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An Impact Evaluation of Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF)

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Abstract

Despite having the biggest natural and human resources, Baluchistan lacks opportunities and financial resources. Due to financial constraints, the majority of students in the province sacrifice further education beyond matriculation or intermediate. For these students, there is hope through programs like the Baluchistan Education Endowment Fund (BEEF). The basic purpose of BEEF is to provide financial assistance to the needy students of the province. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact evaluation of BEEF. A qualitative and exploratory study is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of BEEF initiatives in promoting educational opportunities and improving educational outcomes for the students of Baluchistan. In this regard, primary data is collected from the top management of the BEEF through semi-structured qualitative interviews. The results of the study concluded that the BEEF has a positive impact on the development of higher education in the province by providing financial assistance to deserving students. It also contributes to the empowerment of women, provides equal opportunities for education for minorities and transgender, and motivates students to boost their performance. Additionally, the report recommends that the Government of Baluchistan (GOB) maintain funding for the province's talented and intelligent students.

Keywords: Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF), OECD DAC, Scholarship Programs, Higher Education

Introduction

Education is one of the contributing factors in strengthening society socially and economically. It provides positive development for the human resource (Ahmad, 2022). Higher education is a significant fact that helps develop human resources and provides awareness about the implementation and revolution in innovative technology (B. K. Khan et al., 2021). Research conducted in Romania shows that education and economic growth, are positively significant and they are directly proportional to each other (Mariana, 2015). Education provides awareness about investment and saving, populace control, health care services, and innovative technological practices for the progressive development of society (Woodhall, 2007)

In the survey of world out-of-school kids, aged 5-16 are about 22.8 million in Pakistan (Robert, 2020). Today, Pakistan is the world's second-highest country in the out-of-school survey. Socio-economic and gender partiality still exists in Pakistan.

Poverty is one of the biggest problems in society and is among all other challenges to its growth (Razi, 2016). Accomplishing higher education for females is very difficult compared to males because of a lack of resources and financial hurdles (Shaukat & Pell, 2017).

The government of Pakistan introduced new policies to increase access to higher education and offer scholarship programs to improve higher education in the country (Qazi et al., 2018). Under the umbrella of the Human Development Programs and the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the government offers different kinds of need—and merit-based scholarships for underprivileged areas.

The impact evaluation is defined as “to estimate the revolution in the success of a person because of a specific strategy or plan”. The main question of successful impact evaluation is to find out the cause-and-effect relationship between the policy and its consequences (Paul J. Gertler, et al., 2011). The impact evaluation provides knowledge regarding the planning, making, and implementation of Government policies, and the distribution of funds, it further provides information about the worth of funds and their effectiveness and efficiency (Johnson , et al., 2015). The literature shows a lack of studies conducted in Pakistan regarding the methodology of impact evaluation of scholarship programs (Ahmad, 2022). Mostly, the studies focus on finding the significance of scholarship programs in increasing admissions to higher education, availability of higher education opportunities, increasing the reservation of intelligent students in the country, and improving the student’s performance in their classes (Bettinger, et al., 2015).

This study will aim to do an ex-post impact evaluation of Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF) and to check the appropriateness of this scholarship program. This research will raise awareness of the implementation of programs and their outcomes effectively. This research provides policy guidelines to the concerned authorities. It will also be helpful to increase enrollment in higher education institutes in Pakistan. This research will contribute to the literature by evaluating the BEEF scholarship program. This study will be the first one to explore the impact evaluation of BEEF, their policy-appropriate implementation, and effective outcomes in Baluchistan. To assess the impact evaluation of Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF).

Literature Review

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in 2015 strongly

highlighted the importance of scholarship programs, as they measured it as a device for the developmental growth of the state (Ahmad, 2022) . The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4b targets to promote the best value education for all, worldwide and it also ensures the quality learning of learners. The SDGs aim to offer scholarship programs to ensure substantial admission to tertiary education. It seems that the estimated outcomes of the scholarship program will be determined effectively. The target of SDGs is to develop and nurture scholarship programs, but they do not mention where the funds are approaching (Balfour, 2016).

