

## **Implementation Gaps in Educational Policies of Pakistan: Critical Analysis of Problems and Way Forward**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the main causes for poor implementation of educational policies in Pakistan. For this purpose the paper investigated vast literature. The review of literature revealed that lack of continuity in successive government policies, corruption, inadequate financial allocations, lack of training for human resource, lack of visionary leadership, lack of political will on the part of successive governments, poor follow ups, poor monitoring system, poor policy evaluations, centralized approach in implementation, lack of political stability and decaying institutional disciplines are the main causes that have plagued the process of educational policy implementation in Pakistan. On the basis of this critical analysis the study concludes that although the regularly stated policy goals in Pakistani education are sublime and ideal, yet, due to the above identified reasons coupled by weak institutional structures and frequent political interventions, the policies remain unfulfilled and do not achieve the desired results. In the light of this deep investigation, the paper recommends some practical solutions to poor policy implementation in the country. Firstly, that policy makers and policy implementers are needed to be taken on board before, during and after the policy formulation, implementation and policy evaluation stages. This will generate commitment, strong will, motivation and strong individual and institutional support for the implementation of the policies. Secondly, that increased budgetary allocation for educational projects may also improve the process of implementation if it is carried out with professional fervor, professionalism and commitment by showing zero tolerance to corruption in all forms.*

**Keywords:** Education policy, implementation gaps, political will, centralized approach, corruption

### **Background and rationale for the study**

Education is a road to development. It ensures individual and collective freedom in all walks of life (Pervaiz, 1994). Pakistan, in spite of many ambitious education endeavors, still remains the lowest in development ranks in the world. According to the Human Development Report, Pakistan ranks 136<sup>th</sup> with less than 50% literacy rate with 33.8% female and 47.18% male primary completion rate.

Pakistan stands at the lowest in the ladder of allocation for education with less than 2.0 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (Haq & Haq (1998)). Pakistan is a developing country with a weak education system. Poor policy implementation has been one of the major causes for this state of affairs. Although, this issue is a general phenomenon in all areas of national life yet it has been deeply affecting the education sector since the inception of the country in 1947.

According to Bhatti, Bano, Khanam, Hussain, Riaz, and Hussain (2010) education is the epicenter of all developments. Poor policy implementation in the education sector in Pakistan has exercised highly negative repercussions on all other areas of the national life. Bukhari (1995) defines policy implementation to be setting of goals and anticipating for the consequences of the policy for the people for whom it is made. It means that it involves a variety of actions such as issuing directives, decision making, assigning duties, and hiring personnel, monitoring and evaluating activities. Implementation problems usually happen when there is a gap between the stated policy and the achievement of the benefits of the policy by the target community. This phenomenon has been facing Pakistan for a longer time.

The researchers as teachers, trainers and administrators in education have been observing this sorry state of affairs in the country for a long time. They observed that due to poor implementation of educational policies, the country has incurred heavy loss both in terms material and human. After the lapse of sixty five years of freedom, Pakistan is still struggling with a very low literacy rate in the south Asian region. One of the main reasons for this is low priority for education in the country.

## **1. Introduction**

Public policy refers to a process which helps any system to solve public problems. Implementation of policy is the adoption of the policy at the grassroots level. It consists of giving practical shape to ideas, set of activities and structures to enable the people the deal with new changes (Laauwen, 2004; Fullan, 2001 & Folwer, 2000). The Education Development Index (EDI) reports that Pakistan stands at the lowest rank of 120 out of the 144 countries in the world. Government of Pakistan (2010) report observes that the current literacy rate of Pakistan is 59% which is among the lowest in Asia. In a report of UNESCO (2000) it has been observed that Pakistan has 66% female and 59% male net enrollment rate at primary level which is lower many countries in South Asia. This alarming situation in the words of Aly (2007) is due to the lowest financial allocation for education sector in Pakistan. The expenditure on education has declined in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2.6% in 1990 to 2.2 in recent times. This situation has rendered the education system incapable to cater to the needs of the nation. The education is not productive. There are increasing drop-outs at primary level. Although policies are formulated and framed form time to time without having any positive impact on the lives of the people due to successive failures in implementation. This poor implementation has created a credibility gap. Review of the policies shows that the failure in implementation is due to one reason or another. This leads the researchers to explore the main reasons for the gaps in implementation of education policies in Pakistan on the basis of review of vast literature.

Education is a dynamic activity. The goals of education could be realized by concerted and consistent approach. Realization of the goals of education has direct relationship with overall national development. Pakistan, being a developing country has been facing problems in the arena of policy implementation in all areas generally and in education particularly. This trend has deeply affected the system of education on which the overall national edifice of the society depends (Rasool, 2007). Shahid (1985) holds the following factors responsible for the implementation of education policies in Pakistan such as lack of political commitment, poor economic condition, less or non-involvement of stakeholders, discouraging attitudes of functionaries and lack of cooperation. In another study, Bengali (1999) argues that too ambitious policy targets, less trained technical and educational managers, financial resource constraints and political instability have crippled the implementation of education policies in Pakistan. Butt (1996) adds amongst the many problems weak implementation of education policies in Pakistan are teacher's absenteeism, weak supervision and lack of physical facilities. Similarly, he further argues that non-involvement of lower level managerial staff of education has contributed to development of sense of alienation among the district and provincial staff which has affected the process of policy implementation at these crucial levels.

