

PAKTIKA TEACHER TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP PROJECT (PTTLP)

**Submitted
June 25, 2008**

This document reports accomplishments during the first three months of the first year (March 31 - December 31, 2008) of the **Paktika Teacher Training and Leadership Project (PTTLP)**, a joint venture between the Governor of Paktika, the Paktika Provincial Education Department, Task Force Eagle, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, US Army, and The Center for Afghanistan Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO).

The Goal

The PTTLP represents ‘best practice’ in teacher education. Teacher training colleges and universities provide the subject matter knowledge and the foundation for teaching skill but expertise in teaching evolves over time, after teachers enter the classroom, as a consequence of practice and of seminars and mentoring conducted by more experienced teachers. In Afghanistan experienced teachers prepared to teach other teachers are called Teacher Trainers. The goal of the PTTLP is to educate Teacher Trainers for Paktika Province and to institutionalize the Teacher Trainers’ work in the Province.

Over three years, the PTTLP will prepare a corps of Teacher Trainers who will stay in their home districts and share their subject matter knowledge and teaching skill with other teachers, both experienced and new, through seminars and follow-up support in the classroom. The PTTLP design provides an initial seminar (four weeks) and a practicum (ten days) for the aspiring Teacher Trainers. After successful completion of the seminar and practicum, each Teacher Trainer is assigned a cohort of twenty teachers and is responsible for upgrading the knowledge and professional skill of those teachers. The Teacher Trainers’ work with their teacher cohorts is supervised by the UNO Teacher Education Team. In three years, Paktika will have not only a corps of Teacher Trainers but also a group of teachers who have received a basic professional education with follow-through support in their classrooms.

This document contains: available descriptive information on the first Teacher Trainer cohort; a description of the Kabul seminar and Paktika seminars with target dates for this contract’s remaining three seminars in Paktika; a project evaluation plan; and action on problems to be solved. The document includes a section that identifies the changes in PTTLP design from the original design and justifies those changes. As we consider changes in design, please remember that the PTTLP’s goal, the preparation of teachers for teachers, hasn’t changed since the Project’s inception.

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Description of Teacher Trainer Cohort I

This first time around, the selection of teachers to become Teacher Trainers was done by the Provincial Education Director who was given criteria for selection: a twelfth grade diploma and a recommendation from the District Education Director. The Provincial Education Director was asked to select twenty-two (22) teachers, one from each district in Paktika.

In fact, nineteen (19) teachers were chosen representing five (5) districts: Orgune and Barmal and Surobi (near Orgune); and Yousefkhi and Katwas (near Sharan). Fewer than one-third of the teachers in this Teacher Trainer Cohort are grade twelve graduates.

The process of selecting Teacher Trainer candidates will improve. The means to improvement is addressed in the Problems/Actions section of this report.

The PTTLP Seminar Structure

The four week seminar, held in Kabul, provides the basic knowledge about learning and teaching that Teacher Trainers will impart to other teachers. The content of the seminar follows the content of INSET I, the first of three teacher education curriculums developed for teachers currently employed by the Ministry of Education. INSET I is organized for fifteen (15) sessions of instruction; The PTTLP Kabul Seminar is organized for twenty-four (24) sessions. The extended time in the Kabul Seminar allows aspiring Teacher Trainers to practice the pedagogical skills they are learning or reviewing and to critique their performance with colleagues in the seminar

The PTTLP design includes two seminars in Paktika, each with a different purpose. Paktika Seminar I (ten days) is a practicum for the Teacher Trainers and is conducted by the Head of the PTTLP Teacher Education Team. Teacher Trainer candidates are divided into four groups (five per group) and a seminar is conducted with each group. Each of the four seminars is conducted with 17 to 20 local teachers who constitute the practice groups for the Teacher Trainer candidates. Paktika Seminar II (fifteen (15) days) with follow-through support in the classroom is conducted by each of the successful Teacher Trainers, under supervision from the PTTLP Teacher Education Team, for twenty (20) teachers in the Trainer's district. The number of these seminars depends on the number of Teacher Trainers.

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The Kabul Seminar

Kabul Seminars are held on the University of Nebraska/Omaha Press campus and are conducted by Abdul Ghafoor Imad, UNO Master Teacher Training Coordinator in Kabul, and Head, PTTLP

Teacher Education Team, The seminars are held in a building that has classrooms and dormitory/living space for twenty-four (24) people. The UNO Press has a food service for its employees that provides three meals a day for seminar participants. Imad's office and UNO Kabul administrative offices are in the building that houses the seminar. The 2008 Kabul Seminar was held from April 3 through May 7.

