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Policies and Strategies to Improve Education in Bangladesh

Abstract

Education in Bangladesh is one of the basic requirements for everyone considering the idea that the country has a high number of uneducated individuals. The research herein focuses on examining and analysing the strategies and policies that Bangladesh uses to ensure it enhances the education in the country's schools. The theory adopted is the accountability theory, to show how the government of Bangladesh is trying to take measures to improve education. A thorough literature review explains what happens, which in turn justifies the policies and strategies presented there. A brief conclusion and recommendations follow.

Keywords: education in Bangladesh, policies and strategies, improvement of the education system

Introduction

Education is one of the most important aspects in the lives of the people of Bangladesh as they try to incorporate themselves into the larger world. The history of education in Bangladesh dates back many years, with public and private schools being dominant in the history books. Despite the need for education for most of the Bangladeshi people, the fact remains that the education system in the nation is not competitive when compared to those systems existing at international level. Bangladesh lacks a unified curriculum for teachers to use when instructing their students. Similarly, the country has a limited number of highly skilled instructors to enhance and make a difference in the education sector of the nation. It is important to note that Bangladesh also constitutes a population that largely relies on public schools, which in most cases are flooded with students and not all of them meet the standards portrayed by the nation's private schools. However, policies and strategies can be put in place to ensure that there is an improvement in the educational performance in Bangladesh. The government has a significant role to play in ensuring that this improvement occurs. The government can work on changing the attitude towards education, raising its aspirations for education, and establishing the government's intent on improving educational provision. Therefore, examining the role the Bangladeshi government intends to play in terms of formulating policies and employing improved strategies to ensure that the level of education in the country improves, is vital for the people of Bangladesh.

Rationale for the research

The purpose of conducting this research was to ensure that a clear understanding of the policies and strategies that can help improve education in Bangladesh is established. The justification for seeking improvement in education in Bangladesh is that most of the schools do not perform well and that is attributable to many factors,

but includes the poor standards of education offered to most students. Hence, to ensure that the country produces graduates who are market-ready and relevant, better strategies and policies need to be employed for schools to be improved. Many strategies and policies used globally can be applied to the task of improving education in Bangladesh. However, it is vital to only consider those that can be applied within the environment of Bangladesh. This forms another rationale for the carrying out this study. The study will reveal why and how the strategies and policies required can be implemented to ensure that education in Bangladesh improves significantly.

Research questions

The research questions below were the guiding principles for conducting the research in question.

- What are Bangladeshi government's aspirations for education?
- What strategies has the Bangladeshi government put in place to ensure that it improves education?
- What policies does the government of Bangladesh use to ensure that the improvement of education is achieved?
- What does the Bangladeshi government intend to do to improve the education system?

The research questions were ideal in guiding the research because of the clear sense of direction they provided.

Research design

The integration of the different components of research using one strategy constitutes the research design (Jones, Baird & Lunin, 2018). This study adopted a mixed method research design because of its flexibility in terms of the amount of information to be gathered. The mixed method research approach utilizes many strategies of collecting data (Rahman, Ationg & Zulhaimi, 2017).

Methodology

The study mainly focused on obtaining qualitative data, since the topic of study is one that many scholars in the past have participated in when trying to be part of the solutions of Bangladesh education's problems. The methodology of a study constitutes the means by which a researcher obtains information that is essential in finding solutions and recommendations for further action in order to achieve change (Leatherdale, 2019). A literature review of previous work related to the improvement of education in Bangladesh was conducted. The essence of the literature search is to gather information about the topic under discussion, using and collating information from previous scholars who undertook research in the same field or topic.

Data collection

The data collection methods that one chooses to work with in a study are vital in influencing the amount and kind of information they gather (Ivey, 2017). There are

two major methods of collecting data, which are from primary and secondary sources. The primary data sources constitute those that provide first-hand data, whereas the secondary sources provide information that has been previously researched and compiled in a book, report or article (Dickinson et al., 2004). This study utilized the secondary sources and they constituted a search of information from peer-reviewed articles. Peer-reviewed articles are reliable because they contain information that previous scholars have researched and have established as a result reliable findings and conclusions (Bluemke & Sosna, 2020).

Data analysis

The data obtained from the secondary sources was analyzed by examining the findings of the literature review, looking for similarities and differences and providing an overall summary

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the accountability theory. This theory states that a person can be accountable by justifying their behavior towards other people (Bergsteiner, 2012). In this case, the government of Bangladesh can be seen to be accountable because of venturing into projects that were intended to help to improve the quality of education. The government is accountable to the electors and are expected to demonstrate the same. Therefore, the accountability theory is a useful tool in this study, as the government has also a duty towards the country's students.

