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Dissecting the Weaknesses in the Education Regulatory Environment in Liberia

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Abstract

This scholarly article examines shortcomings in Liberia's educational regulatory framework, emphasizing their impact on quality assurance, access, and fairness in education. A mixed-methods approach highlights systemic inefficiencies, regulatory gaps, and enforcement challenges exacerbated by limited resources and institutional capacity. The findings reveal that although frameworks exist to regulate and oversee the educational sector, enforcement is often inconsistent. Additionally, corruption, inadequate teacher training, and poor infrastructure hinder effective implementation. The recommendations focus on strengthening governance, increasing accountability, and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders to ensure equitable, high-quality educational opportunities for all Liberian citizens.

Keywords: Implementation; Frameworks; Regulatory Gaps; Enforcement Challenges; Regulatory Environment

1. Introduction

Education regulatory frameworks are the legal, policy-based, and organizational structures that define how educational systems operate. They set guidelines for developing curricula, determine the credentials required for educators, approve schools, and assess student performance (World Bank, 2022). These frameworks serve as a guiding mechanism to promote consistency, ensure quality, and uphold education as a fundamental right. Regulatory frameworks play a crucial role in standardizing educational methods and maintaining high standards. Accreditation processes and evaluation systems critically assess educational institutions and higher education establishments against set criteria (UNESCO, 2023). These measures help prevent poor educational practices and strengthen institutional accountability.

Meticulously designed frameworks address inequities in educational access, ensuring that underrepresented populations have equal opportunities. The Education Act in India guarantees that children aged 6 to 14 receive free and compulsory schooling, significantly reducing enrollment gaps across economic groups (Kumar & Sharma, 2021). Frameworks are vital tools for developing curricula that align with national priorities and meet global standards. They also link educational goals to the realities of the job market, promoting workforce readiness (Anderson et al., 2021). By establishing qualification criteria and licensing requirements, regulatory frameworks enhance educators' professional status. Continuous professional development initiatives ensure teachers stay informed about current pedagogical advancements (Schleicher, 2022). Education regulations also facilitate the integration of technology into teaching and learning amid the digital revolution. They set standards for digital literacy, infrastructure, and cybersecurity, ensuring that technological progress benefits all key stakeholders (OECD, 2022).

Education is a fundamental pillar of societal progress and personal empowerment. Comprehensive regulatory frameworks ensure that educational systems align with national goals and international standards and provide equitable access for all individuals. In light of challenges such as inequality, digital transformation, and global competition, these frameworks support a systematic approach to policy development and implementation.

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A fragile education regulatory framework in Liberia indicates a lack of comprehensive systems and mechanisms to effectively supervise and enforce quality standards in the educational sector. This results in challenges such as poor teacher qualifications, inadequate implementation of the curriculum, inconsistent school management practices, and lower overall learning outcomes. These issues are mainly due to the country's historical conflicts and the limited government capacity to regulate education effectively.

Education is fundamental to national progress, serving as a driving force for economic growth, social mobility, and civic participation. In Liberia, prolonged periods of civil unrest and economic instability have severely damaged the educational infrastructure, making it difficult for regulatory frameworks to develop. Despite reform efforts and international aid, the educational regulatory landscape faces major challenges, including ineffective governance, inadequate teacher certification systems, and widespread unregulated private educational institutions (Williams, 2023). This research aims to identify weaknesses in Liberia's educational regulatory framework by exploring the underlying factors that contribute to these issues. It examines how systemic inefficiencies affect access to quality education and evaluates the effectiveness of current policy measures. The findings will contribute to the ongoing discussion about improving education in post-conflict settings.

Research Objectives

- To identify the education regulatory frameworks in Liberia.
- To identify the weaknesses and implementation challenges in the education regulatory environment in Liberia.
- To recommend solutions to the existing gaps and weaknesses in the education regulatory environment in Liberia

Research questions

- What are the education regulatory frameworks in Liberia?
- What are the weaknesses in the education regulatory environment in Liberia?
- What are the recommended solutions to existing weaknesses and implementation challenges?

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The regulatory framework in the education sector plays a crucial role in shaping the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of educational services (OECD, 2018). In Liberia, despite significant efforts to rebuild and improve the education system after the civil war and the 2014 Ebola crisis, the regulatory structure still has fundamental flaws that limit progress and sustainability. These flaws prevent the educational system from providing equal, high-quality learning experiences, which worsens ongoing social and economic inequalities.

A major challenge in Liberia's educational regulatory system is the lack of comprehensive policies and enforcement mechanisms. For example, although the Education Reform Act of 2011 established a governance framework that includes decentralization and teacher quality standards, its implementation has been inconsistent (UNESCO, 2018). Many schools, especially those in rural areas, operate without sufficient oversight, leading to variations in quality and accountability. This regulatory gap allows unqualified teachers to remain in the system, which directly and negatively affects student learning outcomes (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020).

Funding mechanisms clarify regulatory gaps within the system. The educational sector in Liberia remains underfunded, receiving only 2-4% of its Gross Domestic Product, well below the UNESCO-recommended threshold of 6% (UNESCO, 2022). The lack of robust financial oversight worsens inefficiencies and fosters corruption, often preventing allocated funds from reaching the educational institutions that need them most (World Bank, 2019). This regulatory shortcoming significantly hampers efforts to improve infrastructure, provide adequate learning resources, and ensure equitable access across geographic and socioeconomic areas.

