

Provisions, Objectives and Reforms of Education Policies in Pakistan"An Analytical Review"

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive review of Pakistan's educational policies and their evolution since the country's establishment in 1947. It focuses on analyzing the major objectives, reforms, and strategic directions set by successive governments in shaping the country's educational landscape. The review covers the three main sectors of education in Pakistan: Primary, Secondary, and Higher Education, emphasizing their respective goals and developmental . The study provides a historical overview of educational policy development, tracing how various governments introduced policy measures to improve access, quality, and equity in education. Each policy initiative, from early post-independence efforts to more recent reforms, is examined in terms of its intended objectives, implementation strategies, and outcomes. Special attention is given to how the priorities in education policy have shifted over time in response to social, political, and economic changes in the country. Additionally, the report highlights the persistent challenges in both policy formulation and execution. Despite numerous efforts to modernize and expand the education system, Pakistan continues to face issues such as resource constraints, lack of effective implementation mechanisms, regional disparities, and gaps in educational quality. These challenges have often hindered the full realization of policy goals. Overall, the study aims to provide an insightful analysis of Pakistan's educational policy evolution, illustrating both the progress achieved and the critical gaps that remain. By reviewing past initiatives, the document also offers a foundation for understanding future directions for educational development in Pakistan.

Keywords: educational policy, Pakistan, Higher education, secondary and primary education

Introduction

The educational system of a nation is crucial for its social, cultural, political, and economic progress. Numerous nations globally prioritize establishing a robust foundation for their educational systems

through astute policies and pragmatic strategies. A policy is a condensed compilation of concepts (Ball, 1990) that has been sanctioned to define wider frameworks of action (Tahir, 2007). Trowler (2003) defines an education policy as a delineation of actions to be undertaken to attain specified objectives. An educational policy is essential for establishing a sustainable educational system within a nation (Faizi, Shakil & Akhtar, 2012; Heck, 2004).

Pakistan was established in August 1947 following the division of the subcontinent, which had been under British rule for approximately a century (Hameed-ur-Rehman & Sewani, 2013). Throughout this century of British control, the indigenous education system of the subcontinent underwent significant transformations to align with colonial governance.

A succession of modifications was implemented in the indigenous education system of the subcontinent by a sequence of educational policies spanning the periods of 1813-1835, 1835-1854, 1854-1884, 1882-1904, 1904-1919, 1919-1929, and 1929-1947 (Pandey, 2005). These policies resulted in the discontinuation of current Persian as the official and court language, with English being adopted as the official language. In 1844, it was declared that Indians educated in English would be favored for recruitment into the country's Civil Services. In 1857, contemporary universities were founded in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. A variety of schools, colleges, and some technical and professional institutions were also founded. Numerous education changes were perceived by sectors of the Indian populace as a challenge to indigenous values and interests, as well as a means to reinforce colonial dominance in India. This resulted in the emergence of numerous independence movements against British control. Multiple domestic and global events culminated in the cessation of British rule in India in 1947.

The subcontinent achieved independence from British rule but failed to preserve its longstanding geographical and political integrity, resulting in the division into two sovereign republics, India and Pakistan.

Pakistan, as a nascent state, inherited a fragile educational infrastructure. On the brink of independence, the country possessed 9,073 elementary schools, 2,070 secondary schools, 11 professional institutions, 42 non-professional colleges, and two universities (Aziz, 1986). The newly formed state convened a conference titled 'The Pakistan Educational Conference' that took place between November 27 and December 1, 1947. This conference is regarded as the cornerstone of Pakistan's educational system.

The outcomes of this conference establish a trajectory for the state's future educational initiatives. This conference was succeeded by a succession of conferences, commissions, and reforms, including the Report of the Commission on National Education (1959), the New Education Policy (1970), the Education Policy (1972-1980), the National Education Policy and Implementation Programme (1979), and the National Education Policies (1972, 1998-2010, and 2009).

