



EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The socioeconomic development of a country depends upon a sound education system. The current era of technology increases its demand to survive in this globalized world. However, several drastic measures have been taken by Pakistan's government but are still unable to acquire the goals and struggle with low literacy. On this account, a critical analysis was done to understand the root causes of bad governance of education and propose suggestions to resolve those challenges. The study specified several challenges such as unequal access to education, insufficient resources, unavailability of trained teachers, scared accountability and examination system, socioeconomic gap and private supplementary education. In accordance with the findings, the study also proposed useful suggestions for policymakers and educationists.

Keywords: Education governance; Educational challenges; Inequity; Untrained teachers; Socioeconomic gap

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in the development of a nation by increasing human capital formation. The current era of technology immensely increases the demand for education to keep pace with the globalized world. Thus an updated education provides firm support to a country required to meet the needs of the society. Despite passing 73 years after independence and proposing several educational policies and plans, Pakistan's educational sector is facing difficulties and cannot achieve the desired targets. According to the Human Development Index (HDI) report (2020), Pakistan is placed at 154th position among 189 countries reported by United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2020). While according to the Pakistan Economic Survey (2019), the literacy rate of Pakistan is 57% which shows that 43% population is still illiterate. However, Pakistan's government took several national initiatives to increase the literacy rate by supplying a fundamental education to all children. For instance, the state was supposed to achieve 100% literacy up to primary and higher levels, respectively, by 2030 (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2017). Despite that, the country is still struggling in achieving its educational targets due to several issues (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2018). Among those, governance is one of the critical challenges that affect the education system of Pakistan adversely. The term governance is referred to as a process by which the government use their administrative, economic, social, and political powers to implement and administer a particular plan (Sanusi & Martadha, 2012). Good governance is a systematic technique comprised of equity, accountability, the autonomy of views, honesty and transparency (Sundaram & Chowdhury, 2012). A taxonomy was developed to categorize the explored barriers into nine basic knowledge-areas of school administration. The outcomes revealed that 'Governance and Relationships' is the most considerable knowledge-area accredited for school education (Parveen et. al., 2021).

Regarding governance in education, according to the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report: "governance in education is not only comprised of administration and management of education. In the broader sense, it involves formal and informal processes from the formulation of policies to the monitoring and implementation of plans in which every level of the system contributes from central government to the classroom and community" a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009).

Governance plays an essential role in achieving targets and improving the quality of education. According to the current situation, our country remains unsuccessful in accomplishing the desired goals and still encountering a crisis in all educational system sectors. Besides, the study on governance in education has been neglected (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2011); therefore, it is imperative to overhaul the present governance in education to elevate the education standards. The current study aims to unfold the main governance challenges faced by the education sector in Pakistan. Hence, by understanding conventionally and cognitively, it will be beneficial for policymakers and educationists to administer educational plans based on addressed constraints and suggestions. Thereby, the critical analysis was done by adopting the retrospective approach by reviewing past literature, i.e., education policies, research articles, project reports and related literature.

FINDINGS

Inequity

The main problem faced by the Pakistan education system is to align academia to a single platform. However, the country's educational plans are set at a national level, but unable to achieve the targets due to the inequality and difference in the educational sectors, i.e., public and private sectors, rural and urban, national and provincial level (Norris et al., 2014). This difference creates disparity among Pakistan's individuals in terms of quality, knowledge and accomplishing the goals of education, which divide them into two segments. The students from private sectors appear more knowledgeable than the students of government sectors, and private institutions have become necessary since the government failed to provide quality education (Hashmi & Bradley, 2018). Similarly, teachers perform better in private schools than in public schools (Hyun & Sajjad, 2018).

Regarding regional inequality in terms of provincial and district level, the studies have revealed that three provinces i.e. Sindh, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan have badly affected by the discrepancies in the education sector (Jamal & Khan, 2003). Therefore, the government must take serious steps to harmonize the quality of education in all sectors by developing a uniform system of education in all provinces and institutions so that the desired goals may achieve.

Inadequate resources

Resources refer to all components that become involved in accomplishing the planned objectives, such as financial, human and technical resources. Their appropriate utilization is essential for the successful accomplishment of a plan. Inadequate funding has been observed as the main problem that hinders educational plans from achieving their desired targets. Furthermore, a discrepancy occurs between the allocated funds and expenditures in education. The allocated grants are not enough to fulfill the educational sectors' requirements and often utilized improperly, which causes it challenging to execute the plans successfully and thus leads to failure (Ahmad, 2014; Akram et al., 2020). It is therefore essential to allocate sufficient grants for education in the national GDP, with proper accountability, so that the desired objectives may be achieved.

Untrained Teachers

Skilled and trained teachers are essential to uplift the performance of students in order to acquire institutional and national educational goals. Several studies have identified the significant importance of teacher's learning in student's achievements (Kim & Seo, 2018). Therefore, teachers' professional development should be given spherical attention to updating their knowledge and skills according to the needs of the time. However, the government has taken several initiatives to raise teachers' quality and planned several in-service training programs (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2017). Yet, the government is unable to train teachers adequately due to a number of problems such as managing poorly and the lack of sufficient resources (Khan & Afridi, 2017). By considering this issue, the government needs to organize well-equipped teachers' training institutions from primary to a higher level with proper accountability. Besides, these programs should be arranged continuously to facilitate teachers according to the needs of the time.