Furthermore, Liberia faces significant challenges in aligning its educational policies with labor market demands. A report by the African Development Bank (2020) highlighted a gap between the educational curriculum and the skills required in Liberia's labor market. The current inequality is partly due to stakeholders' limited involvement in policy development and implementation. Without regulatory frameworks that promote collaboration among government agencies, the private sector, and civil society, the educational system struggles to meet the country's developmental needs effectively.

Another pivotal concern is the inadequacy of the regulatory framework in enforcing inclusivity and gender equity. While initiatives such as the Girls' Education Policy aim to promote gender parity, the lack of robust enforcement mechanisms

leaves many girls vulnerable to dropping out of school due to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and socio-cultural barriers (UNICEF, 2021). Likewise, children with disabilities continue to face disproportionate marginalization because of the absence of inclusive educational policies and sufficient resources.

The impact of these deficiencies is significant for Liberia's educational infrastructure and broader societal goals. Without addressing these regulatory gaps, Liberia risks perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. A thorough reassessment of the educational regulatory framework, emphasizing strong policy development, capacity building, and enforcement, is crucial to foster systemic resilience and fairness.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Content Analysis Theory offers a robust, systematic framework for analyzing textual data, providing a clear method for extracting meaning from qualitative information. It is especially relevant for investigating issues within Liberia's educational regulatory framework. This framework includes statutes, policies, and directives documented in government reports, legal documents, and international standards. Content Analysis Theory is particularly effective for carefully analyzing textual data to identify patterns, themes, and inconsistencies (Krippendorff, 2018). Using this approach, the research can uncover hidden meanings and implicit issues in regulatory documents, including vague policy language, gaps in enforcement, and conflicting mandates.

Content Analysis offers a systematic approach to categorizing textual data and measuring qualitative insights, ensuring the objectivity of the research. This thorough method is crucial for analyzing the educational regulatory landscape, as it reduces researcher bias and makes studies easier to replicate (Neuendorf, 2017). For example, when comparing Liberia's educational policies to internationally recognized benchmarks, Content Analysis helps systematically identify inconsistencies in a clear, measurable way. Problems within the educational regulatory system often appear through conflicting policies, limited stakeholder involvement, and poor resource allocation. Content Analysis helps uncover these issues by examining the content of documents and the focus of specific regulatory themes. For instance, ongoing neglect of teacher training programs in policy documents can be highlighted and quantified to support claims of regulatory gaps.

A variety of participants, including government agencies, non-state organizations, and international collaborators, influence the regulatory framework. Content analysis supports the integration of multiple data sources, such as policy documents, legislative records, meeting minutes, and news reports. This inclusivity is essential for understanding the complex challenges within Liberia's educational system (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Recent research highlights the growing importance of Content Analysis in educational studies. For instance, Maluleka and Makgahlela (2022) used Content Analysis to evaluate adherence to regulations in African educational systems, revealing gaps in implementation and accountability. Similarly, Boakye and Ampiah (2021) applied this method to examine educational policy documents in Ghana, demonstrating its effectiveness in identifying systemic issues. The rigorous approach in these studies underscores the method's usefulness in Liberia.

The Content Analysis Theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining shortcomings in Liberia's educational regulatory system. Its systematic, objective, and adaptable qualities make it especially effective for analyzing complex textual data, uncovering underlying themes, and offering practical recommendations. By applying this framework, the research aligns with current methodological progress and ensures a thorough approach to addressing key regulatory challenges.

In the case of Liberia, content analysis theory specifically explains regulatory gaps in education by methodically pinpointing missing links between policy documents and enforcement or implementation failures. For example, standards exist, but enforcement mechanisms are vague. Moreover, effective enforcement is undermined by resource constraints. As it relates to language, some policies cannot be enforced consistently. Content analysis also reveals fragmentation and internal inconsistencies across policies (Bowen, 2009; Schreier, 2012). Content analysis can uncover accountability gaps. For example, the Liberia National Learning Assessment Framework is intended to guide the development of assessments. However, a regulatory gap exists because governance texts in the policy are not clearly linked to improvement actions, timelines, and oversight authority (Neuendorf, 2017).

2. Literature Review

The educational regulatory landscape in Liberia is shaped by various policy frameworks, notably the Education Reform Act of 2011 and the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) (Ministry of Education, 2022). These frameworks aim to establish benchmarks for curriculum development, educator qualifications, and institutional accreditation. However,

research highlights significant discrepancies between the goals of these policies and their implementation. Since the end of the civil conflict in 2003, Liberia's education system has faced major challenges due to insufficient funding and systemic neglect. A World Bank (2021) report states that only 12% of public educational institutions meet basic infrastructure standards. Additionally, research by Johnson and Taylor (2022) emphasizes the lack of a comprehensive monitoring system as a key obstacle to enforcing regulatory measures.

