

## ***'Go and do some homework and then get back in the kitchen!'* The contradiction of the new educational landscape for Afghan girls and traditional gender roles in the Afghan-Australian diaspora**

I was born in a remote village in Afghanistan in the years where various Mujahidin groups were at war with each other. Prior to my birth and for many years after that education system in Afghanistan was completely destroyed due to more than two decades of conflicts and war. In such a context and in particular because of the restrictions placed on girls' education by the Taliban regime between 1996 and 2001, access to education for all children particularly girls has been a major issue in the entire history of Afghanistan.

After my arrival in Australia in 2005, I realised the enormous opportunities I was given by Australian society and education system. Unlike Afghanistan, I understood quickly that basic education was my rights as well as a right that every individual is entitled to.

During my schooling, I have also encountered incidents where many Afghan girls living in Australia did not have the support of their families to continue higher education, or particular subject preferences. In this case, I consider myself very lucky because my family have always supported me in my educational goals and aspirations.

As a result, I chose to investigate the contradiction of the new educational landscape for girls and traditional gender roles amongst the Afghan- diaspora in Australia. Through my research, I found that the inadequate formal education in Afghanistan has led to the development of informal education system incapable to provide sufficient knowledge and skills to students. Additionally, the patriarchal society along with other factors such as the lack of parental awareness about female education, traditional social values and the economic issues have made girls' education a secondary issue, particularly in rural Afghanistan.

I also gained new insights about the contradictions between Afghan parental perceptions of gender roles and girls' education. I found that although Afghan parents living in Australia have changed their views about girls' education, some of them still hold conservative views regarding gender roles. The research revealed that migration, Westernisation, the acceptance of the hegemonic paradigm and the need to redefine their identities are some of the factors that have influenced the Afghan parents living in Australia to alter their views.

More importantly, Afghan girls' identities and social roles are being shaped not only by the opportunities and values they find in Australia but also by their parents' historical experiences, traditional views of becoming the so called 'good' woman. I found signs of continuity and change in the perceptions of Afghan parents regarding their daughters' education and the experiences of the Afghan girls in Australia.