



From Grades To Graves: The Emotional And Ethical Collapse Of Schooling In Pakistan—A Case Study Of Danish School Nankana Sahib

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ABSTRACT

Education is fundamentally a **moral journey of human formation**, not an industrial process. Yet, a dangerous transformation has occurred in many schools, where students are treated as production units, teachers as performance agents, and grades as output metrics. This study investigates the ethical and operational breakdown within a government-managed educational institution, Danish School Nankana Sahib, by applying the **Ethical Supply Chain Management (SCM) lens**. Through qualitative narrative analysis and grounded ethical theory (Gioia methodology), the research uncovers systemic dysfunction in governance, teacher conduct, and performance evaluation. The findings reveal how an obsessive focus on grades, psychological coercion, and managerial apathy can lead to the emotional trauma and degradation of a child's confidence, distorting the moral foundation of learning. The paper argues that the integrity of the educational process hinges on **ethical supply chain resilience** and proposes a practical Ethical Educational Supply Chain Framework to restore transparency, empathy, and accountability in institutional systems.

INTRODUCTION

When a parent hands over a child to a school, it is not a transaction—it is a **sacred transfer of trust**. This entrustment carries the profound hope that the institution will build a better human being, focusing on emotional, moral, and intellectual well-being. This hope is betrayed when the educational system, driven by neoliberal trends and an obsession with measurable outcomes, focuses on numbers rather than nurturing minds, leading to an entire system collapse.

This research emerged from one such heartbreak: the case of a promising student at Danish School Nankana Sahib, a government-operated "Center of Excellence." The promise of meritocracy soured as the school's focus on institutional performance metrics led to practices of

exclusion, humiliation, and emotional abuse, resulting in a breakdown of the child's self-esteem and academic confidence. The school, designed to lift the poor and talented, became a factory of pressure and compliance, not purpose and creativity.

By viewing this profound educational failure through the disciplined, systems-oriented lens of **Supply Chain and Operations Management**, this paper aims to provide a robust, actionable framework for reform. This study explores how administrative pressure and unethical conduct, akin to a lack of **ethical sourcing and process integrity** in commercial supply chains, directly lead to emotional damage and deep societal wounds. The paper calls for an urgent reform that treats education as an ethical supply chain, where the integrity of each stakeholder ensures the flow of learning, care, and fairness.

Literature Review

The Ethical Imperative in Education

Ethical education remains the cornerstone of national progress. **Freire (1970)** emphasized education as an act of liberation, while **Noddings (2002)** powerfully called it an act of care, placing empathy and human connection at the center of learning. The failure to adhere to these principles transforms the classroom into a performance factory. Research highlights that when administrative pressure for results dominates, toxic learning environments are created, producing compliant rather than confident citizens.

Supply Chain Ethics and Educational Governance

The discipline of Supply Chain Management (SCM) is built on principles of transparency, accountability, and process integrity. In ethical SCM, failure at any node—from the supplier to the final consumer—is a systems failure that must be monitored and corrected (Institute for Supply Management, 2024). In the educational context, this misconduct mirrors corruption in commercial supply chains where transparency and accountability are lost. Studies specific to educational governance in Pakistan confirm that administrative pressure for results fosters unethical teaching practices and contributes to high levels of student stress and related psychosocial problems (Ali & Shah, 2021; Khan & Malik, 2020).

The Emotional Cost of Grade-Centrism

The systemic obsession with grades leads to the neglect of emotional intelligence and well-being, which are fundamental to effective learning and leadership. When schools prioritize "transcripts" over "hearts," they violate both professional codes and human rights, breeding psychological damage and underperformance. Studies in the Pakistani context show that **academic load, fear of failure, and teacher pressure** are key stressors, with severe negative effects on academic performance (Chaudary & Khan, 2014; Hameed et al., 2022; Shah & Afsar, 2019). The emotional and ethical neglect of students observed in this case study reflects a critical breakdown in professional duty and governance.

Conceptual Framework: The Ethical Educational Supply Chain (EESC)

This research employs a novel framework—the **Ethical Educational Supply Chain (EESC)** to analyze the systemic dysfunction, leveraging core SCM concepts to humanize and systematize the ethical responsibilities of schooling. This approach allows for a rigorous, process-driven analysis of ethical failure, treating emotional and moral integrity as critical quality metrics in the supply chain of human development. The educational system is modeled as a human supply chain with interconnected nodes, where failure at one point cascades throughout the system. The framework is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 The Ethical Educational Supply Chain (EESC) Framework

