

PAKISTAN'S EDUCATIONAL POLICY- A NEGLECTED SENTIMENT

Abdul Qayoom

Research Scholar, Doctorate of Education, University of Gloucestershire, Gloucester, England

abdulqayoomheed@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Abdul Qayoom

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19876927>

Received	Accepted	Published
01 March 2026	10 April 2026	29 April 2026

ABSTRACT

Educational policy in Pakistan has always been a challenging terrain, caught between aspirational narratives of national development and pragmatic realities grounded in systemic inactivity. The education sector struggled with access, quality, equity and governance challenges despite multiple reforms and policy frameworks. Notably, this study analyzes the disconnection between policy formulation and implementation by illustrating how political instability, funding and socio-cultural differences have impeded the realization of meaningful advancements. It shows that education, even as it is acknowledged to be one of the foundations for development continues to be a second-class citizen on the ground. Based on the historical trajectory, current challenges and stakeholder perspectives it argues that the educational policy is not a technical agenda rather some neglected passion which needs emotional valuing serious investment and holistic vision to alter the future of Pakistan.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally acknowledged as back bone of any nation. In the advancement of society, the validity of education cannot be neglected (Munir, Bat & Saj, 2021). In the development procedure of quality of education, the educational policies play a key element role (Scholtz, 1961; Pscharopolous & Woodhull, 1985) cited in Sohag and Khan (2020). Its fundamental right for human beings since its inception and an instrument of social mobility, economic prosperity and cultural flourishing. It helps individuals to get knowledge and stand with global challenges. Education is the key for any nation to cope up with the skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly challenging world. For a nation like Pakistan born with Islamic ideology, idealism with a separate homeland where every single Muslim can be equipped with an Islamic spirit, freedom of worship, maintain peace and liberty, but it deliberately failed to streamline

educational policy. The imperative of robust, inclusive, unified and dynamic education was paramount. The founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in its speech in economic conference in 1947, the early days of the newly created homeland from the subcontinent. He unequivocally stated, "Education is a matter of life and death for our country. The world is moving so fast that if we do not educate ourselves, we will not only be left behind but also will be no more." This message clearly indicates that the policy of education for a newborn country is a matter of existence.

The education policy of Pakistan has evolved through series of reforms reflecting changing political ideology, socio economic priorities, and global influences. The critical analysis of Pakistan education policy reveals its limited success in practical and partial success to give successive

policies based on previous policies one another. Yet, after seven decades, this message of the founder father of Pakistan has gone unheeded. Pakistani educational policy, with good intentions, is a failure due to the political system's apathy and profound neglect. In Pakistan the term Educational policy evokes feelings of desperate hope rather than a sense of strategic direction, a document that is regularly drafted and announced with periodic fanfare. This article argues that Pakistan's education Policy is deeply neglected sentiment, the state is in constant crisis, perpetual inequity, fuels social divisions and suppresses national potential. Pakistan education Policy is based on different eras oriented by different political setups, hence it is very important to keep all these eras on consideration from its inception to the present day.

Educational Policy- A Glance on History

All Education Conference 1947 (Formation Year)

Pakistan has faced great challenges after partition; most of the educational institutions, including universities, were part of India. Mass migration, lack of infrastructure and lack of quality educational institutions inside Pakistan deepen the need to urgently formulate the policy of education. The first national educational conference in 1947 had great ambitions for free and compulsory primary education, character building, and alignment of education on the Islamic principle of national ideology; these ideas quickly collided with the harsh realities of a resource-starved state. At that time, the government pre-occupied by national security, mass migration and limited financial resources; the policy of education was gapped with financial constraints.

The Education Conference 1947 aimed to unify education aligned with the country's Islamic values and national identity (Cousins, 2017). The conference focused on primary education, technical and vocational education on a universal level to cope with technical human resources for newly country (Rahman, 2004). The inspirational leadership of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam, 's inaugural address highlighted the

importance of education, stating, "The education system should be geared towards producing individuals who are well-rounded, morally upright, equipped with modern knowledge and skills" (Jinnah, 1947).

The key recommendation of this conference was "Education for All individuals", including a National system, the importance and need of teachers' training, increasing access to education in rural areas and woman population (Afzal, 2002). The conference also mainly focused on the Islamic studies, Pakistan studies and Pakistan history and culture, including the Arabic sub in the curriculum (Government of Pakistan, 1959). There were three major sentiments that were focused on: character building, National Integration and socio-economic development (Husain, 1999). The key highlights of the conference were as follows.

Islamic Principles: The conference stressed that Pakistan had achieved in the name of Islam, and this will be the focus of the integration of Islamic values and principles in the curriculum development.

National Unity and Integration: The conference emphasised the role of education in promoting national unity and integration as a need for the newly independent nation.

Scientific and Technical Education: The conference emphasized the need for scientific and technical education to promote economic development.

Mother Tongue and Regional Languages: The conference recognised the importance of mother tongue along with regional languages, considering Urdu as the national language.

Adult Education: The conference stressed the inclusion of adult education in the curriculum to cope with the country's significant literacy challenges.