Higher Education Policies

Following the initial sessions of the Pakistan Education Conference in 1947, six distinct subcommittees were established. The committees included: Scientific Research and Technical Education Committee, Adult Education Committee, University Education Committee, Primary and Secondary Education Committee, Committee for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes Education, and Cultural Relations Committee. To achieve communal consensus on the recommendations from the committees, all three joint committees were convened: the Joint Committee for University Education and Secondary and Primary Education, the joint meeting of the Committees on University Education, Scientific Research and Technical Education and Cultural Contacts, and the joint meeting of the Committees on Education, Women Education, and Primary and Secondary Education.

The committees and their joint sessions proposed several recommendations based on the current circumstances. The recommendations were deliberated during designated sessions of the conference and ultimately ratified as resolutions. These resolutions and proposals established a foundational basis for future educational policy and reforms. The subsequent sections delineate the policy stipulations and suggestions. Regulatory Strategies for Tertiary Education and Advanced Learning during the Pakistan Education Conference of 1947, the University Education Committee proposed the creation of the Inter-University Board of Pakistan, tasked with addressing administrative matters and upholding academic standards. The education system in Pakistan should be influenced by Islamic ideology, with mandatory religious instruction for Muslim students in schools and institutions. Comparable provisions for religious education may be advocated for all levels of the educational system. Mandatory military training was also advocated at higher education institutions (Government of Pakistan, 1947).

The execution of these proposals was conducted via a six-year plan (1951-1957) and an initial five-year plan (1955-1960) (Aziz, 1986). A second education conference convened in 1951 to deliberate on the six-year education development plan (Ali, 2013). The newly established state encountered numerous challenges, and many suggestions and policy objectives were not entirely fulfilled; however, substantial progress was achieved in higher education. The policy initiatives proposed at the Pakistan Education Conference in 1947 primarily addressed the ideological underpinnings of state education, which consequently resulted in the progressive Islamization of the education system in the subsequent years. The other primary emphasis was the literacy rate. The literacy rate in the newly established state was merely 13%, with a greater emphasis placed on adult literacy in this campaign (Bengali, 1999). The partition of the subcontinent resulted in a significant movement of various religious communities between different regions of the subcontinent. Prior to partition, the predominant literate demographic was Hindu, who occupied roles as educators at educational institutions.

During the upheaval of partition, numerous educational institutions were shuttered, libraries and laboratories were obliterated, and classrooms, dormitories, and playgrounds were repurposed as camps for migrants (Khalid & Khan, 2006). In this context, convening a conference on education and delineating the state's educational system constituted audacious actions by the government (Saigol, 2007). The subsequent milestone was the recommendations issued by the National Educational Commission in 1959. It is recommended that higher education be acknowledged as a separate stage by transferring intermediate classes from universities to Boards of Secondary Education.

The extension of the Bachelor degree duration from two years to three years was also recommended. Universities should provide two types of courses: a three-year Honour degree and a two-year pass degree. The suggested duration for a Master's degree is two years. Curriculum revision recommendations included the addition of new subjects such as sociology, home economics, public and business administration, and journalism as areas of specialization. The establishment of an institute for modern languages to address the requirements of trade, industry, and civil and defense services was recommended. The commission recommended establishing a framework to enhance autonomy in addressing academic issues and ensuring effective coordination. Recommendations concerning the service structure, leisure activities, and responsibilities of university faculty were also proposed. The recommendation for the establishment of the University Grants Commission aimed to enhance coordination among higher education institutions in the state (Government of Pakistan, 1959; Aziz, 1986).

The recommendations of this commission were implemented with the support of the second (1960-65) and third (1965-70) National Development Plans (Aziz, 1986; Ali, 2013). The commission's recommendations were realistic and balanced in both qualitative and quantitative aspects. The recommendations were comprehensive, timely, and aligned with current educational issues (Bhattacharya, 2009).

The initial formal education policy was established in 1970 (Ali, 2013), emphasizing the enhancement of the country's education system. Aziz (1986) noted that this policy specifically aimed to enhance the declining quality of higher education. Universities were advised to establish Centre of Excellence in specific disciplines.

