



The Role of Governance in Public Education

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ABSTRACT

Governance in public education plays a critical role in shaping democratic societies by ensuring access, equity, quality, and public accountability. However, governance is a complex and often opaque process, influenced by historical, political, and cultural factors, especially within the Global South's postcolonial contexts. This paper examines the evolution of educational governance, its diverse structures, and the roles of key stakeholders. It highlights how governance processes impact policy development, resource allocation, and accountability frameworks. Case studies reveal both successes and persistent challenges, including political interference, lack of transparency, and governance inequities. The research also identifies best practices for effective governance, emphasizing democratic participation, cultural responsiveness, and continuous structural reforms. By illuminating the 'black box' of educational governance, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how governance shapes public education's ability to fulfill its social mandate.

Keywords: Educational governance, public education, policy implementation, resource allocation, accountability, school boards, democratic participation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone of democracy, society, the economy, culture, and individual well-being. Public education fulfills the rights of all citizens to learn and develop a fulfilling life. However, the notions of 'public' and 'education' are increasingly challenged in many Global South nations due to postcolonial governance and politics. This trend impacts policies, structures, values, and leaders within education systems, including universities, ultimately hindering the empowering potential of public education. The influence of governance and its frameworks on the daily practices of education leaders is crucial but often overlooked in contemporary discourse. Education governance research, a relatively new academic field, explores the interactions between various governance entities, emphasizing the public value of education policies. Topics under this research scope include the complexities surrounding governance ideas, their effects on education policies, and future implications for research and practice. Discussions often occur in public settings involving various stakeholders, while decision-making processes remain largely private, resulting in a 'black box' situation within governance. Analyzing governance processes about education policy, especially regarding the Chinese central-local intergovernmental relations post-1989, helps illuminate the forms of this 'black box' in education governance. This dissertation examines these governance processes and their entanglements within the education sector's 'black box'. [1, 2].

Historical Context of Educational Governance

Governance of public education concerns the structures, processes, and relationships through which authority is exercised. Educational governance is different from governance more broadly. In governance, 'education' is the object of governance. Governance of education encompasses more than educational governance to consider the agencies and structures that make sense of and give authority to specific ideas about the nature and purpose of education. The production and reform of education governance is particularly complex because the institutionalised imperatives of education and publicness concern the

exercise of authority across the same domains of domain of judgment, choice, and power. These ideas have surfaced in many ways over the past century and demonstrate the educational governance to individuals and societies. Governance of education has always intrigued human thought. Ideas about the nature and purpose of education have concerned how authority over its production, distribution, and impact is controlled and coordinated through diverse activities and settings. In ancient societies, governance of public education was a matter of edicts from kings and emperors, decisions of councils of ordained men, or decrees issued by various religious authorities. But with more contemporary understandings of democracy and publicness, governance became a more complex and conflicted matter. Meaning and practice of governance of education differ across and within polities, consistent with competing, contradictory, and contested principles of authority. Public education has been a critical consideration because it radically alters the nature of governance by introducing different and often conflicting assumptions about authority. In particular, governance of education concerns more than government of education being less material and more relational; it addresses the multifarious ways through which principles of authority become structured, specifically historical, and social [3, 4].

Types of Governance Structures

Governance in education systems worldwide takes various forms. Some areas feature corporate governance, empowering local authorities in contractual partnerships with school management groups. Others prioritize quality and performance within political frameworks that limit traditional political involvement. However, many public school systems have not changed significantly, relying on direct political representation and hierarchical authority from large political entities and elected community representatives. Teachers' unions play a key role in shaping operational protocols and professional development. School boards have become the primary educational governance bodies in the Western world, gaining status and responsibility. Procedural changes include district-level advisory councils, delegation of management authority to professionals, and reduced community engagement in operational matters. The relationship between boards and administrations is now more crucial than external influences. Upholding trust is a shared responsibility between the board and administration. In this complex governance landscape, the impact of educational policy—encompassing philosophies, arguments, or directives—has grown both in complexity and scope [5, 6].