Criticism and Challenges All Over Educational Conference 1947

One and the most challenge was the disparity between the public and private education systems, leading to unequal access to quality education (Andarabi et al., 2006). Many recommendations were not implemented effectively, barded conference impact. On other side Pakistan has been facing significant resource constraints, ultimately put obstacles in implementations of education policies. One of the major reason was also a shift of government priorities and policies. The conference emphasized on Islamic values and National identity has also been subject to debate over narrow approach to religious education, while some others saw it as essential to Pakistan cultural heritage (Rehman, 2024). To address these challenges, Pakistan needs to implement a comprehensive education reform strategy, special focus on teacher educations and training, curriculum development and infrastructure improvement (Hussain, 2018).

The National Education Commission (NEC) 1959

The National Education commission 1959 was review and reform of country's on-going education Policy led by Dr. S.M. Sharif in 1959. This commission was aimed to strengthen the Education Policy and insure to its implementation with true spirit. Meanwhile the commission put forward its recommendations which were based on Pakistan Islamic ideology, national needs and socio-economic development. Following are key recommendations.

Unified Education: Commission emphasized a uniformed curriculum for public and private schools, stressed on Islamic studies, Pakistan's history and science education.

Technical and Vocational Education: At the time when economic crisis hits the country there was dire need of technical and vocational education trainings to meet country's economic needs.

Teachers training: Commission mainly focused on teachers training and teacher's education to cope up the teachers to hard areas in their subjects.

For this national Teachers training center were advised to open.

Female Education: For equal opportunities to female, and vital role play in boosting economy of the country, commission emphasized home economics and skills centers for female throughout the country.

Curriculum Reform: As of uniformed education, a unified curriculum was focused to promote national integration, Islamic values and modern world knowledge.

Impact and Challenges

The national education Commission (NEC) 1959, laid the foundation of Pakistan Education Policies focused on character building, national integration and socio-economic development. But due to lack of interest in implementation from political parties, resource constraints, inconsistent policies from the government, lack of financial resources hindered progress (Hussain, 1999). Some critics argued that NEC 1959, had narrow approach on education, neglected on modern science and critical thinking. It also valued down the ideology of education (Rehman, 2004).

The Period of Nationalization and Islamisation (1971-1988)

The traumatic national rapture in 1971- the separation of East Pakistan named Bangladesh, heed of educational policy went rancid deeply. A pity attempt of former Prime Minister Mr. Zulifiqar Ali Buhto for nationalization for educational institution, a move to stabilize the education policy but it had the catastrophic long-term consequences. The state was in state of burdened with management of thousands of schools and colleges. Bureaucratic control and excessive interference of political parties in designing of education policy became rampant. The era of general Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) which marked the most controversial and decisive ideological shift in educational history. The policy was shift to Islamize the education system. This was time when USSR invaded Afghanistan and anti USSR forces like USA engaged Pakistan to resist USSR in Afghanistan. For this Pakistan's

military establishment was used by big powers to radicalize the education policy to Islamic ideology. To comply big powers interests, thousands of Madarasas (Islamic Schools) opened nationwide to produce Mujahedeen (Islamic fighters) for USSR-Afghan War. This one-point agenda in formulating education policy shaken the education system in Pakistan. Following are the key features of this education policy.

The subject of Islamiyat and Pakistan studies are becoming compulsory subjects from primary to higher secondary level.

The curriculum was a systematic purge of un-Islamic promoting a particular historic narrative with Islamic Martials and heroes. From start to the end, a single narrative as Muslims are helper and fighter of other's Muslims land occupied by foreigners.

Federation of Madarsa was found to unify the education policy on basis of jihad as symbolic sentiment of Muslim's life. On occasion of foreign invasion on Muslim's land the religious seminars and workshops have been fundamental activities by the state government. The seeds of sectarian and religious extremism were enriched a version of history and citizenship in the national curriculum. The Zia's education policy had immense impact that even today all educational policies spin around the Islamization.

The National Education Policy 1992

The national education Policy was serious and significant step to reform the country's education system, mainly aligned with modern education to bring social change, national integration, and economic development lined with Islamic principles and values. Before to form NEP 1992, Policy maker invited different stockholder to give their recommendations for better and long lasting education policy. These were educationist, scholars, teachers, scientists and different civil societies. Therefore, this policy reflected a collaborative approach with different views, aiming setting clear targets and mechanism with promising approach of implementation.

Main objective of National Education Policy 1992

1. **Islamic Society:** There would be a structured society in accordance with teaching of Islam. It ensures that education must promote moral and ethical values structured with Islamic principles and consistent of ideological foundation of Pakistan.
2. **Universal Primary education:** The policy aimed with universalization of primary education with slogan, the primary Education is fundamental rights of every child. Policy aimed primary education is compulsory and free for every child to eliminating the dropout rates focused over basic learning needs of the population by the year 2002.
3. **Compulsory Adult Education:** All adults who were deprived from previous formal education system will be coped with modern education system to raise the literacy rate up to 70%.
4. **Equal education for All:** At the time there was major issue of gender discrimination and gender disparity. The policy sought to promote equal education for both gender and improving access to education for women and disadvantage group. Attention given to female education, especially in rural areas where female participation in education was lower.

