

## A critical analysis of the weak implementation causes on educational policies in Pakistan

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### Abstract

The current technology era has provided education with a significant position to survive a society in this globalized world. However, Pakistan has made several efforts to raise the country's education status but still unsuccessful in achieving the targets, for instance, struggling with low literacy. The current situation is mainly due to the poor implementation of educational policies. Therefore, a critical analysis of Pakistan education policies was done to understand the root causes of poor implementation and provide suggestions to resolve the weak areas. The study was followed by adopting a retrospective approach to review past literature, i.e., Education policies, research articles, project reports, and related literature. The study identified several barriers: excessive expectations, centralized targets, ambiguous objectives, political influence, inadequate funding and resources, lack of collaboration, scarcity of teachers' professional development, and poor supervision. In conformity with the findings, some recommendations are also proposed. It is further claimed that local needs should be taken under consideration at the time of policy formulation to prevent policy failure. Targets of the educational plans should be formulated based on reality-oriented, thereby can be understood by everyone and may achieve easily. Furthermore, teachers should be facilitated with ongoing training programs to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

### Keywords:

Education policy; weak implementation; literacy; Centralized Targets

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The significance of education in the current era of science and technology has increased its demand for society to excel in the global context through an updated curriculum to meet society's needs. Thus, education is considered the leading pillar of a country that keeps pace with the globalized world. When education gets progressed in the country, this decreases the illiteracy value that eventually decreases the unemployment rate that is considered one of the significant scars for any nation (Bakari & Hunjra, 2018). The education system in Pakistan is governed by the central and provincial ministry of education. The curriculum development and financial arrangement are carried out under federal government cooperation. For the last some decades, Pakistan's education system has been getting developed incessantly, which ultimately facilitates the whole nation's progress, but the targets are yet to be achieved.

The government set up a national initiative to increase the literacy rate, focusing on removing illiteracy and supplying a fundamental education to all children. Accordingly, the state will achieve 100% literacy up to primary and higher levels, respectively, by 2030 (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2017). On the other hand, the country is still lagging in achieving its educational targets due to students' low enrollment and less survival rate (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2018). According to the latest report, Pakistan has shown a low improvement literacy rate that could hardly reach 62% (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2018); this shows that 38% population is still illiterate.

Various national educational conferences, commissions, and policies had suggested plans to readdress the education sector's issues and challenges. However, nearly all of the educational policies that did not achieve the desired objectives from the last few decades are still unachieved, and there is uncertainty for the future. Therefore, it is imperative to overhaul the present system to elevate the education standards by eradicating illiteracy. This study looks to unfold the causes of poor outcomes of educational policies by understanding their weaknesses in implementation. Hence, it will be beneficial for policymakers and educationists to formulate policies based on addressed constraints and suggestions by understanding both conventionally and cognitively. Before looking at the grounds for the weak implementation of policies, it is crucial to explain policy implementation literature.

## 2 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A policy is referred to as a systematic way/process to aid the system in dealing with the public's problems. It provides a way to attain future activities and goals. As explained by Anderson (2010), public policy is defined as a purposive approach accompanied by a worker or a group of workers to deal with a particular problem. The success of a policy depends upon its successful implementation. Therefore, policy implementation is an approach carried out under guided instructions to fulfill the goals and objectives (Khan, 2016). The process of policy implementation is aggregated into three aspects for instance (1) results of the policy; (2) effectiveness of the policy; and (3) evaluation of the policy to investigate whether objectives are achieved or not. According to Durlak and DuPre (2008), the outcomes of a successful policy do not depend only upon the right formulation but also involve managing the implementation process adequately. In education policy, both formulation and implementation of policies are considered valuable separately; however, this distinction is not visible in the actual practice. This vagueness leads to the disenchantment of desired objectives that causes educational policy failure, particularly in the developing countries; for instance, Pakistan is yet unable to achieve its literacy targets (Ahmad et al., 2012).

The main reason for the failure of policy is primarily associated with poor implementation issues, which often poses a dilemma for policymakers, policy analysts, policy researchers, and others who keep information about implementation. Several studies tried to investigate the causes of poor implementation in Pakistan, but no study critically analyzed it. Therefore, this study aims to unfold the critical factors behind policy failure, examine different approaches to policy support, and propose solutions for overcoming emerged barriers in practical implementation. This study further guides policymakers, policy analysts, and educationists to formulate policies given addressed barriers and suggestions.

### 3 METHOD

A qualitative design was adopted by using the retrospective method to evaluate educational policies' targets and achievements. This approach allows a researcher to understand the past's clear description (Cox & Hassard, 2007). The study was further guided by reviewing past literature, i.e., Education policies, research articles, project reports and related literature.

### 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Excessive Expectations

Setting high goals sounds good to meet the time requirements and keep pace with the globalized world. But, while formulating policies, there must be considered a connection between the positive outcomes and implementation. In other words, the policy's implementation should be realistic so that it may be achieved successfully. On the other hand, too high goals may cause stress and other management-related problems that negatively affect the implementation process (Cloete, 2006). From the last few decades, Pakistan has set a goal to achieve 100% literacy; however, it has shown progress slowly but yet reached 62% (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2018). Therefore, it will be beneficial and achievable if policymakers set a realistic goal and increase their targets gradually.

