GOVERNANCE, POLITICS, AND EDUCATION POLICY IN PAKISTAN

Shaista Naz[*1], Ferheen Abbasi[2]

[*1]*PhD Scholar (Education), NUML, Islamabad Pakistan*
[2]*Assistant Professor, Department of Education, NUML, Islamabad Pakistan*

[*1]shaistanaz152@gmail.com,[2]ferheenabbasi@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

In contemporary technology-driven societies, the demand for a high-quality education system is imperative. In Pakistan, however, education policy is shaped by multiple intersecting factors. While socioeconomic conditions are frequently identified as sources of inequality, political agenda-setting, state interactions with self-interested groups, and pressures arising from global technological competition significantly influence policymaking. The state plays a central role in ensuring effective education delivery, placing education at the core of reform initiatives aimed at promoting transparency and democratization. These objectives can be advanced through the leadership of qualified teachers and researchers in curriculum design and implementation. Nevertheless, persistent political interference—manifested in corruption and inequitable resource allocation—continues to pose a major challenge. Although education reform is often emphasized in electoral campaigns, policy decisions tend to be partisan and inconsistently implemented, ultimately undermining sustainable, long-term progress in the education sector.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Definition

Pakistan will be examined in detail, focusing on the main political dynamics behind its formulation and implementation current education policies in Pakistan. Its 2017 education policy of which sub-national politics shape national education policies. International comparative education policies will inform, but not be the focus of, this portrait of how political influences have impacted especially in Pakistan. The chapter will start by characterizing education policy before discussing the ways in this research focuses on how the politics-education concept functions,

1.2. General Background

The recent unrest in Pakistan has brought deep changes in the lives of people in the country. Since the introduction of the latest electoral cycle, the federal administration has promised to be on the front line to propel the level of living through the series of reforms, which include the proposed policy frameworks, enacted laws, and multi-level government structures. These are steps that are in tandem with other national growth and effective governance measures in reaction to the changing societal environment (Bashir and Ahmad, 2022). The cultural and economic barriers in Pakistan are similar to other emerging economies, and it is often the source of crises, e.g., poverty, inequality, and political instability (Qureshi, 2021). The requirement to address the educational demands of the twenty-first century requires the understanding that they are interdependent on such essential variables as the processes of democratization, economic dynamics, demographic variability, and cultural heterogeneity (Baker and LeTendre, 2023). The educational policy of Pakistan is inherently connected with and placed in the context of the higher socio-political and

economic aims, demonstrating the continuous attempts of the country to deal with these complicated issues.

Since the foundation of the state education system in Pakistan, both federal and regional governments have regulated schooling, curriculum and learning in the country. However, the degree to which national policies and international affairs influence local education reforms remains a critical area of inquiry. The Economics and Education program equips students with the jobs in the field of regional, state, and national educational policy leadership. Graduates often work as policy consultants and researchers in government agencies, non-profits and at private organizations dealing with educational reforms. Given that many of these policymakers are influenced by local politics, the impact of political interference on education policy is clear. Furthermore, universities play a critical role in societal growth, contributing to long-term educational and political developments through policy shaping (Green & Stoll, 2023).

1.3. Justification for Choosing the Project

The current education system in state of Pakistan is a matter of great concern because it has to contend with many challenges that compromise the quality and effectiveness of education. The problem of poor strategic implementation, lack of competency in teaching staff, outdated curriculum, least efficient teaching practices, interference of the government, lack of administrative structure, and scarcity of research facilities are the issues that problematize the growth and advancement of the functioning education system (Iqbal & Khan, 2022). Further complicate such problems is the lack of accountability and systematic reforms to help deal with its issues (Akhtar et al., 2021).

