its background in the upper management support for coaching. Afghan Children Read project (ACR) collaborated with the Ministry of Education to integrate coaching with instruction, set criteria for the selection and training of coaches, determine the workload of coaches, set the frequency and duration of coaching for each teacher, and determine the responsibility of the school management, the principal and academic supervisors for coaching. The collaboration between coaches and teachers was another essential implementation factor emphasized both by interviewed teachers and coaches. This relationship was collegial and coaching did not entail supervision. Coaches supported teachers in learning how to make specific changes to classroom practices by informing, discussing and demonstrating the new methodologies of teaching literacy. The literature also shows that effective coaching is based on establishing and maintaining a positive relationship between the coach and the teacher. It also shows that when coaches are in supervisory roles, or asked to report on teachers to supervisors or administrators, it is difficult to develop trusting teacher-coach relationships (Bean, 2014, Pflepsen, 2019).

Although the implementation of teacher coaching was as effective as it was in Afghan Children Read supported schools, a range of challenges remained. Interviewed coaches, teachers and principals indicated that shortage of time for coaching, recruitment of coaches, lack of observation tools, lack of a suitable place to meet with teachers, inadequacy of teachers' skills, and security issues were impediments for coaching. The prevalence

of obstacles in literacy programs and other reforms in developing countries is familiar. In Afghan Children Read supported schools, the lack of time for coaching was the most important obstacle because the coaching period was not integrated into the weekly workload of coaches. Thus, a coach has to do both coaching and full-school load. From research, it is well known that the amount of time coaches spend with teachers influence changes in teacher practices and student performance (L'Allier et al., 2010), and the search for a resolution of this problem has been an issue throughout the project period. The fact that teachers have had low literacy skills can be linked to the lack of training for teaching reading in lower grades prior to the Afghan Children Read program in Afghanistan. In some circumstances, trained teachers might not have achieved the full mastery of the subject-content in the first workshop and in other circumstances, trainers might not have cascaded the requisite skills during training programs. This finding is also consistent with other findings elsewhere. For instance, Roskos et al. (2009) and Bean (2014) report that a short term or a one off workshop may not be sufficient to build the knowledge and understanding of how to teach reading effectively and teachers must be actively supported through coaching. In Afghanistan context, the impact of security was multifaceted, but its effect on coaches' and teachers' mobility or movement before and after coaching was immense. Similarly, some interviewed coaches and teachers seems to imply that the selection of coaches requires some more care. The Afghan Children Read project and the Ministry of Education have defined the criteria for objectively selecting coaches, but it is possible that such selection can be porous for a variety of reasons in Afghanistan context.

8.2 Lessons Learned and Implications of Findings

In various early grade literacy programs, coaching individual teachers has been identified as an effective means of providing teacher professional development (Pflenson, 2019). Experiences from Afghan Children Read Project are consistent with these findings since it was demonstrated that supporting individual teachers with coaching was possible even under severe emergency conditions. Several features of the teacher coaching model were identified as contributing factors for this achievement. These include central ministry support and collaboration, choice of the coaching approaches (school-based and balanced coaching support), well organized content and coaching training, commitment of coaches and teachers, and school management support for coaching teachers.

The Ministry of Education of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has effectively collaborated with the Afghan Children Program in determining the purpose of the coaching program, the levels of coaching early grade literacy teachers in Afghanistan, the coach – teacher ratio and criteria for selecting coaches. The ministry collaborated with the project to decide that this coaching program has to be school-based and in support of the teachers' professional development. The school based approach emphasized that coaches are senior and experienced teachers who provide support to fellow-teachers in their own schools and no coach comes from outside. For this purpose, a clear criteria for selection of coaches which included the qualification of teachers, sufficient years of experience in early grade teaching and participation in early grade literacy content training were set as major requirements. It was decided that a coach would support six teachers and observations would take place every month for each teacher. A choice was made to adopt a balanced approach of coaching where both coaches and teachers exchange experiences about classroom instruction. This program was based on strong training program of coaches, teachers and principals to prepare them for content instruction and pedagogical coaching. The school management was able to support coaches and teachers in their coaching practices, and the response of coaches and teachers was a huge commitment to a coaching practice. The Afghan Children Read Program (ACR) was closed in April 2021. Nevertheless, the project has left a great lesson that success in the implementation of a caching program requires putting together a multitude of factors including upper management support and collaboration; clear policy guidelines; strong preparation and training of coaches, teachers and principals; school management support; and the commitment of teachers and coaches.

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