As indicated earlier, the content of the Kabul Seminar follows the content of the Ministry of Education's INSET I. There are differences in focus, however, The Kabul Seminar's focus is planning and teaching lessons. Imad begins the seminar with a discussion of the characteristics of a good teacher. Following that he teaches a demonstration lesson using seminar participants as students. (For Paktika teachers his first lesson was from an Islamic Studies textbook for students in the intermediate grades.) After the lesson, he invites discussion of the structure of the lesson and his actions as a teacher.

Seminar participants then construct a general structure for lessons that begins with a clear objective, made explicit to students, follows with links to previous lessons, and motivating questions, and proceeds through a series of learning activities to an assessment of what students learned from the lesson. When all of the components of a lesson plan are understood by seminar participants, each participant plans a lesson which he teaches to other participants.. Each lesson is discussed with commendations for good features and recommendations for improvement.

Imad continues to teach demonstration lessons during the seminar and participants continue to plan, teach, and critique their own lessons. Topics in child development and educational psychology are blended into the study of lessons. Participants learn about forming groups for learning through planning lessons. The list of topics blended into lesson planning includes more than these illustrations. The essential point has been made; this seminar requires participants to plan and teach lessons that are critiqued by their peers and by a master teacher.

Participants were interviewed at the end of the 2008 seminar to assess attitudes toward the seminar experience. Paktika participants were of one mind in praising Imad's competence as a teacher and the practical value of the seminar with its emphasis on planning and teaching lessons. They claimed that it was the most useful seminar about teaching they had ever attended and didn't offer suggestions for change. It's hard to interpret the unequivocal enthusiasm. This is the usual response to Imad's seminars among Afghan teachers, however.

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Effects of the 2008 Kabul Seminar on participants' knowledge were examined using a pre-and post-test plan. Imad has a test that, if all questions are answered correctly, earns forty points for the test taker. Questions are of multiple types: true/false; multiple choice ; fill in the blank; and matching questions with correct answers. The same test (no alternate version) is given to participants during the first and last mornings of the seminar. Illustrative questions are: (true/false)

It is not wise for teachers to challenge students with difficult questions. ; A test at the end of a lesson tells the teacher if (the objective) of the lesson was achieved; and (true/false) Children come to school without any knowledge relevant to subjects taught in school.

All nineteen (19) participants took the test at the beginning and end of the seminar. The average pre-test score for Paktika teachers was eleven (11); range 2 to 26. The median pre-test score was ten and one-half (10.5). The average post-test score was thirty (30); range 20 to 39. The median post-test score was thirty and one-half (30.5). Again, these scores are hard to interpret because the participants were familiar with the questions when they took the test the second time. The use of the test, however, illustrates a commitment to evaluation and accountability

Paktika Seminar I

As indicated, this seminar is a practicum for Teacher Trainer candidates who participate in groups of five or six. The local teachers invited to participate are also grouped; the number of groups depending on the number of Teacher Trainer candidates. For ten days, each Teacher Trainer candidate conducts a seminar focused on lesson plans following the structure of lesson plans developed in the Kabul Seminar. The instruction mimics instruction in the Kabul seminar. That is, the Teacher Trainer demonstrates a lesson which is discussed by the teachers in the Trainer's group. Through discussion, the Trainer facilitates the creation of a general structure for lessons that each member of the group understands and accepts. Then the Teacher Trainer instructs each teacher in the group to plan and teach a lesson. Lessons are always followed by discussion. This pattern continues until each teacher in the Trainer's group teaches three lessons, each in a different school subject. These practicum seminars are held in schools.

The first 2008 Paktika Seminar was held in Orgun from June 7 through 17. Six of the nineteen Teacher Trainers participated along with seventeen (17) local teachers.

Target dates for the remaining Paktika I Seminars are: August 16 through 26, 2008; September 20 through 30, 2008; and October 18 through 28, 2008. School locations will be selected in collaboration with the Provincial Education Director.

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Paktika Seminar II

These seminars start at the beginning of the 2009 school year (late March and early April). Sixteen or seventeen seminars* are planned, each enrolling twenty (20) teachers. Each seminar will last fifteen (15) days and will be led by one member of the first cohort of PTTLP Teacher Trainers. Teacher Trainers will be supervised during these, their solo seminars, by members of the PTTLP Teacher Education Team. These seminars will be scheduled in collaboration with the Provincial Director of Education. Since the Teacher Trainers remain classroom teachers, the seminar schedule will accommodate their classroom teaching schedules.

Project Evaluation

It is in everyone's best interest, especially the children of Paktika, to learn if this teacher education project works. To know if the project 'works', we need answers to three questions: Do project teachers acquire knowledge about learning and teaching, judged to be related to successful classroom performance, from the Kabul Seminar? ; Do project teachers demonstrate the skills practiced in the Kabul and Paktika Seminars in their classrooms; and Do students in the project teachers' classrooms make gains in academic achievement? The first two questions are reasonably easy to answer. The last question, logically the most important, will be more difficult to answer than we anticipated.