Key Stakeholders in Educational Governance

Governance processes and the actions of leaders, including CEOs and board chairs, are increasingly important in education. Different governance arrangements can yield similar results within education systems. The impact of educational governance is significant, defined as ways of governing through various entities in multifaceted networks. Educational governance focuses on these systems across commonalities, whether at the state or institutional level. Understanding educational governance involves looking at spatial governance and networks (local, national, supranational, and global). Governance operates through concepts like "steering at a distance," encompassing both actions and the pressures exerted on entities within executive and indirect levels. Governance modes shape human reasoning and desires, impacting education governance's processes, structures, and context. Academic interest in political science regarding educational governance has grown, with public governance being empirically analyzed by scholars. Governance of education systems highlights how state and non-state entities intervene to influence societal and individual behavior [7, 8].

Policy Development and Implementation

Policies are needed for the education system to run smoothly. Good education policies ensure that the jobs and responsibilities of each member of the committee are clearly defined and arranged in a systematic manner. They establish the rules that govern state-approved educational changes. Although it is good to have written policies, doing so does not ensure that they will be implemented. As a result, the required implementation of these policies may not occur. Failure to enforce these policies or lack of awareness of them may result in the education system deviating from its mandate, which was the ultimate purpose of education. When the committee members are aware of the policies, but norms are ignored in practice, the committee cannot fulfill its functions. The necessary checks and balances will not work if one or two members dominate or control the actions of the committee. Adverse effects may exist, such as the possibility of financial mismanagement or unethical practices. Policies play an important role in securing public trust in the school system. Without proper implementation, most of the policies that were developed in writing will be rendered worthless. Education policies may be viewed as the end product of complex processes within a cultural setting. The process of policy development entails deliberation,

compromise, and negotiation to find satisfactory resolutions to disputes and controversies among members of a polity. Networks develop around interests and coalitions. Reciprocities of trust are built, and reputations are acquired. Policy development begins after political decision-making. A policy development unit is constituted to make further decisions regarding the content of the policy. Careful examination of the policy's impacts, discussion of details, and extensive drafting take place. The result of the latter is a staffed drafting document. The committee meets to scrutinize the procedures followed so far, the drafting document, and the consultation process before implementation. Ultimately, as the results of the scrutiny and consultation are still subject to committee approval, policy development continues with no predetermined ending [9, 10].

Funding and Resource Allocation

Both charter and regular public schools obtain large amounts of money from outside sources, most of which are not counted as public revenue. These revenues take the form of grants or contracts from state or federal government agencies, but also primarily take the form of donations from private P-12, college, and university, and education-related sources. To assess charter schools' privatization, it is crucial to document what type of funding each system obtains, how much each system obtains, who provides it, and what regulations, if any, govern the funding. The hypotheses are: Although much smaller, charter schools obtain a large amount of outside revenue comparable to regular public schools because it is necessary for their founding and continued operation, like regular public schools. However, the direct funding of charter schools is much less than that of regular public schools, because outside funding is not evenly distributed; some regular public schools and charter schools have received it, while most have not. Also, charter schools' funding patterns vary by market category: those for operational costs are larger, but obtained more unevenly than those for facilities. Most funding information comes from audited financial statements made available by local school districts. This information comes from charter schools in San Diego, San Jose, Santa Ana, Los Angeles, and Riverside. The outside funding charts compare charter schools and regular public schools (in the nearby city) on the dates for which the audit reports are available. All data have been adjusted for government accounting rules, which classify some outside educational grants as public revenues. Because these grants do not need to be divided with other public agencies, outside grant funding is considered the best measure of inequities among the public school systems [11, 12].