The initiation of postgraduate teaching and research programs across various university departments was underscored, alongside the establishment of postgraduate classes in selected colleges and the granting of autonomy to colleges with a longstanding tradition of quality. Additionally, it was advised to enhance service structures and compensation for university faculty and to reassess regulations concerning the efficiency and discipline of university educators. It is advised against the establishment of new colleges, whether public or private, for the forthcoming years. Instead, the focus should be on enhancing and fortifying existing institutions through the provision of improved facilities, infrastructure, laboratories, equipment, and staff training. It was proposed that the management of colleges should be overseen by directorates of college education (Government of Pakistan, 1970; Aziz, 1986). In the 1970 education policy, recommendations were made to enhance the efficiency of managerial and financial operations within universities via legislative measures. Rules and regulations for college affiliation were established, proposing that colleges demonstrating excellence in teaching be granted autonomy to develop their own courses and conduct examinations for degree attainment from affiliated universities.

The establishment of new universities in various regions was proposed in consideration of population distribution. Distribution to alleviate the burden of affiliations and examinations on universities. The establishment of purely affiliating universities was proposed to designate certain existing universities exclusively for teaching and research (Government of Pakistan, 1970). The policy recommendations align with those of the National Education Commission of 1959 and represent a progressive advancement in educational development. The implementation of this policy was hindered by the conflict with India and the civil war in East Pakistan, which led to the separation of the eastern region and the establishment of Bangladesh (Bengali, 1999).

The National Education Policy of 1972 included several recommendations pertaining to higher education in Pakistan. The recommendations pertaining to higher education included: the establishment of new universities in Saidu Sharif, Multan, and Sukkur; granting full university status to Jamia Islamia Bahawalpur; adding undergraduate faculties at the University of Islamabad; fostering collaboration among universities; developing Area Study Centres within universities; establishing the University Grants Commission; reducing arts enrollment to 5% per annum; and increasing sciences enrollment to 10% per annum (Aziz, 1986; Government of Pakistan, 1972). The most significant recommendation with extensive implications was the nationalization of all privately managed higher education institutions in the country. The policy measures, while seemingly progressive, led to a decline in the annual growth of college and university enrollment from 13 percent to less than 5 percent between 1972 and 1977 (Hassan, 1998).

In 1979, the government, led by the military, introduced an education policy. The education policy's notable aspect was the significant Isolationism of Pakistan's education system. The policy recommendations concerning higher education included: the establishment of no new universities, except for women's universities, for the next five years; the strengthening of existing centers of excellence, laboratories, libraries, and student hostels; the transformation of well-established university departments into centers of advanced studies; the facilitation of staff mobility among universities, government departments, and research organizations; the provision of in-service training for university teachers through the National Academy of Higher Education; and amendments to the university act (Government of Pakistan, 1979). Additionally, suggestions for enhancing college education encompassed the incorporation of Classes XIII – XVI in Degree colleges; provision of science subject facilities in degree

colleges; initiation of postgraduate classes in selected colleges; and establishment of minimum criteria for degree colleges (Government of Pakistan, 1979).

This education policy represents a continuation of frameworks established for this education policy according to requirements in the 1950s and 1960s. In March 1998, the Education Policy 1998-2010 was enacted. This policy, similar to its predecessors, underscored the significance of higher education and identified various deficiencies at this level. Several structural and functional changes were identified to meet the policy objectives. The policy recommendations for higher education included: allocation of non-lapsable funds to universities; tax exemption on the import of educational equipment; increasing education funding from 2.2% to 4% of GNP; expanding access to higher education for 5% of the relevant age group; introducing a three-year bachelor's degree with preference in university admissions and priority in government recruitment; enhancing laboratories and libraries in universities; providing special funds for research; and empowering universities to generate their own funds (Government of Pakistan, 1998). Additional recommendations comprised the modernization of university curricula, revision of the universities act, establishment of a National Testing Service (NTS), enhancement of high-performing departments into centers of excellence, implementation of faculty development measures and incentives for educators, introduction of a tenure track system for university appointments, creation of partnerships with foreign institutions and industry, initiation of internal and external academic audits for universities, and an increase in scholarships for faculty and students pursuing higher education (Government of Pakistan, 1998). The policy suggestions concerning higher education were coherent and compatible with national requirements. Substantial qualitative and quantitative expansion of the higher education sector followed in the ensuing years. Critics of the expansion of the higher education sector contend that it may significantly affect the quality and academic requirements of higher education (Hoodbhoy, 1998).

