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An Analysis of Equity in Secondary School Education: A Headteachers' Perspective

Tahira Roohi *

Muhammad Hamzah Masood †

Rukhshanda Mushtaq ‡

Abstract: *This paper deals with the perception of headteachers concerning an equitable secondary school education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Utilizing survey research methodology, the data were congregated from 36 headteachers via a questionnaire. The questionnaire had two components: component one sought participants' demographic information, whilst component two searched an equitable secondary school education-related practices, capabilities, and accountabilities of secondary school heads. The data were analyzed using one-way ANOVA and Correlation. The study originated that school heads could serve as pillars and advisers for school personnel in developing school system design, implementing in-out-school practices, providing school resources as a mentor, and advocating. It was concluded that there is a strong relationship between secondary school system design, in-out-school practices and secondary school resources.*

Key Words: Equitable, System Design, Practices, Resources, School Heads, Education

Introduction

Equity is a term related to gender, race, poverty and disability. It talks about the perception of fairness, specifically most disadvantaged sets or communities related to education (Klein, Ortman, & Friedman, 2002). UNESCO, Institute for Statistics (2007). [The World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) defined the equity in social perspective as “the absences of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people”. In the present era, all students in the classroom demand the same opportunity of an education. It is more important to counter the variety of classroom learning in the present era than before, but in reality, the current education system reinforces inequalities that need to be overcome. Equity in secondary school system design, school practices and school resources assist in eliminating obstacles so all students can succeed (Field et al. 2007. OECD, 2012). If every student has an opportunity to access the system design, practices and resources they need, the entire classroom

flourishes (Kampen, 2020). In a fair and impartial classroom, single factors did not suppress students from reaching their full learning potentials, but the lists included; race, gender, culture, and religion.

The disparity in educational equity has continued to widen rather than shrink (Sliwerski, 2020). Equity and high standards travel hand-in-hand. Some students perform this with some help in specific areas; others need a lot of support in every area. Most educators and school communities have and believe statements about achievement for all. But it will happen when school leaders “know them by name, know them by need” (Gleason and Gerzon, 2013). According to Soika (2020), equity is an essential element in producing a learning environment; however, it is complex. The route to equity will not be accomplished by treating everyone equally. It will be achieved by treating everyone equitably or justly according to their circumstances (Race

* PhD Scholar, Sarhad University of Science & Information Technology, Peshawar, KP, Pakistan.

† MPhil Scholar, Institute of Liberal Arts, University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: jorkyell@gmail.com

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Wah, Wah Cantt, Punjab, Pakistan.

Matters Institute, 2014). When teachers prioritize the needs of their favourite students, linking to family friends and having cognitive abilities, they create barriers for students of non-favourite and studies with disabilities. This is a great challenge for educators because; this list leads to students' dropout, repeating years, failure, and interference in their path to learning ([Masood, Shafi, Rahim, & Darwesh, 2020](#)).

97% of school heads agreed that equity is a significant aspect of secondary school education, but many are unaware about how to best work towards it in their schools (Worrel, 2016); however, the time has come to acknowledge that they have an essential role in developing an equitable school system design, in-out-school practices and school resources as well as facilitating the process of setting aims, restructuring curriculum, motivating the use of efficient new pedagogy types of equipment, and evaluation with particular reference to equity in education. To acquire an equitable secondary school education entails a free choice of school and subject selection, provision of guidance and counselling services in peek time of streaming and tracking, fair and inclusive classroom environment, use of multi-task teaching strategies, classroom assessment and students' evaluation, provision of need-based resources ([Masood, Shafi, Sultana, & Firdous, 2021](#)). It is in task and farm duties of school heads for incorporating three designed pillars of equity, i.e., system design, practices and resources in secondary school education. These three components are interrelated, cannot separate from each other because the vision and school educational plan it provides, pre-primary schooling leads towards high schooling through different passages, classroom practices, physical and persons' resources, managerial policies ([Field et al., 2007](#); [OECD, 2012](#)). In acquiring this assignment, the school heads must play five key roles; plan conversion, shape success, take key acts, management style and easy to get to staff and known to children ([Leo et al., 2010](#)).

Investigation of education and classroom discourse is essential for exploring the solutions to different issues ([Ahmed, Shafi, & Masood, 2021](#)). The current study aims to analyze the present equity rank in secondary school system design, classroom practices and school resources in Pakistan, specifically in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Miscellaneous issues, i.e., class repetition, students' failure, and students' dropout, shape the equity in secondary school education ([OECD, 2007](#)). These issues are being classified under three main captions i.e.