Major features and reforms of NEP 1992

Expansion of non-formal education: The NEP-1992 had several reforms including expansion of non-formal education. This was for those adults who could not attend for regular schools or formal education due to several reasons, where one of the most important factor was non-access to quality education and dropped out. Rural areas of Pakistan suffered the most where formal school couldn't be opened. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were encouraged to participate in the programs to support increase in literacy rate and educational accessibility.

Establishment of model schools in rural Areas:

The aim of establishment of model schools were to reduce the gape of disparity between male and female participation, giving them equal access to

education. These schools were equipped with improved basic facilities, teaching methods and curricula for both male and female students. The was also an initiative to reduce the quality education gap between urban and rural areas. For this major model schools were established in rural areas to bring rural population to access quality education equally with urban population.

Diversifications of Secondary Education: The policy emphasized the secondary education particularly technical and vocational center to equip students on practical approach of education towards technical work to contribute national economic development after improved job opportunities in technical field.

Reform on Curriculum on modern Needs: This policy emphasized to make education more relevant and responsive to modern societal needs, updating curricular to relevance with science and technology.

Administrative reforms: The policy pointed out that major outcomes are due to weak administration of educational institutions. The policy recognized that many problems are related to lack of resources and budgeting issue but weak management plays major role in weak administration of institutions, conceived to a requirement for professional trainings for educational administrator to improve their decision-making and leadership skills. For strong educational governance, the parent teacher management committees were introduced. The purpose of these committees were active participation in educational process on local level, which also gives to ownership to parents on educational institutions. The district education officers were empowered to ensure these local based educational committees as organ of Education department.

Quality Improvement-main focus: This was the key objective of the policy to ensure the quality improvement. Major changes in educational settings; connecting the global challenges in education focusing on pre-service and in-service teachers training to enhance the competency of

teachers. To cope up teachers with professional competency, the use of audio-visual aids and modern teaching method to make learning more effective and engaging for students.

Examination system: The said policy also brought major changes in examination systems to convert the cramming system to critical thinker. The goal was to remove rote memorization and enhance critical thinking, promote creativity and practical skills among students.

Critiques on NEP-1992

National Education Policy-1992 was ambitious effort to formulate the Pakistan Education Policy but faced numerous challenges along with political instability. Political instability led to shift of government policies, ultimately effected the educational policies. Pakistan has always remained under the financial crises and there was lack of financial resources for teachers training, infrastructure improvement, and basic facilities in ongoing schools across the country, recruitment new teachers to fill up the vacancies, all that gone vanish under financial constraints. Additionally, the weak administration and weak efficiency of educational administrators put less effectiveness over educational policy after having a comprehensive documents covered major grey areas, but its impact from grass root level remained ineffective.

National Education Policy (NEP-1998-2010)

This education policy aimed to bring quality and accessibility in education sector of Pakistan. This policy announced in March 1998 by former Prime Minister of Pakistan. This policy was a way forward to equal access of education for all, improvement of quality education, modernization of curricula and integration of Islamic values. This policy was introduced when country's literacy rate was only 39%, and this was era of different road-map between education and employment opportunity. In this policy, first time the term secular education used along with religious education. The prime goal of this policy was to achieve universal primary education by 2010, unlike the previous policy mainly focused. In this policy, too many

educationists, educators, PhD scholars, different private educational consultants and members of civil societies from every corner of the country were invited to give their proposals to streamline the education policy. These all stockholder came to conclusion to develop a long term strategy for this policy to face 21st century challenges.

Key features of this Policy (NEP-1998-2010)

Universal Primary Education: The policy targeted 90% enrolment in primary education between age group 5-9 years. All public and private schools were instructed to enroll in primary as much target of 105% by 2010.

Teacher's Training: To improve teacher's professional growth and competency, teacher's training programs intended to begin in provincial level.

Equal opportunities in Education: The policy sought to equal opportunities for both genders to narrow down the gender gap in educational institutions. This policy emphasized in expanding equal facilities for girls particularly in rural areas.

Socio-economic development: This policy was aimed to promote vocational and technical education with link to socio economic development. This policy emphasized to students to equip with practical skills to prepare them for active participation in country's socio-economic development.

Increase in literacy Rate: At the time of this policy was formulating, the country literacy rate was only 39%, to reach out the target of 70% literacy rate, proposed to open new non-formal schools to enroll those people who were not provided or dropped out from formal education system with several reasons.

Curriculum Reform: The policy introduced some major changes in curriculum, shifting into demand oriented curriculum. All primary and middle education proposed to shift in elementary education system. Policy gave a comprehensive demand to formulate curriculum with basis to

prepare students for future challenges with special reference to information technology, computer knowledge and skills.

Implementation Gape of NEP (1998-2010)

Despite the efforts, the policy faced inadequate challenges, including lack of implementation, lack of resources and political instability. The objectives were partially achieved and there were several challenges in achieving global primary education (Ahmad & Rauf, 2012). Administrative inefficiency and weak monitoring mechanism also hindered effective implementation. As a result, many of the policy objectives such as achieving universal primary education and significant increase in literacy rate were not fully realized in targeted year (Dildar et al, 2016; Suhag & Khan, 2020).

