

CHILD LABOUR

THE STORY OF THE AFGHAN CHILDREN



Master`s Thesis

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Abstract

Child labour is not just a new expression of our times, but on the contrary, it is a practice that has been among the world for centuries. Since the Medieval era, children had to work and help their parents. Although this was just a light form of work, the practices of child labour have evolved over the years and now it is not just about working with parents and helping them, it is more than that. Once with the Industrial Revolution, children have become the perfect workers for the employers, for different reasons, one of them being the fact that they were easier to manage. However, nowadays, the practice of child labour has become more and more discussed at the international level, the reason being the fact that more and more children are working and this practice does not seem easy to be stopped.

This thesis aims to examine the issue of Afghan child workers, in order to understand what are the motives behind the children`s involvement into the work field. The case study will be applied as a research design in order to analyze the Afghan parents` motives of sending their children to work. This thesis, presents the story behind all the wars and conflicts that have ravaged the country and which affected thousands of people. It also looks at the education system in Afghanistan but also at the situation of the children who work. It presents the educational and the labour regulations according to the Afghanistan`s law. These regulations are afterwards analyzed once with the motives behind children`s work. The main focus of this thesis is to find out and analyze the motives which determined some of the Afghan parents to send their children to work instead of sending them to school. For those children, the fact that their parents decided to send them to work, meant the end of their childhood.

This thesis uses two different theories. The first theory is employed in order to understand the fact that, the phenomenon of child labour has existed throughout the human history and it is not limited only to the Afghan case, while the other one analyzes the motives behind the parents` decision to send their children to work. It also presents at what those children who work, dream of. In other words, it presents what they would have desired to do, if they had not had a job. Moreover, it provides an insight of some of their opinions regarding the fact that they work from an early age. It also emphasizes the importance of the education, as the education has the power to change these children`s future. The analyzed motives are linked with the Education System in Afghanistan and with the Economic Situation of the households.

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1.Introduction

Over the last decade, the issue of child labour in the developing countries has become the point of attention in the international arena. While it is true that if we look at the bigger picture of the world events, where the world is experiencing devastating crises, abuses of the human rights, global inequality or the phenomenon of terrorism where thousands of innocents are dying, this issue of child labour might be a “footnote” (Lieten 2005:6) as Georges Kristoffel Lieten named it, child labour still managed to become a “hot topic” (Lieten 2005:13) in the international attention.

In order to understand the problem of child labour, we need to take a look at the processes from the bottom layers of the society. It is important to learn about the social circumstances in which people live in. Through the “knowledge of the individual person, through anthropological insights into the subjective” (Lieten 2005:7) we can obtain an insight of the cultural patterns that they are experiencing and also what drives them to take the decision of putting their children to work.

In the context of this topic, namely child labour, it is important to discuss about childhood. In 1925, a clergyman stated in New York City that “A man who defends the child labour that violates the personalities of children is not a Christian...” (Zelizer`s 1985: 70). This came after which, in 1904, the first chairman of the National Child Labour Committee, Dr.Felix Adler, stated that “whatever happens in the sacrifice of workers, children shall not be touched, childhood shall be sacred” (ibid). It could be clearly seen that there was a significant desire of removing children from the world of market.

Those people who were advocating in favor of a child labour legislation were the ones who introduced a “new cultural equation” (Zelizer`s 1985: 72), one in which children who were working were not “being properly loved” (ibid). For reformers, a child had sentimental value, they were an “object of sentiment” (ibid) and not something used for producing money.

According to Georges Kristoffel Lieten, numerous authors came to the conclusion that what is genuine for the Western countries, it does not necessary mean that it is genuine for the other countries around the world. (Lieten 2005:9). Hence the idea that, one cannot impose the

western culture in other countries because otherwise, the people`s right to construct their own ideas of childhood would be denied.

However, it is important to mention that, even though, children started to have only sentimental value, the United States of America of America has not ratified the Convention on Children`s Rights. This treaty has been ratified by every country except for three countries: The United States of America of America, Somalia and South Sudan. Moreover, the United States of America of America has not even “sent it to the Senate for consent and approval” (Mehta 2015). Both in Europe or in the United States of America of America, children work. The only difference is that they work in order to earn pocket money for example “to buy cd`s, designer clothes, or to go to house parties” (Lieten 2005:16) and not to make ends meet to survive.

In the developing countries child labour has been accepted because “children there work because it is part of their culture” (Lieten 2005:9). Furthermore, James et al. writes that many of the campaigners who closely experienced the reality of the poor children focused on improving their working conditions. To go further, children`s right to employment is seen as a way of developing their social and economic status (James et al., 1998: 107). Hence the idea that children should not be excluded from work by adults.

Childhood should be considered one of the most wonderful periods in a person`s life. During this period, a child should grow up within an united family where he is protected and loved and most importantly he is being allowed to learn and study while he is being provided at least with the basic needs of survival. While growing up, a child should not be exposed to any kind of danger and he should be guided by his parents to follow his dreams.

All these ideas perceived by many of us as being normal for this period of life, namely childhood, vanish when thinking at the harsh conditions that poor people living in the developing countries face. In these countries, children do not enjoy the concept of childhood instead, they have to work in order to meet their basic needs. The most devastating thing for their future life as adults, is that they do not go to school, either because they have to work or because the education system is not developed and therefore it fails to provide children with a decent schooling.

One might ask, but what do children want? John Locke wrote in *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* that: “The power, then, that parents have over their children, arises from that

duty which is incumbent on them, to take care of their off-spring, during the imperfect state of childhood. To inform the mind, and govern the actions of their yet ignorant nonage, till reason shall take its place, and ease them of that trouble, is what the children want, and the parents are bound to” (Locke 1690: Chap.VI. Of Paternal Power, Sec.58).

Therefore, it can be assumed that during childhood, children want their parents to look after them but also to protect and guide them until they are old enough to make their own decisions. What children want, is to have the chance to a proper education, to have time for their studies which will help them to form for their future life, but they also want to play. All children in this world should have the right to a proper life which include education, protection, love from their family and also, as Georges Kristoffel Lieten stated “the right to freedom from work” (Lieten 2005:13).

Although the idea that childhood should be that period of time when a child is protected from the burden of work and adult responsibilities, holds true for some of us, this is not the case for the developing countries. Even though work “contradicts the very essence of childhood” (James et al., 1998:106) many of children do work and as James et al. stated, the existence of child employment is “most frequently explicated in terms of economic necessity” (ibid) and this is also the case of Afghan children.

Children of Afghanistan experienced over the years “poverty, social inequality, invasion, civil war, occupation, displacement and numerous atrocities” (Heath 2014:1). Afghanistan`s wars affected many innocents and as Jennifer Heath affirmed, it have been “fought on the backs of the innocent” (ibid). The series of wars started in 1839 with the First Anglo-Afghan War and continued with the next two Anglo-Afghan Wars in 1878 and 1919, respectively.

In 1979, Afghanistan faced another war once with the invasion of the Soviet Union and at that time childhood “bore little resemblance to modern Western notions” (Heath 2014:4). Since the 1970`s, children began to assist their parents, for example boys “learn to ride, shot and herd and they can no longer play freely with female counterparts” (ibid). Furthermore, for them, childhood was over and they had no adolescence “the young Afghan boy from ten to twelve moves directly into an adult world” (ibid).

Even after the Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989, the situation did not get better but instead it seemed only to get worse. A civil war started and it had devastated the country which

became highly fragmented. To go further, the situation deepened even more in 1994, when a new movement known as ‘the Taliban’ started to gain power. The situation became even worse for the Afghan people when the United States of America invaded Afghanistan in 2001, because of the Taliban’s refusal to turn over Osama bin Laden. All these wars, left its marks on the Afghan people’s lives.

The reconstruction of this country depends on its children because they are the future. According to Jennifer Heath about 57 percent from the population of Afghanistan are children under the age of eighteen and to go further, one in five represents a school-age child which is the “highest proportion of school-age children in the world” (Heath 2014:1). The childhood of these children, is nowhere alike the childhood of other children from other countries around the world.

The first document to recognize the delicate situation of the children and the responsibility that adults have towards them, is the Geneva Declaration which was signed in 1924 by the League of Nations (League of Nations 1924). The Declaration of the Rights of Child from 1959 represents “the basis of the basis of the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly 30 years later in 1989” (United Nations Assembly 1959).

According to this Convention, a child needs special safeguards and care due to its physical and mental immaturity. Furthermore, the Convention states that the child should be protected against cruelty and exploitation and to go further, it states that “the child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development” (ibid).

30 years later, more exactly on 20 November 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Children was approved by the General Assembly of the UN. The role of this document was to reaffirm that “children’s rights require special protection and it calls for continuous improvement of the situation of the children all over the world” (United Nations General Assembly 20 November 1989). Furthermore, this document also reaffirms the importance of a continuous development of the children and also the importance of education “in conditions of peace and security” (ibid). Moreover, this document ensure that childhood is protected and that it is entitled “to special care and assistance” (ibid). It is important to mention that Afghanistan is one of the countries who

signed this Convention on 27 September 1990 and ratified it on 28 March 1994 (United Nations Treaty Collection).

However, although Afghanistan signed this Convention, its principles do not apply to all of the Afghan children. According to a report made by Human Rights Watch called “Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan-They Bear all the Pain”, at least a quarter of the children who are aged between 5 and 14 are working in order to live or to help their families. (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 2). It is true that some families face economic insecurity and they make efforts to meet their basic needs and that they resort to child labour as a strategy to “diversify and increase income” (Sim 2014:128). Taking all of these into consideration, it is important to mention that, not all of the families end up using child labour as a form of survival. Some of them, even though they are poor, send their children to school instead of work.

The question here is why some of the children work and others have the chance of studying? What are the motives behind the decision took by some of the Afghan parents to send their children to work instead of school? And as I previously mentioned, why cannot the education system provide for those children, the necessary means for a decent schooling? Is it the education system that it is causing child labour or is it something else? Through my thesis, I will try to find answers for these questions but also to find out what the real problems are and why some of the Afghan children do not experience that period of time when they should be protected from all the hard work and go to school. Education is important because it helps them to form as future adults, because as I previously mentioned they are the future of the country and its rehabilitation depends on them. If one generation is educated then, the next generations of the respective family will also educate their children which will result in “a higher standard of living and educational attainment” (Basu et al.,2003: 201).

The subject of child labour among Afghan children seemed worth studying to me because Afghanistan is a country that has faced many years of war and the ones who suffered the most, were the children whose perception of childhood is different from others in different countries, as they had to struggle in order to survive. Despite all these problems, some families managed to send their children to school and in this way, they had a chance to have an education that might give them a future value, while other families send their children to work instead of school. Moreover, some of these children are engaged in hazardous work which will certainly affect their

development and future life as adults. Therefore, I have decided to set as the research question of my thesis the following:

Why some of the Afghan parents are sending their children to work instead of sending them to school?

2.Methodology

This chapter will provide a brief understanding of the methodology of this thesis. The chapter starts with the Synopsis of the thesis and furthermore, it aims to explain the research design, along with the reason of choosing a case study. It also presents the research methods and the data collection. Finally, the methodology chapter will end with an explanation of the limitations faced when writing this thesis.

2.1 Synopsis

This thesis started with an Abstract where I have provided information regarding the issue of child labour in Afghanistan and how the thesis will be going to approach the problem. The first chapter, represents the Introduction of this thesis, where the problem of the children who work is discussed. The Introduction starts from a general point of view, after which it goes to the particular case of Afghanistan. In this chapter I have also formulated the research question of my thesis.

After the Introduction, I have continued with the Methodology, which is the second chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, I will provide a brief understanding of the methodology of the thesis. In other words, I will explain the research design used but also the research methods and the data collection used in writing this thesis.

The next chapter is represented by the Theoretical Framework of the thesis. In this chapter, I will present the theories which are going to be used in the Analysis chapter. After presenting them, there will be a Discussion about how these theories apply to the empirical analysis.

The fourth chapter, called “History and context” is divided into four subchapters. Each of these subchapters have its own subchapters. The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the situation in Afghanistan. The chapter starts with the history of the country, but it also provides information about what a child is according to the International and the Afghanistan`s laws. Furthermore, it provides an insight about children who work in general and in Afghanistan in particular, but also information about the education system in Afghanistan.

Following this chapter, comes the Analysis chapter. In this chapter, there will be analyzed the motives behind the decisions made by some of the Afghan parents to send their children to work. This chapter will be divided into three subchapters. The first two subchapters examine the motives while the third one, examines the dreams of the child labourers.

The conclusions of this thesis are formulated in the sixth chapter, namely Conclusion.

Lastly, the final chapter is represented by the Bibliography of the thesis.

2.2 Research Design

This thesis utilizes the case study as its research design. A case study may be defined in several ways, for instance, according to Robert K. Yin “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin: 13). However, Peter Swanborn offered a broader definition. In his own view, a case study refers to the “study of a social phenomenon which is carried out within the boundaries of one social system (the case), rise of a few social systems (the cases), such as people, organizations, groups, individuals, local communities or nation-states, in which the phenomenon to be studied enrolls and in the case’s natural context” (Swanborn 2010: 13).