Examining 105 works of literature on higher education scholarship programs, it has been figured out that there are six different consequences of these scholarship programs, as they supply awareness of people toward education, supply skills, encourage public development, stimulate sustainable Improvement, internationalize organizations, and develop political links (A. C. Campbell & Neff, 2020). The research shows that scholarship encourages educational success, commitment, and attainments, whereas educational success depends upon consistency, progress, and completing the degree on time (Ganem & Manasse, 2011). The study illustrates that the students who receive scholarships make it a pillar of their success (Ahmad, 2022). The student's consistency, confidence, and determination are significantly related to their identification programs, performance appraisal, and successes (Bliven & Jungbauer, 2021). Financial support increases the quality of learning of students, but the scholar also declares that it is an extraordinarily small amount that does not cover all educational expenditures as a result the trust foundation pays them relevant amounts in the form of programs or plans (Rana, 2021)

Baluchistan Education Endowment Fund is a body constituted by the Government of Baluchistan for the brilliant, capable, and needy students belonging to the deprived sector or areas of the province by providing them with need or merit-based scholarships. For the success of economic and social growth in affluence and development of Pakistan, The scholarship aims to invest in human resources, which in return help in the country's development, by providing equal chances to intellectually intelligent and talented students of the province (BEEF, 2022).

The DAC Network on Development Evaluation is the international platform where experts and evaluation consultants from development cooperation OECD countries members and multilateral development institutions work together under one forum. The network aims to improve the effectiveness of international interventions

by providing dominant evaluations. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) initially in 1991 set five criteria for evaluation. In 2002 the criteria are well explained in definition. These evaluation criteria are Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and sustainability. They are considered the best evaluation criterion for Development Corporations and others (OECD, Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness, 2002). The criteria are broadly implemented, easy to understand, consistent, and comparable. The results of the criterion are easy, neutral, and easily implementable, and it covers the broad area that needs to be evaluated. It concludes that the reviewed criteria need to be continued and developed for further enhancement with the current explanation (OECD, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, 2019).

The fundamental purpose of implementing the OECD DAC evaluation criteria is to evaluate the impact evaluation of the intervention. The objective of the impact evaluation is to evaluate the direct outcomes of the project, providing investigational proof of its effectiveness. The impact evaluation helps us in making decisions by providing us the knowledge and accountability, it helps the firm to improve its core missions and facilitates the affected societies. The OECD DAC standards are the best criteria to evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of intervention for its impact evaluations, it facilitate the external environmental factors to make the evidence-based decisions, allocate the resources, and motivate the sustainable developmental goal (Manya & Abbasi, 2024).

Methodology

The research paper will be qualitative and exploratory. The main advantage of the qualitative data collection process is that it provides us with the knowledge to understand the complete development of the program. The qualitative results for program evaluation are possibly extra straightforward. There are already many national and international measures of student outputs and outcomes that can be used as part of a policy evaluation exercise.

The primary data is collected through interviews. The secondary information was gathered from desktop reviews through published papers on the impact evaluation of scholarship programs in higher education, including progress and annual reports. The secondary information provides better information about the historical context of the impact evaluation of scholarship programs.

The research is based on evaluation and aims to gather information from the top management of Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF) and their

committee members. Their proficiency familiarity is mostly ex-post in nature. The evaluation process makes it possible to determine the ensuing results, best practices, and improvements. The population of the research study consists of the 09 Admin staff of Baluchistan Education Endowment Fund, their top management, and committee members who contend and monitor the scholarships program. These members will give enhanced evidence about the BEEF scholarship program and their impact.

The OECD-DAC is “the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide useful information, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. The evaluation also refers determining the significance of an activity, policy, or program. An assessment is as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, ongoing, or completed development intervention” (Penny & Teferra, 2015). We use the DAC’s model as the main evaluation method for the BEEF Scholarship impact evaluation.

Results and Findings

Relevance

The BEEF program has accomplished its goals with complete relevancy and consistency. It is considered a valid relevant and effective program, which is playing a vital role in financially supporting the meritorious students enhancing their academic performance, and contributing to the development of society. The purpose of BEEF is to minimize the financial barriers that cause educational collapse in the underdeveloped province of Baluchistan. It is providing scholarships not only nationally but also internationally.