It is a known fact that education is one of the most important professions globally as it is the foundation of national growth and development of society. Nevertheless, there are limited access to qualified and skilled teachers in Pakistan. The teaching profession has a large number of people who join the profession after failing in other career fields which contributes to the further worsening of the education quality. Political manipulation of the education system is also widespread, with political figures using the sector for personal gain by hiring unqualified, low-cost teachers as a form of patronage or bribery, especially within the public sector. This is an important barrier to reforming and modernizing education, due to its politicization (Siddiqui, 2023).The lack of professional standards and the misuse of educational appointments undermine the development of a high-quality education system.

One of the problems that affect the education system in Pakistan is political interference in policies. Political interests tend to influence education policies in Pakistan, which do not align with the client needs and instead create continuous inconsistencies in the reforms and difficulties in their implementation (Hussain and Niazi, 2020). The purpose of this project is to investigate the scope of politics on the education policy in Pakistan and will give a detailed study of this relationship with a particular focus on how the political factors influence and hinder educational reforms.

1.4. Objectives of the Project

The primary goal of the project is to research the education system in Pakistan with the aim to explore the different influences on the education policies with special interest on political interference. The report will evaluate how politics affect the education policies that have been adopted in the recent years in Pakistan with the focus on how politics have influenced the education policies.

1.5. General Objectives of the Project

The general aim of this research is to understand the influence of politics on education policies.

It can not only be a Pakistani problem because political interference in the education system is known to be a global problem. The comprehension of these dynamics will be added to the general discussion of the educational policy development and reform.

1.6. Exploring the Relationship between Politics and Education Policy

The connection of politics and education policy has been gaining greater importance in modern day governance with educational matters not being the

concern of local governments but becoming the priority of national and state politics. Politics is a major factor that determines the education system since it shapes the development and enforcement of policies whose motives are dominated by political ideologies, economic concerns, and social demands (Ali & Rahman, 2021). In Pakistan as in most developing nations, education policy is a national concern that is also ingrained in the political structure of the country and education policy is a national issue in most developing nations, and in Pakistan, it also involves politics in the structure of governance (Siddiqui et al., 2022).

Education policies are easily abused by politicians because they use the education reforms as a tool to fund their popularity. As an example, political parties can make huge promises about the increase of education expenditures during the election time, or they can offer limited reforms that would satisfy the momentary needs of the population, with no references to the long-term educational aims and sustainability (Chaudhry et al., 2023). Consequently, education policies can become responsive, not proactive, and usually they are shaped by the political environment at the moment instead of based on evidence-based research in education (Khan and Ali, 2020). Such politicization of education may result in disjointed education reforms, uneven application of policies, and a break in education policies across political terms (Siddiqui, 2021).
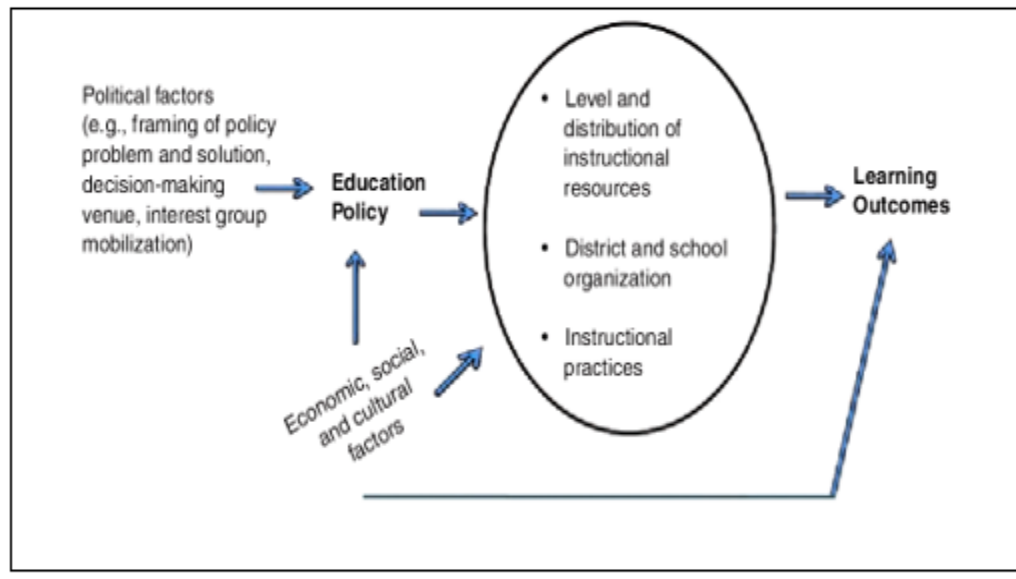