- System Design
- Practices
- Resources

System Design

The primary aim of schooling design is to attain individual needs. The selection of an effective school and educational pathway is not an easy stipulation. It tolerates fairness in education. If this task is done successfully, the entire secondary education achievement becomes significant. Demarcation in schooling structure, academic selection, school choice and admission, informed engagement of parents, educational cost, early tracking and comprehensive schooling is also a risk to equity ([Horn & Nunez, 2000](#), [Brunello et al. 2007](#), [Field et al., 2007](#), [Causa and Chapuis 2009](#), [Leo et al., 2010](#), [OECD, 2012](#)). In secondary school education, young students may face a situation where they have to choose an institution or discipline because of inadequate information ([Field et al., 2007](#)), rottenly leads to students' failure. Consequently, it generates the need for guidance and counselling services that help students choose education and career among dissimilar trails and leads to completion ([OECD, 2004](#)).

[The Wallace Foundation Report \(2013\)](#) found an empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement. The school head remains the central source of leadership influence. S/he plays a significant role in developing a professional community of stakeholders. As the main instrument in organizational machinery, a great leader cultivates leadership in others because of one's equity commitments regarding professional collaboration and collective responsibility. Developing cultural competence, commitment to professional learning, structures for caring, producing academic culture, vital pathways to careers and providing advisory services to school head' responsibilities ([Gleason and Gerson, 2014](#)).

School-in-out-Practices

Today's world has become a global village, and the brood knows their institution's strengths and

weaknesses better. They are well aware of their school process and procedures, classroom activities, syllabus and content, teaching strategies, and their parents' role (PISA, 2015). The critical elements of equitable schooling are classroom management, teachers' attention, students' behaviour, lesson delivery, classroom assessment, curriculum development and parent's participation (Smith and Gorard 2006, Lindberg et al., 2010., OECD, 2012., Gleason and Gerzon, 2014., Gowda 2015., Jennings, 2015., PISA, 2015., Stiglitz & Greenwald, 2015., Soika, 2020). Impartial classroom practices reduce grade repetition, dropout ratio, and students' failure. Field et al. (2007) stressed that to keep away from the economic loss of repeating years and students' dropout, it is essential to transform our high school practices towards multitasking education that can bring fair and inclusive education. Adopting strategies like moving towards standard-based grading, reviewing curriculum regularly, and involving students in the conversation can go a long way towards helping a school level the playing field for all students (Joseph, 2021).

It is a general opinion that equity and school culture are interdependent, but it acquires to promote from classroom level. As school leaders, headteachers have a charge to accept their own beliefs, utilize a variety of materials, and explore the ways that connect the students with classroom groups or individual activities that make the voice of students. It will enable the students to understand the vocabulary and action and feel comfortable (Kampen, 2020).

School Resources

Pakistani social system has a non-linear distribution of resources (Hassan, Shafi, & Masood, 2021). according to the OECD report (2012), the achievement of equity is crucial to attain social justice and make ways to effectively utilise the school resources to improve economic growth. Resources are the key holder in the stipulation of equitable secondary school education. Equity in schools not only supports disadvantaged students but also provides the resources according to individual demand, resulting in improvement in classroom learning (OECD, 2008). Nonoyama-tarumi and Willms (2010) enhanced the discussion regarding the

significance of material resources because it is superior and functional for the quality of teaching in some establishments; however, the distribution of infrastructure and other material resources are not the least motives to accomplish an equitable education (Fatima, Ahmed, & Shafi, 2021).

Equity in secondary schools means ensuring every student has the resources and support for success (Kampen, 2021). procedures for professional development and reviewing hiring practices also improve the school performance and success (joseph, 2021). additionally, re-stimulation of extra-curricular support by schools, more attention to education and quality of education for children from a disadvantaged background, integration of out-of-school children into regular schools, and adequate financial transfers to local governments with weak resource bases (UNICEF, 2010) are the significant steps that promote equity in secondary school education. According to Hussain (2015), the school authorities face two types of confronts, i.e., within school challenges and outer school challenges. Absenteeism and shortage of teachers, lack of basic facilities, and unfriendly environment between teacher-student and principal-teacher are main challenges within school premises. While outside confronts include shortage of schools, cultural norms, remote area schools for a female, non-cooperative attitude of parents.

Power and money make a position controversial (Masood & Shafi, 2020), so the role of headteachers is always controversial in allocating school resources. He/she has a preliminary position in changing disadvantaged schools towards advantaged ones so; they choose, coach and prop up sufficiently (OECD, 2012). it is a vital duty of headteachers to give an equitable school education that enhances every student because they know that a fair and inclusive education is a valuable tool in patterning the characters of the individuals (field et al., 2007). it is also the prime duty of KPESE to provide training to school staff related to equity issues to resolve ordinary fences related to school resources (Atchison, et al., 2017).