Literature review

The government of Bangladesh is working hard to ensure that the schools in the country improve the level of education they offer to the students. According to the World Bank Report, the Bangladeshi government has collaborated with the World Bank to invest in the education sector. As a result, the over one million children who are out of school currently, will benefit (The World Bank, 2018). The collaboration will also concentrate on developing a stronger and better curriculum that will allow teachers and students to display their best in teaching and learning respectively. The government's effort to seek support from the World Bank is a great move for the Bangladeshi education sector, because a proper curriculum is one of the aspects that the nation needs to improve the level of education therein. Therefore, such a strategy of collaborating with global organizations can prove to be beneficial to the Bangladeshi education system now as well as in the future. Such organizations provide the financial muscle that the Bangladeshi government requires in transforming its education sector.

The Bangladeshi government is working hard to establish policies that will help in the improvement of the level of education in the country. According to Austin et al. (2008), the government of Bangladesh is endeavouring to recruit more tutors in schools that have many of the least literate students. The essence of employing more tutors, is to ensure that these students do not lack human personnel to attend to them. Having more tutors means that students will be able to be open to the tutors regarding their weaknesses and find the help they very much need. The government,

therefore, takes the responsibility of funding such moves to ensure that the students in Bangladesh are attended to in the best way possible. Consequently, the presence of more tutors, increases the chances of the students prospering academically.

Similarly, the Bangladeshi government has adopted the former centralization strategy in managing matters pertaining to education. According to Austin et al. (2008), the government has encouraged the process of decentralizing education matters, such that national and district officials work together with the committees that manage schools, to ensure the disbursement of block grants. The presence of grants is important in that they help schools acquire more resources that they may need to make students' learning environment more conducive. Many schools in Bangladesh, especially the public learning institutions, underperform partly because of the insufficiency of resources. Certain resources such as classrooms and reading material are essential in ensuring that students perform well and that the level of education improves. Hence, when the Bangladeshi government decided to adopt the decentralization strategies when managing education matters, it aimed at improving the standards and level of education that is offered in the schools of that country.

The number of illiterate people in Bangladesh is worryingly high because of the low rate of school attendance. Malak (2013) conducted a study on the Bangladeshi government's Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) established to enhance education in the country. The significance of the program was to ensure that as many children as possible join schools to study. Better attendance of students in school, is one way of improving education thereby justifying the government's investment of funds in the PEDP program.

The Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Program (TQI-SEP) is pivotal in explaining the role that the Bangladeshi government is playing in ensuring that the education levels are enhanced in schools. The TQI-SEP is important in enhancing education, because it concentrates on improving the quality of teaching. Enhancing the teaching quality constitutes many activities, including making sure that teachers' colleges are sufficiently equipped and making available to teachers the necessary resources needed for instructors to deliver good lessons. The most important point to note is that the Bangladeshi government commits its resources to formulating these policies and employing different policies therein to ensure that education in Bangladeshi schools improves significantly. The improvement in the quality of teaching means that students will be able to acquire knowledge from instructors, who themselves have a comprehensive understanding of the concepts of their subject. The teachers will also be well positioned to deliver content because of the training they have undergone, before they are afforded the opportunity to instruct. Hence, the PEDP and TQI-SEP programs play a significant role in ensuring that education in Bangladesh is largely improving.

According to Khondaker et al. (2019), the modernization of curricular is one of the most important strategies that the government of Bangladesh uses to enhance education. Most of the schools in Bangladesh utilize an outdated curriculum in comparison to what other countries use. This means that the knowledge that students acquire is not to the level that the rest of the world enjoys. The government of Bangladesh has played a big role in putting in place the resources that enable the establishment of a modernized curriculum in most of the schools. The essence of establishing modernized curricular in Bangladeshi schools, is that this helps in

ensuring that the students adapt to the changes that are happening in the world. This means that the students from Bangladeshi schools can be at par with rest of the world in contributing to the country's development. Improving education from a perspective of using a modernized curriculum means that the contents of the curriculum are designed to suit the challenges that prevail in the contemporary world.