According to a report by Education For All (EFA) (2008) 5.5 million children of primary school age are out of school. There is an alarming rate of 45% drop outs at primary level in Pakistan.

In another place the report states that teacher absenteeism, poor supervisory mechanism, inadequate learning materials are some of the acute problems which are direct offshoot of the weak policy implementation in the country. National Education Policy (2009) reports that weak policy implementation is primarily due to lack of commitment on the part of policy implementers which leads to implementation gap. This gap is catapulted by the weak allocation and utilization of resources. Furthermore, Rasool (2007) shares that even much of the developmental funds remain unspent to the tune of 10% to 30% in Pakistan. He holds the following factors responsible for this situation such as communication, resources, dispositions, bureaucratic attitudes, political structures and attitudes. He further says that these factors closely interact with one another and consequently, either help or hinder the policy implementation process in any system.

## **2. Justification of the study**

Malik (1999) defines educational policy implementation the activities that are carried out in the light of the stated and established policies in a country. Pakistan being a developing country has a weak system of education plagued with various problems. One of the problems is poor policy implementation. Many studies have been carried out on this, yet the previous studies have not critically analyzed the causes of poor policy implementation in Pakistan. The scope of all previous studies was focused either on the problems or the causes of problem. Therefore, this study is carried out to deeply and critically review the causes or reasons for the poor policy implementation in the education system of Pakistan. And the study also aimed to suggest viable and practical solutions for the problems of education policy implementation in the country which have deeply affected the overall quality of education in Pakistan.

## **3. Objectives of the study**

Following are the main objectives of this study.

- To define policy implementation
- To analyze role of governmental institutions in educational policy implementation
- To explore the problems of poor educational policy implementation in Pakistan
- To recommend solutions for the implementation gaps

## **4. Methodology**

This is a literature review research study. For this purpose the researchers consulted a vast number of national and international reviewed papers, journals, newspaper reports, book analysis and findings of research studies in order to find out the causes for poor educational policy implementation in Pakistan.

## **5. Review of literature**

A large amount of related literature was critically reviewed and presented here to conspicuously and comprehensively deal with the various gaps with regard to the poor educational policy implementation in Pakistan. On the basis of critical review of literature the following main influencing areas or components of the educational policies were first identified which were found common in all the policies designed and implemented so far. Then one by one these components were analyzed in the literature which is presented below.

## **6. Gaps in education policy implementation in Pakistan**

Following are the main gaps in education policy implementation in Pakistan:

### **6.1 Poor communication system**

Policy implementation is a dynamic process. Education policies in Pakistan are plagued by poor communication, less support from the stakeholders, less ownership of the policy by the stakeholders, lack of commitment on the part of the implementers, no collaboration and cooperation, less accurate and consistent approach towards the completion of the policy goals (Rashid, 2004). Therefore, according to Shahid (1987) inadequate information creates distances between the policy implementers and the beneficiaries and ultimately causes serious obstacles to policy implementation.

### **6.2 Weak administration**

Government of Pakistan (1979) says that for proper implementation of policies effective implementation agencies are important.

Various initiatives for policy implementation failed due to weak administrative machinery at the grassroots level. The agencies at this level did not own the policies (UNESCO & Government of Pakistan, 2003). The poor management capacity of the directorates of education at policy formulation levels, school heads at implementation level is one of the many factors which also responsible for this mess. Government of Pakistan (1998) considers weak and defective implementation mechanism, inadequate personnel, poor training, low political commitment and absence of incentives as reasons for the failures of educational policy implementation in Pakistan.

### **6.3 Poor policy evaluation mechanisms**

Conversely, Akbar (1995) elaborates that precise, accurate and clear policy directives produce creativity and adaptability which helps in the effective implementation as well. On the other hand, less precise directive does not leave room for the policy implementers to use their discretion and flexibility which is normally needed for better policy implementation. In the words of Bukhari (1995) it must also be ensured that a not just information rather a highly relevant and adequate information is provided on the implementation process.

### **6.4 Financial gaps and irregularities**

In its report UNESCO (2005) has found that inadequate financial resources for education in Pakistan have hindered the policy implementation. According to Saleemi (2010) financial resource in any system plays the role of a life blood. Without enough monetary support no system can work effectively. No matter, how clearly and accurately the implementation orders are transmitted, if the resources both financial and material are less, the implementation will result in problems. Therefore, according to World Bank Report (2000) resource availability must be ensured by the implementers and the policy makers before developing a policy. The resources include adequate number of staff, enough financial support, quality and trained staff. Therefore, it is necessary that equipments and buildings must be provided for better policy implementation. Without sufficient resources like these, required services will not reach the beneficiaries directly (Siddiqui, 1993).