In 1999, the military overthrew the democratic government of the state, leading to the implementation of an important improvement program in higher education that was known as the Education Sector Reforms 2001-2004. A vibrant higher education sector is essential for the technological advancement and socioeconomic development of the country. The primary objective of these reforms was to enhance the accessibility and quality of higher education, alongside increasing enrollment and placing greater emphasis on science and technology at this level. The policy proposed for both private and public sectors was notably liberal to improve access to higher education, resulting in a threefold increase in the number of universities and degree-awarding institutions in the country.

The primary recommendations resulting from these reforms included the replacement of general bachelor degree programs with four-year Honors programs; an increase in higher education funding from 0.39% of GNP to 2% of GNP by 2010; the creation of endowment funds for university research; the establishment of an academy for university educators; a revision of the service structure for university faculty; the enhancement of libraries and laboratories in higher education institutions; and the development of connections between higher education and industry, as well as society beyond academia (Government of Pakistan, 2001). The military-led regime significantly contributed to the advancement of higher education. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan was established in 2002. The HEC implemented five-year plans for higher education to tackle challenges related to access, quality, and alignment with national needs. As a result, the number of universities rose from 42 in 1980 to 175 in 2016, comprising 99 in the public sector and 76 in the private sector (Mahmood, 2016). This represents a significant advancement in quantitative development. The newly established universities continue to encounter challenges related to infrastructure development, quality enhancement, and achieving financial independence.

In 2007, the democratic government of the Pakistan People Party succeeded the military regime, and in 2009, the new administration proposed an educational policy, citing the failure of the previous policy to

meet its objectives (Government of Pakistan, 2009). The Ministry of Education (MoE) initiated a review of the policy from 1998 to 2010. The reasons presented were primarily twofold: first, the education policy from 1998 to 2010 exhibited deficiencies in various aspects, including quality, access, and equity of educational opportunities; second, international challenges arose from globalization and commitments such as the Dakar Framework of Education for All (EFA) Goals and the Millennium Development Goals. (Ahmed & Hussain, 2014). Ali (2013) contends that the National Education Policy 2009 is articulated in a significantly distinct manner relative to the policies established prior to 2009. Until 1998, Pakistan's education policies were developed using a sectoral approach, emphasizing policy measures for various educational levels and streams, such as primary, secondary, tertiary, and technical education, in a classified manner. In contrast, the 2009 education policy adopted a thematic approach. This encompasses access, quality, and governance.

The policy recommendations emphasized promoting research that contributes to the country's economic development. Key measures included increasing the enrolment rate in higher education from 4.7% to 10% by 2015 and 15% by 2020, along with raising the allocation for higher education to 20% of the total education budget. The policy also advocated for strengthening research and development in universities by prioritizing basic research, fostering university-industry linkages, establishing science parks, and launching programs that encourage the practical application of knowledge. Additionally, the introduction of competitive research grants and the institutionalization of the tenure track system for faculty appointments were recommended. To enhance teaching quality, the policy proposed the development of continuous professional development programs for college and university teachers. Furthermore, it recommended awarding doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships to high-achieving students for advanced studies both within Pakistan and abroad, as well as encouraging universities to establish split-degree programs in collaboration with internationally recognized foreign universities (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

The recommendations for improving access to higher education included: effective integration of ICTs in teaching, learning, and research, and expanded access through ICT in distance education; provision of access to technical and scholarly information resources to support academic communication between educators and researchers; allocation of additional television time for high-quality distance education programs; introduction of need-based scholarships to promote equitable access to higher education; and establishment of university campuses in capital towns lacking universities (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

The preceding overview of these policies reveals a repetition of recommendations across the educational policy series. This may be attributed to unmet objectives in many of these policies. Lindblom (1968) asserts that policies are invariably influenced by antecedent policies. Typically novel Policies often represent a continuation of prior frameworks; at times, a new policy appears to extend or consolidate existing policies.