It is important to note that with the emergence of new job opportunities, the government's educational aspirations keep changing because the economic value of education needs to be increased to meet the demands in the job market. According to GAGE (2019), the government of Bangladesh has invested in girls-only stipends to ensure that the girls' schools perform better, thereby improving the education of females in the country. The essence of concentrating on the girls, was to ensure that the large numbers of young girls who do not have access to schools because of a variety of avoidable circumstances, can find the time and opportunity to go to school. This strategy improves the education in Bangladesh in the sense that the girls, are motivated to go to school and study hard because of the stipends. In other words, the stipends act as motivational factors for students to perform better and cause an improvement in education. It is vital to note that the quality of education improves whenever the students are willing to learn, since this gives their instructors a great incentive to encourage good standards of work.

The above-discussed issues constitute the challenges that the education system in Bangladesh faces. It is crucial to note that one of the greatest problems the education system and the government of Bangladesh is corruption. According to Prodhan (2016), the government of Bangladesh is working hard to eliminate corruption and pave the way for the allocation of more funds for the most important necessities in the education sector. The Bangladeshi government is trying to decentralize education-related activities to ensure it eliminates the rigidity that is present in the administration of services. This will lead to improvement in policy formulation processes.

Through teaming up with private organizations, the government of Bangladesh is offering grants to students and charging very low amounts of interest rates. The grants are meant to facilitate the education of bright students in higher education, for example in the universities. The essence of using grants for students is to ensure that the government becomes part of the efforts in improving more attendance in higher education, by facilitating students' ability to attend university. Education is improved when students are offered grants because they help students to acquire adequate learning materials, which they would have otherwise not been able to afford. Consequently, when students have enough learning materials and a good learning environment, it becomes possible that with time, better results will occur. Most of the grants given to the students have long years of repayment, thereby making it comfortable for students to repay once they are employed.

Therefore, the Bangladeshi government's efforts have, in the recent past been bearing fruits because a slight improvement in the level of education has occurred in students' performance.

Educational infrastructure is important in ensuring that students and instructors can display their best in both Bangladesh and many other nations. According to Meje (2012), the Bangladeshi government is working hard to ensure the

improvement in the infrastructure of the schools within the rural areas. This includes classrooms, student dormitories, and laboratories. Such infrastructure is important in the development of the education sector. The essence of investing in educational infrastructure is that it aids in improving the learning environment of students. Classrooms are the biggest problem for most of the schools in Bangladesh and as such, the government's efforts to improve educational infrastructure is vital, resulting in the construction of new teaching areas. With the government supporting the development of educational infrastructure, it remains to be seen how the students and teachers in Bangladeshi schools will do their part to ensure there is a further improvement in education in the country. It is important to note that most of the schools that the Bangladeshi government concentrates on, constitute the public learning institutions. Most of the private schools have better infrastructure to support student learning and good instruction from the part of teachers.

According to Anonymous (2020), working hard to enforce the legislation for compulsory primary education from 1990, which requires that primary education, be made mandatory is essential. Enforcing this policy brings about an increased level of literacy. Making it mandatory for all children to attend school enhances education in the whole nation. With most of the population in Bangladesh, the government is taking bold steps that at present may not be visible to the public. These actions will benefit the education sector of Bangladesh in the near future. Hence, utilizing the opportunities available to formulate or enforce policies, is essential in helping the Bangladeshi government make education in the country better than it is currently. Other policies that the government of Bangladesh is strongly enforcing include the Non-Formal Education Policy (2006) and many others. It is important to note that the country still has a long way to go in formulating policies that will help students and teachers raise achievement in academic work. There is need to formulate and enforce many more policies based on the challenges that the schools of Bangladesh are facing every day.

Conclusion

The improvement of education in Bangladesh largely relies on the policies and strategies that the government puts in place. The Bangladeshi government is playing a significant role in ensuring that better policies are formulated to guarantee the improvement of education. Similarly, better strategies are being used to enhance the level of education in the country, in particular the increase in funding for education. Based on the literature review, it is evident that the Bangladeshi government is aiming to ensure that it introduces policies and strategies that will enhance the lives of teachers and students, thereby improving education. However, further data gathering will aid in analyzing the situation regarding the efforts of the Bangladeshi government to improve education.

Recommendations

It is to be applauded that the government of Bangladesh invests in the policy-making processes. The government should aim to remove the rigidity in the processes involved in forming policies. The government should also strive to seek accountability for the resources that it disburses for use in the education sector and

other sectors. The argument for seeking accountability is that cases of corruption will reduce drastically, thereby increasing the financial resources available for use in the education sector. The government should put in place measures to ensure that there is a regular revision of the education curriculum to aid in updating everything related to education in Bangladesh.

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