The decision of using this research design is related to the research question. For instance, the research question of this thesis asks a ‘why’ question about a contemporary social phenomenon “over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin: 9). As Yin states, if these conditions are met, namely, “how and why questions” (Yin: 7), then the use of case studies is the preferred strategy.

The case study design is broadly used as a research technique nowadays. Therefore, Kothari is addressing the advantages and disadvantages of this technique. Some of the advantages that he mentions are: “Being an exhaustive study of a social unit, the case study method enables us to understand fully the behavior pattern of the concerned unit; This method enables the researcher to trace out the natural history of the social unit and its relationship with the social factors and the forces involved in its surrounding environment” (Kothari 2004,1990,1985: 115).

On the other hand, in his view this technique also has some limitations or disadvantages and some of them are: “the danger of false generalization is always there in view of the fact that no set of rules are followed in collection of the information and only few units are studied; case study method is based on several assumptions which may not be very realistic at time and as such the usefulness of case data is always subject to doubt” (Kothari 2004, 1990,1985: 115).

While doing a case study, there are three important principles, which were formulated by Robert K Yin., as being important to “any data collection effort” (Yin 2009: 98). These principles include: the use of multiple sources of evidence which “far exceeds that in other research methods, such as experiments, surveys or histories” (Yin 2009: 115); “creating a case study database” (Yin 2009: 118), as it is important to organize and document the data collected for case studies and the last principle is to “maintain a chain of evidence” (Yin 2009: 122) in order to increase the accuracy of the information used in the case study.

The case study that I have chosen for this thesis is the child labour in Afghanistan, which is taking place due to various motives. This is an on-going phenomenon which, in my own view, needs to be better understood. Taking into consideration the fact that, this thesis focuses on the Afghan child workers, it will be regarded as a single case. I have found the single case study, to be the most suitable approach for the purpose of my thesis. According to Lijphart, a single case study advantage is that it “can be intensively examined when the research resources at the investigator’s disposal are relatively limited” (Lijphart 1971: 691). I have chosen the single case study in order to maintain the aim of the thesis in finding out the motives behind the Afghan child labour.

2.3 Research Method

This thesis uses as a research method the qualitative approach and it is based on secondary data. Qualitative methods are seen as “providing rich data about real life people and situations and being more able to make sense of behavior and to understand behavior within its wider context” (Research Methodology- Qualitative Research). Robert K Yin, came to the conclusion that, “instead of trying to arrive at a singular definition of the qualitative approach” (Yin 2011: 7), it is better to take into consideration five features. According to him, the five features of the qualitative

research are: “Studying the meaning of people’s live, under real-world conditions, representing the views and perspective of the people; Covering the contextual conditions within which people live, contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior and striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone” (ibid). In other words, a qualitative research offers information about the human behavior and also about why people behave in a certain way. Moreover, according Yin, the qualitative approach, aims to “collect, integrate, and present data from a variety of sources of evidence as part of any given study” (Yin 2011: 7). Furthermore, he also states that the conclusion of the study is “likely to be based on triangulating the data” (ibid) which was gathered from different sources.

This thesis consists mostly of qualitative secondary data, but quantitative secondary data has also been used to offer a better understanding of a certain situation. For instance, quantitative secondary data has been used to support the findings from the Importance of Education chapter regarding the number of students, teachers and schools in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the use of this quantitative secondary data, helps in strengthening the accuracy of the information used in this research.

2.3.1 Data collection

The data collection for this thesis is based only on secondary data. As I did not make my own data collection, I have not used primary data. The data that I have used has already been collected or analyzed by specialists in the field of child labour. As a result, I am aware that some sources of data may have some risks such as: reliability, suitability or adequacy.

This thesis, consists of books, government reports, reports published by the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan, academic journals, UNICEF reports, Human Rights Watch reports, The United Nations Conventions, NATO reports, but also The Constitution of Afghanistan. Furthermore, there are also sources from news media, both from Afghanistan media such as The Daily Outlook Afghanistan and from the International media such as The Huffington Post or BBC news.

2.3.2 Limitations

The most important limitation in writing this thesis was the lack of primary data, as I did not travel to Afghanistan to gather the data by myself and conduct my own interviews. Due to the fact that the situation in Afghanistan is still unstable, as the Taliban continue on launching attacks against the population, the environment is still considered to be dangerous.

Another important limitation was the language. It was difficult to translate some of the official documents, which were published by the Government of Afghanistan in Dari or Pashto. Furthermore, some of the interviews, were translated from Dari or Pashto, directly into English, therefore it exists the risk that some of the ideas that they wanted to express, might not be so accurate.

3.Theoretical framework

The aim of this chapter is to offer a brief understanding of the theories which are going to be used as basis for the analysis part of this thesis. There will be a presentation of the two theories which are going to be applied to the empirical analysis. Lastly, there will be a discussion about the theories` applicability to the analysis, explaining how these theories are going to be used.

3.1 The Theory of Child Labour

According to James Challis and David Elliman, children have always worked and they continue to work even today. Challis and Elliman place child labour into a historical perspective, as child labour is a global problem which took place around the globe. It is a practice that existed in all the Continents and it was not limited just to the nations which were poor. They are explaining in their book, *Child Workers Today* that, the practice of child labour existed in Europe, the USA, The Middle East, Central and South America, but also Asia and Africa.

Since the 1970`s children could be seen “picking crops in pesticide-soaked fields of the USA, labouring on buildings sites in Mexico, in sweat-shops in the East End of London, being injured in factory accidents in Italy, making carpets in Turkey, assembling plastic toys in Hong Kong, labouring as unofficial sub-employees in Indian factories” (Challis, Elliman 1979: 2). Besides all of these, they could be found working in the agriculture field in almost every part of the world.

According to them, children have always performed all kind of jobs from the “part-time occupations” (Challis, Elliman 1979: 161) which represented the light form of work, to more dangerous occupations which “constitute a threat to their health and well-being” (ibid). The child workers were not confined to a single geographical area, but on the contrary, the practice of child labour “extends right around the world” (ibid). Moreover, child labour was not a practice used only in the poor countries. That is to say, child workers could be found in rich countries too.

3.2 The Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency

This Theory was originally developed by Jean-Marie Baland and James A. Robinson in “*Is Child Labor Inefficient?*”. The theory was further explained by Drusilla K. Brown, Alan V. Deardorff and Robert M. Stern in the chapter called “*Child Labor: Theory, Evidence, and Policy*” in “*International Labor Standards*” ed. by Kaushik Basu, Henrik Horn, Lisa Roman and Judith Shapiro. I have decided to use the explanations offered by Brown et al., as it were framed to offer a better academic understanding related to the phenomenon of child labour, as the original theory consisted of mathematical equations used in studying the problem of child labour with a two-period model of equilibrium approach which were difficult to interpret. The wrong interpretation of it might lead to the misunderstanding of the main idea behind the theory.

According to this theory, the members of a family will choose actions from which the whole family benefits, that is, to increase the joint income of the family. According to Brown et al., this theory’s point of departure is that “all families make child-labor decisions to maximize the present discounted value of the households’ income” (Brown et al., 2003:198). When making the decision of sending their children to work, parents usually “weigh the present discounted value of the future income of an educated child against the foregone income while the child is in school” (ibid). In such cases, parents choose child labour if the outcomes of the educational process are not satisfactory enough “to compensate families for the lost income of their children” (ibid). According to the theory, a low return to education will make the parents to discount the value of the school. This theory assumes that a low return to education, occurs “if schools are far away, inadequately staffed, lack educational supplies and materials etc.” (ibid). Furthermore, the return to education will be unappreciated if the overall quality of schools is poor. That is to say, if the overall quality of the education system is considered to be low then, the expected return of an educated child is not high enough “to compensate families for the lost income of their children” (ibid). In other words, if these conditions are met, the value of the school is considered to be lower than the return to work.

According to this theory, child labour also emerges “when the parent’s initial endowment is low relative to their child’s future income (whether or not they are educated). In this case, parents would like to engage in consumption smoothing” (ibid). This theory states that, parents want to “engage in consumption smoothing” (ibid) which means that, parents “would like to borrow

against the future wealth” (ibid) of the family in order to “increase current consumption while lowering future consumption” (ibid). In such cases, “the consumption profile of the family” (ibid) will lower with the passing time. This theory states that, in general, parents take the decision on engaging in child labour “when the household’s survival is threatened by a period of unemployment” (ibid). The theory further states that, “the only option parents have for increasing current household consumption” (ibid) is to send their children to work, even though this decision will seriously affect their children’s future. In such cases, parents borrow from the future of their children by sending them to work rather than investing in their education which could have helped them to achieve a better future. According to this theory, “child labor is a device from transferring income from the future into the present” (ibid). That is to say, a child who works instead of acquiring an education, does contribute to his family’s income, but he works “at the expense of his future productivity” (ibid).

3.4 Discussion

The starting point of the analysis place child labour into a historical perspective. It is important to understand that the phenomenon of child labour is not something new, but on the contrary, it has existed throughout the history and on all the Continents. It is also important to understand that, it is not a culturally specific problem, but a global one which has existed across time. Therefore, in order to offer a brief understanding of the fact that child labour has always existed, I will apply the Theory of Child Labour, according to James Challis and David Elliman. This theory offers a proper insight of the problem and it helps in strengthening the idea that children have always worked.

However, the problem of child labour has come into the international attention as more and more children are working, under different motives. In order to find out what these motives are, in the case of Afghanistan, I will apply the Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency. According to the theory, one of the motives behind the parents` decision of engaging in child labour is linked with the overall quality of the Education System. Furthermore, the theory also states that the overall quality should be determined after analyzing the key features of the Education System. According to the theory, if the parents decide that the quality of the education is not satisfactory enough, then, they will send their children to work. I will apply this theory in order to analyze if the quality of the Education System, plays an important role in the Afghan parents` decision of sending their children to work, instead of school.

Furthermore, according to the theory, the other motive behind the parents` decision of engaging in child labour is linked with the Economic Situation of the household. The theory states that, in order to increase the current income of the family, parents “would like to borrow against the future wealth” (ibid) of the family. In other words, if the income of the family is low, then, families take the decision of sending their children to work as their only option to increase their income. By applying this theory, I will try to find out what are the features that determine the Economic Situation of the Afghan families who believe that child labour represents their only option to meet their basic needs and most importantly, I will try to find out if the Economic Situation of the family plays an important role

That is to say, I will apply the Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency throughout the empirical analysis, to find out if these motives – The Education System and The

Economic Situation – are the ones behind the parents` decision to send their children to work instead of school in the case study of the Afghan child labour.

4. History and study context

The aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the situation of Afghanistan. It starts with the history of the country, in which the wars and conflicts that took place in Afghanistan are presented through a timeline, after which, the subchapter ends with a description of the childhood of the Afghan people, which was severely influenced by the wars. The second subchapter provides information about what a child is according to the International law but also about what a child is according to the Afghanistan`s law. The third subchapter, offers an insight about children who work from a general point of view and it ends with the situation of the Afghan child workers. Lastly, the fourth subchapter, describes how important is to have education, but it also describes the situation of the education system in Afghanistan. All these subchapters provided the necessary information, which helped in understanding better the situation of the Afghan children.

4.1 Background

It is important to understand the conflicts that took place in Afghanistan over the years, in order to appreciate the situation that Afghan people have been facing. The first part of this chapter, offers insights through a timeline about the wars and conflicts that had ravaged the country, starting from 1839, while the second part describes how their childhood was influenced by these conflicts.

4.1.1 History of Afghanistan

Afghanistan, a poor country and also an undeveloped one, became unified at the middle of the 1700`s. Starting from the 1830`s the series of war, Afghanistan was involved in two wars over the issue of Russia`s attempts to gain influence and to use Afghanistan against the British India which contained the territory of what we call today, Pakistan (Collins 2011: 15). The competition between Afghanistan and British India was called the “Great Game” and during this competition, Afghanistan finds itself “a strategically significant country” (Goodson 2001: 32).

The First Anglo-Afghan War took place between 1839-1842. This war began once with the British invasion and the occupation of the capital city, Kabul and other cities too. Since the

beginning of this war, the British forces underestimated the Afghans who killed almost the whole British expeditionary force, namely “16,000 soldiers, dependents and camp followers” (Collins 2011: 15) with the exception of a regimental surgeon “who returned home to tell the tale” (ibid). Before retreating back to India, the British made a punitive expedition through which they killed thousands of Afghans and destroyed three cities, including the capital of Afghanistan.

The Second Anglo-Afghan War was fought between the years 1878-1880, the cause being the misunderstandings between Russia and British India. The possible influence of Russia over the capital city, Kabul, determined the British to invade Afghanistan once again. Abdur Rahman who was the Emir of Afghanistan and ruled “from the center with an iron fist and with significant British subsidies” (Collins 2011: 16), was forced to accept the hated Durand Line. This Line was drawn by the British envoy, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand in order to divide Afghanistan from India. Once with this Line, the Pashtuns were divided too, leaving a “third of them in Afghanistan and two-thirds in western India” (ibid) which became Pakistan.