In Pakistan, political instability (Hoodbhoy, 1998) inadequate management, lack of supervision, and corruption have contributed to ineffective policy implementation. Despite shortcomings in policy execution, Pakistan has achieved certain advancements in higher education. In 1947, there existed two universities serving a population of approximately 30 million (Aziz, 1986). Currently, there are 153 universities for a population of around 200 million (Mahmood, 2016). Mahmood (2016) indicates that the establishment of the HEC has led to significant growth in the higher education sector. The number of universities and Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs) increased by 78 percent from 2010 to 2015, encompassing both public and private sectors. Over the past five years, student enrollment has increased by 174 percent, accompanied by a significant rise in female participation. In addition to this growth,

standardized and updated curricula have been implemented to address the skills-based needs of the developing country, and a systematic approach for quality assurance in higher education has been established in Pakistan. Policy Interventions for Secondary Education in Pakistan

Secondary Education Policies

In numerous countries, secondary school education commences at the age of 11 (Taneja, 1989). Secondary education holds significant importance within the educational framework, serving both as a pathway to higher education (Government of Pakistan, 1998) and as a final destination for numerous youth in developing nations (Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Iqbal, Ali, & Badshah, 2013). During the partition, this educational stage lacked clear definition. The Primary and Secondary Education Committee of the Pakistan Education Conference 1947 established distinct stages for school courses: Pre-Primary for ages 3 to 6 years, Primary for ages 6 to 11 years, and Secondary for ages 14 to 17 years (Bhatti, 1987). The Primary and Secondary Education Committee of the Pakistan Education Conference in 1947 proposed several recommendations regarding secondary education.

The recommendations suggest that education in Pakistan should be founded on the Islamic principles of universal brotherhood, democracy, and social justice. It is recommended that Urdu be established as the second compulsory language for the state, while English should remain a compulsory language at the school level. However, each province should determine its medium of instruction. Physical education ought to be mandatory in schools, encompassing activities such as scouting, rifle club, and mountaineering. The recommendations established guidelines and formulated the framework for secondary education in the state. The newly established state encountered numerous challenges, including a shortage of literate personnel to operate schools, the resettlement of millions of migrants, disputes with India, a fragile administrative framework, political instability following the death of founding leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and insufficient physical and financial resources (Wynbrandt, 2009).

Consequently, the five-year plans that adhered to these policy measures did not meet the established targets. The Commission on National Education, 1959, recognized secondary education as a distinct stage, a view that has gained universal acceptance. Separate academic and administrative units are recommended, with control and regulation of secondary education assigned to Boards of Secondary Education that operate alongside universities within the state. The commission recommended that the secondary curriculum include various elective subjects tailored to students' aptitudes, thereby preparing them for higher education and diverse vocational opportunities in social services.

The commission expressed concern regarding secondary schools that offer substandard education due to untrained teachers, limited facilities, and insufficient infrastructure. It recommended that educational authorities implement and enforce regulations for the recognition of secondary schools. The commission emphasized the financial challenges encountered by the government in providing support for the growing number of schools experiencing increased enrolment.

The commission recommended that schools meeting the necessary criteria should be established to address this issue. The government should cover 20% of the expenses as a grant, while 60% should be sourced from student tuition fees, with school management accountable for the remaining 20% of expenditures. The commission proposed conditions for the registration of commercially operated schools and recommended prohibiting the operation of unregistered schools. The commission emphasized the necessity for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of secondary education.

The policy recommendations of this Commission were significant and reflected societal needs; however, their implementation was hindered by a lack of resources. Hassan (1998) states that the curriculum at The

secondary level was revised during the first five-year plan, after which budgets were reduced due to the 1965 war with India. Consequently, the established targets were not met; however, this policy significantly impacted the overall education system of the state. The Education Policy of 1970 emphasized the decentralization of educational administration and implemented structural changes (Shami, 2005). It is recommended that school education encompass grades I to X, structured into elementary schools (grades I-VIII) and high schools (grades IX-X). It is recommended that each school establish a governing body consisting of 3 to 5 members, including two representatives from the school staff.

The establishment of a district school authority was recommended to manage developmental plans for school education, determine grants and recognition for privately managed schools, appoint headmasters, and oversee the administration and supervision of the district education fund. A standing advisory body comprising senior district officers, parents, teachers, and other respected citizens was proposed to assist the District Education Authority. The establishment of directorates of schools at the provincial level was recommended to assist and facilitate district school authorities (Government of Pakistan, 1970). This policy continued the efforts of the previous Commission on National Education; however, it was not implemented due to political turmoil in the country (Shami, 2005).

