

**Author:****Marwa Baragzai**

## **The Power of Digital Learning in Empowering Girls and Youth in Today's Afghanistan**

Afghanistan's current educational landscape has placed millions of girls and young learners at a crossroads where their futures depend heavily on alternative pathways to knowledge. With formal schooling for girls above grade six restricted, digital learning has grown from a modern convenience into a crucial instrument for survival, growth, and empowerment. While the rest of the world uses digital learning to strengthen existing educational systems, Afghan learners—especially girls—use it as their only connection to continued learning. This essay offers a comparative analysis of digital learning's global role versus its unique and urgent importance in Afghanistan today.

Afghanistan's current educational landscape has placed millions of girls and young learners at a crossroads where their futures depend heavily on alternative pathways to knowledge. With formal schooling for girls above grade six restricted, digital learning has grown from a modern convenience into a crucial instrument for survival, growth, and empowerment. While the rest of the world uses digital learning to strengthen existing educational systems, Afghan learners—especially girls—use it as their only connection to continued learning. This essay offers a comparative analysis of digital learning's global role versus its unique and urgent importance in Afghanistan today.

Girls worldwide have also increasingly used digital learning to overcome social and geographical barriers. In conflict-affected regions, online education has offered continuity even when schools were forced to close. This global experience shows that digital learning can reduce inequality and open opportunities for communities that struggle with traditional schooling.

The situation in Afghanistan, however, is strikingly different. Since 2021, girls have been barred from attending secondary schools, universities, and many technical programs. This policy has left more than a million girls without access to formal education, effectively erasing academic and professional pathways that previous generations fought to gain. Boys' schools remain open, yet they also face overcrowding, shortages of qualified teachers, and limited resources.

Unlike countries where digital learning complements strong institutions, Afghanistan relies on digital education as a substitute for missing infrastructure, closed schools, and limited mobility. In a setting where traditional systems struggle to function, digital learning becomes one of the only viable bridges to knowledge.

## How Digital Learning Empowers Afghan Girls Today?

For Afghan girls, digital learning represents more than academic development—it offers hope, identity, and psychological stability in an environment where educational opportunities have drastically narrowed. First and most importantly, digital learning replaces banned schooling. Through online classes, recorded lessons, e-books, and learning applications, girls can continue studying subjects that are unavailable to them through formal institutions.

Second, digital learning is often safe and culturally acceptable. Many families who cannot send their daughters to school due to restrictions or safety concerns support home-based digital learning as an alternative that aligns with community norms.

Third, digital learning connects Afghan girls to global knowledge. They can study English, computer science, graphic design, mathematics, and other subjects that would otherwise be beyond reach. This access helps them imagine futures that current conditions deny.

Finally, digital learning supports emotional and social well-being. Online study groups, virtual mentorship programs, and educational communities provide girls with encouragement and a sense of belonging.

## Youth Empowerment and the Afghan Economy

Beyond girls, digital learning offers Afghan youth—both male and female—practical tools to navigate economic challenges. With unemployment rising and formal job markets shrinking, the ability to learn digital skills has become essential.

Through online platforms, young Afghans can learn programming, digital marketing, translation, freelancing, and entrepreneurship. These skills allow them to generate income remotely without needing physical offices or international travel.

Digital learning also reduces dependency on weakened local infrastructure. Even in areas without functioning schools, young learners can access educational materials through smartphones or community learning centers.

Additionally, exposure to global innovation encourages Afghan youth to design local solutions, such as educational apps, online tutoring services, or digital agricultural tools that support rural communities.

## Comparative Advantages of Digital Learning in Afghanistan

While digital learning benefits students worldwide, its advantages in Afghanistan are distinct and far more urgent:

- It serves as the only pathway to continued education for millions of girls.
- It reaches remote districts where schools remain under-resourced.
- It supports flexible schedules for youth who must work to support their families.
- It delivers high-quality global education at low cost.
- It equips Afghan learners with skills needed for remote work and global markets.

### Barriers to Digital Learning

Despite its potential, major challenges still limit digital learning's effectiveness in Afghanistan. Internet access remains inconsistent, especially in rural regions. Many families cannot afford smartphones, laptops, or stable electricity. Digital literacy is low among parents, and community attitudes toward technology, particularly for girls, can be conservative. These barriers slow progress, yet they do not eliminate the transformative possibilities.

Digital learning has reshaped education worldwide, but nowhere is its impact more profound or more necessary than in Afghanistan today. With girls barred from secondary education and youth facing shrinking economic opportunities, digital learning stands as one of the few remaining bridges to empowerment. It restores access to knowledge, strengthens motivation, and creates opportunities where traditional systems fall short. While barriers remain, the potential is immense. If technological access expands and communities recognize its value, digital learning can become a cornerstone of Afghanistan's future—built through empowered girls, skilled youth, and a generation determined to rise despite adversity.

**The End!**