Research Methodology

Theoretical Framework

The framework determines the direction of

research (Masood, Shafi, & Darwesh, 2020). The current study's theoretical framework or 'blueprint' provided a set of broad thoughts based on existing "tested and validated" equity in secondary school education (Adom et al., 2018). It leads to three main elements of equity, i.e. a) secondary school system design, b) school in-out-practices and c) secondary school resources (Field

et al., 2007; OECD, 2012). The equity in secondary school education comprises theoretical standards, builds, notions and occupants (Grant & Osanloo, 2014) of system design, practices and resources developed by secondary school heads or principals. The theoretical framework of the present study is as under:

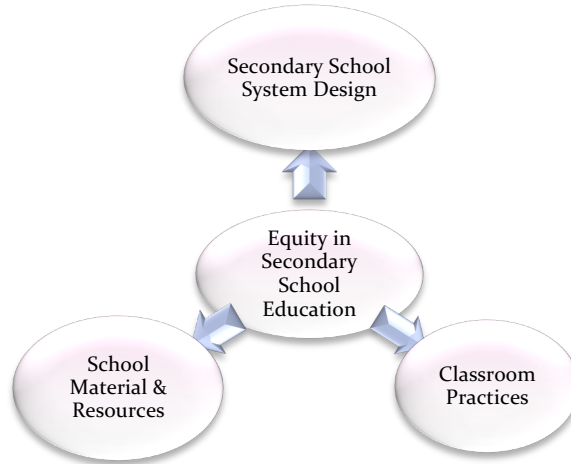


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Equity in Secondary School Education

Source: [Field et al., \(2007\)](#) & [OECD, \(2012\)](#)

Objectives of the Study

The present study holds the following objectives:

1. To study the allocation of equitable educational opportunities related to the development of students' potentials in secondary school education at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
2. To explore the relationship of secondary school system design, classroom practices and provision of material resources of secondary school education with reference to equity

Research Questions

1. What is the status of equity in high schools of KP?
2. To what extent does the system of education present chances to tackle equity in KP?
3. Do in and outside academics perform in secondary schools well-matched with equity?
4. Are the human and physical resources for secondary schools in sequence with equity?

Table 1. Linking Research Objectives & Research Questions to Research Methods & Research Tools

Objectives	Questions	Methods	Tools
To study the allocation of equitable educational opportunities with reference to the development of students' potentials in secondary school education at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	i. What is the status of equity in the high schools of KP?	Quantitative phase (survey, Checklist & Observation)	The checklist comprised the items related to physical and human resources existing in sample schools.

Objectives	Questions	Methods	Tools
To investigate the relationship of secondary school system design, classroom practices and provision of material resources of secondary school education with reference to equity.	i. To what extent does the system of education present due to educational chances to tackle equity in KP? ii. Do in and outside academics perform in secondary schools well-matched with equity? iii. Are the human and physical resources for secondary schools in sequence with equity?	Quantitative phase (survey, Checklist & Observation)	The questionnaire comprised 28 items from system design. The questionnaire comprised 42 items from classroom practices. Comprised 16 items from school material & resources. Total 86 items

Method

Equity analysis in secondary school education required multi-research approaches, i.e. qualitative or quantitative (Creswel, 2012). Using a mix-methods research approach, both quantitative (survey and checklist) and qualitative (Observation) instruments were employed to collect data from the school heads for its effectiveness (Ullah, Arif, & Qaisar, 2020). A list of schools was gained from the District [Education Management Information System \(EMIS, 2015-16\)](#), including 2029 schools in KP. The sample contained 36 boys' and girls' school heads from four sample districts, i.e. Haripur, Karak, Hangu and Peshawar of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on purposive sampling technique because all schools were homogeneous in nature.

As the questionnaires prove effective in analyzing the prospective of participants of research (Siddiq, Arif, Shafi, & [Masood, 2021a](#), b), so the chief author visited all the decided schools and governed the questionnaire personally to gather the actual information from school heads about their knowledge and consideration of fair and inclusive school education and appearing at the record for obtainable status. A questionnaire was build-up supported on closed questions and a Likert scale to facilitate the research participants to demonstrate their level of conformity with the statements. The questionnaire had two portions; portion one required personal's profile about the participants (e.g. age, gender, academic and professional qualification, work experiences and extra-duties) and part two, having 86 items collected data about school system design (28 items), in-out-school practices (46 items) and

school resources (16 items). A One-way ANOVA and one-way repeated measures ANOVA are used for independent surveillance and later for dependent surveillance ([Robson, 2002](#)). The contrast among an equitable secondary school education was examined from first to last three categorize features, i.e. secondary school system and design, practices and resources. The correlation among these three features was scrutinized through 'Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient (r)'.