The Afghan leaders fought against the British invasion but they often ended up by taking subsidies from them. In exchange for these subsidies, the British “receive control over Afghan foreign policy” (Collins 2011: 17). The Afghan leaders used these subsidies to consolidate the power of the Afghan army but also to strengthen the “internal power of the central government in Kabul” (ibid). This situation, which in fact was stable, continued like this until 1919 when a third Anglo-Afghan war started.

The Third Anglo-Afghan war started after the War World I, more exactly in “May-June 1919” (Adochitei 2013) and it established Afghanistan`s full independence. This war began with the “mysterious death” (Collins 2011: 17) of Habibullah Khan who was the Emir of Afghanistan between 1901 and 1919. Habibullah did not want to get involved in another war with Britain because they were paying him health subsidy. He was the Emir who managed to keep Afghanistan neutral during the World War I. After Habibullah`s death, his son, Amanullah, seized power. The British were reluctant in fully recognizing the new Emir or to “reward Afghanistan`s neutrality with complete independence” (Goodson 2001: 45), which motivated Amanullah to begin the Third Anglo-Afghan War in only two months after he had come into power. Even though the war lasted only one month, it led to the “Treaty of Rawalpindi which finally freed Afghanistan to conduct its own foreign affairs” (Goodson 2001: 46). Therefore, in 1919, Afghanistan became a fully

independent state. This war ended up the British subsidies which were a key source for the Afghan leaders.

After this victory, which later was celebrated as the “beginning of the Afghan self-rule” (Collins 2011: 18), Amanullah made reforms and efforts in order to modernize his country. He was the first Afghan leader who took aid and military assistance from the Soviet Union (ibid). During his time as a leader, he wanted to remove the veil from women and to force the Afghans to wear Western-style clothes in the capital city of the country (Collins 2011: 16). Eventually, all his reforms lead to a revolt in November 1928 which drove him from power.

The Soviet Union tried to regain the throne for Amanullah by sending “850 to 1,000 men” (Goodson 2001: 57). Being disguised as Afghans, they captured Mazar-i-Sharif which is the fourth largest city of Afghanistan and Tashkurghan, a city located 60 km east of Mazar-i-Sharif. After capturing these cities, they moved toward Kabul, but because of the “international disapproval” (ibid), the force was withdrawn. A couple of years later, in 1930, the Soviet Union sent again people into Afghanistan, but this time to capture Ibrahim Beg, the leader of the Basmachi movement which was a revolt against the Russian Imperial and the Soviet rule.

As a result, it was signed the “Treaty of Neutrality and Nonaggression of 1931” (ibid) between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, whose leader was Nadir Shah. Even though they have signed this treaty, both Nadir Shah and his teenage son Zahir Shah, grew “disenchanted with the Soviets and distanced Afghanistan from the USSR in the 1930s” (ibid).

Even though Zahir Shah was the successor of Nadir Shah, his “uncles ruled as regents until 1953” (Collins 2011: 19), when he took the throne. During his reign, Afghanistan succeeded in remaining neutral during the World War II. In the 1940`s and early 1950`s Afghanistan made several proposals to the United States of America of America in order to ask for economic and military aid, but Washington “consistently demurred” (Goodson 2001: 59). As a consequence, in 1956 Afghanistan accepted the aid from the USSR which came in the form of military aid. As a result, Afghanistan managed to create a modern military while the Soviets “concentrated loans in certain economic sectors, rescheduled loan repayments” (Goodson 2001: 60) and they even increased the number of people sent as advisers in Afghanistan.

The Soviet assistance was meant to be as visible as possible, they invested in maximum-use projects “such as paving the streets of Kabul” (ibid). As for the United States of America, they did provide aid, but most of it was “bogged down in the Helmand Valley dam and irrigation scheme in remote southwestern Afghanistan” (ibid). The Soviet diplomatic actions, along with the economic aid and military assistance were combined in such a manner so as to establish a substantial Afghan dependency on the USSR.

In July 1973, Mohammad Daoud, the first cousin of King Zahir Shah, declared himself the President of the new Republic of Afghanistan while the King was in Italy (Goodson 2001: 62). During his reign, he tried to distance Afghanistan from the USSR and instead, he tried to obtain the aid from the West, especially from Saudi Arabia. The death of a communist leader led to demonstrations in the capital, namely Kabul, and as a consequence, the new President, ordered the arrest of several communist party leaders in April 1978 which led to a coup. A small “band of leftist army officers” (Collins 2011: 25) with help from the Soviet advisors attacked the palace and killed President Daoud along with his family.

After the coup, the army became unstable and the tensions between Soviet advisors and the Afghan commanders have also grown (Collins 2011: 26). In the spring of 1979, the war started in Afghanistan. Hundreds of Soviets were hunted down and killed and so the revolts followed in more cities. Moreover, the Afghan army units “started to kill their Soviet advisers” (Goodson 2001: 66) In the winter of 1979 “the first of some eighty thousand Soviet troops” (Goodson 2001: 63) started to enter in Afghanistan. By the next day, the Soviets controlled the cities and the government so, it can be said that “the invasion was a success” (Goodson 2001: 68).

After the Soviet invasion, the period of uncertainty deepened into Afghanistan and during this period, the Soviets became more powerful into the cities. The international opinion was negative, the United States of America even imposed a grain embargo and they boycotted the Moscow Olympics (Collins 2011: 30). Even though the international opinion opposed to the Soviets` actions, they ignored this international disapproval and they have “concentrated on consolidating their gains” (Goodson 2001: 68).

In the spring of 1980, the Soviets “had more than one hundred thousand troops in Afghanistan” (ibid) and they kept engaging in fighting`s all over the country. Besides all these fighting`s affecting most of the cities and which “wrested them temporarily from government

control” (ibid), there were also insurgency activities which were spreading around the country. Moreover, the conflict became worse over the next two-years and “by the end of 1981 all 29 provinces of the country were experiencing guerilla warfare” (Goodson 2001: 69).

The power of the Soviet forces which consisted of firepower which gave them air superiority, destructed Afghanistan. Villages and civilians were being targeted because of their inability of distinguishing the fighters from the civilians. The atrocities that these civilians experienced created refugees which ran away into Pakistan and Iran. The soviets` tactic was to “destroy villages and basic infrastructure” (ibid) so, this created an even greater number of refugees. These tactics created not only refugees but it also created internally displaced people.

The Soviets entered in every department of the government, they organized their forces in order to “meet the Afghan situation” (Goodson 2001: 73) and they were heavily testing weapons in the countryside. A lot of people run away from the country or they were internally displaced. The countryside had been severely damaged and every city of this country witnessed warfare. Therefore, the civilians which remained in Afghanistan, were supporting the “resistance fighters overwhelmingly” (Goodson 2001: 76) while the international opinion kept disapproving the Soviets` actions.

Starting from the autumn of 1986, the resistance fighters received “US-made Stinger missiles antiaircraft gun, multibarreled rocket launchers” (Goodson 2001: 77), which provided them the air defenses they needed. These weapons forced the Soviets to reduce the number of their air missions and what is more, the pilots did not want to fly at low altitudes anymore. Their air strategy was gone.

When Mihail Gorbachev took power, in March 1985, he started to change the policy they had towards Afghanistan. There was an “increasing domestic discontent over the Afghan War” (Goodson 2001: 78) and even Gorbachev was concerned. The reasons of his concerns were the situation of the economy, as a lot of money were being used in this war, and the “overall relations with the West” (ibid). Taken these factors into consideration, he constrained his generals and the Afghan allies to come up with a solution for this war.

Eventually, on 14 April 1988, it was signed an agreement which was “calling for a nine-month phased Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan” (ibid). Even though they reached an

agreement, the fighting`s continued throughout the year 1988, after which, on the 15th of February 1989, the Soviets troops withdraw completely from Afghanistan. This war cost the lives of 15,000 Soviets and a million Afghan lives (Collins 2011: 30). Moreover, it created a huge number of refugees and what is worse, it had left “millions of mines on the ground” (ibid).

Starting from 1991, both the United States of America and the Soviet Union decided to cut off the military support for Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Soviet Union decided to limit the economic aid too. After the resignation of Gorbachev, on 25 December 1991, the Soviet Union broke apart and it also brought down the end of the communist government from Kabul. (Goodson 2001: 82)

Despite the fact that the Soviet Union left Afghanistan, it did not create peace, but, instead, a civil war continued the series of war. After the collapse of the government, it had been difficult to make “a national coalition government a reality” (Goodson 2001: 83). The rival mujahedeen groups and the militia did not accept to share power, so the fighting`s continued. There had been a continued violence between “resistance organizations, tribal militias and the former government forces” (ibid) which were seeking to take the power.

Negotiations between the representatives of various groups within the Afghan society existed, but these negotiations had “little success in forming a national government” (Goodson 2001: 85). Furthermore, in 1994, there had been massive fighting`s around Kabul, including air attacks. The aftermath of these fighting`s was catastrophic, “nearly one thousand people had died and more than one hundred thousand others had been made homeless” (ibid). Moreover, since 1992, Pakistan refused to accept any more people from Afghanistan without visas. This situation constrained the civilians to flee to Jalalabad or other cities inside Afghanistan.

Afghanistan was a fragmented country and this situation deepened even more in 1994. In the summer of 1994, both Pakistani and Saudi Arabian fundamentalists started to support “a new movement known as the Taliban (religious students)” (ibid). Those Taliban`s were in fact, Afghan refugees and veterans of war who were based in the rural Pakistani and in Islamic religious schools which were known as madrasahs.

They first emerged in 1994 and they were presenting themselves as the “religious students” (Goodson 2001: 86) who had enough of the post-communist struggle to gain power in Afghanistan

and of the lawlessness all over the country. Quickly, they gain support in the south-western part of Afghanistan and they were headed by a council of southern Pushtun religious scholars and students (ibid). In order to gain more power, they have asked or even paid drug kings, warlords and militia commanders to give up on their power or to leave the country. What is interesting is that, many of these leaders did as the Taliban said, maybe because they did not want to “fight against religious students” (ibid). As a result, they managed to control about one-third of Afghanistan by the year 1995.

In 1996, the Taliban finally took the power over Kabul and by the next year they kept forwarding by capturing key towns. To get to the center of Afghanistan, they put a lot of pressure on the Hazara population, people who mainly live in the central part of Afghanistan. This pressure meant restrictions to supply of food aid until they were making those people to starve. The Taliban were helped by Osama bin Laden who gave them financial support in order to “buy off local commanders” (Goodson 2001: 88).

While fighting for power, in 1998, “more than eight thousand noncombatants had been killed and thousands more were reported to have been relocated as ethnic cleansing returned to Afghanistan” (ibid). Constantly winning battles, the Taliban managed to control 90 percent of the country, but their significant rival, Massoud, the leader of Shura-i-Nazar – fighting against the Soviet supported Democratic republic of Afghanistan – still “was able to field a significant military force by the autumn of 1998” (ibid).

The social policies established by the Taliban, their own interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law, “led to the marginalization of the movement by most international actors” (ibid). It became hard for the international organizations which offered aid or even for the UN to conduct operations in Afghanistan and this is the reason why they withdrew all their operations from Afghanistan by August 1998.

After they have taken control over the country, they implemented, as I previously said, their own interpretation of Sharia law and order. As Collins stated, they generally “opposed progress and modernity” (Collins 2011: 39). For example, the public health had significantly declined because they imposed a restriction to the “mobility of female midwives” (ibid). Among other things they have prohibited the “female exposure, shaving, the music, the kite flying, dancing at weddings, tailors sewing women`s clothes or taking measurements of women or wearing British

and American hairstyles and the prayer was made mandatory” (Collins 2011: 40). To go further, the women who did not respect these laws were subject to beatings by the religious police. Also, the public executions of criminal or adulterers were made public. All these restrictions bothered many Afghans, mostly the ones who were living in the urban areas because, their life “had been traditionally less restrictive” (Collins 2011: 41).

The fact that the Taliban were constantly rejecting the idea of creation of a “broad-based government” (Goodson 2001: 89) which might include the delegates of the northern minorities together with their tolerance and also the participation in the production of opium and heroin in Afghanistan, led to the isolation of their regime. The United States of America rejected the Taliban because of their compliance to create a safe haven, as well as training bases for the Islamic militants which were headed by Osama bin Laden. Moreover, he was involved in the “June 1996 bombing of an American barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia” (ibid) including the bombings against the US embassies from Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998. As a consequence, the United States of America responded with cruise missile strikes against the training bases located near Khost. Therefore, the “US-Taliban relations dipped to their lowest point” (ibid).

Year 2000 marked “the end of twenty-two years of continuous war in Afghanistan” (Goodson 2001: 95) and by the end of this year, the country was unified. Even though it was more unified than “it had been at any point in the preceding two decades” (ibid) it was still divided. The Taliban was controlling from 90 to 97 percent of the Afghan territory and the rest of it, was in control of Massoud Tajik’s army and other ethnic minorities.

This situation was about to change soon. One might even ask, how much war can the people of Afghanistan stand. The situation there, was indeed terrible. After the terrorist acts from 9/9 and 9/11, the assassination of the commander of the Northern Alliance forces, Ahmed Shah Massoud and the attacks against the World Trade Center respectively, the “Afghan and American people became tied together in a common war against al Qaeda and its fellow traveler, the Taliban” (Collins 2011: 1).