Accountability In Public Education

Accountability in education has been a focal point of discussion among government levels, particularly following initiatives like Creating Safe Schools and the Draft Educational Administration Bill in Bermuda. A consequence management accountability framework guides this examination. This study reviews divergent stakeholder perspectives and literature, employing qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, to gauge views on K-12 education accountability. Findings indicate that accountability is multi-dimensional, with significant interrelationships among these aspects. In Bermuda, statutes govern accountability requirements and goals; however, education accountability often fails to align with expected outcomes. Misalignments between various accountability types hinder public education results. The research enhances literature on public accountability in schools, highlighting that while accountability is often discussed, solutions in educational contexts remain scarce. An institutionalist framework that includes Governance, Policy, and Stakeholder perspectives is recommended for future approaches. Accountability in public education has long been a watchword, yet definitive progress is lacking. Stakeholders must be answerable for their actions and improve public education performance. Recent controversies in Bermuda emphasize dissatisfaction with educational outcomes, revealing the complexities arising from the interconnected roles of various stakeholders, including the Government, Auditor General, Department of Education, and the community [13, 14].

Challenges In Educational Governance

Issues surrounding public education governance are fundamentally political. Governance, alongside educational leadership, forms a vital aspect of public education discourse. The term governance encompasses a wide range of definitions and constructions. Key aspirations for effective governance include mutual accountability, transparency, and a focus on student achievement rather than merely on processes. Despite being easy to articulate, these principles require deeper discussion regarding the roles and relationships among stakeholders in public education governance. To understand the education governance landscape, two keys emerge: who makes the rules and who adheres to them. These elements help classify governance types into a two-by-two typology. One dimension distinguishes governance as

either public or private based on school institution ownership and knowledge suppliers, while the other categorizes governance as bureaucratic or political, indicating how governance tasks are executed. Governance questions fit into one of four quadrants according to the emphasized elements. Generally, education is perceived as predominantly publicly owned across nations, making public education governance significantly more relevant than private governance regarding the number of governance inquiries. This framework is applicable at local governmental levels, producing four governance types: bureaucratic public governance, political public governance, bureaucratic private governance, and political private governance [15, 16].

Best Practices in Governance

There is extensive research on good governance characteristics and the necessary structures for governance. Governance involves engaging stakeholders in reviewing and implementing organizational policies. Good governance is essential for long-term success and serves as a strategic resource that influences an organization's life and performance. Current models emphasize understanding what constitutes an effective governing body aligned with an organization's strategy. This suggests that many existing governmental board structures may become obsolete, indicating a need for substantial change in social engagement. Insufficient governance efforts and neglect towards social change can undermine good governance, notably in public education. While state governments often oversee various aspects of governance, there is a paucity of literature specifically addressing good governance in public schools, particularly from an Australian viewpoint. Public education in Australia is integral to the state, deeply ingrained in social structures, leading to significant interest in governance matters. Governance structures can change, yet governments typically opt to amend rules for newly formed boards. School boards became an alternative to state administration, gaining traction in the late 2000s. The framework for understanding school boards and their structural alternatives is explored, while the effects of elected boards on student performance regarding best practices are addressed. Considerations for countries with elected school boards undergoing reforms are discussed, alongside implications for state legislators. School boards aim to enhance educational standards, allocate resources, evaluate superintendents, monitor performance, and engage with the public. District-level boards in the USA operate more extensively than in other nations. Recent structural reforms of governing bodies have shown negative effects; however, some have also led to positive outcomes [17, 18].

Case Studies of Effective Governance

Governance of public education has been a major topic of discussion over the past two decades. Weber's ideal type of governance serves as a legitimate, yet challenging, definition of effective governance. This framework is widely critiqued in public sector contexts to enhance governance processes. Discussions surrounding education governance include revisions to Weber's bureaucratic approach, which contrasts with community governance with corporate proposals. While some regions may improve their educational governance competencies, none can achieve a perfect Weberian model. Essential governance principles include democratic accountability, transparency, performance measurement, and adherence to regulations, which assess the effects of these frameworks on education. The growing diversity in populations means school boards cannot operate under a "one size fits all" model. Conflicts arise when school boards, predominantly composed of one ethnic group, fail to connect with diverse student populations and their families. This disconnect fosters distrust and weakens minority representation in school systems. When a school board lacks cultural sensitivity, it risks misunderstanding or missteps that could lead to biased policies against other ethnic groups [19, 20].