The National Education Policy 1972-1980 recommended the provision of free education up to class IX and X starting in October 1974. The most significant alteration was the nationalization of privately managed educational institutions. To foster social responsibility among students post-matriculation, the inclusion of vocational and occupational subjects in general education at this stage has been proposed. The policy's recommendations, while seemingly progressive, led to an increase in educational expenditures from RS. 0.8 billion in 1971-72 to RS. 2.8 billion in 1976-77 (Hassan, 1998). Consequently, it became unfeasible for subsequent governments to maintain this policy, resulting in a decline in the educational quality of institutions formerly operated by private owners.

The National Education Policy 1979 recommended the replacement of the 4-tier education system (Primary, Secondary, College, and University) with a 3-tier system (Elementary, Secondary, and University). It proposed the addition of classes IX and X to intermediate colleges and classes XI and XII to high schools. Furthermore, it advocated for the introduction of mathematics as a compulsory subject for both Science and Arts students, along with the introduction of Agro-Incorporating technology as a subject in all secondary schools and initiating second shifts (evening classes) in high schools, where necessary, to meet the objectives of universal education and adult literacy (Government of Pakistan, 1979). This policy introduced minimal changes, primarily incorporating an Islamic component into the school curriculum and permitting the private sector to contribute to education provision.

The National Education Policy, 1992-2002 primarily emphasized enhancing the quality of school education across all levels (Shami, 2005). Recommendations include reassessing the role of teachers in the educational process, modernizing curricula and textbooks, enhancing physical facilities in schools, introducing activity-based science courses, and utilizing educational technologies and mass media to improve the quality of education for learners (Government of Pakistan, 1992; Shami, 2005). The abrupt political changes in the country hindered the full implementation of this policy (Shami, 2005). The National Education Policy, 1998-2010 emphasized secondary education. Secondary education serves as a crucial component of the educational system, specifically designed to equip students for the workforce and to facilitate further academic pursuits in various professions and specialized areas of higher education. Policy provisions include the establishment of one model secondary school per district, curriculum revisions to promote problem-solving and independent thinking, the introduction of defined career paths, the implementation of multiple textbooks, and the creation of guidance centers for secondary school

students in partnership with universities. Additionally, it was advised to offer Education Cards to students in need.

To enhance the quality of teaching and educators, several recommendations were made: the implementation of project-based teaching methods; the establishment of an Education Service Commission for teacher recruitment; the introduction of a code of ethics for educators; the strengthening of the existing National Education Testing Services (NETS); and the initiation of B.S. Ed and B.A. Ed programs to prepare high-quality teachers for science and arts subjects. The policy aimed to elevate the secondary level participation rate from 31% to 48%, increase the higher secondary level participation rate from 11% to 13%, expand the number of secondary schools from 11,000 to 18,000, and augment the number of secondary school teachers from 160,500 to 216,000 by the year 2002-03.

To examine the national education policy from 1998 to 2010, education-sector reforms were implemented between 2001 and 2004. The primary objective of these reforms was the institutionalization of general secondary education. The objective was to enhance the relevance and employ-ability of this educational level by revising the current curriculum to include a new technical stream alongside Science and Humanities. Additionally, it aimed to introduce 34 distinct trades based on varying criteria, develop teaching and learning resources, and increase secondary level enrollment from 7% to 50%. Additionally, recommendations were made to enhance science education by equipping science laboratories, developing video textbooks, establishing mathematics resource rooms, revising curricula from grades I to XII, and ensuring the availability of well-trained teachers to deliver quality education (Government of Pakistan, 2001; Shami, 2005).