National Education Policy 2009

In the context of turbulent history of education reform, The National Education Policy 2009, seemed to be milestone to streamline the education policy provision to new subject with provincial autonomy on education reform. This policy conceived a comprehensive road map to track on the country's education system which was inculcated deep-seated crisis. This policy was based on the commitment over international education Goals-Education For All and millennium development Goals. Formulating education policy under NEP-2209, coming with the time, when country was facing severe internal security challenges and worldwide war on terrorism. There was main focus to fight against rhetoric terrorism in province Balochistan and Federal Tribal Territories. In this situation, access of education in these disturbed areas was major challenge to give education equally and equity.

One of the good thing of this national education Policy was to draw structural drawback of education system, despite of giving an ideal policy as it was carried out in the past. The structural weaknesses were, the public private division, unequal access of male and female in rural areas, and the religious school system competing with secular or liberal stream of learning, low literacy, gender indiscrimination, high dropout rate, lack

of public confidence on government school, weak administration in schools, untrained teachers, teacher crises, long process of teachers appointment, political interference in education sector, corruption in education, and lack of technological development in education sector. The NEP-2009 set a vision of education system based on following principles.

- 1-Education for universal access
- 2-Curriculum reform and teacher capacity building
- 3-Reform in the system of governance and accountability
- 4-National cohesion based on Islamic values
- 5-Priority education considering current labor market.

Above all principles reflect the “Global Education Opportunity” and Pakistan’s socio-cultural cohesion. The key features of NEP-2009 given as following.

Universal primary education: This policy had deliberately recognized the early childhood education as a key factor to meet the global standard of primary education. This treated as central pillar of national development. It focused on following key areas.

- 1-To promote child friendly environment with major focus on child’s joyful learning.
- 2-Especial arrangements of training for ECC teachers.
- 3-To develop ECE curricula.

This was a step to develop and shift towards an international standard of primary education with long term child’s cognitive development and social engagement.

To develop a curriculum was a key area focused of NEP-2009. First time a unified exam system introduced to bring public and private institution on same page to prevent any devastation of government run schools. To develop a curriculum, the major focus to introduce quite new curriculum, which will be more relevant and skills-oriented curriculum, following proposal given at the time.

- 1-To develop curriculum based on modern time challenges and to promote critical thinking.

- 2-To prevent rote memorization and cramming in exam system.

- 3-To major focus on learning outcomes.

- 4-To cope learning to become law-abiding citizens.

- 5-Focusing on ethics and Islamic values and patriotism.

Teacher’s Education: As teachers are the backbone to play major role to implement the curriculum, one of the major reforms was proposed in NEC-2009. The standardization of teacher’s education institutions and training programs were proposed, including student’s centered teaching methods, cross curricular competencies, classroom based trainings, and practical teaching experience. For the in service teachers, continuous professional development (CPD) trainings, teacher’s trainings in subject knowledge, pedagogical assessment, classroom management, multi-grade teaching, ICT and language teaching. This shows that teaching isn’t one-time qualification but continuous process throughout its career (Government of Pakistan, 2009). Teachers’ education included;

- 1-The minimum qualification for a primary teacher is bachelor Degree
- 2-Establishing programs to enhance Teacher’s education according to continuous professional development (CPD).
- 3-Strict Rules and regulations for recruitment of teachers and accountability mechanism proposed.

Islamic Education: The objective of teaching of Islamic Education shall be to ensure that all the Muslims children to provide to learn and apply the fundamental principles of Islam in their lives with the purpose of reformation and development of society on the principles of the Holy Quran and Sunnah (Government of Pakistan, 2009). The subject of Islamiyat affirms the role of Islamic education shaping the national identity and moral development. It main focused is based on the following.

- 1-Islamiyat as a compulsory subject
- 2-Integrating the ethical and moral values across the curriculum
- 3-Bringing Madarshs in mainstream of education system

4-For Non-Muslims there will be the book of ethics replacing Islamiyath, the aim was to develop responsible citizens with strong moral values, tolerance, honesty and social justice.

Secondary and Higher Secondary education: It is in the recognition to expand secondary and higher secondary education to meet the knowledge based economy with following reforms included.

- 1- Introducing technical and vocational education on secondary level.
- 2- Reforms and strengthen the higher education commission.
- 3- To promote research and innovation and linked the higher secondary schools to university education.
- 4- To expand, updating the technical and vocation education and training up to the internal standard, aligning the skills, considering current and future labor market needs.
- 5- Governance and Management: poor governance and management had always adverse impact on outcome of any educational policies. It also had effects on education sector. NEP-2009 introduced several governance reforms.
- 6- Disseminate powers to lower level or power decentralization from high level to lower level, and from federal to provincial level and province to district level.
- 7- The complete mechanism of monitoring and evaluation.
- 8- Empowering and enhancing transparency in schools.
- 9- Participations of communities, through school management committees.

Financing of education: The policy proposed 7% of GDP fixed expenditure on education comparison with 2.5% in previous policies. It also emphasized for sufficient allocation of budget, reducing wastage and corruption, encouraging public private partnership.