The activities and results closely match the expected effects, especially in helping Baluchistan’s socioeconomic growth, encouraging academic success, and offering financial support. The BEEF's continued growth, institutional collaborations, and monitoring initiatives show that BEEF is flexible and dedicated to constantly improving its goals.

Over time, the program's flexibility has been demonstrated by its expansion to accommodate a greater variety of degree programs and even overseas scholarships. BEEF's activities are in line with its intended impact, which includes enhancing

educational outcomes and promoting socioeconomic development, others argue that more thorough research is necessary to evaluate the program's long-term benefits

Effectiveness

In accomplishing its goals, the BEEF program has made notable progress. It works well for boosting school enrollment, encouraging academic competition, and giving financial aid to deserving, worthy students in Baluchistan. Scholarships have grown dramatically, and the program continues to operate with high integrity and transparency.

BEEF's success effect in strong governance, merit-based selection, and stakeholder collaboration. Obstacles including student awareness, political influence, and demographic pressure prevent the program from realizing its full potential. Certifying that students are properly educated about the BEEF program, efforts must be improved. The competent students know how to apply, this can be accomplished through focused outreach initiatives, workshops, and social media campaigns. BEEF would assist in addressing the rising need for scholarships in a rapidly shifting demographic environment. It's become difficult that the integrity of the scholarship distribution process by making sure that political influence doesn't sway merit-based judgments. To assist against outside influences, governance procedures should be strengthened. The BEEF program may continue to improve education in Baluchistan and increase its efficacy by tackling external issues and bolstering its internal strengths.

Efficiency

The scholarship programs under examination demonstrate a strong dedication of attaining operational efficiency, punctuality, and cost-effectiveness. Only a small amount of these program's budgets usually between 5% and 10% is used for administrative expenses like salaries, electricity, and other overheads; the majority is provided for scholarship funds. These scholarship types are particularly cost-effective as resemble to alternatives, provide by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), which usually have higher administrative expenses.

BEEF projects aim to enhance timeliness, yet many encounter difficulties with data gathering, stakeholder collaboration, and logistical procedures. The time lag between policy design and execution is frequently the cause of delays, which can occasionally last up to one academic year. Through better planning and more efficient implementation, the programs have been able to better coincide with academic years

and deadlines in several circumstances.

The programs are taking proactive measures to increase their efficiency, despite obstacles with external stakeholders. These continuous enhancements to personnel competencies and organizational procedures show a dedication to preserving and boosting the programs' impact. The BEEF program's emphasis on capacity building, continuous improvement, and strategic planning guarantees that it will continue to accomplish its objectives in a timely and efficient manner, even though there are still occasional delays and operational difficulties

Impact

Students' lives have been significantly improved by the BEEF program. About 90,000 students have received scholarships from the program since its institutions and its effects extend beyond the recipients to their families and communities. BEEF has made it possible for students who might not have been able to afford higher education to continue their education by offering financial assistance. The scholarships are given out only based on merit, and students are urged to perform well since this raises their CGPA and increases academic rivalry, which makes them even more motivated to succeed.

The percentage of out-of-school children has been gradually declining as more students have access to education. Furthermore, BEEF's assistance has promoted a more upbeat and competitive learning atmosphere, raising enrollment and retention rates. By giving students financial support, BEEF has enabled them to follow their goals and land decent jobs, which in turn contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction. Furthering social development, BEEF's emphasis on women's empowerment and gender equality has also helped to reduce educational gaps, especially for rural women. The studies have shown how well the program has worked to achieve its objectives, which include lowering poverty, offering high-quality education, and raising provincial educational standards.

Sustainability

It has been estimated that the program's operations will continue even after particular project activities come to an end because the Baluchistan Education Endowment Fund (BEEF) demonstrates a sustainable model for long-term educational support. The creation of an endowment fund, which generates revenue by investing in a variety of industries, including banking and businesses, is essential to its sustainability. The money made from these investments goes toward operating expenditures,

administrative fees, and scholarships.

