REVIEW OF FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: A nation's ability to develop over the years - its ability to innovate, advance real purchasing power, and reduce income inequality – is highly connected to the quality of education. The basic mechanism behind this development is that education is a crucial to empowering economic efficiency by enhancing the value and productivity of human capital, in turn, it results in shifting poor individuals from poverty. High quality of education established in a nation guarantee the competitiveness of the state in international arenas. Hence, this article aims to review the factors affecting learning outcomes in secondary education in Uzbekistan.

Key words: Human capital, quality, secondary education, learning outcomes

Introduction

Upper secondary education schools are one of the crucial actors in Uzbek education system. Hence, Education for All (EFA) initiative has driven an education reform agenda pivoted on enhancing quality of learning outcomes in secondary education to achieve human development goals, political strength, and economic competitiveness within nations (Alvarez, Gillies & Bradsher, 2003; King, McGrath, Rose, 2007; Lewin 2008, 2015; UNESCO, World Bank). Secondary education is treated as an intermediary stage between primary and tertiary education, which develops necessary skills, aptitudes, social values, technological know-how, and advances learners analytical thinking ability before they step into higher education or labor market. Particularly, General Secondary education in Uzbekistan comprised nine years compulsory education from 1st grade to 9th grade, until new reforms were undertaken in 2017. In the 2017-2018 academic year, secondary education prolonged to 11 years with multiple pathways to enter industry or higher education. Largely, enrolment in secondary education upsurges, it necessities to enhance the quality of national secondary curriculum. Rapid changes in technology, results in changes in global economies and diverse national labor markets, in turn, it pushes for more appropriate and adequate curricula content and integration of information and communication technologies as a module and as a learning instrument. Similarly, Uzbek authority is also implementing well planned and sufficiently resourced projects to create an environment where learners can achieve knowledge and skills which enable them participate actively in economic and social life, contribute their effort to remain peaceful and democratic society.

To achieve the learning outcomes in schooling system, the governmental authorities must detect main determinants of quality of education. Thus, there are several multiple factors that derive favorable learning outcomes, the most important of which is increasingly recognized to be quality of teachers and teaching (UNESCO, 2004, 2006, 2010; USAID 2012). Accordingly, EFA report (2005) captures what happens in the classroom, the influence of teacher and her methods in teaching as one of the main elements in improving students' engagement and learning outcomes. Quality improvement process depends on how teachers conduct classes, how s/he deliver the information to students. Hence, policy makers, researchers all focus on teacher quality and learning.

As we highlighted in above discussion, productivity of teachers has a crucial place in education which is evaluated based on quality of teachers and how teachers instruct. However, there are external ingredients that influence teachers' productiveness like the number of students per teacher and gender of instructor. Number of pupils per teacher is generally associated with class size and it is predominantly believed that small sized classes feed a better teaching and learning. This concept has been devoted by many nations such as the USA, European states, China, Japan, and they implemented policies to lessen their class sizes (Blatchford & Lai, 2012). Evidently, many developed countries have shortened the average class size. For example, over the decade between 2000 and 2010, Portugal has reduced secondary education class size by 33.9%, this figure constitutes 27% for Spain, 20% for Japan, 17% for South Korea, and 13.2% for the USA (OECD, 2012). Particularly, the STAR project that is implemented by the Tennessee State Department and CSPAR project which is undertaken in the United Kingdom are vital studies that demonstrate the significance of class size on

students' academic achievement. The STAR project exhibited that primary and secondary school students in small size classes with 13-17 students had significantly higher test scores compared to their counterparts in usual classes with 22-25 students (Word, Jahnston, Bain, Fulton, Zaharias, 1985-1990). However, some researchers found out that lower student teacher ratio cannot be single element that encourage academic achievement, indeed, classroom process, students' engagement, classroom activities are main factors that ensures higher learning outcomes within schools (Johnson, 2011). Thus, the factors behind the students' admission rate to higher education in Uzbekistan has not been studied much, even though it is a quite significant examination for all secondary education students as this exam is the main determinant for being admitted to universities.

Therefore, it is also important to identify how poverty shapes educational outcomes, processes. Education is the main field which is highly affected by poverty. Hence, many researchers have been accompanied to study the relationship between poverty and education returns (Bowman 2010, Hanushek and Woessmain 2010). Accordingly, Phipps and Lethbridge (2007) examined income and child outcomes in children 4 to 15 years of age. Research outcomes show that, higher incomes are associated with better outcomes for students in their schooling years. It is important finding that cognitive and school components are highly effected by poverty, followed by behavioral and health metrics, while smallest affect revealed for social and emotional measures. Another study carried out in USA by Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (2007) demonstrated that socioeconomic disadvantage and other components related to poverty negatively affect cognitive development and academic performance of students. Like a crystal, thrilling and insistent poverty has negative impact on individuals, American studies revealed strong causation effects between learning outcomes and socioeconomic factor. Parents with low income are not only more likely to have their kids born before the predetermined time, but these early born children are also excessively at higher risk for school failure compared to children with the same neonatal chronicle from higher income families (McLoyd V.C, 1998).

Conclusion

It is important to identify main elements of quality of education in a nation, to improve living standards of population. Among the potential key determinants, I confidently state that filling the teacher gap is not sufficient to straighten students' achievement. Teachers' enlightenment and skills, how they teach, and 'socioeconomic gradient' is equally important. In addition to these key ingredients, gender inequalities in the teaching personnel also need to be treated as a critical issue.

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