The Education Sector Reforms from 2001 to 2004 demonstrated the effectiveness of the national education policy established for 1998-2010, leading to enhanced consistency and focus in its implementation. In alignment with the belief of policy elites regarding the necessity of mass education for development, there was increased investment in the education sector during the policy period of 1998-2010 (Shaikh, 2006). Despite the emphasis and ongoing monitoring, the established targets have not been met in either qualitative or quantitative aspects. The National Education Policy 2009 was introduced from a novel perspective. The recommendations for enhancing quality and access include: improving access to secondary education in rural areas with a low ratio of secondary schools, particularly for girls; increasing student support to mitigate dropout rates due to financial constraints; providing counselling services from the elementary level to address socio-political issues; offering career counselling at the higher secondary level to assist students in making informed choices for further studies; organizing sports activities in secondary and higher secondary schools; developing community service programs in secondary schools to enhance the appeal of education; and promoting skills-based education in secondary schools. This new policy lacks the overly ambitious qualitative or quantitative targets characteristic of previous policies. The new government is committed to implementing educational reforms in response to the evolving landscape of the workforce. The overall outcomes in secondary education over the past 69 years are disappointing. Secondary education represents a critical phase in the educational process.

Primary and Elementary Education Policies

Primary education refers to the instruction delivered by primary or elementary schools (Taneja, 1989). Primary education encompasses the broadest reach for economically disadvantaged groups within society (Sheikh, 1987, p.9). Primary education, recognized as a fundamental necessity for individuals, was established as a basic human right for all in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). As a result, all countries and nations globally prioritize the provision of access to basic education. At the time of its establishment, approximately 80% of Pakistan's population was illiterate, with only 3.7% of literate individuals having completed secondary education (Sheikh, 1987, p. 9). The Primary and Secondary

Education Committee of the All Pakistan Educational Conference in 1947 recommended the introduction of five to six years of compulsory and free education at the primary level. Furthermore, it asserted that education in Pakistan should be founded on the Islamic principles of universal brotherhood, social democracy, and social justice. This provision mandates that students acquire the fundamental principles of their religion, integrating spiritual, social, and vocational elements into their education. The committee designated the age range of 6-11 years for primary education (Government of Pakistan, 1947; Aziz, 1986).

The subsequent initiative for education reform was the National Commission for Education in 1959. The commission underscored the significance of universal basic primary education for the economic, political, and social advancement of the nation. Consequently, it proposed an initial duration of five years for compulsory education, later extending it to eight years. The state was deemed incapable of covering all expenses necessary for the provision of compulsory education. The commission recommended that the community share these expenditures. A special tax at the district level should be implemented to generate 50% of the necessary funds, while the remaining 50% would be sourced from other means, supplied from the general revenues of the provincial government. To effectively manage and oversee the universal compulsory education program, it is recommended to establish a Central Coordinating Committee under the President of Pakistan.

The central committee recommended the establishment of Provincial Committees, overseen by the respective governors, each comprising a chairman and five to six members from relevant fields to manage the funding process. The commission recommended the establishment of a district-level administration comprising the Deputy Commissioner or their nominee as chairman, along with four additional members, including District Education Officers. Each district will be segmented into units comprising 10,000 to 15,000 individuals, overseen by a committee consisting of three nominees appointed by the Deputy Commissioner (Government of Pakistan, 1959; Aziz, 1986). The commission's recommendations informed the Second Five-Year Plan (1960-1965) and the Third Five-Year Plan (1965-1970). The Education Policy of 1970 recommended the integration of primary and middle schools into elementary schools, an increase in the literacy rate among the population, and the prioritization of elementary education within educational policy. It also called for the establishment of an authority to promote adult literacy, supported by the national literacy corporation. Islamic Studies became mandatory until class V (Government of Pakistan, 1970; Aziz, 1986). The fourth five-year plan (1970-75) was established; however, it was not implemented due to political unrest in the country. The National Education Policy 1972-82 recommended universal education, emphasizing the provision of free education.

It is recommended that education be made free and universal up to class X for all students in the country, implemented in various phases. It was recommended that education be made free up to class VIII by October 1, 1972 (Government of Pakistan, 1970; Aziz, 1986). This policy was implemented after a non-planning period due to the absence of a five-year development plan.

The New Education Policy of 1979 was proposed by the military-led government. This policy represents a continuation of prior initiatives aimed at enhancing primary school enrollment and facilities. The policy document (Government of Pakistan, 1979) emphasizes the enhancement of internal efficiency through community mobilization and the effective utilization of existing educational resources in the country at that time. Additionally, emphasis was placed on decreasing the primary level dropout rate, which was approximately 50% at that time. The policy suggested increasing development funds for primary education from 13.2 percent to 32 percent annually.