Improper accountability

Supervision and accountability contribute considerably in identifying the effectiveness of the program. Subsequently, on examining the educational program's weaknesses, a leader supports the teachers to attain the targets. Inadequate accountability leads to the loss of resources; consequently, desired targets and goals cannot be achieved. Unfortunately, a lack of accountability or weak supervision is observed in various educational institutions, which hinders achieving the desired learning outcomes (Riaz & Sultan, 2017). In this regard, it is essential to strengthening accountability, from the upper level to a lower level. Besides, the principals of the educational institutions should be given training programs so that they may supervise efficiently.

Poor Examination system

Assessment or examination connects classroom's educational practices to student learning outcomes and considered as the essential constituent of the learning process. Assessments are usually organized on an annual basis to evaluate the student's success. Subsequently, promote to the upper grades or keep there in the same grade. Several studies have identified the flaws of assessments of the Pakistani education system. UNESCO (2007) concluded that the primary education's assessment system fails to evaluate students' basic literacy skills. At the higher secondary level, every school/college runs a competition to highlight their institute's name. Consequently, teachers and students focus only on grades rather than learning, and students memorize concepts just for the sake of numbers (Rehmani, 2003). Sometimes, students also find short cuts for acquiring marks; for instance, Cheating in the examination results from poor governance of education (Quraishi & Aziz, 2017). However, the Pakistan Ministry of Education (2009, 2017) proposed that students' performance should be measured on the basis of skills and knowledge through multiple assessment techniques, but it is not observed in practice. For instance, the English language subject's assessment measures only content knowledge rather than developing their language skills (Shamim, 2011). It is therefore imperative to reform the educational assessment system of Pakistan, and tests should be designed in such a way that can strengthen the analytical and problem-solving capabilities of a student.

Population Explosion

The fast growth of population in our country is another big challenge that not only affect the education sector, but other aspects of life are also affected. According to the statistics, Pakistan gets the rank of the fifth most populous country in the world and is expected to be 363 million in 2050 (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2019). Consequently, schools and universities are overcrowded, and the educational institutions are not enough to meet all individuals' needs (Rashid & Mukhtar, 2012). It is, therefore, necessary for the government to take serious action to control the population and it also needs to develop more educational institutions so that all individuals may get equal opportunities to access quality education. Furthermore, to meet the goals of MDGs¹ and EFA², primary education should be provided free of cost for all and more educational institutions should be developed in rural as well as urban areas for equal access to all.

Socioeconomic Gap

Pakistan's education has always been segregated into two types, i.e., the private and public sectors. Private schools offer quality education compared to public schools, and parents show more satisfaction in private schools. On the other hand, private institutions' cost is high, mainly meant for high socioeconomic status people. Whereas low-income families cannot afford private schools' expenses; therefore, they prefer their children to be admitted to public schools. Consequently, the education system creates discrepancies in the nation rather than providing equal opportunities for all and affects its literacy rate. Various studies also identify that high-income inequality shows minimal literacy rate (Nolan et al., 2014). However, the government has taken several initiatives to stabilize the situation for reducing poverty through the Ehsaas program, Sehat Sahulat program and Waseela-e-Taleem program, etc. (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2019), yet unable to avail by everyone. Therefore, it is required to minimize income inequality by providing good empowerment opportunities for all. Besides, equal opportunities should be provided to low as well as high-income families.

Private supplementary education

The trend of supplementary education (also known as shadow education) has been increased rapidly over the last two decades. Supplementary education refers to a non-formal educational approach outside the school to strengthen the academic concepts of a student in all disciplines and charge a fee (Bray, 2014). This educational approach takes place in one-to-one teaching, small or large groups and even online (Bray, 2013). Private tutoring is not meant to facilitate only low-achieving students, but high achievers also avail this to enhance their good performance more (Choi & Park, 2016). However, some studies found good supplementary education results, whereas other studies find negative or no effects on academic achievement (Ha & Park, 2017).

Moreover, private tuition exerts an unnecessary economic burden on students' families (Tabassum et al., 2018), which low-income families cannot afford. Consequently, it develops disparity. It also causes strain and fatigue to the teacher; thus, students lose interest in mainstream schooling (Chui, 2016). It is therefore suggested to the government to reduce the prevalence of private tutoring by enforcing a ban. Besides, the quality of education in schools should be enhanced so that all students satisfy there.

CONCLUSION

From independence to the present era, Pakistan is struggling with issues related to educational plans and goals. The current study has discussed some predictors of ineffective governance of education. However, several drastic measures have been taken by the government to govern education effectively, yet the targets have not been achieved. The most dominant challenge is the country's unequal education, which segregates the nation into different partitions. Regarding the quality of teachers, it is also evident that Pakistan is facing lack of quality and skilled teachers. In this account, it is essential to take necessary measures to uplift the quality of education. Furthermore, each unit of the system should be appropriately monitored to know about the effectiveness of the plans.

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¹ Millennium Development Goals

² Education for All

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