Fig. 1: The traditional view of the relationship between politics and education policy (L. McDonnell, 2009 "Repositioning Politics in Education Circle of Knowledge)

Besides, the politics of party loyalty, patronage, and local power structures directly influence the choice of educational leadership, curriculum, and distribution of resources in the education sector. Political patronage in hiring of teachers could lead to appointment of underqualified teachers, which has a significant overwhelming negative effect on education quality (Farooq et al., 2020). Regional politics in Pakistan tend to cause unequal education systems between urban and rural areas, as well as between various provinces when it comes to educational decision-making (Qadir & Aslam, 2022). Such political dynamics are able to promote the existing inequalities in the education system and prevent the achievement of equitable and quality education to all students.

Besides, politics and education policy is subject to larger socio-economic and cultural forces. Political priorities, which eventually define the flow of educational reforms, may be impacted by economic

issues, demographic trends, as well as social movements. Education, as Henig (2023) alleges, has been a vehicle to advance political agendas that favor the interests of the ruling elite resulting into policies that favor one or group of people at the expense of others. This has necessitated the need to critically analyze the political interests in relation to education policies and how they influence access, quality, and equity of education to every citizen.
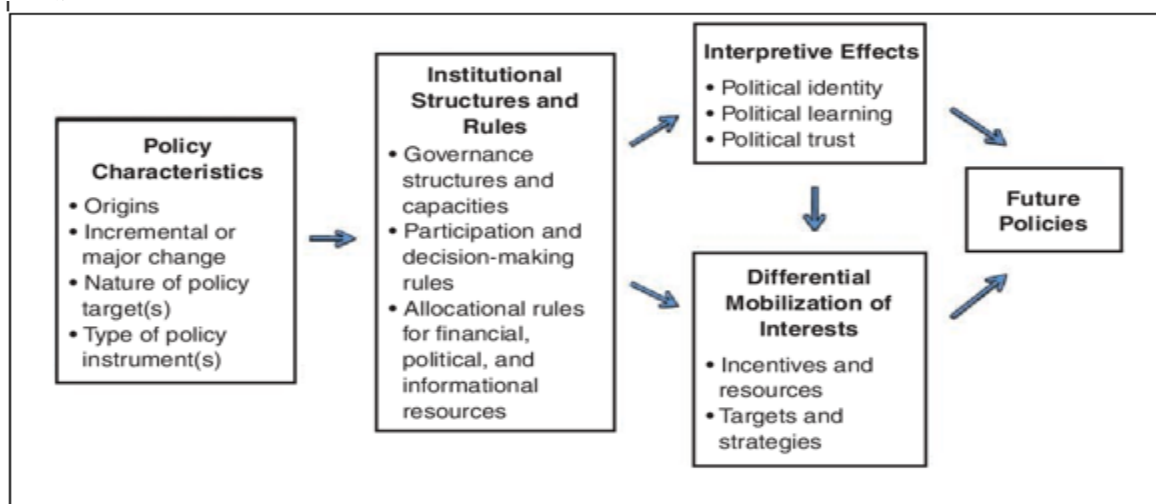
1.7. Conceptual Model

Fig. 2: The conceptual model on education policy in contrast to political views (L. McDonnell, 2009 "Repositioning Politics in Education Circle of Knowledge)