The quality of educators is essential to effective teaching. However, research shows that only 40% of educators in Liberia have formal pedagogical training (UNESCO, 2022). The lack of rigorous certification procedures has allowed poorly qualified individuals to enter the profession, undermining educational outcomes. The rapid growth of private and informal schools has placed additional strain on the regulatory system. While these institutions help fill gaps in public education, they often operate without proper accreditation or oversight. Scholars such as Kamara (2023) argue that the rise in unregulated educational establishments undermines efforts to ensure equal access to quality education. Corruption within the education sector is a common problem. Transparency International (2023) reported that nepotism and bribery are common in teacher hiring and school evaluations, resulting in unfair resource allocation.

3. Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative methodological framework. It used a literature review as a qualitative strategy to gather and analyze data from secondary sources (Creswell & Plano, 2018). Data were collected through a thorough review of official reports, scholarly articles, and policy documents relevant to the educational policy value chain in Liberia. In total, more than 15 documents related to issues within the education regulatory regime were reviewed.

This investigation used a document-review research design to examine regulatory frameworks and their implementation challenges. In conducting this research, a diverse set of documents was carefully selected for relevance, reliability, and timeframe. The collection includes government reports, scholarly articles, policy analyses, and publications from international organizations. The selection criteria ensured that the documents, together, provide a comprehensive overview of the factors involved in identifying weaknesses in Liberia's education regulatory environment. A thorough, systematic framework was developed to critically evaluate the selected documents. Key variables, including political stability, economic resources, social attitudes, community engagement, gender inequalities, and infrastructure, were defined. The review protocol included methods for systematically extracting and categorizing data relevant to these variables. The information gathered from the documents was organized and encoded according to these variables. Patterns, trends, and relationships were identified and analyzed to conclude the factors influencing the implementation of educational reform in Liberia. Policymakers responsible for school supervision acknowledged the challenges of ensuring compliance with school guidelines and regulations. In an interview with some supervisors, it was revealed that

4. Results

4.1. Education Regulatory Frameworks in Liberia

The regulatory frameworks governing education in Liberia are carefully designed to oversee the management, quality, and standards of educational practices nationwide. These frameworks include many policies, laws, institutions, and initiatives that work together to improve access, equity, and quality in the educational system. Below are the main elements of Liberia's education regulatory frameworks.

4.2. Key Institutions and Governing Bodies

Ministry of Education (MoE): The MoE serves as the primary regulatory body for Liberia's education sector. Its responsibilities include developing, implementing, and evaluating educational policies and programs. The Ministry oversees and designs educational policies for all types of schools, including public, community, private, and faith-based institutions. The MoE is organized into central, county, and district offices. Each county has a county education officer (CEO) responsible for operational management. Liberia's educational structure is outlined as follows: Early childhood education (ECE): a three-year program for children aged 3 to 5. Core education: Nine years, consisting of six years of basic foundational learning and three years of advanced foundational learning. Secondary education: Three years, which may include either general secondary schooling or technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Tertiary education: Four years.

The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) aims to uphold educational quality in Liberia. It is responsible for managing and accrediting higher education institutions. The NCHE is the governing body responsible for assessing,

validating, and accrediting higher learning institutions in Liberia. It also oversees the operations of currently functioning higher education institutions nationwide. The statutory duties of the Commission, as outlined in Section One of the legislative Act that established it in 1989, include: 1. Developing comprehensive policy frameworks for establishing higher education in Liberia while coordinating and serving as the primary intermediary between higher education institutions and the Liberian government. 2. Systematically monitoring, evaluating, and accrediting all higher education institutions. 3. Approving all new and existing higher education programs for financial support based on their alignment with national developmental needs. 4. Evaluating current programs at higher education institutions to prioritize academic offerings according to national priorities. (National Policy on Higher Education, 2002).

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) administers standardized examinations and certification processes for primary and secondary education in Liberia and other West African nations. WAEC is an examination authority established by legislative mandate to determine the necessary examinations in the public interest across English-speaking West African countries, oversee their administration, and award qualifications comparable to those issued by similar bodies worldwide. Founded in 1952, the council was established to administer exit assessments in five West African countries where English is spoken: Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Liberia. Additionally, the council maintains an endowment fund to improve educational opportunities by offering lectures and financial support to economically disadvantaged individuals. (2004). Several missions drive the Council, most of which focus on maintaining the standards it has set. The West African Examination Council's missions include the following objectives: upholding internationally recognized protocols, ensuring the delivery of high-quality, trustworthy educational assessments, and promoting sustainable human resource development, mutual understanding, and international collaboration.

4.3. Legislation and Policy Documents

Education Reform Act of 2011: This act articulates the framework and obligations of educational entities, underscoring the importance of access to free and compulsory primary education. The Liberia Education Reform Act of 2011 serves as a crucial legislative tool that has radically altered Liberia's educational landscape, chiefly by extending free and compulsory education to include junior secondary education (grades 7-9), improving access to high-quality educational opportunities for all children in Liberia, and reforming the governance framework in the educational field; thereby positioning it as the core legal basis for fulfilling the right to education in the nation. The most salient characteristic of the Act is the incorporation of junior secondary education into free and compulsory schooling, which substantially increases the number of children eligible for government-supported educational services. The Act seeks to reconfigure the educational system by decentralizing authority and strengthening accountability mechanisms across administrative levels. The legislation emphasizes advancing educational quality by instituting standardized criteria for teacher preparation, curriculum innovation, and evaluative methodologies. The Act advocates initiatives to address gender imbalances in education and increase female student participation. The Act seeks to conform to global frameworks on the right to education. By broadening the parameters of compulsory education, the Act inadvertently helps mitigate child labor by elevating the minimum age threshold for permissible employment. Notwithstanding its comprehensive design, the Act grapples with obstacles such as insufficient financial resources, a shortage of qualified educators, and infrastructural inadequacies that impede the realization of its objectives (Salia, 2022).