The National Education Policy-2009, was considered to be comprehensive documents and vibrant framework, but many educationists criticized over NEP-2009. The biggest objection was, its quantitative nature despite of qualitative framework, based on empirical figures only. It had

ambitious goal like universal primary education promoting ECC classes, but implementation gapes widened the policy crises. The policy targeted improving quality education, teacher's education but due to financial commitment, deficit budget, once again the policy criticized as weak policy. The increasing to 7% GDP, was taken as baseless targets given by political elites. Without sufficient funding, the school infrastructure, teacher's training, curriculum reforms, and literacy programs couldn't be implemented effectively.

After 18th amendment the subject of education shifted from federal to provincial level, widened the gap of coordination between provinces to federal government. Due to different geo-political and physical feature access within province to far flung areas, Policy-2009 had less effectiveness and national educational target couldn't be achieved.

National Education Policy-2017

Another attempt to align Pakistan education landscape, as all previous education policies failed to comprehend the outcomes of education policy. This was time when there was high drop-out ratio and high rate of Non-going school children. Hence there was another step needed to overcome the crisis. The prima-facta of NEP-2017 was to reach global standard in general, sustainable development Goal (SDGs) in particular (Government of Pakistan, 2017).

When work on NEP-2017 was launched Pakistan was facing severe economic challenges. Pakistan expenditure on education was still less than 2% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Government expenditure on education was reported 1.868% as lower as under deprived African Country. The absence of facilities, miss-matched and non-inclusive curriculum, demotivated working environment for teachers as established a system that does not address the needs of students and educators (Sumaira, 2025). There are two facts to the policy implementation paradox, for the long time for these points of view have important arguments within the field of policy studies, however in practical there was a disjuncture between the policy views and outcome in practice is also significant (Nuzdar, 2013). The main focus

of NEP-2017 was aimed and mainly focused on improving access, quality governance and financing of education without budgeting hurdles, taking all provinces on-board.

Key Feature of National Education Policy-2017

The education policy, which promotes quality of education for all, equal access inclusive education in both rural areas. Some of major features given as following.

Equal Access: policy emphasizes equal access of universal primary education, special inclusion of marginalized group. It also focused school infrastructure with modern way of teaching and learning, joyful learning on ECE level. It proposed to control drop-out rate on ECE level.

Teacher's training: Teachers are assets of society and backbone in implementation of any educational policy. Trained qualified teachers give results better. Hence, this policy too focused on teacher's training to enhance teacher's capacity and professional development. Internal standards training programs proposed for in service teachers and a mechanism formulated for recruitment of teachers. Policy also proposed for accountability mechanism for in-service teachers.

Quality education: Quality education was always prime focused in all previous policies but it couldn't be fulfilled due to several reasons. The NEP-2017 proposed curriculum reforms to bring quality to meet international standards. NEP-2017 also brought a road-map to assessment system in secondary and high secondary level which was a shift to rote memorization to critical thinking for students.

Technical and vocational training: to meet labor market demands this policy emphasized skill development considering market demands. For this policy demanded expansion and increase in technical and vocational centers, aligned with industry needs. This can increase job markets and also reflects a shift towards skilled based economy.

Enhancing information and communication Technology: the use of ICT in learning can give better outcomes, for that a wide range of digital technology program proposed for access in information technology. This technology proposed in schools and teachers training programs. In secondary and higher secondary level, a mechanism of Blended learning was stressed to initiate.

Curriculum reforms and language policy: Pakistan is a multicultural country and around 66 languages are spoken. This language policy possesses major challenges to formulate education policy based a single language or national language. Some of interior areas in Pakistan people even do not speak and understand its national language. NEP-2017 was an attempt to balance national identity giving major value to national language with global connection through English language.

Financing: The policy emphasized smart financing and governance. I was also verified that poor financing and governance weakened the previous education policies. Hence, this policy will improve coordination between federal and provincial government with major increase in education funding and strengthen the mechanism of accountability.

Critical Overview of National Education Policy-2017

When comparison this policy with previous policies, it was more comprehended frame worked and aligned documents to bring education on right track, but still there had been critics by some scholar and educationist. Educational policies are also called political documents because these are directed by the vision and political agenda by the government (Ahmad, Khan & Naseem, 2011). Policy indicates aspirations of the government towards addressing towards unprivileged population by introducing new initiatives and improving existing services. The lack of coherence statics and ground realities mentioned in different policy chapters indicate the time constraints or lack of coordination between team involved in

policy development (Chaudary & Azeem, 2025). Other hurdles and constraints associated with provision of diversity responsive education have been meager financial resources, less focus on education sector, structural flaws and hurdles, non-availability of instructional and teaching materials, untrained or less motivated teachers, non-supportive school leadership, lack of conviction and commitment at government level (Chaudary, 2019). The systematic review of concerned literature suggests that involvement of bureaucrats-never been educationist, lack of research based policy making, influence of foreign aid, incapable of policy makers are the major reasons for ineffective of policy making in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2021, 2022; Ali & Ahmad, 2023; Anwar et al., 2017; Arshad & Zameer, 2018; Aslam, et al., 2022).

Non-willingness has always been prevailed in Pakistan's administration, suffered bureaucratic hurdles, political instability and its interference, weak governance and misallocation of resources, inconsistent policies lead to delay or fewer effective implementation. Moreover, policy-2017 avoided ground realities, didn't focus on teacher's absenteeism, poor school infrastructure, devastating facilities, most of the urban schools lacked with modern facilities like computer and science lab. Teachers training reforms remained superficial. The policy didn't have sufficient stress on quality teacher's education with monitoring and supervising teacher's performance. There wasn't teacher's incentive and efficiency mechanism, lack of consistency between classroom realities and policy intentions. There was fewer stress on teachers' performance attribute to poor academic performance in the education sector (Asim et al., 2021; Baig et al., 2019; Hali et al., 2021).