The conceptual model illustrated in Fig. 2 presents the intricate relationship between education policy and political views. The model as expounded by McDonnell (2009) explains that political ideologies and agendas play an important role in determining the process, process, and results of education policies. The model underlines that education presents not only the product of educational aims and the needs of the society but it is also highly institutionalized in the political environment and the order of allocation resources, the priority of reforms, and the course of the educational systems. Placing politics in the policy context of education, McDonnell reemphasizes the need to comprehend the politics of power and political zeal, which promotes shift of policies, but not necessarily with equal consequences to educational quality and equity.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Introduction
Most low-income countries have been experiencing a high rate of primary education but academic performance has not been matching the rate of increase. Regardless of the increased rate of enrollment into schools, it is estimated that no more than one in every half of the children receiving the schooling qualifies as a reader, writer or capable of performing simple arithmetic. This disparity in learning outputs is worrying due to a number of reasons. It is generally accepted that education is one of the most basic rights, the major factor of the societal development, and the most necessary factor to help people become even more prosperous. It has been found out that quality education is a more credible indicator of economic productivity rather than just the number of years a person has attended school. This situation whereby the number of children, who are attending school yet failing to gain the necessary skills is a clear crisis of learning, with serious social and political consequences.

2.2. General Issues Faced by Pakistan Education Policy

One is that the education system of Pakistan suffers a myriad of problems that are likely to negatively affect its effectiveness and to provide good education. The absence of uniformity in standards of education in the country is one of the most important concerns. Although there are areas that have advanced in the area of accessibility of education, some of them especially in the rural regions continue to struggle to offer even basic education. The inequality in urban and rural education systems is a significant issue because of the lack of infrastructure, untrained educators, and the access to educational materials in the rural areas (Ahmad and Khan 2021). The policy frameworks which are destined to help in curbing these disparities are usually failing because of poor implementation and absence of follow up.

The second urgent problem is the political intrusion in the process of the education policy making and implementation. Pakistan education is usually influenced by the political interests and not the needs of the education system where the policies keep on shifting in terms of the ruling government. This discrepancy derails long-term educational changes and causes this feeling of uncertainty among students and teachers (Shah et al., 2022). Teacher recruitment is also influenced by political patronage as most teachers are often recruited depending on their political affiliations and not their qualifications, which also contribute to lowering the quality of education (Khan & Iqbal, 2023). Politicization of the education sector does not only impact the quality of teaching but also causes inefficiencies in resource distribution and thus it is hard to have sustained development of education.

Moreover, inadequate deprivation of a national curriculum has also been mentioned as a severe problem. The Pakistani curriculum tends to be rather disintegrated and diverse, as various provinces use their own education policies and principles, and this situation results in the dissimilarity of the education standards in the country. Javed and Aslam (2023) report that due to the lack of a single curriculum, students become confused and find it difficult to pass through one region to another. The initiatives of the government to standardize the curriculum have been

haphazard and though some improvements have been made, a lot still needs to be done in order to make sure that every child in Pakistan gets quality and similar education.

2.2 Factors Determining Education Policy

Education policy formulation is a decision that is affected by various factors such as political, economic, social and cultural factors. The most important are political factors, since the governmental agendas tend to influence the educational reforms and adjust them to the ideology of the party and the electional agenda. Ali and Zafar (2021) explain that the political environment in Pakistan has a significant impact on the future of the education policy, as the power balance tends to cause changes in priorities of the policy and resource distribution. This political force has the effect of creating disjointed and unstable reforms in the education sector, which negatively affects the sustainability of reforms.

The economic factors are also crucial when determining the education policy. The scope and scale of the educational reforms is highly dependent on budgetary constraints and the distribution of resources. Economic challenges, including low national income, high debt, and inflation, have also impeded the freedom of the government in Pakistan to invest in education (Raza and Shah, 2022). Such financial limitations normally lead to poor school funding, absence of training programs to teachers, and restricted access to technological education which only add to the preexisting disparities in the education system. It is therefore directly impacting the quality of education and reforms implementation, and there is need to always look at the political goodwill and the economic ability when developing education policies (Raza & Shah, 2022).