Table 1 Regulatory Policy Documents

Policy Documents	Description
Liberia Education Plan (2022). /23-2026/27	This policy document provides a strategic roadmap for achieving the government's key education policy goals over the next five years.
Liberia National Policy on Education	This policy delineates the parameters for curriculum formulation, educator professional development, and institutional governance across all tiers of education.
Higher Education Act	It sets benchmarks for post-secondary institutions and confers authority on the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) regarding its oversight and quality assurance processes.
Technical and vocational and training (TVET) Policy:	This policy emphasizes developing regulatory structures for vocational and technical education to enhance skill acquisition and improve job prospects.
Free and Compulsory Education Policy:	Obliges the provision of free educational opportunities at the primary level to bolster enrollment figures and mitigate rates of illiteracy.

Table 2 Curriculum and Quality Assurance Frameworks

Quality Framework	Assurance	Description
Liberia Standards	Curriculum	Formulated to guarantee uniformity and excellence in pedagogical practices and educational outcomes throughout the nation in accordance with established regional and international criteria.
Teacher Standards	Certification	These standards require educators to meet specific qualifications and participate in ongoing professional development to demonstrate their proficiency.
School Framework:	Accreditation	To remain legally operational, educational institutions must meet specified criteria regarding infrastructure, personnel, and instructional quality.
Liberia Administrative Regulations (LEAG)	Education	This policy document outlines the strategic framework for implementing the shared vision for education management across educational institutions, educators, and learners, ensuring adherence to established regulatory standards.

Table 3 International and regional Commitments

International and Regional Commitments	Description
Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)	Liberia’s educational policies align with the objectives of SDG4, which aim to ensure inclusive and equitable access to high-quality education and to foster lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals.
Education for All (EFA) Initiative	Liberia is resolutely dedicated to advancing the goals of the EFA initiative, which seeks to raise literacy rates, ensure equitable access to education, and enhance the overall quality of educational experiences.
ECOWAS Protocol on Education	This protocol promotes regional alignment of educational systems by recognizing academic credentials and facilitating the mobility of students and educators across member states.

Table 4 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms	Description
Annual Education Sector Review:	Administered by the Ministry of Education, this review evaluates the progress, challenges, and effectiveness of enacted policies.
School Inspection and Supervision Units	Systematic inspections ensure adherence to established standards within public and private educational institutions.
DATA and Reporting Systems	Resources such as the LEAS platform furnish essential data for monitoring critical indicators, including enrollment figures, dropout statistics, and educator performance metrics.

Table 5 Funding and Public –Private Collaborations

Funding and Public – Private Collaborations	Description
Education Sector Plan (ESP)	This document delineates the funding priorities and objectives, formulated in conjunction with international collaborators such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank.
Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL)	This is a program in which private entities are entrusted with the administration of public educational institutions, subject to stringent governmental supervision.

4.4. Weaknesses in the Education Regulatory Environment

Despite these regulatory regimes, the system is rife with inherent weaknesses that undermine the coherent and consistent enforcement of regulatory policies. A considerable challenge exists in holding educational institutions and their administrators accountable for meeting mandated standards, primarily due to insufficient monitoring and ineffective punitive measures. Rigorous protocols are absent to ensure that educators possess the requisite competencies, training, and licensure to provide high-quality instruction. Pronounced discrepancies in educational quality vary significantly by geographical location and financial resources, resulting in inequitable access to superior educational opportunities. There are obstacles to formulating and consistently executing a well-organized curriculum across the entire spectrum of educational institutions. Transparent frameworks for monitoring student performance, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring stakeholder accountability are lacking. Inadequate financial resources are allocated to the Ministry of Education, hindering its ability to supervise and regulate the educational sector effectively. Students are failing to attain the anticipated levels of academic proficiency, largely due to substandard teaching practices and inconsistent educational settings. The prevalence of inferior educational standards disproportionately affects children from underprivileged backgrounds. Graduates may exhibit deficiencies in the skills sought by the labor market due to poor-quality educational experiences.

4.5. Outdated Regulatory Frameworks

A significant yet frequently overlooked challenge in Liberia's educational landscape is the antiquated regulatory framework governing the sector. The existing laws, policies, and oversight mechanisms are vestiges of a bygone era that fail to capture the complexities of contemporary education. This dissonance has created substantial obstacles to quality assurance, institutional accountability, and innovation. The majority of Liberia's foundational educational statutes were enacted before the onset of the civil conflict, with several dating back to the 1970s and 1980s. These frameworks have not undergone a comprehensive revision to address post-war reconstruction of the educational system, the burgeoning involvement of the private sector, or the imperatives of digital learning. Consequently, regulators operate within a system characterized by ambiguous, outdated, or entirely unenforceable regulations. For instance, the Education Reform Act of 2011 endeavored to establish a new trajectory but fell short of delineating explicit operational standards for private institutions or mechanisms for large-scale compliance monitoring (Ministry of Education, 2011).