The policy assured the expansion of public private partnership (PPP) on higher education. It was frame work to bring all private institutions on single road-map towards quality education. But Higher Education Commission (HEC) was failed to maintain quality assurance in this area which was built under trust and assurance. The policy prioritized increasing the grass enrolment ratio without strengthening HEC capacity to regulate

low quality private universities (Ahmad, 2019). Education became the subject of provinces after enforcement of constitutional Eighteenth amendment, where aspirational goals were run behind in the cost of national standardization and provincial autonomy. The political instability, military establishment involvement in policy making and its implementation remained a question on political will with democratic commitment as education a way forward to liberty and prosperity.

Single National Curriculum (SNC)-2021

The single national curriculum represents the most comprehensive education reforms in the country's history. At the time there were three education systems prevailing in the country. The government schools-yellow schools, the private schools and the Madarsah. These three systems had their own dimensions. The rich class of families prefer to enroll in expensive private schools, and the upper and lower middle class prefer to enroll in less expensive private schools and the very poor class prefer to enrol in Madarsa where schooling based on boarding with free of cost. These multiple streams had long term concerns that produce different social class and unequal educational outcomes. Historically Pakistan had two major education system in general. The English medium school and secondly Urdu medium schools. Each system had different curricula, syllabus and text books, ultimate some different outcomes. This mode of difference statically created social inequality, economic disparity. The Single Curriculum was proposed in highlighting these issues of different social class disparities and to bring them a unified social class. The single National Curriculum was proposed to address these disparities by providing unified curriculum framework throughout the country, so that every social class would learn the same content. This reform was also connected with core issues of national integration, social cohesion and equality of opportunities.

Students educated in different system often struggle to relate one another or collaborate professionally due to stark differences in exposure language skill ability (Ahsan, 2021). The idea of

single national curriculum was simple: every child in Pakistan should study the same knowledge regardless of social or economic background (Baig, 2026). The SNC emphasized critical thinking, moving away from rote memorization and corporate with modern skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and creativity. The core framework of this curriculum was student-centered- students learning outcomes, inquiry based learning, activity based learning and expelling the rote memorization (Khan at el., 2024). Subjects like social studies promotes the democratic participation, critical thinking and import skills of modern world and global citizenship. SNC was not only the frame work to formulate the education policy but disseminate the sense of patriotism and the national integration. The SNC was based equal participation on curriculum content and modernized teaching and learning approaches. Institutions with different teaching with different language instructions focused on inclusive and equitable education as per global standard to align with global education to meet the criteria of united Nation’s sustainable Development goals. Another goal of SNC was national integration. Pakistan has wide diverse culture and multiple languages and different regional identities. It argued that single and unified curriculum reduced ideological differences, enhance national cohesion and equal citizenship created by different education system. SNC argues that it minimizes the devastation among those who cannot afford the expensive fees to educate their children in private English medium schools. This curriculum can eliminate the social and economic differences among people living in economic disparities. So this education policy was not only an educational reform but nation building project, social cohesion, strength and unity among diverse culture. It helps people to understand the national responsibility and well-being and sense of integration and identity formation.

Key aspects of Single National Curriculum

Structure: The structure of SNC was standard based curriculum mainly focused on student’s learning outcomes (SLOs) in spite of rote

memorization. There was point of SLOs given start of any lesson.

Subject Area: There were variety of subjects in different levels, but the core subjects include social studies, mathematics, General knowledge, Urdu, English and Islamic education/ Religious education.

Main Focused Area: It includes activity based learning, modern world skills and competencies, and conceptual understanding with special focus on mathematics.

Implementation: Curriculum implementation covering G-1-----G-5 by 2021
 Curriculum implementation covering G-6-----G-8 by 2023
 Curriculum implementation covering G-9-----G-10 by 2024

Core Features of the SNC

- Uniform curriculum across the board
- Focus on modern teaching method
- Character Building and ethics
- Teacher education and in service training
- Stress on critical thinking
- Values and ethics
- Cultural and Religious content
- Competency based learning and learning outcomes
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Social and normal cohesion

Key Objectives

Equal Learning Opportunities: As Pakistan’s education system divided into three parallel systems, SNC brought these all systems into single system to give opportunity to all learner studying in any school in any part of country. Students with any background would equal learn through single National curriculum.

National Integration and Harmony: The slogan of SNC is “one Nation one Curriculum”. It was building one nation by creating shared educational experience while studying any school

of the country. This provided national integration and cohesion throughout the country.

Inclusion of Madarsh: When SNC was launched around 8 million children were enrolled into madarsh, brought them into mainstream of national integration, mandating secular subjects along with religious subjects. The purpose was to provide equal opportunities in job market with those who passed out from any other schools of the country.

Skill Development: The one of main focused of SNC was critical thinking despite long content with rote memorization. Information and communication technology (ICT) became mandatory content in middle and secondary schools.