Results and Discussion

Secondary school education's progress status ensured the need for equitable school education, system design, practices, and resources brought into line with the pupil needs. The results demonstrate that the school heads were of observation that school and subject choice, guidance and counselling facilities, provision of quality education and role of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Elementary Secondary Education Department (KPESE) in minimizing the dropout, repeating years and students' failure were the main targets that were not accessible to secondary school education. However, while a majority of headteachers shared that the government reviewing the curriculum on a regular basis and made a systematic system of monitoring and evaluation of high schools and staff, most of the schools have no proper classroom practices, lacking the parents' cooperation, favouring the students in the teacher-student relationship and assessment and evaluation. Moreover, the findings depicted that provision of need base direct and indirect resources by KPESE were not available and accessible to secondary school students. The

results also demonstrate that most headteachers did not monitor the school system design, classroom practices, and school resources properly and were dependent on government actions. The findings indicate that the required goals of equity in education are not achieved due to the lack of leadership capacities to translate vision into reality regarding the school system, classroom practices, and arrangement of intime

resources. Similarly, a more significant part of the headteachers was unconcerned in in-service training workshops and did not allow their staff members for said capacity development programmes. Furthermore, they did not take any initiative by themselves or send recommendations about the subject to the authorities regarding just and complete secondary school education.

Table 2. Rank of Equity Beneath the sway of System and Practices with Allusion to Resources in School Heads Perspectives (One-way ANOVA)

Items		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
System	Between Groups	4.863	0.405	284.038	.000
	Within Groups	0.033	0.001		
	Total	4.896			
Practices	Between Groups	1.948	0.162	11.892	.000
	Within Groups	0.314	0.014		
	Total	2.261			

$N=35$, $df=$ Between Groups=12 and Within Groups=23

Table 2 reflects the school heads observations regarding the high school system and classroom practices with orientation to school resources. The analysis avowed the optimistic upshot of secondary school resources on the school system and school practices. The analysis is evidence that the results were significant. So, keeping in the picture the mentioned statistics, it is concluded that equitable secondary school resources affect an equitable school system and practices. The analysis depicted that school resources cannot resolve all difficulties, but they can transport constructive change in school education. Still, issues of classroom practices and school system design are also tricky to be conversed with.

District Peshawar female participant contributed to: "Resources should be utilized for the betterment of students, but most of the time allocation of resources is not need based, e.g., we have not enough space for furniture according to students' strength, but KPESE supply them without any demand."

According to [Field et al. \(2007\)](#), "Equity requires that different resources be devoted to different students because some students have greater needs than others". To hold equity in high schools, the KPESE should draw fair and just funding policies that are helpful in allocating impartial and practical resources ([OECD, 2012](#)).

Table 3. Rank of Equity beneath the sway of System and Resources with Allusion to Practices in School Heads Perspectives (One-way ANOVA)

Items		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Resources	Between Groups	10.885	.907	33.686	.000
	Within Groups	.619	.027		
	Total	11.504			
System	Between Groups	3.958	.330	8.086	.000
	Within Groups	.938	.041		
	Total	4.896			

$N=35$, $df=$ Between Groups=12 and Within Groups=23

The findings represented in table 2 designated headteachers' opinions regarding the secondary school system and school resources with allusion to school practices. The statistics eloquent the optimistic upshot of secondary school practices on the school system and school resources. The statistical analysis demonstrated that the findings were significant. So, it is concluded that unbiased secondary school practices completely shape an equitable school system and resources. In-out-school practice have a vital role in acquiring fair and inclusive school education, but as isolation, it has not possible, it is connected to school design and resources.

In taking opinion regarding the relationship among system design, practices and resources, one male participant of district Karak depicted: *Classroom processes should be worked out for the benefit of the students not supposedly but*

practically. Our educators need to establish their classroom practice according to the modern era.

The male headteacher of district Haripur enhanced the discussion: *Teaching is a vocation where without concerned ability, craving ambitions may not be attained.*

Another headteacher of district Hangu shared her inspection: *Our pre-primary education is feeble, cannot stay alive in upper classes, so leaving schools, and class repetition is the known crisis at high schools. Besides in-service training, I suggest that major subjects, i.e., mathematics and general science, should be taught in English from the primary level.*

The discussion portrayed that we cannot isolate the classroom practices from high school system design and resources, they are correlated with each other.