After which Al-Qaeda attacked the United States of America, through the attacks against New York, the Pentagon and Pennsylvania, the United States of America asked the Taliban to turn over Osama bin Laden together with his accomplices, but they refused to do so. As a consequence, the United States of America “took decisive action” (Collins 2011: 2). On 7 October 2001, they

have launched several attacks which marked the beginning of the Operation Enduring Freedom. Overall, this operation represented a success though, not a decisive one. After this operation, Al-Qaeda was removed from its sanctuary and its ability to recruit new members was significantly reduced. Moreover, the Taliban left Afghanistan and as a result, the refugees were able to come back into their country and the civilians which were internally displaced moved back into their homes.

In the period 2002-2005, “a small American and international force tried to help Afghanistan” (ibid) as it was devastated after the long series of attacks. These efforts were not enough, as the Taliban were planning to come back in power. They were making detailed preparations from their sanctuary from Pakistan. They have retreated together with Al-Qaeda in Pakistan, where they have started to reorganize and gather weapons. They even built training camps in order to be ready for their returning in Afghanistan.

As Collins stated, “United States of America was surprised at the virulence of the Taliban attack” (ibid) which began in 2005. They started an offensive at the national level in order to spread their influence. After they spread their influence, the Taliban judges have also started to administer sharia-based judgments (Collins 2011: 77). The citizens of Afghanistan did not love the Taliban but they had no choice other than respecting their rules, because of the insecurity which was created, they were hesitant in acting against them.

Three years later, after the war from Iraq began to diminish, the United States of America was able to focus more on Afghanistan. Furthermore, “the Obama administration redoubled U.S efforts” (Collins 2011: 3) and it launched drone attacks against insurgents and terrorists. At the same time, the Taliban kept recruiting new members and building training bases. Moreover, they continued to spread their influence and the fighting`s came closer to Kabul.

They have launched a series of attacks inside Kabul which included “an attempt on President Karzai`s life, during a military parade in Kabul” (Stenersen 2010: 25). The attack took place on 24 April 2008 and three people were killed. In 2008, President Barack Obama, made a declaration in which he stated that he does not want to support “an endless war in Afghanistan” (Collins 2011: 2). He also stated his intention to start the withdrawal of the American forces in the summer of 2011.

Starting from 2010, the United States of America increased the number of soldiers deployed in Afghanistan. To be more specific, by the summer of 2010 there were “more than two U.S Soldiers in Afghanistan for every one in Iraq” (Collins 2011: 80). This increasing in the number of troops in Afghanistan was meant to build the Afghanistan`s Government confidence that they can cope with the different situations which might come. Taking all of these into consideration, the President Barack Obama, announced in June 2011 that he will withdraw the troops from Afghanistan. As a result, the coalition will start to transfer their responsibilities for security in certain areas to the government of Afghanistan. This represented also a transition to the independence of the Afghan government in security, govern and development.

As for the Taliban, starting from 2013, they have intensified their attacks and they were making progress in east and south due to the troops withdrawal. The Afghan army could not resist to these attacks without the help of the coalition. The scale of their advance was mainly due to the low number of troops which remained in Afghanistan. Although the Afghan troops were not prepared to stand against the Taliban, the coalition kept its plan to withdraw. Therefore, by the end of 2014, the International Security Assistance Force has ended its mission and the transition process was completed (NATO – ISAF`S mission in Afghanistan 2001-2014, 2015). On the first of January 2015, a new non-combat mission was launched named “Resolute Support” in order to provide “further training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security forces and institutions” so they resist the Taliban (ibid).

Even now, three years after the withdrawal of the troops, the situation does not seem to come to an end. In 2016, insecurity rose significantly “all across Afghanistan, in particular in the northern and southern parts of the country” (Ahmadzai 2016). The Taliban recaptured the capital of Kunduz province, which the government forces recaptured back but only after severe fighting`s. Moreover, they have not limited themselves only to Kunduz, they have also “expanded their insurgent activities” (ibid) across three more provinces in the north. To go further, Helmand province which is one of the “most contested regions between the government and the Taliban” (ibid) experienced intense fighting`s which escalated into bloody battles. Many Afghans are leaving the country because they witness the situation of the security which is heavily deteriorating.

4.1.2 Afghan Childhood

Childhood represents one of the most important periods in our lives, thus being an influential factor for the human development. Ting and Chui stated that “as the wheel of life turns, people pick up new social roles and face a new reality. But however important these life events are in modifying our value orientation, by no means do they erase the influence of childhood experience” (Tin, Chui 2000: 34). Furthermore, according to them, a family social and economic background keeps its importance even when we try to control the outcomes of the education, for example, when we marry and it also maintains its importance besides our occupational status or income. In other words, our experiences from childhood will always be an important thing in our lives no matter our status.

Afghanistan`s years of “civil and social unrest, dislocation, foreign intervention and war” (Brodsky 2014: 51) have severely influenced the childhood experiences of Afghan children. Every experience from our childhood is crucial in the development of our “psychological, cognitive and behavioral abilities” (ibid). Moreover, all these actions put their mark on the Afghan people as individuals, but also as a collective, on their memories as a population.

Most of the Afghan children did not know what childhood is during the period of conflicts and nowadays, the situation still has not changed. Most of them, who are now adults, when thinking about their childhood, they remember that they were living under rockets attacks, traumas caused by the conflicts, war, Taliban regime but also poverty. Moreover, because of the conflicts and the harsh conditions they had to endure, a lot of people lost their loved ones.

During the war, a lot of Afghan people were forced to flee to Pakistan. In Pakistan, they had to endure harsh living conditions, as they were living in refugee camps. This is the reason why, some of them decided to return back to their country. Some of them, who are now grownups, recollect the rockets that were launched on the civilians` homes. They remember their childhood as being horrible and furthermore, a man remembers that “life under the Taliban was worse and that growing up in Kabul was dangerous” (Kator-Mubarez 2014: 39).

The conditions were harsh, a lot of people remember growing up in impoverished living conditions, barely struggling to survive. For example, a woman who is now in her seventies, said that she “don`t really remember having a childhood” (Kator-Mubarez 2014: 43). She goes further

by saying that, the conditions were so hard that, there was no guarantee that children “would survive to adulthood” (Kator-Mubarez 2014: 44) and therefore, parents tried to have as many children as they could, in the hope that maybe some of them would survive through the period of childhood.

For some of them, childhood brings back painful memories. When asked about her childhood, a woman from Herat told that, when the Soviets invaded the country she had to drop out of school as she was arrested for treason. In prison, all her “fingernails and toenails were ripped out and she was constantly given electrical shocks” (Kator-Mubarez 2014: 45), in order to make her to confess her “crime of treason” (ibid). After this unimaginable experience, she remained with traumas but she also suffered from “severe migraines” (ibid).

I have written this chapter because I have tried to offer an insight of the life of the Afghan people. I wanted to create a picture of the hard situation that these people had to endure, sometimes their lives being at stake. Furthermore, I wanted to create a better understanding of what childhood meant for these people since 1839, when the first Anglo-Afghan war started and up to day.

As Jennifer Heath stated: “war is not healthy for children and other living things” (Heath 2014: 1). For these people, the situation is awful and “the country has been ravaged” (Goodson 2001: 97) by the war. The income has declined due to so many years of war, and a lot of families have lost their homes, their lands, animals or even jobs. Many of them have remained with disabilities because of the land mines that have remained on the ground after the Soviet war.

Furthermore, besides all these problems, the education system has been disrupted and children “grew up in refugee camps and mine fields” (Goodson 2001: 98), rather than in real homes. As a consequence, they did not have the chance to a proper education, but instead they had to find the means to survive. The system of education was not the only one disrupted, the transportation and the communication systems had problems too and as a result it “further deepened the existing social problems” (Goodson 2001: 97).

That is to say “no Afghan under thirty-five years old has ever known peace in their country” (Heath: 1). Those people had to endure “poverty, social inequality, invasion, civil war, occupation” (ibid), they had to flee away from their country or they were internally displaced, they did not know how is it to live in peace or to have a normal childhood. Sadly, nowadays, the situation has

not changed much. There is still a high number of children who do not know what childhood means as many of them have to endure the burden of work.

4.2 Child according to law

One might ask when does the childhood end. When does a child stop being a child and instead becomes a grown up? When does he start on taking responsibilities and decisions that might change his life? Therefore, in this chapter I will provide a brief understanding of what a child means according to the International and Afghanistan laws.

4.2.1 Child according to the International Law

According to the first Article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child from 1989, a child means “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (United Nations General Assembly 20 November 1989). Furthermore, the Convention emphasizes the importance of following the best interests of the child and it also states that a child should be ensured with “protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being” (ibid). Moreover, a child has the right to be cared by his parents and he shall not be separated from his parents if he does not want to.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines the word child as “a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger” (Eastern Caribbean UNICEF). Even though it states that countries can change the legal age, The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is the monitoring body of the Convention, “has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18” (ibid) and also to strengthen the level of protection offered for children under the age of 18.

Furthermore, this Convention should be applied to all children “whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from” (ibid). According to this Convention, it is not important where the children live, what their mother tongue is, what their parents work, what their culture is or if they are rich or poor. Children should not be “treated unfairly on any basis” (ibid). Moreover, the Convention clearly states that while making a decision, an adult should think how this decision might affect his child.

Another important point is the education, meaning that all children have the right to education and the primary education should be free. Child Labour is also discussed into the Convention. It states that children should be protected by the governments of the countries in which they live from work, especially if the respective is “dangerous or might harm their health or their education” (ibid). However, they are allowed to work in the sense of helping their parents but in ways that are safe for their age. Therefore, the work they perform should not jeopardize in any way their rights “including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play” (ibid).

In 2016, the importance of the Children`s Right to Play has been brought into discussion. Play is seen as an important part in the development of a child. It is described as a “form of everyday participation, interwoven into the cultural, social, and physical fabric of everyday life” (OHCHR 2016: Children`s Right to Play and the Environment). Through play, children can establish different social relations which might help them in their future life as adults but it also helps them to cope with stress and it can be seen as a positive “impact on children`s sense of well-being” (ibid). The absence of play, has a negative impact on every child, regardless the place where they live or the living conditions.

4.2.2 Child according to Afghanistan law

According to the Civil Law of the Republic of Afghanistan, a person is considered to be a child until the age of 18. After he turns 18 years-old, the age “shall be recognized as having full legal personality in business transactions” (Asian LII Afghan Laws). Furthermore, according to the Constitution of Afghanistan, family is an important pillar of the society. Therefore, the state should adopt any necessary means to ensure both the “physical and spiritual health of the family, especially of the child” (The Constitution of Afghanistan January 26, 2004).

Afghanistan has signed the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1990 and ratified it in 1994, thus being a state party to this Convention. Therefore, in Afghanistan forced labour is forbidden and Article Forty-Nine from The Constitution of Afghanistan clearly states that “forced labour on children shall not be allowed” (ibid).

The Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled has prepared in 2004 a National Strategy for Children at ‘at-risk’. The most important goal of this Strategy was to create a Nation where “Children can reach their full potential free from abuse, exploitation or violence” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, 2004: 5). This goal would enable children to fully participate as citizens of Afghanistan (ibid).

The aim of this Plan is to protect all Afghan children. It emphasizes the importance of safety and the well-being of children and it also states that their protection and “the support of families is everyone’s responsibility” (ibid). This National Plan highlights the rights of vulnerable children in order to help them “to achieve their full potential” (ibid) but also to escape from exploitation and violence. According to this Plan, a large number of children are considered to be at-risk or vulnerable and among the groups of children who have been identified at-risk are also included “Street Children, working and street working children, children deprived of parental care, children experiencing abuse or kidnapped children” (ibid).

The Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled has also launched in 2013 a National Strategy for Street Working Children. According to this Strategy, children are entitled to the right of expressing freely on matters that might affect their lives and they should be provided with “the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Martyrs and

Disabled, 2013: 10). Moreover, the parents are responsible for the development of the child and their main concern should be the interest of the child. On its turn, the government should ensure “the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of the children” (ibid).

The main aim of this National Strategy is to “influence Afghan society’s perception of children and childhood” (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, 2013: 14). In this way, they are trying to make child labour unacceptable in the eyes of the society and instead, to transform the education into a universal norm that is accepted by every member of the Afghan society.

According to this Strategy, it is the Government’s duty to inspire respect for the rights of the child and a “sense of responsibility for children into all professions and individuals who come into contact with children through their work” (ibid). It is also the obligations and responsibility of the professionals such as “police officers, teachers, judges and religious workers” (ibid) to raise awareness regarding the rights of the children.

There does not exist a “comprehensive Children’s Act in the Afghan law or national strategy” (Lexow 2011: 23) which might cope with the forms of violence experienced by the Afghan children. Both the Children’s Rights Consortium and UNICEF are calling for a comprehensive Act dedicated to Children which would be incorporated into the Afghan law, because the current legal obligations with regard to children are spread through ministries “with little coordination and often contradictory in form” (ibid).