The program does have some difficulties. The large and challenging-to-reach demographic region of Baluchistan is one of the primary obstacles. Lack of infrastructure, such as dependable internet access or transportation, makes it difficult for many students. As BEEF's heavy reliance on digital platforms for scholarship announcements and application management, the program's visibility and opportunities are limited in remote areas due to inadequate internet connectivity

Considering these obstacles, BEEF has proactively raised awareness, by strengthening partnerships with local communities, government organizations, and colleges. BEEF must uphold its fundamental principles, especially merit-based scholarships, which support educational opportunities and advance Baluchistan's socioeconomic growth. Stakeholder participation, policy improvement, and thorough assessment will be necessary as the program develops to guarantee its ongoing effectiveness.

Conclusion, Recommendations, and Limitations

Conclusion

Education improves the skills, and capabilities of people progressively for society. Higher education is considered a main developmental factor for poverty alleviation and revenue dissemination. The government of Pakistan takes several actions for the students by providing them with scholarships to develop the importance of higher education. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) goal is to facilitate thorough, knowledgeable, and independent evaluation to increase the efficacy of international development programs. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has created common definitions for the six evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

The study is qualitative and exploratory. Primary data is collected through interviews with the top 09 admin staff of Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF). The purpose is to find out the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of BEEF programs. The Baluchistan Education Endowment Funds (BEEF) has successfully achieve its goal with relevancy and consistency. The objective of BEEF is to minimize the financial hurdles of the students belonging to deprived backgrounds that cause their educational interruption. BEEF is renowned as a legitimate and prosperous initiative from the government of Baluchistan that

supports the academic excellence of the students by providing them with financial assistance.

The BEEF program has significantly improved the lives of the students of Baluchistan where financial barriers affect the asses of higher education. The number of beneficiaries is about 90,000 who received the scholarship since the BEEF was established, its extent affects beyond the lives of the students but also their families and communities. The out-of-school rate is declining, emphasis on women empowerment and gender equality, it inspires the students to put more effort into increasing their CGPA, the competitive learning environment among the students, and increasing the educational standard by promoting a culture of excellence and accountability.

Recommendations

The evaluation has enabled the identification of the following recommendations, which could help maximize the outcomes attained and enhance their sustainability. These suggestions might be incorporated into the plan for the next interventions in the same field that the partners, the promoter, or the donor want to carry out.

- Plan staff training sessions regularly to improve their abilities and productivity in running the program.
- To enhance the program's digital platforms and general technological capabilities, invest in technical upgrades.
- To guarantee that deserving students receive support based on academic achievement, keep giving merit top priority when choosing scholarships. Because the mantra of BEEF is merit and prioritizing merit increase the capabilities of achievement and hard work of student.
- Conduct routine reviews and assessments to determine the program's impact and efficacy as well as areas that require improvement.
- Concentrate on creating an operational and financial model that will enable BEEF to carry on with its activities for a long time. To achieve higher sustainability, take proactive steps to reduce risks and optimize program results.
- Strive to increase the endowment fund's size so that all deserving students can eventually get scholarships.
- Increase the program's funding base to boost overall effectiveness.
- Increase the number of students who receive scholarships so that more

recipients can continue their education.

- Conduct a thorough investigation to assess the program's influence on Baluchistan's socioeconomic circumstances.

Limitations

The primary difficulties BEEF encounters in its operations, outreach, and expansion in offering scholarships and educational assistance in Baluchistan are summed up in these areas.

- BEEF faces challenges in providing fully financed scholarships based on merit, even though the number of students enrolling each year continues to rise.
- Because the area is tribal, there is social pressure to list the names of some pupils regardless of their qualifications.
- BEEF's outreach and support are hampered by some places' limited accessibility, particularly in remote areas.
- BEEF's work in some areas is made more difficult by Baluchistan's complicated demographics.
- BEEF's operations and capacity to award scholarships to all worthy students are hampered by a lack of resources, especially financial limitations.
- Due to financial limitations, BEEF is unable to offer scholarships to all deserving students.

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