Table 4. Rank of Equity Beneath the Sway of Practice and Resources with Allusion to System in School Heads Perspectives (One-way ANOVA)

Items		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Practices	Between Groups	2.243	.173	208.774	.000
	Within Groups	.018	.001		
	Total	2.261			
Resources	Between Groups	10.228	.787	13.568	.000
	Within Groups	1.276	.058		
	Total	11.504			

N=35, *df*=Between Groups=13 and Within Groups=22

Looking at given table 3, it appears the headteachers' perceptive regarding secondary school practices and school resources with allusion to the school system. The statistics exemplified a positive upshot of the secondary school system on school practices and school resources. So, custody insight the results, it is recapitulated that fair and just school system absolutely shapes equitable school practices and resources.

One of the district Haripur female participants shared her observation regarding the relationship among system design, practices and resources: *We are the blind implementers of the government policies. Have no approach to provide the option of school or subject selection—no option to refuse the entries. The primary students have no*

educational base. About 95% of students come from government primary schools with auto-promotion, which results students' failure.

The high school system was experienced to be most imperative, one female respondent of district Hangu and other from district Peshawar contributed to the same outlooks: *It is the need of the present era to produce an educated and skilled number of students, and the school system is the pathway for this. So, merit-based admissions are required to attain desired goals.*

Keeping in view the participants' observations, it is brought to a close those in-out-school practices and school resources had a great impact on school system design. They are unified so, equitable secondary school education cannot be possible without their amalgamation.

Table 5. Correlations among Secondary School System, Practices and Resources of Secondary School Heads

Items		System	Practice	Resources
System	Pearson Correlation	1	0.513**	0.729**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001	0.000
	N	36	36	36
Practice	Pearson Correlation	0.513**	1	0.311
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001		0.065
	N	36	36	36
Resources	Pearson Correlation	0.729**	0.311	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.065	
	N	36	36	36

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The statistics of table 4 gives details of association among secondary school system, practices and resources from school head's acuity. The consequences reflected that correlation of the secondary school system, practices and resources were significant. So, custody in view of the above statistics, it is summed up that the secondary school system was connected with practices and resources. However, the assessment revealed that practice and resources were not significant, so it is insolvent that the school practices were not correlated with school resources. The correlation of the school system with school practices and resources had matched with level equality and equity, whereas the non-correlation investigation of school practices with resources is divergent to equity.

Conclusion

Although the consequences and argument of the current study exposed that the KPESE provide monitoring and supervisory system of school and staff professional development, however, the principle is to determine the level of educational chances to tackle equity the existing educational system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, concerning secondary school system design, in-out-school practices and school resources. The results imitated that the KPESE has focused on the equal distribution of secondary school education as equity requires justifying. According to headteachers perceptions, the present students lacked the opportunity to select a school or subject track, and there were no merit-based admission policies in the present phenomenon. In addition, teachers did not correctly manage the classroom, lesson planner and did not apply need-based

teaching strategies in classroom practices. The research indicated that most teachers were facing the non-cooperative attitude of parents towards providing a learning environment at home. They lacked the ability to make teacher-student friendly relationships, so students considered that teachers favoured the able students in classroom practices and test/exams, which impacted their emotions and abilities (Shafi, 2019). It becomes apparent through data that the direct and indirect resources were not utilized properly, specifically in disadvantaged schools. The study reflected that most of the headteachers did not send their recommendations regarding appropriate and inclusive school education. Their role in school policies and procedures seemed to be a distance between KPESE and school, resulting in a lack of development in secondary school system design, in-out-school practices, and school resources.

Recommendations

Supported on the given findings and conclusion of this pragmatic study, the following recommendations are offered for establishing an equitable secondary school education and for improving capabilities, workplace training and coaching of school heads;

1. Headteachers of all secondary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, have to sure an equitable school education. The provision of school and subject choice, guidance and counselling facilities, school monitoring and supervision are necessities in these schools, and school heads must ensure the implantation for the sack of fair and inclusive education.

2. Headteachers should successfully instigate, lead and engross the teaching staff in developing fair and inclusive classroom management and need-based pedagogies in lesson delivery.
3. It is important that headteachers take the lead in improving the friendly relationship of stakeholders of schools, i.e., teacher-students and parents-teachers, in the acquisition of equitable school education.
4. Headteachers should strive for the allocation of need-based resources, specifically in disadvantaged schools.
5. Continuing research should be embarked on (including other parts of the province and country) to observe the embryonic role, responsibilities, and natures of school heads towards equitable secondary school education.

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