A paramount consequence of this regulatory inertia is the inability to control the proliferation of low-quality private educational establishments and higher education institutions. With minimal accreditation protocols and feeble enforcement mechanisms, these institutions may operate without adequate oversight, occasionally providing subpar education or issuing fraudulent qualifications. The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) reports that the escalation of unaccredited tertiary institutions continues, affecting public confidence in academic qualifications (NCHE, 2023). Furthermore, the antiquated regulatory framework impedes effective teacher management and curricular modernization. There is no robust legal framework to guide teacher certification, evaluation, or professional development, resulting in significant disparities in teacher quality nationwide. A 2020 UNESCO report underscores that over 60% of educators in rural Liberia lack the requisite qualifications; however, there has been minimal systemic response due to regulatory inertia (UNESCO, 2020). Digital education, another pivotal domain, is also largely disregarded under the extant policy framework. There are no established standards for online learning or for integrating technology into educational settings. The inadequacies in the regulatory framework for distance learning became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational institutions resorted to improvised delivery models without guidance or assessment, leading to significant disparities in student access and outcomes (World Bank, 2021).

The outcome is a disjointed, inadequately supervised educational system in which both public and private entities operate without a unified framework. This fragmentation undermines efforts to raise educational standards and exacerbates persistent disparities in access, quality, and equity. The modernization of Liberia's educational regulatory framework transcends mere bureaucratic reform-it constitutes an essential step toward establishing a functional, accountable, and future-oriented educational system. This requires revising outdated statutes, establishing enforceable standards, and empowering oversight bodies with the authority and resources to implement them. Absent such changes, initiatives to enhance teacher training, curricula, infrastructure, and student outcomes will continue to be compromised by a system lacking the regulatory foundation necessary for enduring transformation.

4.6. Inadequate Enforcement Mechanisms

Notwithstanding Liberia's comprehensive educational policies, the education sector continues to face significant challenges due to inadequate enforcement mechanisms. While laws and regulations are formally established, chronic implementation deficiencies have severely hindered efforts to improve access, quality, and equity in the educational landscape. This enforcement deficit is one of the most substantial obstacles to achieving significant advancements in

Liberia's educational framework. The Liberia Education Reform Act of 2011 sets ambitious goals to strengthen governance, improve teacher effectiveness, and advance infrastructure development (Republic of Liberia, 2011). The Ministry of Education (MoE) has developed strategic actions, including the Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2022-2027, which focuses on advancing learning outcomes and advocating for inclusive

Education and the development of strong practices for school monitoring. Nevertheless, the persistent inability to enforce these policies has led educational institutions, particularly in rural areas, to operate without sufficient oversight or accountability.

For instance, the regulation requiring the presence of trained and licensed educators in all educational establishments remains largely unenforced. The 2022 Education Sector Analysis found that over 60% of educators in public schools lack formal pedagogical training (MoE, 2022). Although the Teacher Professional Development Policy advocates ongoing certification and training, the absence of effective monitoring frameworks and insufficient funding render enforcement nearly nonexistent. Many educators are appointed based on political favoritism or local arrangements rather than meritocratic principles or qualifications. Furthermore, school inspection systems are largely ineffective. The National School Quality Standards mandate regular inspections; however, MoE data indicate that less than 25% of schools undergo inspections annually (MoE, 2022). In the absence of adequate enforcement, educational institutions fail to comply with fundamental standards for infrastructure, sanitation, and curriculum delivery. This issue is particularly pronounced in counties beyond Monrovia, where logistical and financial constraints make enforcement nearly unattainable.

Corruption and political meddling significantly erode enforcement capacity. Financial resources earmarked for educational improvements or teacher training often fail to achieve their intended objectives. Local education officials, tasked with upholding standards, are often inadequately compensated and lack the transportation or incentives needed to conduct effective supervision (World Bank, 2021). Consequently, even when policies are articulated, no practical mechanisms exist to ensure adherence. The ramifications of this situation are profound. In the absence of enforcement, policy becomes largely symbolic rather than functional. Inadequately qualified teachers instruct students, learning takes place in deteriorating environments, and students encounter inequitable opportunities that vary by geographic location. A 2019 USAID study found that Liberian students in grade 3 performed below foundational standards in reading and mathematics, partially attributable to subpar instructional quality and inconsistent school oversight (USAID, 2019).

Rectifying this enforcement gap requires more than formulating improved policies-it requires comprehensive systemic reform to implement existing frameworks. This includes empowering district education officers, increasing inspection budgets, establishing transparent teacher recruitment processes, and instituting penalties for noncompliance. Without these measures, Liberia's educational regulations will remain merely aspirational rather than actionable.