Supply Chain Component	Educational Equivalent	Core SCM Principle	Ethical Responsibility	Failure Outcome
Supplier	Teacher	Ethical Sourcing/Input Quality	Impart knowledge with empathy, equity, and moral courage.	Emotional trauma, psychological coercion, student disengagement.
Processor	Principal/Administration	Process Integrity/Quality Control	Ensure ethical governance, foster psychological safety, and provide fair evaluation.	Bias, negligence, institutional coercion, breakdown of trust.
Collaborator	Parent	External Stakeholder/Feedback Loop	Communicate, support learning, and actively hold the institution accountable.	Distrust, conflict, co-optation by administration.
Quality Auditor	Board/Authority	Compliance/System Audit	Monitor learning quality, enforce ethical standards, and ensure accountability.	Institutional collapse, systemic decay, perpetuation of misconduct.
End Product	Student	Final Output/Customer Value	Be a holistic, confident, and ethical citizen with high self-efficacy.	Lost potential, broken spirits, social decay.

Methodology

This study utilizes a **qualitative case study approach** grounded in narrative inquiry and the **Gioia inductive framework**. The focus is the case of a student (pseudonym F.A.) at Daanish School Nankana Sahib. Data sources included parental interviews, observation of the student across academic years, and communication records.

The analysis followed a rigorous three-stage process, in line with the Gioia methodology: (a) **First-order analysis** (identification of specific incidents, such as verbal humiliation and biased marking); (b) **Second-order themes** (coding emotional trauma, psychological coercion, and managerial apathy); and (c) **Aggregate dimensions** (interpreting the findings through the lens of **SCM resilience theory** and the EESC to create a grounded ethical theory).

Findings and Discussion

The Ethical Breakdown of the EESC Nodes

The case of Daanish School demonstrates a catastrophic failure at the primary nodes of the EESC: the Teacher (Supplier) and the Principal (Processor).

Teacher as a Coercive Supplier (Supplier Failure)

The **Teacher**, whose ethical responsibility is to impart knowledge with empathy, was found to have acted as a "controller" focused on performance data. This failure included frequent verbal humiliation, mocking the student's background, and biased marking. This is a breakdown in **ethical sourcing**, where the critical *input*—the daily interaction that shapes the child—is contaminated by toxic conduct, directly leading to emotional trauma and the dismantling of the child's self-esteem.

Principal as a Protector of Data (Processor Failure)

The **Principal**, responsible for ensuring process integrity and fair evaluation, instead acted as a "protector of performance data". The administration's obsession with high metrics led to the deliberate exclusion and stratification of lower-performing students—a practice akin to output-based filtering in supply chains, which artificially inflates short-term metrics while destroying system resilience. Furthermore, when the parent raised ethical concerns, the principal allegedly retaliated by **coercing the father to sign a self-incriminating document**, shifting institutional blame onto the family. This is a severe breach of ethical governance and a failure of the Quality Control (QC) function at the Processor node.

Managerial Myopia and Loss of SCM Resilience

The systemic failure is rooted in **Managerial Myopia**. By prioritizing high, image-driven results over human suffering, the school embraced an unethical supply chain model. This practice erodes **SCM resilience**, as the system becomes brittle and incapable of handling complexity or internal ethical risks. When the institution fails to uphold empathy and fairness, it not only harms the student, leading to "lost potential," but also sabotages national development.

Conclusion and Implications

The Daanish School Nankana Sahib case is not an isolated tragedy, but a symptom of systemic decay across Pakistan's educational landscape. The core finding is that when education becomes a race for reputation and grades, humanity becomes the casualty. Schools were meant to be **sanctuaries of growth**—not production lines of marks. The future of Pakistan depends on reforming this broken chain. The way forward lies in redefining success: from grades to goodness, from performance to purpose.

Policy Implications

For policymakers and educational leaders, particularly those with a background in SCM and Operations, the adoption of the EESC framework is critical:

1. **Human-Centered Governance:** Implement a **Student Emotional Health Index** as a mandatory metric in teacher and administrator performance appraisals, shifting focus from raw marks to holistic growth.

2. **Process Integrity and Ethical Audits:** Policymakers must incorporate **Ethical Audits** and **transparent evaluation processes** into the schooling system to monitor misconduct, similar to third-party audits in ethical sourcing.
3. **Restoring the Processor's Role:** Principals must be trained to act as **facilitators of justice**, not protectors of corrupted performance data, ensuring a neutral, supportive grievance redressal system for parents and students.
4. **Teacher as Ethical Supplier:** Mandatory professional development in empathy, conflict management, and ethical conduct is required to restore the teacher's role as a caregiver and moral leader.

If we continue to build "centers of excellence" without ethics, we will produce degrees without dignity and knowledge without kindness. Education must **build hearts before transcripts**.

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