4.3 Child Labour

Nowadays, many children embrace the idea of working thus, welcoming every opportunity they have to work. Many of them see this opportunity as a genuine factor in their own development and even parents see it as “part and parcel of everyday existence” (Lieten 2005: 9) of their children. Furthermore, a lot of children consider that work in this stage of their life is “the rite of passage to adulthood” (James et al., 1998: 108) thus, giving them the chance to prepare for their lives as adults when they will have to be productive members of the society in which they live in.

However, not all kinds of work that children perform are considered to be something positive. Some work tasks are difficult, even hazardous and it can be “mentally, physically socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children” (International Labour Organization: What is child labour). These types of work are generally known as child labour.

Child labour is considered to be a type of work that “deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and that it is harmful to physical and mental development” (ibid). This type of work takes away from the children the chance to have a proper education by making them to “leave school prematurely” (ibid) although, in some cases it may be able for a child to combine school with “excessively long and heavy work” (ibid).

In some cases, child labour can lead to “children being enslaved” (ibid), working and sleeping in “conditions designed to minimize outside contact” (James et al., 1998: 109) and being restricted to talk to their families. Furthermore, the work which they have to perform is considered to be extremely dangerous for their health and through it, they can be “exposed to serious hazard and illnesses” (International Labour Organization: What is child labour).

“Children have always worked” (United Nations Children’s Fund 1986), whether it is in the rural areas or in the cities, children “everywhere carry water or care for their younger brothers and sisters” (ibid). It is true that children had been “servants and apprentices throughout most of human history” (History: Child Labour) but, child labour had become extremely dangerous with children often working in factories for long hours and being very low paid. In the past, children were used because of their small size which allowed them to work in “small spaces in factories or mines where adults couldn’t fit” (ibid) also, another advantage was that they were perfect workers

as they could easily be managed or controlled.

Furthermore, in colonial America for example, “child labour was not a subject of controversy” (ibid) because it was considered that every child should take part in the agricultural and handicraft economy. It is important to mention that, they were not working only at their parents` farm but they were also hired out to work at other farmers. Moreover, boys were starting to work “between ages ten and fourteen” (ibid). On the other hand, in India, existed child labour too but, under the form of enslavement such as bonded labour. In this case, the debts accumulated by a family had “to be paid off by labour in industrial enterprises” (James et al., 1998: 108). In most of the cases, children had to work within the brick-making industry until the debts were considered to be paid off. However, sometimes the debt repayment became “an almost impossible task and the debt was transferred to the child “(ibid) who had to spend maybe his entire life in order to pay the respective debt.

Dogramaci stated that: “children are highly visible...not only at the market place but at almost every street corner; from shoe shine boys to newspapers hawkers, from cigarette vendors and all manner of peddlers to messenger boys, from waiters in virtually every restaurant and coffee house, to helpers in all sorts of shops and establishment” (Dogramaci cited in James et al., 1998: 104). According to James et al., in the 1980`s, in Egypt, the tourist authorities, had a picture on their promotional literature, which was meant to promote their country, the only problem was that this picture depicted the image of a “child picking cotton” (James et al., 1998: 104).

In United Kingdom, children could be seen performing different types of jobs “from milk, newspaper and other deliveries to table waiting” (James et al., 1998: 113). Although these types of jobs may seem not too harmful for a child, we should be aware that much of this work is performed illegally. Due its illegal character, it does not offer health protection which means that, there are no regulations. For example, while an adult who worked as a postman was allowed to carry a limited amount of weight, children did not have such limits (James et al., 1998: 114). According to James et al., the boys and girls who were delivering newspapers “have been found to be carrying much heavier loads” (ibid) than adults did.

Children started to have more sentimental value and this change is linked with the social changes which took place in “Western Europe and North America during the nineteenth and twentieth century” (James et al., 1998: 115). There were changes at the economical level, were the

international scope took the place of the local and national ones. The agricultural production was transformed into “industrial and service economies” (ibid) and the manual labour was replaced with the non-manual one. Changes took place at the family level too. Hence, the adults started to have more economical value, while children`s economical value was lost and schoolwork was seen as the only work children should perform. Furthermore, there were introduced new types of machineries which were meant to replace the tasks done by children and the “semiskilled adults became necessary for the most efficient use of the equipment” (History: Child Labour). Moreover, the new types of jobs required an educated workforce in order to handle the machineries.

Even though efforts were made to eliminate child labour, it still represents a problem. As Morrow stated: “the social construction of childhood which is a period marked by dependency and an absence of responsibility [that] prevents us from knowing about those cases of children working and taking responsibility. An analysis of children`s everyday lives outside school reveals that children have continued to work” (Morrow cited in James et al., 1998: 115). According to Morrow, even though child labour was substantially eliminated, children still work but the difference is that, the work performed by them has been made hidden into the concept of the child who grows up within a nuclear family and who is loved, dependent and supported by his parents.

Despite the fact that, child labour was substantially eliminated, some children “continue to labour an excessive number of hours or hold prohibited jobs” (History: Child Labour). Nowadays, over “100 million children around the world work in hazardous conditions” (Human Rights Watch: Child Labour). They work in different sectors varying from agriculture to mining sector. They work in tobacco farms, where they are exposed to long hours of extreme heat, nicotine or even “toxic pesticides that can make them sick” (ibid). Other children work in gold mines, where they have to use toxic mercury in order “to process the gold, risking brain damage and other serious health conditions” (ibid). This is the case of Afghanistan where children are involved in all kinds of work activities.

4.3.1 Child labour in Afghanistan

“Child labour is an issue of growing concern in Afghanistan” (Sim 2009:1). Nowadays, in Afghanistan, “at least a quarter of Afghan children between ages 5 and 14” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 2) are engaged in different types of jobs. A lot of the Afghan children work in hazardous conditions which might affect their health meaning that, they can develop all kinds of illnesses, they can injure themselves and what is worse is that, they can even die.

In Afghanistan, most of the children who work, work for long hours with little pay or in some cases with no pay. They have to work in “the home-based carpet industry, as bonded labour in brick kilns, in the metal industry as tinsmiths and welders, in mines, in agriculture and on the streets as vendors, shoe shiners or beggars” (ibid).

The Afghanistan`s Labour Law sets the age of 18 as the minimum age allowed for employment. However, children aged between 15 and 17 are allowed to work too, but “less than 35 hours a week” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 2) and only if the respective job “represents a form of vocational training” (ibid). Furthermore, the job they choose to perform must not be harmful for their health. Also, it is important to mention that, under the Afghanistan`s Labour Law, children under the age of 14 are not allowed to work.

In 2010, Afghanistan has ratified the “International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No.182 on the Worst Form of Child Labour and the Convention no.138 on the Minimum Age of Employment” (ibid), these two Conventions being the most important International Conventions which are related to the child labour. However, despite the fact that, Afghanistan has ratified these Conventions and that the domestic law forbids children under the age of 14 to work, child labour is still a growing issue with 25 percent of the Afghan children between ages of 5 and 14 working.

These laws are generally ignored due to the “resistance of employers” (Zucchini 2014) and families. A lot of children end up as beggars, they walk among the vehicles in traffic and they beg for money or if they do not beg “they pester drivers to buy chewing gum, candy, maps, matches, scarves and toilet paper” (ibid). Sadly, some children search through garbage in order to find food or they “collect the trash to burn for fuel” (ibid).

In Afghanistan, children work for long hours facing a lot of health problems. For example, the children who work in the brick kilns industry, start the day at “4 a.m. and end it at nightfall” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 4) and while working they risk respiratory illnesses and heat stroke. A boy aged 15, working as a brick maker, stated that: “the point is, everyone works” (ibid). He and his siblings started to work at the age of five, that is when they start to work, no matter the health risks, every member of his family has to work.

Not all of the children who work in the brick kiln industry have the chance to go back home after a day of work. Within this industry, exist the concept of bonded labour. This means that, the child is constrained to work as a brick maker until an accumulated debt is repaid. These children work “in conditions of servitude” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 8) and it happens very often that the debt is passed on to the next generation. Sher Khan who is a brick kiln manager, told to the Human Rights Watch that: “all their lives, they’re out like that, working at the kilns... One who start brick making doesn’t do anything else” (ibid).

In Afghanistan, this kind of bonded labour can be found only in the brick-kilns industry and “each kiln may employ 10 to 30 families living on-site” (ibid). The fact that they live on the site, it enables them to keep their children working most of the time. They start to work once they turn five and it is exhausting for them, especially for the pre-adolescents who have to work” between 10 and 15 hours” (ibid) per day. A man who is working as a bonded labourer together with his sons who are aged “between 12 and 16” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 10), told to the Human Rights Watch that he and his sons “work every day of the week” (ibid) and that in the summer they work even more because they have to load trucks and in the summer, they come more often so they have to “load day and night, 24 hours” (ibid). Besides heat stroke and respiratory illnesses such as asthma or “silicosis due to the breathing in brick dust” (ibid), they can also experience malaria, which is “transmitted by mosquitoes breeding in stagnant water found near many brick kilns” (ibid).

The industry in which it can be found the highest percentage of working children, namely “93 percent” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 14), is the carpet industry. In this industry also, children begin working at the age of five. This work is home-based and this is the reason why there are more girl labourers than boys, working in carpet

weaving. The working day starts at 5 a.m. and it ends at nightfall and although the work they have to do in this industry is not seen as a physically demanding one, it is highly dangerous.

“The main weaving tool is a hook-blade, a long hook appended to the end of a knife” (ibid) and because the action of weaving has to be repetitive but also fast, children cut their hands. Even more worse is the fact that sometimes, the hook “catches their eyelid” (ibid), an injury which can take a month to heal. In some cases, the looms are placed in the same room where the family basically lives, meaning that, the children are exposed to wool dust for long periods of time. This is the reason why some of them “suffer persistent coughing” (ibid). While working, they have to sit in all kinds of uncomfortable postures in the front of the loom and over time it can cause them all kind of health problems such as “the carpel tunnel syndrome, neuralgia, swollen finger joints, eye strain and premature vision problems” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 16).

In the metalwork industry as well as the other industries, children start working between ages of 5 and 11. In the metalwork industry in Afghanistan, children can work as apprentices enabling them to make “gates, doors, water tankers and windows” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 18) and sometimes they even make decorative items such as cake trays. Mohammed Zulmai who own a metal shop, does not hire men in his shop, he prefers to hire children because in his own view “these boys have small hands, quick hands, for this delicate work. I train them, and they become experts” (Zucchini 2014).

Children who work in this industry are exposed to all kinds of danger such as: “vision problems, high noise levels, long working hours, heavy loads and unsafe equipment” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 18). Every child who works in this industry put his life at stake. Because it is performed illegally, protection measures are not taken into account, thus, these labourer children can develop severe burns from the unprotected welding or they can be exposed to too much sun as most of the work takes place outside.

Once they become teenagers, they have to perform “the full range of often hazardous task in metal work” (ibid) which means that, they have to use sharp metal cutters that normally were designed for adults to use it or they have to “weld metal parts together” (ibid). While performing these tasks, they can get severely injured. For example, a 13-years-old boy working in this industry,

told to the Human Rights Watch that he got a lot of cuts, but one time the sheet cut his leg and he “got a big tear” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 22).

Khair Mohammad Akhtarzada, who is the deputy governor of Samangan, stated that: “more than 1,000 of some 5,000-people working in mines are underage” (Azorda 2017). There are a lot of children, especially in the Dara-e Suf district of Samangan province who are working in coal mines - this district has “more than 500 coalmines” (ibid). They work for long hours in order to fill lorries with coal, risking all kinds of danger. For example, an interviewed child stated that he wakes up at one o`clock in the morning and that he stays in the mine “until 2 p.m. the next day so as to fill two lorries full of coal” (ibid). Not only that they have to work for long hours facing exhaustion, but they also have to endure the dust, the heat and other dangerous conditions as the mine can collapse at any time. Furthermore, when they walk inside the mine in order to dig, they have no safety equipment with the exception of a “small headlamp” (ibid) which is why they frequently broke their arms or legs.

Those mines are so dangerous that children get killed inside, a mine worker said that one time, while he was working, “the entrance to the mine collapsed and both boys 14 and 15 years of age were buried under piles of coals and died” (ibid) and then he went further, by saying that, from his experience, about 100 people are killed each year. Moreover, a private mine-owner claimed that: “one or two people get killed or wounded every two or three months” (ibid) inside those mines. These coalmines have devastating impacts on the health of children as they can develop respiratory illnesses such as asthma, they can break their bones, or the most devastating impact is that they can die trapped inside the mine.

Children also work in bakeries, as well as in the other industries, they wake up at 5 a.m. and they work until the night falls. They have to carry water from the public wells to the bakery, in order to bake “the flat loaves known as khasa and the round loaves called kamachi” (Zucchini 2014). After the flatbread is ready, they have to sell it and this cycle is repeating until dark, six days a week, or sometimes every day. Some of them, live inside the bakeries so, they do not have the chance to see their families, they only speak with them “about once a week” (ibid). Despite the hard conditions they have to endure, a bakery owner, who started by working in a bakery too, said that: “Young boys have always worked in the bakeries. That`s our tradition” (ibid).