4.7. Funding and Resource Constraints

The educational field faces financial constraints, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching supplies, and meager compensation for educators. These funding and resource limitations reflect a substantial deficiency in Liberia's educational policies, significantly hindering the nation's capacity to provide high-quality education. Despite policy frameworks such as the Education Reform Act of 2011, which mandates free and compulsory basic education, the successful implementation of these laws is significantly hindered by insufficient financial and material resources. The allocation of government resources to the education sector in Liberia is markedly lower than in other sub-Saharan African nations. As reported by the World Bank (2021), education expenditures in Liberia remain below the government's target set in the Education Sector Plan 2010-2020, which aligns with the minimum benchmark of 20% of total government expenditure established by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In recent fiscal years, the proportion of educational expenditure in Liberia's national budget has fluctuated between 13% and 15%, falling short of these established benchmarks (World Bank, 2021; Global Partnership for Education, 2020).

The consequences of insufficient funding are evident across multiple dimensions of the educational system. Numerous educational institutions, particularly those in rural areas, lack essential infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, and sanitation facilities. This infrastructure shortfall not only creates an inhospitable learning environment but also poses health hazards for students (UNESCO, 2021; Ministry of Education [(MoE, 2016). Furthermore, a shortage of adequately trained instructors is a serious problem, with a notable fraction of educators lacking formal teaching training (UNICEF, 2020). This deficiency in human capital critically undermines the quality of education provided to learners. Furthermore, financial constraints extend to the regulatory bodies overseeing education in Liberia. The Ministry of Education and other regulatory bodies frequently lack the resources needed to effectively monitor and enforce

educational standards nationwide (MoE, 2016; World Bank, 2021). This insufficiency impedes the implementation of policies aimed at improving educational outcomes.

To mitigate these challenges, the Liberian government must prioritize education in its national budget, aiming to achieve or exceed the 20% allocation benchmark. Additionally, investing wisely in educator preparation, upgrading infrastructure, and providing vital resources are key to improving educational excellence. Collaboration with international partners and non-governmental organizations may also play a critical role in strengthening government initiatives and addressing resource deficiencies. In conclusion, while Liberia has instituted educational policies to ensure free and compulsory education, ongoing funding and resource constraints severely impede their realization. Addressing these pressing deficiencies is imperative for achieving equitable, high-quality education for all children in Liberia.

4.8. Inequitable Access to Education

Inequitable access to education is one of the most profound and enduring deficiencies in Liberia's educational framework, a failure intrinsically linked to insufficient regulatory oversight. Notwithstanding improvements in enrollment figures following the cessation of civil hostilities, access to high-quality education remains markedly inconsistent, exacerbated by pronounced geographic, economic, and gender disparities. The existing regulatory apparatus lacks the requisite instruments and enforcement authority to systematically and sustainably address these inequities.

The disparity in access between rural and urban areas is the most conspicuous manifestation of this educational gap. Urban areas such as Monrovia are advantaged by better-resourced educational institutions, more qualified educators, and closer proximity to tertiary education establishments. In contrast, rural areas are often beset by deteriorating infrastructure, a shortage of teaching personnel, and insufficient educational materials. Data from Liberia's Ministry of Education show that over half of children in rural communities are either not attending school or enrolled in schools that do not meet standards for favorable learning conditions (MoE, 2022). Despite this alarming situation, there are no binding policies mandating equitable resource distribution or regulating the quality of educational services across regions.

The issue of poverty further exacerbates this educational divide. Although public primary education is nominally free, ancillary costs, including uniforms, textbooks, transportation, and unofficial fees, are significant barriers for economically disadvantaged families. A 2021 World Bank report found that these indirect expenses often exceed the financial capacity of impoverished households, particularly in rural areas, resulting in higher dropout rates (World Bank, 2021). Nevertheless, prevailing regulations are insufficient to monitor or alleviate these costs. There are no standardized policies in place to enhance fee transparency or to ensure that educational institutions do not financially exploit families.

Gender inequity is yet another critical dimension of this access gap. Even with considerable growth in girls' enrollment rates over time, they still face notable disparities in representation in secondary and postsecondary education, especially in the scientific and technical sectors. Cultural norms, early marriage, and incidents of sexual harassment within educational environments deter girls' continued education. While Liberia's Girls' Education National Policy was enacted in 2013 to mitigate some of these obstacles, it remains lacking in regulatory authority. There are a few mechanisms for enforcement to ensure that educational institutions adhere to policies promoting safe learning environments or to hold accountable those who perpetrate gender-based violence within schools (UNICEF, 2023).

Children with disabilities are also systematically excluded. Most educational institutions lack basic infrastructure, such as ramps, trained personnel, or inclusive pedagogical materials. No effective regulatory mandate requires schools to accommodate learners with special needs, rendering this demographic largely invisible within the national educational strategy. According to a 2020 study by Humanity & Inclusion, fewer than 5% of children with disabilities participate in Liberia's formal education system (Humanity & Inclusion, 2020).

This failure to secure equitable access underscores a broader regulatory void. The Ministry of Education lacks a comprehensive policy framework and the institutional capacity to monitor, enforce, and support interventions that promote equity. Without enforceable standards on inclusion, funding equity, or quality assurance, inequity will persist as a defining characteristic of the educational experience in Liberia.