The policy proposed the establishment of around 5,000 mosque schools over a span of five years. This initiative was based on the recognition that mosques, as central institutions present in nearly every village

across the country, could serve as effective venues for primary education. Mosques generally have adequate space and basic facilities suitable for running village-level primary schools. Additionally, since mosques remain largely unused between morning and afternoon prayers, utilizing them for educational purposes was seen as both practical and efficient. Each mosque school was envisioned to accommodate 20 to 30 students, operate under the supervision of provincial governments, and follow the same curriculum as other primary schools. Alongside the mosque schools, the policy also recommended the establishment of 5,000 Mohalla schools and 1,000 village workshop schools to further expand educational opportunities in rural areas.

The structure of Mohalla schools was designed to cater to cohorts of 20 to 30 students, aiming to impart basic literacy skills alongside teachings of the Holy Quran, Islamic studies, and essential home management skills. These schools were also expected to evolve into centers for functional education and skill development for adult women. A monthly stipend of Rs.150 was proposed for the individuals managing these schools.

The National Education Policy (1998-2010) identified elementary education as the cornerstone of the national education framework and highlighted the state's legal obligations in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the time, over 5.5 million children aged 5 to 9 were out of school, with the primary school dropout rate standing at approximately 45%. Moreover, about one-fourth of primary teachers lacked professional training. The policy set ambitious goals to raise the enrolment rate from 71% to 90% by 2002-2003, and to 105% by 2010.

To accelerate the achievement of these targets, the military-led government introduced the Education Sector Reforms (2002-2004), focusing primarily on achieving universal primary education. Key recommendations included ensuring universal access to quality primary education with a 100% participation rate, improving the infrastructure of existing schools, establishing new primary schools where required, and developing Community Basic Schools. Further provisions included the distribution of free textbooks to all students and the availability of free Braille books for visually impaired children. Additionally, a Compulsory Education Ordinance was enacted to reinforce the state's commitment to universal primary education (Government of Pakistan, 2001; Shami, 2005).

In 2009, under the civilian leadership of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a new National Education Policy (2009) was introduced. Its primary education objectives included achieving 100% enrolment of all children, irrespective of gender, by 2015, and securing the necessary financial resources to meet the Education for All (EFA) goals. The policy emphasized collaboration with international development partners to improve school facilities through comprehensive planning, adopting strategies to make schools more attractive to students, and launching initiatives like food-based incentives and financial support to boost enrolment and reduce dropout rates. Further recommendations included setting 6 to 10 years as the official age range for primary education, establishing at least one model school in each province to facilitate access to quality education for underprivileged students, and upgrading primary schools to the middle level. Despite these efforts, the provision of quality education remained a significant challenge, with many primary school students continuing to display insufficient life skills (Government of Pakistan, 1999; Pervez, 1995; Samo, 2009).

Conclusion

The review demonstrates a lack of significant differences in evaluating educational needs and formulating policy measures across various levels and dimensions of the education system. Consistent issues appear to have arisen in the policy implementation process. Intermittent political instability and insufficient

commitment from political leadership and government represent significant barriers to effective policy implementation. Previous critiques by Khwaja (1985), Shakoor, Azeem, Dogar, and Khatoon (2011), as well as Ahmad, Rehman, Ali, Khan, and Khan (2014), highlight that insufficient political will, overly ambitious policies, corruption, political instability, and inadequate funding are significant obstacles to effective policy implementation.

Khalid and Khan (2006) contend that additional factors contributing to inadequate policy implementation encompass an unclear vision concerning means and goals, controversies surrounding issues such as the medium of instruction, challenges in science and research, women's education and gender roles, as well as political interference in education. Bhattacharya (2009) argues the absence of commitment from the ruling class and the socio-economic divide between the impoverished and the elite feudal class are additional factors contributing to this situation. The lack of commitment and reform initiatives among the ruling class and affluent individuals appears to stem from their exclusion from the public education system. The public education system has historically received minimal priority in fund allocation and expenditure due to insufficient vision and a lack of vested interests. The insufficient allocation of funds for the public education system has been a primary factor contributing to the ineffective implementation of policies in Pakistan.

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