“Thousands of Afghan children” (NDTV 2016) put their life at stake. They risk their health every day by working in all kind of dangerous industries. These jobs they have to perform expose them to high risks of different diseases, to all kinds of injuries and in some cases even to death. Not only that they might get physical injuries, but they also face “psychological damage” (Child Labour in Afghanistan,2008: 10). The worst part for their development is that some of them do not get the chance to go to school, as only half of the children who work attend school.

4.4 The Importance of Education

For an individual and for the society as a whole, education is crucial. Education is important for all of us, playing a significant role in our lives regardless of our nationality, race, sex, language, political views or age. Furthermore, education is “concerned with the development of the virtues of the mind” (Reid 1998: 321). In other words, it helps us to develop the “power of rational thought, intellectual autonomy” (ibid) and the capability of understanding different things. The idea of education involves more than just knowledge and understanding, it also helps us to develop and evolve from a physical, emotional and social perspective.

According to the Right to Education, education is a human right and “not a privilege” (Right to Education). This means that, the right to education is a right that everyone should enjoy. It is guaranteed for all people, without discrimination and the states are obliged to protect this right. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights which was adopted in 1948 has clearly stated in the Article 26 that: “everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Since the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, the “right to education has been widely recognized” (Right to Education). Therefore, it has been further developed and protected by a number of Conventions such as: The International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination against Women.

Education represents a fundamental characteristic not only for someone`s own personal development, but also for the social and economic one. For this reason, both the citizens of a society and the society as a whole can benefit from the right to education. Through it, it can be achieved a sustainable development that can also be used for the promotion of the society`s well-being.

Durkheim stated that education represents “the action exercised by the older generations upon those who are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to awaken and develop in the child those physical, intellectual and moral states which are required of him both by his society as a whole and by the milieu for which he is specially destined” (Durkheim cited in Bottomore 2010: 172). This means that the education should be aimed towards the development of children.

Education will help children to develop their personality and to discover their potential, but it also prepares them for their future life as adults, when they will participate in the society as grownups. Education will enable them to discover their abilities and passions, allowing them to find a job they like, which will further allow them to support their families. Moreover, even after they grow up they will continue to learn, because learning continues throughout our life.

Schools are an important tool in the educational process. Those institutions must respect the dignity of every child but also their right and desire to study, by “creating an environment of respect and tolerance in the classroom” (NESRI), by instilling self-confidence and by helping children to learn how to express themselves. Schools should prevent “practices and disciplinary policies that cause harm or humiliation to children” (ibid) and by preventing those practices, children could learn how to respect people.

Although education is a fundamental human right and every child is entitled to this right, yet millions of children do not get the chance to exercise their right. In other words, a lot of children are being deprived from the chance to a proper education.

4.4.1 The Education System in Afghanistan

The Constitution of Afghanistan states in the Article Seventeen that: “the state shall adopt necessary measures to foster education at all levels” (The Constitution of Afghanistan January 26, 2004), while in the Article Forty-Three, it states that: “Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan” (ibid). It goes further by stating that, it is the state’s obligation to design and implement programs in the educational field in order to “foster balanced education for women, improve education of nomads as well as eliminate illiteracy in the country” (ibid).

All Afghan citizens have the right to a free and equal education until they obtain their bachelor degree at the governmental institutions. In Afghanistan, the compulsory age for children to go to school is established “between six and fourteen years old” (UNICEF Child Notice 2015: 47). The education system consists of the “General Education, Community Based Education, a parallel system of Islamic Education, Technical and Vocational Education and the Teacher Training” (ibid).

In 2016, the budget allocated for education was “13%” (Policy Brief National Budget 2016: 2) of the entire national budget, while “90% of the budgeted amount goes to salaries, with 10% left to cover teacher training, infrastructure and learning materials” (UNICEF Child Notice 2015: 47). Furthermore, in 2016, the Ministry of Education, reported that the number of students enrolled in General Education Schools is “8.7 million of whom 5.2 million were boys and 3.5 girls” (Central Statistics Organization Afghanistan Statistical yearbook 2015-2016: 87).

In terms of schools, the Ministry of Education, reported that there were 16,800 schools in Afghanistan. The problem is that from this figure, only 8,544 schools have a building, while 7,037 have no buildings and 329 schools currently have the buildings under construction. The remaining 890 schools did not have any updated information regarding the infrastructure in the system (Ministry of Education EMIS- Building & Class Room Information 1394).

All these schools, lack qualified teachers, for example “only 32% of the teachers in the education system in Afghanistan meet the minimum requirement” (UNICEF South Asia) in order to be fully qualified as a teacher. As a consequence, a lot of schools are not able to provide a quality education to its students. Therefore, there exist “a need of capacity building for teacher” (UNICEF Child Notice 2015: 48).

Furthermore, there is a lack of female teachers in the schools of Afghanistan. For example, in 2016, the Ministry of Education reported that there were “125.241 male teachers and only 62.796 female teachers” (Central Statistics Organization Afghanistan Statistical yearbook 2015-2016: 89) in the General Education Schools. In Afghanistan, there are strong cultural beliefs and this is the reason why some of the “parents do not allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers” (UNICEF South Asia). Thus, the lack of female teachers may be a major disadvantage for the girls` enrolment.

What is more, is the fact that, “30% of schools” (ibid) do not have the necessary facilities. This means that, these schools do not have proper buildings that can be used, with “boundary walls” (ibid), the water it is not safe for drinking and they do not provide sanitation facilities (ibid). According to the Human Development Reports, in 2015, only “38 % of the population aged 15 and older” (UNDP Human Development Reports- Adult Literacy Rate) could read, write and understand. Also, in 2015, “22,2 % of the population aged 25 and older” (UNDP Human Development Reports- Population with at least some secondary education) has reached to the level of the secondary education. However, not all of them completed this level.

Despite some progresses that were made at the educational level, Afghanistan is still a country where a lot of children do not have access to education. According to UNICEF “40%” (UNICEF-One in four children in conflict zones are out of school 2016) of the children who have the age of schooling, are out of school. The conflicts that took place in Afghanistan over the time, deprived a high number of the “Afghan under-age children to go to school” (Bahrami 2016).

Due to insecurity and the lack of schools in some areas, children do not have the chance to a proper education. Attacks against schools and students still continues in Afghanistan, thus, risking the lives of both students and teachers. For example, in 2016, “more than 300 schools in Afghanistan have been destroyed in the past two months” (Theirworld 31,2016). Most of these schools were destroyed by the Taliban, as they declared war on education. Furthermore, after they have burned down a school in northern Jawzjan province, they have also warned “that the girls should not be allowed in the school again” (ibid). Also, a headmaster of a primary school for girls from the Baghlan province, declared that the Taliban closed the school and he was not able to re-open it again (Murphy). The most used type of attack against schools is “arson, where school

buildings, tents or inventory was burned” (UNESDOC Afghanistan National Education for All 2015: 12).

As a result of the violence, Afghanistan`s educational sector is considered to be “the least developed” (Bahrami 2016) in comparison with other countries. Education system is far away from modernization and this is the reason why the schools from Afghanistan use “outdated and inefficient methods of administration and teaching” (ibid). Also, there are schools where the teachers do not have the necessary skills needed for teaching and there are also schools where the teachers` “level of literacy is below twelve grade” (ibid).

There are a lot of children in Afghanistan who cannot read or write. The fact that they miss those basic skills, will affect their future as grownups. As the UNICEF Chief of Education, Jo Bourne, stated about the children who are unable to read or write, “they are at risk of losing their futures and missing out on the opportunity to contribute to their economies and societies when they reach adulthood” (UNICEF-One in four children in conflict zones are out of school 2016).

All those children who do not have the opportunity to go to school risk all kinds of danger, such as “abuses, exploitation” (ibid) and they are even exposed to the risk of being recruited as soldiers into armed groups. School can help them to build a better future for them and their families, it gives them a chance to a better a life. As Jo Bourne further declared, “schools equip children with the knowledge and skills they need to rebuild their communities once the conflict is over, and in the short-term it provides them with the stability and structure required to cope with the trauma they have experienced” (ibid). A proper schooling for children could be helpful in terms of long-term development of the country, but it also might help the Afghan people to achieve a better life.

5. Analysis

This chapter will be constructed upon the motives behind the decisions made by some Afghan families to send their children to work. These motives will be examined through the theoretical framework which will be applied to the data that I have gathered. The analysis will be divided into three subchapters. The first two subchapters examine a different motive, while the third one examines the dreams of the child labourers. I have chosen to divide the analysis into subchapters in order to provide a brief understanding of each motive, how each of these motives can undermine a child's future.

According to the Theory of Child Labour by James Challis and David Elliman, historically, children have always worked and what is more is that, they continue to work even today. According to their theory, child labour was not limited to a single geographical area, but instead it could be found everywhere around the world. Child workers existed in both rich and poor countries and they were performing different kind of jobs, even if it was a light form of work or dangerous jobs which might put their lives at stake.

What do you imagine when you think of the child workers? Through their theory, Challis and Elliman tried to offer a mental image of the words "child workers". That is to say, they are not depicting only just one image of a single worker, but instead they are trying to cover multiple geographical areas, to offer examples for more than just one country. For instance, child workers represented: "a small pallid nineteenth century chimney boy in England, medieval apprentices, gaunt young shepherd boys sleeping with their sheep among the hills of southern Italy, children of migrant families travelling north and south in the USA, harvesting successive crops, little girls working in textile factories in Morocco, a child looking after an all-night stall in a market place in South America or a robust western teenager pushing newspapers" (Challis, Elliman 1979: 1).

The idea of putting children to work "was first documented in the Medieval era when fathers had their children spin thread for them to weave on the loom" (Child labour during the British Industrial Revolution). Children were performing all kind of tasks which were critical to the economy of their family.

Children have always worked, particularly in farming. At first, families needed just help with their everyday chores and it was natural for children to help their parents, moreover, they “would naturally pass off work to their children” (Parr 2016). Child labour is a phenomenon that has existed everywhere in the world, being a global problem.

In “the late 1700`s and early 1800`s power-driven machines replaced hand labour” (A History of Child Labour) for most of the items which were manufactured. Factories started to spread everywhere, starting with “England and then in the United States of America” (ibid). Once with these factories, the owners, discovered a new source of labour who “could be hired more cheaply” (ibid), and this source of labour was made up of children. They were preferred because they were paid low and what is more is that, to operate the “power-driven machines it did not require adult strength” (ibid).

The work in factories was harder than the one in farming. They were working from 12 to 18 hours per day, “6 days a week, to earn a dollar” (ibid). Most of the workers were starting to work before turning the age of 7. In the past, the factories were “often damp, dark and dirt” (ibid). Besides the factories, they were also working in coal mines, where they had to work underground in even harder conditions. Those children did not know how it is to have spare time, to play, to go to school, or just to rest and most of the times “they became ill” (ibid).

By 1810, “about 2 million school-age children were working 50 to 70 hours” (ibid) per week and most of them were coming from families that were poor. If parents could not support their children then, they would sometimes send them to “a mill or factory owner” (ibid). They were working in hard conditions, which was severely affecting their health and they were paid only “10-20 percent of an adult`s wage” (Buchheit 2017).

Even though the work was hard, children had no chance to escape, as the factories were using different methods to prevent the children from running. For instance, a glass factory, which was located in Massachusetts “was surrounded by barbed wire to keep the young imps inside” (ibid). Children were doing dangerous jobs such as “carrying hot glass, working in coal mines, hauling heavy loads, and working in textile mills” (Room 2012). Those children had no alternative, but work, since “their families depended on the income” (Buchheit 2017) that they were producing.

Although child labour has existed throughout history, due to the difficult conditions under which children have to work, the issue has become a hot topic for the international attention. In Afghanistan, child labour has become “an issue of growing concern” (Sim 2009:1).

As mentioned in the Child Labour in Afghanistan subchapter, under the Afghan law, children aged between 15 and 17 are allowed to work, but only if they work less than 35 hours per week and only if the job “represents a form of vocational training” (Human Rights Watch: Hazardous Child Labour in Afghanistan July 2016: 2). Furthermore, the job must not be harmful for their health in any way. Moreover, according to the Afghanistan`s Labour Law, children aged 14 or below, are not allowed to work, any form of labour for them is considered to be illegal.

However, although these legal remedies do exist, they are not implemented on the ground, as thousands of children work. Most of the times they work “in circumstances that are harmful for their health and put their lives in danger” (Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan). For instance, Sayes Maroof Sadat, who is a Principal at a High School in Kabul told that, several years ago he had a student who worked as a mechanic and that one day *“he was under a car when the jack gave way and he was killed instantly. These incidents happen, these accidents”* (ibid).

Ali Eftekhari, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Labour of the Government of Afghanistan, stated that: *“Children under the age of 18 are forced to work [...] and that a more serious problem is the lack of awareness among the people about the rights of children”* (ibid). There are different motives when thinking about why do all these Afghan children work. As this thesis focuses on the Afghan child workers, I will analyze the motives behind the families` decision of sending their children to work.

5.1 The Education System

“When someone doesn’t have education and knowledge they don’t know themselves as a human being; they don’t treat others as human beings; they don’t have human values”

(an Afghan boy named Ali interviewed by Anne E. Brodsky in Heath,Zahedi 2014: 56).