5. Discussion

The review of documents reveals the presence of key institutions and regulatory bodies within the country's education governance system. Several categories of legislative instruments and policy documents guide the system. These regulatory instruments cover a wide range of policy matters, including monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, international and regional commitments, quality assurance, and public-private collaboration and bilateral funding arrangements with multilateral organizations. The existence of these key regulatory frameworks demonstrates the government's commitment to effective regulation of education in Liberia, ensuring the provision of high-quality education and compliance with education system standards. The Ministry of Education is the lead regulator of education in Liberia. Its regulatory functions include, but are not limited to, developing and implementing policies and enforcing standards at the tertiary level and below. At the higher education level, the National Commission on Higher Education regulates universities and colleges. At the same time, the West African Examination Council is responsible for administering standardized tests for students at the secondary and primary levels.

The findings underscore systemic inefficiencies in Liberia's education regulatory environment. Inconsistent enforcement of policies, coupled with resource constraints, hampers the government's ability to uphold education standards. The Liberian national curriculum for all grade levels emphasizes a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning. However, the key element for successfully implementing the curriculum dissemination process is missing. Evidence from the Ministry of Education shows that most schools lack curricula, creating a basis for ineffective instruction that is not aligned with the curriculum. The failure of schools to have the appropriate curriculum is linked to weaknesses in the central-level curriculum dissemination process. This extends to teachers not having the curriculum and, therefore, being unable to cover the required content (Mutegi, 2014).

Regulatory deficiencies significantly undermine the effectiveness of quality assurance frameworks. The presence of inadequately qualified educators and substandard educational facilities directly and adversely affects student performance. As Johnson and Taylor (2022) note, insufficient oversight manifests as pronounced disparities in educational quality between urban and rural settings. The unregulated proliferation of private educational institutions intensifies social inequality. Although these entities offer alternatives for families with financial means, they frequently marginalize disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, corruption in school evaluations and teacher hiring processes sustains the inequitable allocation of educational resources.

Inadequate enforcement of educational regulations in Liberia has created pervasive challenges that significantly compromise the integrity of the nation's educational system. Without effective enforcement, many educational institutions operate without qualified educators, sufficient infrastructure, or standardized curricula, resulting in inferior educational outcomes. Deficient oversight permits the proliferation of unlicensed and unregulated institutions, which, in turn, produce graduates with dubious qualifications. Inadequate enforcement often leads to the employment of inadequately qualified educators, thereby diminishing the overall quality of instruction. Without stringent regulatory measures, practices such as cheating, bribery, and certificate fraud become prevalent, undermining the value of academic accomplishments. Ineffective enforcement of school attendance policies exacerbates high dropout rates, as students often lack motivation and financial support to persist in their educational pursuits. Insufficient oversight further exacerbates the risks of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and exploitation within educational settings, with girls being particularly vulnerable. A poorly educated workforce poses significant impediments to national development, diminishing productivity and restricting Liberia's competitiveness in the global economy. Addressing these layered challenges requires creating more resilient regulatory frameworks, stronger enforcement practices, and a serious commitment to funding teacher training, infrastructure improvements, and anti-corruption projects.

5.1. Suggested Innovative Approach to Addressing Regulatory Weaknesses

5.1.1. *Localized Monitoring Mechanisms and Community-Led Systems for Real-Time Compliance*

The effectiveness of regulation hinges on the robustness of its enforcement mechanisms. In numerous jurisdictions, particularly those grappling with environmental, health, or industrial challenges, top-down regulatory oversight often moves slowly, is inadequately funded, or is prone to corruption. In this context, localized, community-driven monitoring systems are emerging as a viable alternative. These frameworks enable residents to oversee compliance, identify violations in real time, and foster accountability when centralized authorities may falter. Community-led monitoring (CLM) is based on the premise that individuals most affected by policy deficiencies are best positioned to identify those shortcomings. When local stakeholders receive training to gather and disseminate data, they can identify instances of noncompliance more quickly than government entities, which may lack the necessary proximity or contextual understanding. For instance, in Ghana, community members received training to monitor illegal logging activities and

report findings using GPS technology and mobile applications. Their contributions markedly enhanced enforcement of forest laws and promoted transparency (Nelson et al., 2014).

The effectiveness of Community-Led Monitoring (CLM) depends on establishing clear protocols, providing technical assistance, and maintaining robust escalation channels. Merely observing infractions is insufficient; the collected data must be actionable. This requires feedback mechanisms that prompt responses from regulatory authorities or independent enforcement entities. In Indonesia's palm oil industry, for example, communities using drones and geospatial technologies have documented land encroachment, prompting inquiries by environmental regulatory bodies (Colchester et al., 2011). Technology plays a pivotal role in this regard. Mobile applications such as Open Data Kit (ODK) and WhatsApp have enabled communities to report pollution, deforestation, or hazardous practices directly to monitoring organizations or regulatory agencies. These tools mitigate the temporal gap between violations and subsequent interventions. Furthermore, they create a digital documentation trail that strengthens legal arguments or supports public pressure initiatives (World Resources Institute,

2020).