2.3 Historical Background

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to invest in education (Raza and Shah, 2022). Such financial limitations normally lead to poor school funding, absence of training programs to teachers, and restricted access to technological education which only add to the preexisting disparities in the education system. It is therefore directly impacting the quality of education and reforms implementation, and there is need to always look at the political goodwill and the economic ability when developing education policies (Raza & Shah, 2022). During the initial years after the independence of Pakistan, the government held back-to-back meetings to deliberate on the future of the education system in the country. The first Pakistani Educational Conference was one of the landmark events held in November 1947 under the leadership of the Minister of State of Media and Science, Mr. Fazul Rahman. The meeting involved representatives of the government, thinkers, and teachers throughout Pakistan to deliberate on the problems and the vision of the future education system (Khan and Ahmed, 2023).

Some of the attempts made in the past for the formulation of educational policies are given below:

Education policies/Reports	Keyset objectives of Education policies
National education policy 1947 /Educational Conference	Character development, Islamic theology, and Democratic Socialism
The report of the Commission National Education	School education reorganization and readjustment, intellectual, ethical, and values and culture Integration of postsecondary learning, farming, and technological development
Education policy 1970	
Education policy 1972-1980	The ideology of Pakistan, National cohesion, dignity of labor, Equal access to education for all, Participation of all stakeholders, and Skill development for economic activities.
National education policy 1978	Lifelong learning was its major goal, which included Islamic life ideals and adherence to Pakistani culture.
National Education policy 1992	Academic, financial, cultural, and institutional factors all have a role. Universal basic schooling, Islamic values, justice, excellence, and economy Natural equilibrium.

2.4. Negative Impacts of Politics

Most of the officials want to be the best leaders they can be but in the process they end up making judgments that end up being detrimental to the education system. This is because the appointment of leaders is related to politics, whereby political interests may contribute to the decision making process instead of the interest of the education sector. Consequently, there are a number of adverse effects observable such as:

• Inability to hire skilled and personnel.
• The commercialization of the admissions process.
• Repeated strikes that interfere with the education system.
• Obsolete buildings that impede efficient learning and teaching.
• Dysfunctional people in tests that influence the validity of tests.
• Inequality in the quality of students who come as a result of an underfunded and inefficient education system.

Finally, it is impossible to overestimate the role of the government in providing high-quality education. It is important that education should be a key component of reforms in the sphere of the public sector to encourage transparency and democratization. This is possible when people with high level of expertise like experienced teachers/ researchers are put in leadership roles where they develop and introduce

school curriculum (Jamil & Raza, 2021; Khan and Shah, 2022).

To sum it up, the role of the government in ensuring provision of high standard of education cannot be overemphasized. It is critical that the serves as key schooling as a critical component of public sector reforms to encourage ideals of transparency and democratization. And this may be accomplished when persons with sufficient experience or skill as educators or researchers get to positions of leadership in charge of developing and executing the school curriculum.

3. Methodology

3.1. The Function of the Project

The project will seek to investigate some of the most important elements of the educational policy, especially in terms of political intervention. The project has the following specific functions:

• Research into the influence of the factors on policy making in education.

• Determining the level of political involvement in the modern education policies.

• Discussing such problems in the framework of Pakistani politics and how they affect education.

3.2. Political Influence

The national government has been known to play a very huge role in the control of educational resources including the materials used in classrooms. Having the standards of review and additional subsidies to distribute federally funded materials, the government has strived to improve the diversity of curricular choices that schools can make with new curricula. The government overtime became more geared towards bringing change instead of letting change take place.

Classroom setting is an important aspect in defining the learning process. As a teacher, it is one of my responsibilities to make the learning environment engaging, welcoming and stimulating. An effective classroom space will result in a community of learners; teachers, students, parents and society will share the burden of learning. The educational system stakeholders including teachers, parents and the community leaders should work together on a regular basis so that implementation of the curriculum should be in line with the requirements of the students. This would be possible, e.g., by communicating regularly with families, neighborhood leaders and school administration.