As mentioned in the Education System in Afghanistan subchapter, The Constitution of Afghanistan states that: “the state shall adopt necessary measures to foster education at all level” (The Constitution of Afghanistan January 26, 2004). Furthermore, the right to education is a right that everyone should enjoy. To go further, in Afghanistan the compulsory age for children to go to school was established between the ages of six and fourteen.

However, although all these legal remedies do exist in The Constitution of Afghanistan, they are not implemented on the ground. That is to say, “40% of primary and lower secondary age children are not accessing an education” (UNICEF-One in four children in conflict zones are out of school 2016). In Afghanistan, the Education System is not able to offer the necessary facilities, which definitely play an important role in helping the Afghan children to obtain a proper education.

The Education System is regulated by norms, but these are not implemented and most of the schools do not offer the basic facilities for example, boundary walls, sanitation facilities or drinkable water. Besides all these problems which are linked with the facilities that the schools do not provide, teachers are another problem. There exist schools where they do not have the necessary skills for teaching and as a result, children do not have what to learn from them. The deficiencies in facilities, supplies and the teachers` level of literacy and training, seriously undermine the value of the schools.

According to the The Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency, the quality of the school plays an important role when it comes to deciding whether to send children to school or to work. Parents, usually ask themselves whether it is better to send their children to school or to work. Households, most of the times, “engage in a careful analysis” (Sim 2014: 129) of the benefits of schools, versus the benefits of work. Based on this analysis, they decide whether to send them to school, or to send them to work in order achieve a skill. As the theory states, before making the decision to send their children to work, parents evaluate the quality of the school by

analyzing some characteristics and if the outcomes from the educational process are not satisfactory enough “to compensate families for the lost income of their children” (Brown et al., 2003:198) then, parents will choose child labour.

That is to say, when engaging in this so-called analysis, the parents evaluate the value of the school. Meaning that, they take into consideration the quality of the school and what future their children might have if they spend their time in school. Children and parents often complain about the fact that the Education System do not offer them the necessary facilities, or that the classrooms are overcrowded.

One of the features that determine the overall quality of the school are the teachers. These people from which children should learn a lot of useful things, which will help them throughout their educational process, are not qualified, they are not motivated and sometimes they are even abusive. As a consequence, parents “expressed frustration over poor learning outcomes” (Sim 2014: 129). For instance, when asked about whether she preferred to send her child to school or to work, a mother from Herat, expressed herself that: “*My daughter has studied up to fourth grade, but she still can't read and write, so what was the point of going to school?*” (ibid). Not only the mother considered that there is no point in wasting time in school, since her daughter does not learn anything useful, but also the girl expressed herself “the desire to drop out of school to weave carpets with her mother” (ibid). The fact that children do not learn anything in school, at least how to write or read, seriously “undermine the value of the time that children spend in schools” (Basu et al., 2003: 208), thus making both children and parents to prefer work instead of studying. In this case, the future of the girl, is influenced by the teachers who are unable to teach her the basic pillars of education, such as writing or reading. As the theory states, the low return to education, makes the parents to consider the value of the time spent in school as unsatisfactory, thus resulting in the parents` decision to withdraw the child from school and instead to put her to work.

Other feature that determines the overall quality of a school is the security. When living in an insecure country, it is important for the schools to provide the necessary security means in order to protect its students. When analyzing whether to send their children to school or to work, parents consider not only the quality of the education that the children are receiving in schools, but also the safety of their children. Meaning that, they take into account if their children will be safe while studying or not. When asked about school attendance, Mohammed Azim Karbalai, stated that:

“Many parents don’t send their children to school because they see some danger, some problem. It’s circular... Three components are very important: 1. security, 2. Teachers, 3. buildings. All are impacted by security” (Director of Planning Department, Ministry of Education, Kabul, December 15, 2005 interviewed by Human Rights Watch: Lessons in Terror, 2006).

As the theory assumes, a low return to education occurs “if schools are far away, inadequately staffed, lack educational supplies and materials, etc.” (Brown et al., 2003:198). In Afghanistan, there are a lot of cases in which the schools are far away from children’s houses, so they have to walk long distances in order to get to school. Some of the families prefer not to let their children to go to school due to security reasons, as a parent stated: *“We don’t like to send our kids to these schools for security reasons: kidnapping and murders and because of the heat during the hot seasons-it’s too hard to walk”* (Human Rights Watch: Lessons in Terror, 2006).

However, in the areas where schools exist, parents find them to be unsafe or inadequate. There are many areas in which the teaching hours are held in “tents, private homes, donated structures, mosques, and outside” (ibid). For instance, a teacher from Kandahar, more exactly in the Nesh district, told to the Human Rights Watch that there are no proper schools and that, most of the schools are *“mobile, they have no set place, no tent. They are held under trees, in mosques wherever we can. The teachers move the blackboards and equipment, and the students receive some supplies from the Ministry of Education and UNICEF”* (ibid).

The Afghan parents consider that safety is the most important thing. Therefore, they “place greater importance on secure buildings” (ibid). This means that, parents will not let their children to go to school if the teaching lessons take place in tents, in open air schools, or in schools that do not have surrounding walls. Families are not willing to send their children to a school that does not provide safety. As Director Mohammed Azim Karbalai stated: *“In Afghanistan the main demand from families is a safe environment inside schools”* (ibid), which means that, if schools do not have proper buildings which might protect their children, then, parents do not allow their children to go to school and study.

Parents are afraid of the safety of their children. They are afraid that their children might get hurt since the Education System is not able to provide proper buildings, where they could study. For example, a man interviewed by the Human Rights Watch told them that: *“once during the last year when the school didn’t have any building and the students were studying under tents,*

the school was burned. They burned all the tents and carpets and blackboards” (ibid). As a consequence, once the attacks occur, parents refuse to allow their children to go to school, unless the school has a proper building, with bounding walls and all the necessary facilities. They do not want to put their children in danger by sending them to a school that do not dispose of proper and secure buildings.

Human Rights Watch tried to find out the sources of a particular attack or the cause, but unfortunately, they were not able to determine these things. However, according to them, many of the attacks that took place against schools were carried out by the Taliban forces or by the groups which are “allied with the Taliban, such as the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami who were previously bitter rivals of the Taliban” (ibid). However, even though many of the attacks are carried out by the Taliban, there are also other sources, such as “the involvement of militias, of local warlords – for instance in Wardak province, where forces loyal to the warlord Abdul Rabb al Rasul Sayyaf hold sway – or criminal groups – such as those controlling smuggling routes in Kandahar and Helmand provinces” (ibid).

There are different motives behind these attacks. Sometimes, the attacks took place motivated by the opposition against education in general, or against the girls’ education, which is a more specific reason. In other cases, the attacks against schools occur because these schools are a “symbol of the government” (ibid) and if the schools are not run by the government, they are run by the different International Nongovernmental Organizations which represent “the work of foreigners” (ibid). There are also a few cases when these attacks reflect “local grievances and rivalries” (ibid). These groups, which are opposed to the authority of the central government of Afghanistan are attacking schools, so as to “instill terror in ordinary Afghans” (ibid). By doing this, they will make the ordinary Afghans to believe that the government is not able to protect them and thus, they will “turn them away from the central government” (ibid).

The features that determine the quality of the Education System, such as: far away schools, teachers who are not qualified, lack of the basic facilities and security - which represents a demand of the Afghan parents - play an important role, as the theory also states, in parents` assessment of the value of the school. Based on the overall quality of the school, which in the Afghanistan`s case is determined to be one of a poor quality, the parents decide that they should not send their children to school because, according to the theory the parents consider that the Education System is not

satisfactory enough “to compensate families for the lost income of their children” (Brown et al., 2003:198) while they were in school.

Due to the poor quality of the school, children will not be able to achieve a high-paid employment once they have finished their studies and as result parents decide not to send them to school, but still, they need to learn something in order to deal with the life as an adult. Therefore, they send them to work, in order to learn an useful skill, which will help them to support their families, later in life. Even if their children will not be educated, they will still know different skills, as one grandfather stated: *“It is good to even learn how to repair shoes because then you can sit in the street and do that work and earn 20 or 30 Afghanis to buy food”* (Sim 2014: 130).

Taking into consideration the fact that, going to school does not bring any advantage, parents see in their children`s opportunity to work, a better way for them to learn skills, because it is better to learn something than not learning anything. For instance, a boy from Badakhshan, aged fourteen, who does not go to school but instead “gathers and sells firewood” (ibid) stated that: *“I know how to plow the land, sow the seeds, harvest... when my father is not at home, I am the one responsible for my household. And when there is something happening in the village, I`m invited to the meeting where the elders make decisions”* (ibid). Learning a skill, instead of going to school, make children responsible, which for some of the parents represents an important outcome resulted from the fact that children are working

In these cases, where the education is considered to be of poor quality, child labour is seen as a means “of transition from childhood to adulthood” (Sim 2014: 131), where children learn important life skills, which are necessary for them in order to deal with their life as “successful adults” (ibid). Due to the poor quality of school, a lot of children do not get the chance to be educated, therefore, their parents consider that it is important for them to go to work in order to learn different skills. As one grandfather from Herat, pointed out: *“if a person can sit in the street and repair shoes, he is not educated, but he can support his family”* (Sim 2014: 130).

However, there are some parents who decide that it is better for their children to go to school and have an education. A case-study village from Badakhshan, made by Amanda Sim, showed that most of the families consider that the school offers a “high-quality education” (Sim 2014: 129). The perception that the quality of the school is high, had an impressive effect. Meaning that, “almost all the children in the village were attending school on a regular basis” (ibid). This

case-study strengthens the fact that the quality of the school is a necessity and that it plays an important role when it comes to deciding whether to send their children to school or to work.

Furthermore, Palwasha Sabori, the Director of Save children in Afghanistan, stated in 2014 that: *“Educational facilities should be given priority and must be properly monitored to make sure that children are attending school on a regular basis [...] to promote the enrollment of children into schools so they can use and reach their full potential and stay out off the streets and exposure to bad influences”* (UNAMA Multimedia).

To conclude, the low quality of the Education System is one of the motives behind the Afghan parents` decision of sending their children to work. The low quality of the Education System, makes parents to decide that it will be better for their children to learn a useful skill by working, as they consider that studying in the Afghan Education System will not “compensate families for the lost income of their children” (Brown et al., 2003:198). Therefore, it can be said that the Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency was applied.

5.2 The Economic Situation

“Children under the age of 18 are forced to work because of poverty and unemployment [of their parents]. 36% of the population in Afghanistan lives under the poverty line. A more serious problem is the lack of awareness among the people about the rights of children”

(Ali Eftekhari, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Labour of the Government of Afghanistan for Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan).

“About a quarter of all Afghan children” (ibid) are involved in some kind of child labour. They work as carpet weavers on looms at home, in the metal industry, as shoe shiners or even as street workers. Some of them perform what is called bonded labour, in the industry of brick kilns. They work for long hours, under circumstances which are hard to imagine, doing all kind of tasks which are dangerous for their health or it could even lead to their death.

In Afghanistan, a lot of families face economic insecurity and they struggle to meet their basic needs. This is due to “scarce and irregular employment, low earnings, high living costs and debt” (Sim 2014: 128). In such cases, child labour represents a strategy which is being used by those families in order to increase their income. As the Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency states: “when the parent’s initial endowment is low relative to their child’s future income (whether or not they are educated), parents would like to engage in consumption smoothing” (Basu et al., 2003: 198). In other words, parents “would like to borrow against the future wealth” (ibid) of the family in order to “increase current consumption while lowering future consumption” (ibid). The theory further states that, the “only option that parents have” (ibid) in order to increase their income, is to send their children to work at the expense of the children’s future.

In Afghanistan, children play an important economic role in their families. The little money that parents earn, is not enough to sustain the whole family and, as a result, they put their children to work. They are taking this decision, driven by the desire to increase their present income, even though this will interfere with their children’s future. As an Afghan father stated: *“I don’t have my own house, I pay 6,500 Afs per month as rent of the house. My sons are obliged to support me.*

The way we live is not called life. We do something not to die” (ARIA Channel Afghan Child Labour Documentary).

Due to the low income that parents earn, children are seen as another source of income. They have to work from an early age if they want to survive. When asked about why is he working, a boy said that: *“Our economic situation at home is so bad, my father makes about 150 or 200 Afs per day. My elder brother works too. If I miss working for only one day, then we won’t have anything to eat”* (ibid). In such cases, parents rely on the economic contribution of their children in order to meet their basic needs such as food. This example, illustrates an image of how important is the role of the children when it comes to supporting their families. In such cases, the little money that children earn, is saving the family from starvation, thus, emphasizing the inability of the parents to ensure the basic needs for their families. Without the children’s income, the families would not manage to procure their basic needs which will ensure their survival for another day.

There are a lot of families in Afghanistan who resort to child labour, as this is their only way to survive from one day to the next one. For instance, a young worker stated that: *“I work because I need to earn money for my family”* while others claimed that: *“I am poor. That’s why I have to work”*; *“We have a lot of financial problems so we came down to the streets to work and make a living for all of us”* (UNAMA Multimedia). Due to the harsh economic situation, children are seen as a means of ensuring the necessary income which will allow the family at least, to make end meets. Children know how hard the economic situation is, therefore, they got used to working, because their salary represents an important part of the families’ income. As the theory states, in such cases, parents decide to “borrow against the future wealth” (Brown et al., 2003:198) of the family, by engaging in child labour in order to survive.