Standardized Assessment: When content of curriculum becomes same and equal all over the country then same standard of assessment was implemented into enforcement. Students having different backgrounds will be tested with same mechanism of assessments.

Critical Overview of Single National Curriculum
Despite the comprehensive work to bring all nation on single curriculum and to bring them in mainstream of national cohesion, researchers, educationist and members of civil societies had a critical overview on SNC.

1- **Religious Orientation:** The SNC Pakistan is a federally promoted, politically one sided policy with its aim to reform the education system under one uniform curriculum highly induced with Islamic doctrines (Shaikh & Benedetti, 2024). The English text book content found to rise 23% as Islamic content which was violation of constitutional safeguard regarding religious freedom. An Educationist Nayar observed that under the SNC, "Public schools now teach more religious content than many Madarsahs". In Islamic subjects there was huge plurism or uniformity in case of SNC Pakistan (Shaikh & Benedetti, 2024). Contents regarded Quranic verses were added, there was question raised either education is fundamental rights of every citizen in Pakistan or the curriculum

designed for perception development for political national building through religious homogenization (Mahmood, 2025, July 20, GEO TV).

2- **Implementation Gape:** Most of the private schools were following oxford and Cambridge curriculum at the time when SNC was imposed. It was found that SNC lowering of standard for their students. On other side, most of the government primary schools were on multi-grade teaching system headed by single teacher with many classes in single school. The content balance become rigorous and even many teachers in single schools couldn't reach on standard of learning due to hard contents, with no pre-implementation trainings for teachers. In the most of the Madarsahs, there were crises of teachers to teach SNC syllabus. Hence, there was significant implementation gaps throughout in all systems of schools running at that time.

3- **Resource Gape:** In the implementation phase for educational policies, there are pre-requisites preparation and planning. It was observed that despite implementation, the SNC was imposed with limited resources. Most of government run schools were suffering basic facilities along with teaching resources. There was heinous infrastructure of schools showing the ruins. There were thousands of vacancies of teaching positions, vacated for many years. Government had no sufficient funds to appoint teachers for implementations of SNC with its true spirit.

4- **Out of Schools Children:** When policy of SNC was given, 22.8millions children were out of schools. This education policy couldn't give adequate directions to bring these children to schools. Education is a fundamental right to every child, but Policy mainly not identified road-map to resolve the out of school children issue. Another crisis was gradual increase of drop-out children from the schools due to poverty, lack of opportunities especially for girls in most of the rural areas.

5- **Federal Imposition Policy:** After 18th constitutional amendments, Education policies became the subject of provincial government, and the role of federal government becomes limited in

curriculum orientation. Yet the federal government by-passed the provincial government consensus imposed it in the country. The imposition of this policy without considering province position of resources, infrastructure, and readiness created chaos on this policy and central-provincial tug of war began, ultimately undermine the concept of SNC (Dr. Muslim, 2025).

6- Neo-liberalization Framework: The Single National Curriculum was framed by two external factors, the secularization and neo-liberalization (Shah & Jules, 2023). These two factors were used to counter perceived threats to national identity and security. The possible outcome of SNC reflects neo-liberalization as preparation of human resources for global market needs.

Conclusion

Pakistan Education Policy trapped in different cycle of successive government given multi-dimensional flaws, faced ambitious educational rhetoric by system failure. Pakistan nation has produced a bunch of documents a series of educational policies diagnosed the same alignment owing low literacy rate, crises of children drop-out, stark gender and regional disparities, political instability, nasty of non-going school children, dysfunctional system of rote memorization and crises of financial resources, economical hindrances and change of immediate government setup, imposition of martial law and successive policy couldn't break the cycle of regional disparities consistently treated curriculum reform as a political tool rather than pedagogical mission. The National education commission 1959 given by General Ayub Khan was emphasized science and technical education mainly reflected the thinking to produce cold war force with major consideration to make atomic bombs for country's survival, which this world conceived in Second World War where USA dropped atomic bomb to Japan. In 1972, education Policy under Bhutto's government nationalized private schools and promoted Urdu as a national Language and medium of instructions in school alienated middle class-dissemination in quality.

The most drastic Education Policy under Zia-ul-Haq's 1979, where the cause of education dramatically shifts to produce religious-militaristic ideology. The reason was to produce Islamic Martials (Mujahideen) to intervene USSR-Afghan war on directions of USA. The cold war between USSR and USA as big powers manipulated in all area of Pakistan nation where Educational Policy set as long term touch religious orientation where even after fifty years of Zia regime, today SNC was followed religious cognition among Youth.

Since independence, Pakistan was inherited a colonial education system, which was not aligned with socio-cultural economic needs. The education Policy 1992, and education policy 2009 focused on expanding the access of education to every individual, aligned education with economic development, improving quality access to meet the global challenges with special reference to science and technology. Policy 2007 showed more comprehensive framework on universal primary education, involvement of community in educational process and development. Later on the Single National Curriculum intended to bring Nation on single platform- Single Nation Single Curriculum. This policy addressed the systematic disparities and inequalities. But it was also criticized to undermine diversity and innovation in education, and failed to address the deeper issues such as teacher's quality participation in educational process, governance challenges, educational structural issues and work to take on confidence to all provinces on single path. Despite to appreciate the work on SNC, provinces grieved to interfere education system in provinces after 18th constitutional amendment. The lack of coordination between provinces and federal government and inadequate monitoring mechanism and implementation gape and lack of qualified human capital and insufficient budget, frequent change of government, Army intervention in government policies, low GDP share in education, political based appointments of teachers killing meritorious appointments in education sector, bad governance and bureaucratic mode of work put impacts and neglecting sentiment of Pakistan Education Policy. There was attempt despite to impractical policy

gives a neglected sentiment in education development.