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Also, even after more than seven decades of independence, Pakistan has been marred with political unrest and turmoil. The country has been under the rule of the democratic and military governments and there are constant political struggles to legitimacy. Political instability has been a major setback to the education opportunities in the country because, with every change in the government funds are misplaced and priorities are changed. Being a federal republic, the political organization of Pakistan is split between the federal government and provincial governments, which only makes the situation with education policies more complicated (Siddiqui, 2021).

Politics has a significant influence in the field of education since it is not only the establishment and execution of laws and policies but also distribution of resources and governance in the education systems. Education in Pakistan has been a politically charged situation, which was influenced by the politics of the country. The population of working classes may view politics as having nothing to do with school practice, but the fact is that the political decisions have a significant impact on education (Shah et al., 2022).

3.3 School Practice is Political

Conservative and transformative educational schemes are both essentially politicized, and the role of education is not just the impartation of the

academic content, but the impartation of students in terms of political contributions to the community by the development of critical thinking or the inculcation of conformity to the dominant cultural standards. Political struggle among competing forces constitutes education reform whether through enacting it at federal, regional or municipal level. As a result, schools management and the content covered in classrooms are decided by the policymaking process (Bashir and Aslam, 2021).

In Pakistan, schools are seen as rather a means of the state to generate citizens who could fit the society order and system rather than serving the purpose of building well-rounded people. This standpoint has created a dilemma that is unending: the education system, be it in the state or in the private sector, focuses more on the training of students enabling them to work in the society dominated by political brainwashing instead of training them to provide the means of their personal and intellectual development. This school paradigm continues to exist in Pakistan, still based on outdated traditions that focus on memorization of facts, thus not providing students with the skills and abilities of surviving in a competitive globalized world (Farooq and Malik, 2023).

3.4 National vs. State Politics

The difference between federal and state politics is a critical analytical axis in case one considers their respective effects on the system of primary and secondary schooling. In many instances, public schools do not enjoy substantive autonomy in the process of setting objectives, in the choice of curriculum content, and in setting up medical testing procedures, since the regulatory directives tend to be promulgated by the state government agencies. However, changes in state rules or standards of education, although often defined as disruptive, may often provide not only substantial opportunities to the teachers but also to the learners to grow and adapt. The difference in policies reveals the dynamic relationship of the political forces at both the state and federal levels in the ongoing process of forming the structure of the education system (Jamil and Raza, 2021).

4. Summary of Findings

The results of this research offer some important conclusions on the complicated correlation between the political factors and process of making the educational policies in Pakistan. There were a few themes that came out as a result of the analyses and these are summarized as follows:

4.1 Influence of Political Dynamics on Education Policies

A prominent conclusion of this study is the widespread impact of the politics of Pakistan to the education sector. The study has proven that political leadership, which includes democratic as well as military leadership has direct influence on education policies direction and priorities. The nature of the political agenda always determines the development and adoption of educational reforms, leading to the change of policy priorities according to the changes in the government (Jamil and Raza, 2021). Such constant changes of policies not provided by educational requirements but by political ideologies have led to a disjointed education system that has a discontinuous nature due to lack of continuity.

4.2 Lack of Effective Policy Implementation

A second important observation is the dearth in the implementation of education policies in an efficacious manner. Despite the fact that the governments of different regimes have admitted the importance of education and made reform efforts, little changes have been observed in the practical implementation of these policies. This polarization in policy development and implementation can be mainly explained by political meddling, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the lack of proficient staff members to hold the most important educational roles (Ali & Khan, 2022). In addition, the policy of education is often aligned to the short-term political agendas thus limiting the long-term strategic planning required to achieve sustainable development in education.