All these children do not know how is it to have spare time, as they work from 5 a.m. until night. For example, a 12-years-old boy who works as a carpet weaver told that: *“I start at 5 in the morning and work until 6 at night”* (Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan). Parents sacrifice their children’s childhood so as to increase their income. That is to say, children need to work in order to help their families to obtain the necessary means to survive. When asked about child labour, Shafiullah, an Afghan parent stated that: *“By the grace of God, I have 11 children [...] When they turn five, they start working. That’s when they start. The point is everyone works”* (ibid). Although, it is forbidden for children under 14 to work, in some

cases, the families are so poor that, as mentioned in the theory, sending their children to work is their only way to increase the income of the family.

There are cases in which families have accumulated a debt and therefore, it is the duty of their children to help them to pay off the respective debt. In these cases, too, the only option for the families to increase their income and pay off the debt, is to put their children to work. Therefore, as the researcher Ahmad Shuja stated, “children have absolutely no choice but to work on the brick kiln” (ibid). For example, Shaaheed, an Afghan boy, who come from a family consisting of ten people, as he has four brothers and four sisters, told that, he has “*to work to earn for a living*” (ARIA Channel Afghan Child Labour Documentary) and he goes further by saying that his father “*borrowed 57,000 Afs and I have to work here in return. I can`t leave this place unless I return the whole amount. It`s been a very long time that I work here*” (ibid).

Families, put their children at work in order to help them to make ends meet. Families that take loans from the brick factories, need to repay these loans back, one way or another. As a result, the parents together with their children have to work in order to pay the loan but also to earn enough money to survive. These children spend their days by making bricks and they do not have any other choice but “to accept their fate” (Ghazi 2016). Due to the low income of the parents and due to the fact that they have accumulated a debt, the households turn to child labour, as a strategy of increasing their income. That is to say, in this industry, where children must help their parents to pay the loan, as soon as a child is able to walk, “they`re enlisted to work” (Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan).

The economic situation of the family can also be determined by the household composition. For instance, in the households where “the adult male is deceased or incapacitated by old age or illness” (Sim 2014: 12), it is more likely to engage in child labour in order to increase the income. In such cases, children have to work in order to “compensate for the lack of an adult male” (ibid) who should have been the income-earner.

“No mother wants their son to be like this. A mother would like her child to study and be a doctor”

(an Afghan mother interviewed by Wahabzada, July 16,2015).

There are a lot of cases in which families' resort to child labour as it is their only possibility to make ends meet. While it is true that, there are cases in which children work side by side with their parents in order to increase their income – when parents earn little money and they need extra money to pay for the basic needs, they engage in child labour – but there are also cases in which children are the only income-earners of the family, due to the household composition or due to their parents' health problems.

Usually, when the male-earner dies, children take on his responsibilities. An Afghan boy told to Jawad Wahabzada, who made a documentary about children who work in Afghanistan, that he used to go to school, but he went only until the fourth grade. He then goes further by saying how he started to work; *“I started working after my father's death”* (Wahabzada 2015). After which, his mother explains that: *“I used to work in someone's house, but since my backbones are displaced, I can no longer work [...] We don't have a head of the house or someone that could provide for us”* (ibid). In these cases, the income that the child earns is their only way to survive from one day to another. Even though, some parents might not like to see their children like this, they do not have any other option, but to send their children to work. Due to the fact that the boy's father passed away, and due to the fact that his mother is unemployed because of her health condition, we can say that, *“the household's survival is threatened by a period of unemployment”* (Brown et al., 2003:198) which makes the mother to engage in child labour as a means of survival, as it is mentioned in the theory. It is also important to mention that, there are many cases in which the children are the only breadwinners of the family, and in those cases *“the consumption profile of the family”* (ibid) will lower with the passing time, as the children are not able to study.

This is also the case of disabled parents. When parents cannot work, due to their health condition, then the responsibilities are taken by the children. Parents need money to meet their basic needs and, as they cannot work anymore, they put their children to work in order to sustain the household. For example, a mother explained their decision of putting her daughter to work by saying that: *“During the first civil war, a mine exploded under my husband. Since he has been disabled, we've been selling Bolani. My daughter used to be really shy, but now that God has brought this day, she has to work [...] If my husband was well, my daughter and I would be at home. Even now when I leave he cries. He tells me he feels terrible. I say, what can we do? We*

have no choice” (Wahabzada 2015). These households are too poor, not to engage in child labour, thus they choose to send their children to work in order to sustain the family.

The money earned by these children is vital for the households` survival. Most of these children who work, have accepted their fate, they understood that their work is essential and that they have no other option. For instance, a boy who works and who is the breadwinner of the family stated that: *“I felt that I am responsible for the family. If I don` t work, they don` t eat and if I work, they eat”* (ibid). Unfortunately, child labour remains the only option, even though this will affect their future.

In the Constitution of Afghanistan, it clearly states in the Article 54 that “Family is the fundamental pillar of the society, and shall be protected by the state” (The Constitution of Afghanistan January 26,2004). This means that, there will be taken all the necessary measures which will ensure that parents will not need to use child labour as a strategy, meaning that, they will get all the financial means to protect their children from the burden of work. Unfortunately, this is not implemented on the ground. When asked about the problem of child labour, Ali Eftekhari, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Labour stated that: *“Unfortunately, we don` t even have the minimum budget for social support programs. This is mostly because the national budget is spent on security and less on social issues such as vulnerable children. For example, if we prohibit children from working, we must at least have an alternative plan to support them [to say] for example, “you should not be working, we will support your family, either financially or by providing them jobs”. Unfortunately, we have a problem in this area”* (Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan).

To conclude, the Economic Situation of the families, represents another motive for engaging in child labour. That is to say, as the Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency states “parents would like to borrow against the future wealth” (Brown et al., 2003:198) of the family in order to “increase current consumption while lowering the consumption profile of the family” (ibid) with the passing time. Due to the Economic Situation of the family, which is influenced by unemployment, debts that need to be repaid, low earnings and due to the parents` health condition or household composition, children need to work in order to support their families. In this case, child labour represents, as the theory states, “a device from transferring income from

the future into the present” (ibid). Therefore, it can be said that the Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency was applied.

5.3 What do child labourers dream of?

About a quarter of the children of Afghanistan work. They work for long hours and under difficult circumstances and even though the work they do might cause them harm, they have no other option. Either because parents consider that it is better for them to work than to go to school, either because the income of the family is so low that they have to contribute too.

Even though most of these children understood that they have no other option but to work, this does not mean that, they want to do this for the rest of their lives. The main characteristic of the children is their innocence. So, one might ask, what do these innocent souls really want? What are their dreams?

They have accepted their fate, at least for the moment, but this does not mean that they do not desire something else for themselves. For instance, a 15-years-old brickmaker expressed himself by saying that: *“We want to go away from the brick kiln and go somewhere else and have a decent life. For my brother and sisters to go to school. We want to go to school and learn a new skill. There is no future in brick kiln”* (Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan). What most of these children dream of, is going to school, attending courses, because this will help them achieve a better life for them and their families. School seemed to be the dream of most of the children who work and thus cannot attend it. For instance, another girl said that: *“If we had a better life, I wouldn't do this. I would be in school studying and getting an education. But now that I have no other choice, I am working”* (Wahabzada 2015).

These children dream of being educated and having a decent job and most of all, they dream of helping to rebuild their country. They would like Afghanistan to be an educated country, where everyone goes to school and have a decent job. They dream that one day, they will change the future of their country, but to do this, they need to be educated.

“I should go to school, not wash cars [...] This is the only wish I have”

(an Afghan boy who washes cars, interviewed by Wahabzada, July 16,2015).

“We ask the government to help us and provide educational opportunities. We cannot do these jobs our whole lives. If I am doing this now, what will I do when I get older? But, if I study now, I will become someone in the future. Unfortunately, our government has not helped us yet”.

(a child worker, interviewed for UNAMA Multimedia).

In other words, what these children want and need is a good governance that could improve the country`s overall situation, thus helping them to achieve their dreams. Through a good governance, children could achieve a better life than their parents had. Furthermore, the government should invest in the Education System, more exactly to invest in the features which make the education to be one of a good quality. In this way, the Education System could provide all the necessary facilities. If the Education System would be one of a good quality, then, the parents will not have any motives to send their children to work - as a motive of learning a skill - decision which is taken due to the low quality of the Education System - but, instead, they could send them to school in order to achieve a proper education. However, on the other side, the financial support for parents is critical for the children`s future. If financial support will be provided by the Afghanistan`s Government to the Afghan families then, again, they will have no motives and no excuses for putting their children to work, as the financial support could improve the Economic Situation of the families enough so as to make households to keep their children away from work. For instance, Afifa Marof who works at the Human Rights Independent Commission argued that: *“If we have a better security and good governance then more jobs will be created in the future and the quality of parents and children`s lives will improve”* (UNAMA Multimedia).

6. Conclusion

Child labour has always existed and children had been “servants and apprentices throughout most of human history” (History: Child Labour). Children were often working for long hours in extreme conditions for little money. Usually, children were the perfect workers, as their size allowed them to move “in small spaces in factories or mines where adults couldn’t fit” (ibid) and besides that, they were easily controlled in the sense that it was easier for an owner to manage a child than it was to manage an adult. Very often they worked to help their families and they were forced to give up on school. Taking into consideration that, all the evidences suggest that child labour has always existed and it is not a phenomenon limited to a specific geographical area, it can be said the Theory of Child Labour formed by James Challis and David Elliman was applied.

Today, child labour has become so widespread that it has captured the international attention. More and more children are working in difficult conditions and this is the case of Afghanistan, where almost a quarter of children are engaged in some form of work. The work they have to perform seriously affects their health. Thousands of children from Afghanistan, risk their health day by day working in all kind of industries, thus being exposed to all kind of injuries and in some cases even to death. It is not only that they will remain with physical scars from different injuries, but they will also face a psychological damage which will affect their future life as adults. Cheduction, which might help them in achieving a better life.

The answers for my research question - *Why some of the Afghan parents are sending their children to work instead of sending them to school?* – were found by applying the The Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency to the empirical analysis. The theory assumes that the main determinants of child labour are the quality of the Education System and the Economic Situation of the household. In the Education System subchapter of the Analysis, the analyzed features that determine the overall quality of the Education System, as stated by the theory are: “schools that are far away, inadequately staffed, lack educational supplies and materials etc.” (Brown et al., 2003:198). In the Afghanistan’s Education System these features have proven to be true, as in the view of the Afghan parents the features that determine the overall quality of the Education System are: far away schools, teachers who are not qualified, lack of the basic facilities and security. These characteristics determine the overall quality of Afghanistan’s Education

System – as being of low quality – which is one of the motives that makes the Afghan parents to engage their children into the work field, because they believe that the outcomes of the educational process are not satisfactory enough to “compensate families for the lost income of their children” (ibid) while studying. In the Economic Situation subchapter of the Analysis, I was able to determine that the Economic Situation of the Afghan parents is determined by unemployment, debts that need to be repaid, low earnings, their health condition or by the household composition. These are the specific features of the Economic Situation of the families which determine parents to “borrow against the future wealth” (ibid) of the family in order “to increase the current consumption” (ibid) which as a result, provides them the necessary income which further allows them to meet their basic needs. As the theory states, the only option for the parents to “borrow against the future wealth” (ibid) is to send their children to work. The Baland-Robinson Theory of Child Labor Efficiency was applied to the both motives, namely The Education System and The Economic Situation.

In Afghanistan, child labour is so widespread that it cannot be eliminated in a short term. Even though, under the Afghanistan`s Labour Law, children under the age of 15 are not allowed to work, and children between the ages of 15 and 17 can work but only if the job represents a vocational training, there are still thousands of children who work in dangerous industries. As a matter of fact, in some industries, as soon as a child is able to walk then, it means that he is able to work too.

So many children are working, that this practice is impossible to be eliminated in a short term. As Ali Eftekhari, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Labour stated, they cannot just simply prohibit the Afghan children from working, unless they have an alternative plan which might support them, that is to say, to support their families financially or by offering them jobs, so as they will not have to send their children to work anymore but, unfortunately this is not possible yet. Those children could not be helped yet because “*the national budget is spent on security and less on social issues such as vulnerable children*” (Human Rights Watch July 2016: Kids at Work, Out of School in Afghanistan).

Education can save these children. All these children who work, believe in the power of education. If they will be educated then, they will become someone in the future. Afghanistan depends on its children, because they are the future of the country and they can help to its

reconstruction. For example, if one generation of children is educated, then, they will also educate their children, which in the long term, will result in “a higher standard of living and educational attainment” (Basu et al.,2003: 201). The Education System is important, because through education, they can obtain a better life, one in which they would not have to work from such an early age. But for this to be achieved, the government should invest more in the Education System and provide more jobs, if not financial support for the families. In this case, parents will have no motives or excuses to send their children to work, instead of providing them with a proper childhood and a chance to be educated.

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