References

- Abbasi, K. (2022). "Education Policy of 2009 still in Vogue". *Dawn*, 9 August. Available at <https://paper.dawn.com/news/print109-08-2022-004-006>.
- Adnan et al., (2023). Case Study Analysis of educational policies; *Resource Distribution and prevailing inequities in Pakistan journal of Human Dynamics*.
- Afzal, M (2002). Pakistan Education Policy: A critical analysis. *Journal of Educational Research*, 5(1), 1-15.
- Ahmad, I. & Rauf, M. (2012). Implementation Gaps in Educational Policies of Pakistan: Critical analysis of Problems and way forward. *International Journal of Humanities and social sciences*, 2(21), pp.240-245.
- Ahmad, M., Khan, A.B., & Naseem F. (2011). Policies for special person in Pakistan. Analysis of Policy implementation. *Berkeley Journal of social sciences*, 1 (2), pp. 1-11.
- Ahsan, H. (2021). *Analyzing pros and cons of single National Curriculum*. PIDE.
- Ahsan, M. (2003). An Analytical Review of Pakistan's educational Policies and plans. *Research Paper in education*, 18(3), pp. 259-280. Doi.10.10801026715203200010329.
- Alif, Ailan. (2015). *25 million broken promises: The crises of Pakistan's Education system*: Islamabad.
- Baig, M. (2026). *Single National curriculum in Pakistan: Pros and Cons and ground reality*. <https://rozupdates.com/blogs/single-national-curriculum-in-pakistan-pros-cons-and-ground-reality>.
- ChatGPT, Copilot, Deepseek, Meta AI used for Reading and Ideas taken. No copy paste used.
- Chaudry & Azeem, (2025). National education Policy (2017). An analysis through the lens of inclusion. *Journal of research & Reviews in Social Sciences Pakistan*, 8(1), 2025. pp. 3035-3067. www.kinnarid.edu.pk/
- Dildar, S. M., Saif, N. N., & Naz, A. (2016). review of education Policy of Pakistan: Urdu as a medium of instruction. ICS Es-2026 proceeding, University of sargoda-Pakistan. pp. 25-26.
- Government of Pakistan, (1959). *National Education Commission report*, Ministry of Education.
- Government of Pakistan, (2009). *National Education Policy 2009*. Islamabad pp.23-25.
- Grammarly AI used for correction of Grammar and spellings.
- Hussain, S.A. (1999). *Education in Pakistan: A Critical review*. Oxford University Press.
- Khan, S. (2015). Education Policy in Pakistan. *A review journal of Education Policy*, 29(1), pp. 1-15.
- Khizar, A. Anwar, M.N, & Malik, 2019. Role of national Education Policy-2009 and national professional standards for teachers in developing Teachers' professionalism. *Bullet in education and research*.
- Khurram, A. (2025). *Implementation of education Policy in Pakistan: a systematic literature review*. PIDE-working papers 2025:8, Pakistan institute of Development of Pakistan.
- Maqbool, S. (2025, March 10). *Revamping Pakistan's broken education system*. (Minute Mirror).
- Ministry of Federal Education & Professional training. (2017). *National Educational Policy 2017-2025 Government of Pakistan*.
- Nuzdar, H.P. (2013). exploring the policy implementation Paradox. *International Journal of qualitative studies in education*, 26(8), pp.933-952.
- Oxfam. (2018). *Addressing Gender inequality in Pakistan's Education system Islamabad*: Oxfam GB.
- Rehan, T. (2004). *Denizens of Alien worlds: A study of Education, Inequality and polarization in Pakistan*. Oxford university Press.
- Shah, D. (2016). Review of Education Policies and Plans in the context of secondary education in Pakistan. *International Journal of current Research*, Vol.8, Issue, 07, Pp. 34447-3458.

- Shah, S.A., & Jules., T.D. (2023). *Education for securitization and Neo-liberalization: A cultural political economy Analysis of Pakistan's Single National Curriculum*. An annual Review of comparative and international education 2022. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Siddiqui, K.A, (2003). A review of Pakistan's National policy of 2009 and 2017; similarities from ECE to Higher Education. Elm ve innovative technology. *Yalar Journal*, 27, pp.105-114.
- Suhag, A.K., & Khan, N. (2020). National educational Policies of Pakistan with reference to social justice: A critical analysis an Educational Studies Review, V (III), pp.166-174.
- The Friday times. (2025). *One Nation many hurdles. The promise and perils of Pakistan's Single national curriculum*.
- Zia, S. U. (2010), Impact of Education policies on Religious minorities in Pakistan 1947-2010, Karachi: South Asia Forum for Human Rights.