### **6.5 Attitudes and dispositions of public servants**

Attitude and disposition is one of the key factors that affect implementation process. It has been explored by Abbas (1994) that bureaucratic underpinnings have placed more pressures on the teachers' community in Pakistan. This trend has given rise to feelings of alienation among the teachers. This attitude and disposition of the supervisors has promoted sense of discrimination among the teachers. This leads to demonization of the supervisors and de-motivation of the teachers. In view of Ahmad (1993) in education system, use of powers, direct of staff, developing relationship and keeping expectation depends to a large extent on the disposition of the implementers toward the policies.

### **6.6 Inefficient bureaucratic structure**

Ghaffar (1992) narrates that unless and until there is an efficient bureaucratic structure along strong professional knowledge, the problem of implementation will remain unresolved despite of having clear communication, resources and positive disposition. He further argues that organization where there is fragmentation hinders effective coordination which is necessary for policy implementation because it may result in wastage of resources, block the pace of smooth change and in overlooking of some of the important actions necessary for policy implementation. In view of Shahid (2003) there are some other chronic factors which have hindered smooth policy implementation in Pakistan. These are not only related to implementation but also related to policy makers and the overall environment where the policies are formulated and implemented.

### **6.7 Failure of decentralization measures**

Zaki (1992) has found that in Pakistan devolution of responsibilities in any system is not always accompanied by devolution of authority which has created many complications in the discharge of the services. Education is not exception to this. Naseem (1990) further elaborates that decentralization provides better opportunities for the beneficiaries at the grass root level. They will reap the fruits of the policy easily without any bureaucratic or other hurdles. However, in Pakistan there are discrepancies in the assigning of responsibilities to the people as to how to act and use the given powers. There is no proper direction which leads to role confusion less and effective contributions.

### **6.8 Lack of political will**

Political will of the local implementers play a pivotal role in effective implementation process. In Pakistan, due to none or less participation of local implementer such as school principals, teachers and students, ownership factor of the policy becomes weak. Jatoi (1995) believes that success of implementation of a policy depends largely on the political will of the policy makers and policy implementers alike.

### **6.9 Leadership vacuum**

For any successful implementation of policies, visionary leadership, strategic planning, strong will, trained teachers, community support, and availability of resources, students and teachers motivation play the role of cementing forces (Channo, 2003). For this purpose Zaidi (2005) suggest empowerment of local stakeholders, planning strategically, resource mobilization, resource utilization, political will, monitoring and evaluation of the education system are essential steps for successful implementation.

### **6.10 Deeply entrenched corruption**

Riaz (1998) writes that for successful implementation of any policy, it is essential that the stakeholder are ready to sacrifice their personal interest on the interest of the system and for the general welfare of all irrespective of nay personal whim or vested interests. This type of attitude develops an environment of trust and transparency. However, education system in Pakistan has been made hostage to evils for many years after its inception. This trend of corruption has played with the foundations of the overall system.

## ***7. Findings and Conclusions***

Policy strategies are essential for successful implementation of a policy. These strategies help in setting forth mechanisms to achieve the prescribed objectives. This study aimed at exploring the hurdles in the way of successful policy implementation in Pakistan and suggesting solutions in the light of literature review. The vast analysis of the data showed that there is lack of direction, consistency, poor institution-community relationship, corruption, lack of visionary leadership at lower level and commitment on the part of policy formulators and implementers with regard to policy implementation in education. The analysis also showed that there is no follow up, accountability for authority and supervisors, lack of system of training for policy formulators and implementers.

## ***8. Recommendations***

On the basis of this study the following recommendations are provided.

- All stakeholders such as teachers, principals, and researchers may be involved or informed on policy formulation and implementation. In this way the gap of understanding would be resolved.
- Strong coordination between the schools and the inspectorate may help in bridging the gulf of mistrust and alienation
- Accountability system may be strengthened to decrease corruption
- In order to overcome financial constraints, practical measures may be taken for effective planning and utilization of available resources both human and material.
- Through strong accountability, the prevalence of corruption, nepotism and favoritism could be controlled.
- The people involved in the process of formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies can be trained to enhance their theoretical knowledge in skills in better administration, management and coordination.
- A string bond or relationship between the beneficiary community and policy makers can decrease the trust deficit between the system and public.
- The step of decentralization should be strengthened. It will decrease the delays in implementation of measures taken at the central level.

## **Future research**

On the basis of this research study accepts its limitations that due to lack of time and resources, this review of literature could not deeply explored some of the other major causes for poor policy implementation in the education system of Pakistan.

Therefore, it is suggest that a more vast and comprehensive qualitative and quantitative investigations should be carried out into the problem of poor policy implementation in Pakistan so that the system of education is able to function properly and achieve the national objectives which due to this choric problem of poor policy implementation have remained unfulfilled in all fields of national life.

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