Nonetheless, not all CLM frameworks are equally effective. They face obstacles such as retaliation against whistleblowers, concerns about data integrity, and insufficient enforcement follow-through. To mitigate these issues, successful initiatives often incorporate legal protections, third-party validation, and collaborations with civil society organizations. For instance, the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa empowered community health monitors to identify and report deficiencies in service delivery within clinics, supported by legal assistance and media advocacy. This initiative led to observable improvements in care for HIV and tuberculosis (Schneider & Lehmann, 2016).

Vitality, Collaborative Local Management (CLM) does not seek to overthrow formal regulatory frameworks; instead, it seeks to refine them. Establishing a bidirectional communication channel between regulatory bodies and residents fosters transparency and expediency in systems that are frequently characterized by opacity and sluggishness. When these mechanisms are crafted with a focus on accountability and safety, they can turn passive recipients into proactive guardians of governance. In an era marked by increasing complexity and diminishing trust in institutional frameworks, localized monitoring mechanisms offer a pragmatic pathway forward. They do not require flawless systems—merely engaged communities, appropriate resources, and a commitment to prompt action.

5.1.2. Blockchain for Educational Accreditation as a Decentralized Approach to Mitigating Fraud and Enhancing Transparency

Accreditation is the foundational pillar of educational quality assurance. It authenticates institutions and validates the legitimacy of degrees, thereby ensuring that both students and employers can have confidence in academic credentials. Nonetheless, conventional accreditation frameworks are characterized by sluggishness, lack of transparency, and susceptibility to fraud. The proliferation of diploma mills, the issuance of falsified credentials, and pervasive bureaucratic inefficiencies have made verifying academic authenticity increasingly challenging. Implementing blockchain technology offers a compelling solution—one that decentralizes the accreditation process, enhances transparency, and makes fraud nearly impossible.

Blockchain serves as a distributed ledger that records data across multiple computers, making it tamper-proof and enhancing clarity. In academia, blockchain can effectively maintain educational transcripts, credentials, and institutional endorsements in a transparent, decentralized format. Once a degree or accreditation is recorded on the blockchain, it becomes immutable, requiring consensus across the entire network to make any changes. This immutability represents a significant advancement in the fight against counterfeit credentials (Zhang et al., 2018).

A decentralized accreditation framework would include academic institutions, accrediting bodies, and, potentially, governmental entities as integral nodes within a blockchain network. These stakeholders could facilitate the issuance and verification of credentials via smart contracts—self-executing programs that automate processes according to pre-established criteria. For instance, upon a university fulfilling all the requirements set forth by an accrediting body, a smart contract could autonomously update its accreditation status on the blockchain. Such a system would mitigate human error, eliminate unnecessary paperwork, and substantially accelerate the accreditation process (Grech & Camilleri, 2017).

5.1.3. *Public-Private Partnership Models that Enhance Regulatory Enforcement and Educational Funding Through Strategic Investment*

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have moved beyond their traditional role in infrastructure development, emerging as powerful mechanisms for strengthening regulatory enforcement and expanding educational financing. By combining corporate assets with nonprofit acumen, PPPs offer a versatile framework for addressing deficiencies in the public sector, particularly in areas constrained by limited budgets and escalating demands.

In the realm of regulatory enforcement, PPPs can amplify governmental oversight without undermining accountability. For example, collaborative efforts in environmental regulation have benefited from partnerships in which nonprofits provide monitoring data while corporations finance compliance technologies. A notable example is the collaboration between the Environmental Defense Fund and logistics firms to reduce carbon emissions through initiatives focused on voluntary reporting and transparency protocols (EDF, 2021). Such alliances enable regulatory agencies to operate on real-time, high-quality data while simultaneously reducing monitoring costs.

An additional model features technology firms collaborating with regulatory authorities to develop compliance instruments. The partnership between Microsoft and financial regulators in implementing AI-driven risk-detection systems has expedited the identification of fraudulent patterns, thereby enhancing regulatory responsiveness while preserving public oversight of decision-making processes (OECD, 2020). These models illustrate how private-sector innovations can significantly bolster enforcement capabilities without ceding authority to private entities.

6. Conclusion

Liberia's education regulatory environment faces significant challenges that hinder the delivery of equitable, high-quality education. Addressing these weaknesses requires a multifaceted approach that emphasizes governance reform, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration. By prioritizing these areas, Liberia can strengthen its education system and pave the way for sustainable development. To address the weaknesses and challenges in Liberia's education regulatory environment, it is essential to pursue effective measures that tackle these problems head-on. Strengthening governance is critical to ensuring rigorous enforcement of policies. Therefore, it is recommended that independent regulatory bodies with the mandate to oversee compliance and address corruption be established. Increasing funding for teacher training, professional development, and licensure will enhance teacher quality and address gaps in teacher certification. Increased funding will also support infrastructure development to ensure schools meet regulatory standards. Efforts must be made to establish a community engagement mechanism to involve local community structures in monitoring school performance and enhancing accountability. The Ministry of Education must strengthen teacher qualification verification systems, implement regular teacher training and certification programs, enforce strict penalties against schools that employ unqualified teachers, and encourage community and stakeholder involvement in monitoring teacher recruitment.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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