The answer to the first question comes from a knowledge test administered to participants in the Kabul Seminar at the beginning and end of the seminar. In an effort to increase the meaning of the post-test scores we already have, we'll construct an alternate version of Imad's test in July and re-administer it to members of Teacher Trainer Cohort I. We can test thirteen of them during the remaining three Paktika I seminars and make arrangements with the District Education Director in Orgune to re-test the six members of the Cohort who participated in the June seminar in Orgune.

The answer to the second question comes from systematic observations in the Teacher Trainers' classrooms and interviews with their students. To this end, we will construct a classroom observation form and a student interview form and plan to conduct two observations and six student interviews in each of the nineteen (19) classrooms by the end of November, 2008.

***Note:** We plan sixteen or seventeen seminars because Imad believes that two, maybe three, of the nineteen teachers in Cohort I are so good they can join the UNO Teacher Education Team as Master Teacher Trainers.

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The observation takes thirty (30) minutes as do three student interviews for a total of two hours in each classroom. The observation and interview forms are easy to construct and will be completed by July 31. It isn't difficult or time consuming to train people to use them. That can be done in three to four hours. The problem is finding people, not connected with the project in any way and therefore likely to be objective, who can serve as data collectors and then providing for their safety while they work.

An official in the Ministry of Education recommended students from Paktika attending Kabul University or The Education University of Kabul as data collectors. This would be ideal and we will explore the possibility but we may not be able to find such students. We've thought of two other sources: interpreters from US bases in Paktika and Afghan members of the Paktika Reconstruction Team and will explore these possibilities, too.

There is a caveat to the value of this observation/interview process. Unfortunately we don't have baseline data on classroom performance for our teachers. This makes this first set of performance data difficult to interpret. It may turn out that this first run is essentially a pilot of our procedures.

The answer to the question about gains in student achievement comes from achievement test data. The Ministry of Education in Afghanistan doesn't have nationally standardized achievement tests except for grade 12. Teachers develop and grade their own tests and submit each student's scores to the Provincial Education Director. In Paktika, testing is done in October and November and scores are submitted before the end of the school year in mid-December. We can work with the Provincial Education Director's Office to recover individual students' scores from our teachers' classrooms and scores from same grade level classrooms taught by other teachers in the school and compare the scores. Before we decide if this is worth doing, we need to see the data. We'll try to get access to last year's data in September and decide by September 30 if existing data are usable.

If so, we'll collect and analyze 2008 achievement test data from the nineteen (19) classrooms and at least one comparison classroom in the nineteen (19) schools in January, 2009

In summary, we will get data this year on the first two of three evaluation questions and report them in the final report of PTTLP's first year. We will know by the end of September if we have reliable data on the third question.

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Problems/Actions

Selection of Teacher Trainers: As noted, the selection of participants for Teacher Trainer Cohort I did not conform to PTTLP specifications. A different process will be used for Teacher Trainer Cohort II. Anwari will ask Qazi Sayeed Ahmad, the Provincial Director of Education in Paktika, to convene a group of candidates in his office in early December. Imad and Anwari will interview these candidates and select those who, in their judgment, have the best qualifications. For those selected they will record: level of educational attainment; number of years of teaching experience; grade level taught; and district in which they teach. As indicated, this information will be recorded for each participant.

Security: Three participants in the 2008 Kabul Seminar left during the seminar because of threats to themselves and their families. All but one returned to complete the seminar. A 'guest' returned with one of the participants, stayed overnight in a dormitory, and attended one session of the seminar. Apparently, rumors about the seminar were commonplace in some parts of Paktika, the dominant rumor being that participants were taken to the US Embassy in Kabul and taught by US teachers. Fortunately, this rumor was easily dispelled. An 'observer' attended every session of the June seminar in Orgune. These visits and observations appear to be working for, rather than against, the teacher education project because it is clear that Afghan educators are in charge and are serving the interests of people in Paktika.

Immediately after the Kabul seminar, thirteen participants sent a letter to Sayeed saying that they wanted to postpone participation in the Paktika Seminar until security improved in their districts. Sayeed responded by saying the seminars would be re-scheduled when security improved. (A copy of this document with the translation has been forwarded to the FOB in Orgune. Another copy is with Anwari in Kabul.) We have established target dates for the remaining seminars. Anwari will forward these dates to Sayeed and remain in touch with him to confirm the dates and make local arrangements. Imad has been notified of the target dates.