The Future of Governance in Education

The available research to date on governance in education has focused on governance structures with an emphasis on hierarchies and market structures, not as strong a focus on discourses as governance logics. The research on this topic can detail frameworks for understanding increasing structures of accountability, the effectiveness of public systems of education, and non-state actors on the power of states to shape accountability mechanisms over time. These researchers on governance of education systems through traditional discourses of NEOL, such as accountability, efficiency, global competition, innovation, and decentralization, however, do not go far enough to understand what these relatively new discourses mean for education in unequal times. Perhaps the strongest feature of the available research to date on governance in education is its focus on governance structures. In a highly influential typology of governance models, researchers and their colleagues outline various governance models of public services, focusing on the robust set of agencies, regulatory, institutional, and enabling forms. Governance models

have been shown to differ strikingly in the extent to which 'the state shapes the policy agenda and the extent to which public services are directly provided by the state, as opposed to being marketized and undertaken by private bodies'. Governance models have also been shown to be consequential; states employing different models of governance have had different experiences as a consequence, enduring different levels and patterns of performance. State-level governance experience is thus seen as highly consequential for considering what possible paths forward may be available. As networks grow in size and complexity, states using coalition-style governance models experience progressively worse performance across various domains relative to states using hierarchical governance models. Top-down, bureaucratic models of governance, it is argued, are less resilient to shocks as they become stifled and unresponsive to changing circumstances. In addition, even as states employing highly decentralized governance regimes seem to have more opportunity, in practice, they encounter difficulties in coordination and interdependence [21, 22].

International Perspectives on Educational Governance

Education systems around the world are in a state of flux regarding their governance. Existing architecture is safe from informal advances into traditional power positions. Established hierarchies of governance, power and resources are being challenged in various ways: through the devolution of decision making over governance and resource allocation to local authorities and schools, changes in the roles and powers of schools' governing bodies, the establishment of quasi markets and new types of schools, shifting balances between public and private funding of services, and crackdowns on and possible curtailing of the power of teachers' unions. These upheavals in governance seem to be part of a broader set of changes occurring across a wide range of nations, and are usually termed as "globalisation." This is said to spell the end of what have been termed "welfare states," with their emphasis on universalism, uniformity, equality, and redistributive state intervention in the economy, employment, and social welfare generally. The increased influence of globalisation in national policy arenas is said to lead to a reshaping of the relationship between nation states and the economy, and in the process, the restructuring of power along regional, national, and local lines. This common set of transformations in governance seems to have generated a fresh epistemological interest in the study of governance processes. Changes in the locations of power and influence, and the shifting strategies and discourses of power, raise fruitful questions about how thought constructs these new loci of power in ways, which may locate analytic purchase on several levels of influence concurrently, helping to explain an array of governance changes across nations, while still allowing accounts of specific pathways to these transformations. How dominant views of governance change from global to national and local levels under different contingencies, and how competing interests provoke and facilitate changes in governance, are similarly productive avenues for inquiry on future paths of governance. Illuminating how historical, political, and cultural realities shape divergences in national pathways and informal attempts to gain power over existing governance structures will also ensure that awareness of broader social consequences remains integral to governance studies [23, 24].

CONCLUSION

Governance is the backbone of public education systems, determining not only how schools are administered but also how educational ideals are translated into practice. Historically and globally, governance frameworks have evolved from centralized, authoritative models to more participatory and complex structures. However, significant challenges persist, such as political interference, inequitable resource distribution, and the exclusion of marginalized groups. Effective governance requires transparency, mutual accountability, stakeholder engagement, and cultural sensitivity. Best practices, drawn from various national and local contexts, emphasize the necessity of adapting governance structures to societal needs while safeguarding education's public value. Strengthening governance frameworks is essential for public education systems to meet their promises of equity, quality, and empowerment in an increasingly complex and diverse world.

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