#### 4.2 Centralized Targets

Centralized Targets referred to the goals which are set at a national level by few authority persons. It includes all the decisions from the smaller scale to higher, approved by the top management. The formulated policies based on centralized targets may not help all stakeholders and provinces, as every region has specific needs and challenges (Norris et al., 2014). Due to this approach, the educational policy often fails to recognize all subscales' needs and encounters problems in achieving targets and goals. Therefore, authority members must focus on the root causes of all stakeholders while setting policies and actions so that the educational policy may attain the goals.

#### 4.3 Ambiguous Objectives

Goals and objectives of the educational policies are set by recognizing the needs of the time; hence, they should meet the country's needs and educational situations. However, unfortunately, we are still unable to achieve the targets and goals due to the lack of clear objectives, failing desired outcomes (Ashraf & Hafiza, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to formulate clear objectives to understand and interpret easily for successful implementation (Saeed et al., 2020).

#### 4.4 Political Influence

As the government develops educational policies, hence needs continuous support from top political leadership for their successful implementation. Unfortunately, due to the lack of collaboration and political support in our country, we have not achieved the targets yet. Each new government does not provide or discontinue the running programs due to which plans and objectives of the policies remain unfulfilled. For instance, Quality assurance of various educational systems in Pakistan, i.e., Basic Medical Education, encounters political influence challenges (Khan et al., 2020). The administrative authorities should critically examine the accreditation system of medical colleges to ensure medical education quality.

#### 4.5 Inadequate Funding and Resources

Resources include all the subunits that accomplish planned objectives of an organization/policy, such as financial, human, and technical resources. Their proper channelization is essential for the successful implementation of the educational policy. Low education funding is observed as the main problem that causes hurdles in achieving the desired targets set by Pakistan's educational policies. Moreover, there lies a gap in granted funds and expenditures in education. The funds are not enough to fulfill the expenditures by the educational sector, and sometimes the granted funds are not utilized appropriately, which creates problems in the execution of plans which leads to the implementation failure (Ahmad, 2014), and also face challenges in achieving literacy targets (Akram et al., 2020). Therefore, it is essential to allocate a sufficient budget for education in the national GDP, so the desired objectives may achieve.

#### 4.6 Lack of Collaboration

For a successful implementation, the policy needs to be executed properly, which is impossible without proper coordination between policymakers and all other critical stakeholders of the concerned units. Unfortunately, due to the improper coordination, the stakeholders of the concerned units cannot understand the objectives adequately, consequently, leads to the implementation failure (Ali, 2011). Clear and consistent guidelines should be shared with all stakeholders, and Principals and teachers should work together to support learners. In this way, working in collaboration enriches the institution's environment and allows them to achieve educational targets successfully.

#### 4.7 Scarcity of Teachers' Professional Development

The desired educational goals cannot be achieved without having skilled and trained teachers, which raises the importance of teachers' professional development. Several studies have also established a significant relationship between teacher's learning and student's achievement (Kim & Seo, 2018). Therefore, teachers should be facilitated with continuous professional development programs to update their knowledge according to the time's needs. However, the government has given special attention to uplifting teachers' quality by organizing several in-service training programs (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2017). These programs are either not well-managed or run poorly due to the lack of trained human resource (Khan & Afridi, 2017). In this regard, well-equipped teachers' training institutions should be organized by the government from primary to a higher level, and teachers should be facilitated with the ongoing training programs.

#### 4.8 Poor Supervision

Supervision plays an essential role in exploring the weaknesses in teaching or examining the project's weak areas. Subsequently, a leader provides support to the teachers or project to attain the required outcomes. Inadequate supervision or ineffective leadership cannot achieve desired targets and goals, hence leading to the failure of policy implementation. Unfortunately, weak supervision with a lack of accountability in academic matters is observed in various educational institutions, which hinders achieving the desired learning outcomes (Riaz & Sultan, 2017). To tackle this barrier, it is essential to strengthening the system of accountability, and all the principals of the educational institutions should be given training programs so that they may supervise efficiently.

### 5 CONCLUSION

Since independence to the present age, Pakistan's efforts towards increasing enrollment and literacy are not hidden away yet failed to achieve the goals. Several factors have been discussed above, which contribute significantly to failing the accomplishment of targets. Among those, the leading one is policy formulation without involving the local educational needs of Pakistan's different regions. Consequently, the policy may not be beneficial for all stakeholders. Another major barrier is the ambiguity of the objectives, due to which policy fails to implement appropriately. After analyzing critically, it is evident that Pakistan education system needs to reform by investing more in human resources and infrastructure development. Furthermore, a policy should be formulated based on provincial and district needs and challenges so that each part of the country progress at their own pace. Besides, all these provisions should be monitored through a proper channel.

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