Relationship with Sayeed: The participation of the Provincial Education Director is critical to PTTLP's success. He helps assure the quality of teachers selected as Teacher Trainers. He will play a major role in project evaluation, most notably by permitting access to end of year test scores for students. He will also play a major role in scheduling the nineteen (19) seminars conducted in Paktika next year by Teacher Trainers. This is a problem for which we don't have an action plan yet but will formulate one soon through discussions between Imad, Anwari, Yaseer, and Shepherd over the next month. Sayeed is not uncooperative; he just isn't actively involved yet.

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Ministry Textbooks: We don't have sufficient knowledge about the presence of Ministry textbooks in project teachers' classrooms. Minister Atmar said, through a public statement issued in June, that every student in Afghanistan will have a complete set of textbooks by the end of August. This statement was confirmed through contact with a Ministry of Education Official on June 22. We will ask our Teacher Trainers and teachers invited to participate in the Paktika I seminars about textbooks this year. We will also ask all candidates for Teacher Trainer Cohort II. If we find that, after August 30, students in project teachers' classrooms don't have textbooks, we will contact Mr. Rhamati, the Ministry's Director of Teacher Education, and arrange to get textbooks to project teachers' classrooms.

Coverage: From the inception of this Project in August, 2007, the goal has been to Prepare Teacher Trainers for each district in Paktika. We've projected three for each district with a total of sixty-six (66). If each of these Teacher Trainers taught twenty (20) teachers, one third of the current group of teachers would obtain basic professional knowledge and skill for teaching within the duration of the Project. Because of security constraints in Paktika this may be an unattainable goal. Our experience this year to date indicates that we may not be able to schedule and conduct enough seminars in Paktika to achieve this goal. It may be wiser in the long run to develop and institutionalize the Teacher Trainer Program in two or three districts in Paktika. These districts would become demonstration districts for the Province. Duplication and dissemination throughout the province would be the responsibility of The Provincial Director of Education, as security permits. Three model provincial sites under the control of the Provincial Director of Education would be a substantial step in the direction of complete coverage for the Province.

Justification for Changes in PTTLP Design

The original plan to prepare Teacher Trainers for Paktika Province located the project in Kabul during the winter school holiday for each of three years, 2008 through 2010. In 2008, twenty-two (22) Paktika teachers were to come to Kabul for the first phase of their education as Teacher Trainers; a seminar based on INSET I, a Ministry of Education teacher education curriculum. In 2009, half of these Teacher Trainer candidates would return to Kabul with sixty (60) Paktika teachers. The Teacher Trainer candidates would conduct an INSET I seminar, under supervision, for the teachers as practicum training for the role of Teacher Trainer. The 2009 program would be repeated in 2010 with the other half of the Teacher Trainer cohort and second group of sixty (60) teachers from Paktika. The outcome: twenty-two (22) Teacher Trainers for Paktika and 120 Paktika teachers with a basic professional education. This plan was based on the presumption that it wasn't safe to work in Paktika if western educators were involved. The design was a professional compromise.

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When the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) agreed to become the implementing agency for a teacher education project in Paktika, the presumption underlying the original plan was no longer operative. UNO has a staff of experienced and highly regarded teacher educators, born and educated in Afghanistan, who are willing to work in Paktika. The new plan is superior to the first plan for the obvious reason that it allows the Teacher Trainer candidates to use the knowledge and practice the skills they learned in Kabul in their own schools. It is a more efficient plan because we don't have to move groups of teachers to Kabul. And, we can reach more teachers with this plan.

Critical Dates: June 30 – December 31, 2008

- 07/31 Alternate Post-test and Classroom Observation and Student Interview Forms sent to Anwari for translation to Pashto and Imad's review
- 08/14 Alternate Post-test ready to use
- 08/16 Target date for second Paktika I Seminar
Alternate Post-test given to Teacher Trainers
- 08/31 Classroom Observation and Student Interview Forms ready to use
- 09/15 Data collectors for observations/interview selected
- 09/16 Target Date for third Paktika I Seminar
Alternate Post-test given to Teacher Trainers
- 09/30 Training for observers/interviewers finished
Schedule for observations/interviews ready
- 10/05 Observations/interviews begin

- 10/18 Target date for fourth Paktika I Seminar
Alternate Post-test given to Teacher Trainers
- 10/25 Alternate Post-tests obtained from Teacher Trainers
in June Paktika I Seminar
- 10/31 Decision use/no use teacher produced achievement scores

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- 11/01 Decision about number of Teacher Trainers for
2009
- 11/15 Classroom observations/interviews finished
- 12/01 Interviews for Teacher Trainer Cohort II
- 12/15 Teacher Trainer Cohort II created
- 12/31 If 'yes' to teacher produced achievement data
plan for January data collection complete

Note: This schedule covers the three activities remaining in this contract year;
completion of the Paktika I Seminars; selection for Teacher Trainer Cohort II;
and data collection for project evaluation