4.3 Socio-Economic and Political Factors Impeding Educational Reform

The paper highlights the relevant socio-economic and political barriers that hamper educational reform

in Pakistan. The financial limitations, including the limited financing of the government and insufficient investment in education infrastructure, are the key obstacles to the quality improvement of education. Moreover, the study shows that political instability and unrest have worsened changes to the standards of education because the priorities of governments in times of crisis are not on education (Farooq and Malik, 2023).

Complicated sharing of powers between the federal and provincial governments also adds to the unstable education policies. Even though the federal directives are often offered, they are not equally implemented on the provincial level and lead to the difference in the quality and access to education in the many different parts of the country (Shah et al., 2022).

4.4 Teacher Recruitment and Training Issues

One of the insights of this research involves the recruitment and training of the teacher. Politicization in the recruitment procedure has brought about placing of incompetent or under competent teachers, particularly in the rural areas. This has been heightened by political patronage coupled by absence of clear hiring processes hence strain on the quality of the education being provided. Also, there is no regular professional growth of the teacher, and this fact also contributes to the low level of education that is presented in Pakistan (Khan and Iqbal, 2022).

4.5 Public and Private Education System Disparities

The study also showed that there are strong differences between the public and the private education in Pakistan. The facilities and quality of instruction in the private schools would be better and they are usually not accessible to the poor. On the other hand, the public schools are faced with outdated infrastructure, overcrowded classes and limited resources. Such inequalities promote unequal access to quality education, thus enhancing the socio-economic divide in the country (Gulzar and Khan, 2021).

4.6 The Role of Stakeholders in Educational Reform

The research revealed that the involvement of all stakeholders—including teachers, parents, students, and the broader community—is essential for meaningful educational reform. Effective communication and collaboration between these groups can lead to better outcomes in terms of curriculum implementation and student performance. However, the lack of consultation with grassroots educators and other stakeholders in the policymaking process has been a major barrier to effective reform (Ali & Zafar, 2021).

4.7 The Need for Long-term Vision in Educational Policy

The study found out that including all stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students and even the general population is a requirement of successful educational reform. Good communication and cooperation among these groups may result in improved performances of the curriculum implementation and student performance. Nevertheless, the absence of consultation with the grassroots teachers and other stakeholders in the policymaking process has been a significant obstacle to successful reform (Ali & Zafar, 2021).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations
5.1. Conclusions

This study project provides valuable insights into the political and structural challenges faced by Pakistan's education system. The findings underscore the need for greater political will, improved policy implementation, and a more inclusive approach to education reform. Addressing the systemic issues in the education sector requires not only political commitment but also active involvement from all stakeholders to ensure equitable access to quality education for all.

One last important conclusion is that education policymaking requires a long term vision. The research points out that Pakistan has tended to undertake education reforms as a reaction to either temporary political or social agendas as opposed to a long-term plan. There should be a more strategic, holistic policy making process that takes into

consideration the changing demands of society and the economy so that the education system is geared to meet the demands of the future (Bashir and Aslam, 2021).

5.2. Recommendations

The observations made in the current research describe several directions to be taken in the further investigation. These directions are both in order to fill gaps in existing scholarship and to continue dealing with the challenges inherent in the education system in Pakistan. Future studies can use these propositions in generating a more refined knowledge and in devising effective educational policies.

Future research priorities may include:

(i)   Checking how political stability influences educational reform;

(ii)   Monitoring the teacher training and professional development programs;

(iii)   Testing longitudinal studies that compare epochs of political stability and instability, and thus, have the ability to clarify how political milieus modify the integrity and effectiveness of educational reforms (Shah et al., 2022).

The comparative research on the conditions of public and private schooling will probably yield practical information on the further development of the public education industry, especially in relation to the promotion of equal access to high-quality education on all levels of socioeconomic factors (Gulzar and Khan, 2021).

These are the suggested research paths that will offer a timely chance to address the key shortcomings in the educational system of Pakistan and maximise the effectiveness of policy interventions. By focusing the academic effort on these areas, it will be easier to develop more inclusive, equal, and effective educational policies, which will establish a long-lasting change of the national education landscape.

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