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**From Policy Documents to Daily Practice: Administrators' Perspectives on Implementing Educational Technologies in Pakistan**

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**Abstract**

Policymaking in educational technology today is more focused on digital transformation, innovation, and efficiency; although the directives of policies are translated into the organizational practice, the latter is still unequal. This research investigates the views of educational administrators on the adoption of educational technologies in Pakistani education system schools and colleges with respect to policy document interpretation, negotiation and implementation in day to day administration and teaching situations. The research problem is a typical gap between the intentions on policies and their real practice in institutions. The main aim of the research was to understand the experience, interpretations, and difficulties of administrations to operationalize technology related policies. A qualitative research design was used whereby semi-structured interviews with public and private institutions administrators were conducted in order to gather data. The research presupposed that institutional capacity, leadership discretion and contextual constraints influence policy enactment, and the boundary conditions were introduced in terms of infrastructure, professional growth and accountability mechanisms. Results have shown that administrators tend to change, redefine, or choose not to follow policy directives as they do not fit the local realities leading to partial and imbalanced technology adoption. The results are not only in line with the international research on policy enactment but also provide context-specific results in Pakistan. The paper has found that administrators have a monumental negotiative role in mediating policy hopes and daily education exercise.

**Keywords:** Policy enactment; Educational technology; Administrator mediation; Implementation gaps; School leadership; Pakistan schools and colleges

**Introduction**

The policy of educational technology has gone into the spotlight of modern education reform agenda, with the focus put on digital transformation, innovation and better efficiency within institutions. There is a growing promotion of technology integration in governments and international organizations as an approach towards improving the quality of teaching, methods of assessment, and administrative aspects (Selwyn, 2016; UNESCO, 2020). Nevertheless, studies indicate that the effectiveness of these policies is not limited to its design but rather to the interpretation and implementation of the policy in institutions (Ball et al., 2012). Educational administrators are involved in the critical role of the interpretation of policy texts into practice, as well as making decisions that influence the process of technology adoption and continuation. This is relevant in Pakistan, where schools and colleges are subjected to various resource and governance contexts

hence it is vital to know the experiences of administrators who deal with the implementation of technology policy.

One of the most frequently held beliefs about educational technology policy is that when well-defined instructions are laid down it would therefore be expected that there would be leading of uniformity among institutions. The research on policy enactment however refutes this assumption as it shows that policies are re-construed, modified or opposed when they are translated into practice (Ball et al., 2012). Although the phenomenon of technology policy implementation has been studied in international literature, scanty empirical studies have investigated the views of administrators in the developing settings. Unless doing research on policy formulation; access to technology, the available studies in Pakistan have given little focus to the daily institutional routine of negotiating policy demands by administrators. This gap corresponds to the following question of the research: How do educational administrators in Pakistan understand and apply the educational technology policies in their daily practices?

This study will investigate the attitude of administrators toward the educational technology policies implementation at Pakistani schools and colleges. The study is done through a qualitative approach and it focuses on how the administrators understand policy documents, how they react to institutional constraints and the discretionary decisions they make in the implementation process. The results indicate the selectiveness and adaptation to situations and negotiating policy expectations and actual conditions. This study is relevant because by placing the voice of the administrators at the center of the study it will help in policy implementation as well as the educational technological literature, given that leadership plays a mediating effect on policy intentions and practice. The article is divided into relevant literature review, methodology, the results, discussion and conclusion.

## **Literature Review**

The policies of educational technology are providing frameworks which put digital tools as a necessary tool to enhance teaching, assessment, and the efficiency of the administration. Nevertheless, the studies always demonstrate that the application of policies is not a set of rules that are interpolated and implemented in institutions but rather the interpretation and implementation of regulations. This literature review reviews the literature on topics connected to the theory of the policy enactment, the theory of educational technology implementation, mediation by administrators, and constraint by the context with specific reference to Global South context. The research question of this review is as follows: How under the intervention of educational technology policies can educational administrators explain and apply this educational technology in real institutional practice? This review combines international and regional studies to discover the recurring patterns, tension, and gaps warranting the qualitative study of the views of administrators in Pakistan.

An increase in legal matters, encompassing policy changes and educational reforms, is required concerning enrollment and attendance (George, 2002).<|human|>2.1 Policy Making and Educational Reform 2.1 An enlargement of the legal issues, which include policy changes and educational changes, is necessary with regard to the enrollment and attendance (George, 2002).

The policy enactment theory points to the fact that the policy is not merely implemented, it is being interpreted by actors in institutions (Ball et al., 2012). It has been demonstrated that administrators practice selective reading, giving priority, and adapting policy texts depending on the capacity and accountability demands within the institution (Braun et al., 2011). Instead of being implemented in a linear manner, policy implementation entails bargaining, discretion and compromise. Research studies indicate that leadership is a determining factor in how policies are brought to fruition, especially with respect to some areas of complex reforms like educational technology (Fullan, 2016).

### **Politics and Practices of Educational Technology Gaps.**

The educational technology policy research regularly informs that the education policy often has the gaps between policy expectations and real classroom or administrative practices (Selwyn, 2016). Infrastructure, skills, and time are most times assumed in the policies of technology, as they might not be present in reality (Cuban, 2001). Research indicates that adoption is often quite disproportionate, involving partial and symbolic compliance instead of complete adoption (Howard et al., 2018). Such gaps are particularly acute in the cases when the policies are borrowed in the systems which do not have enough contextual adaptation.

### **Administrator Mediation and Discretion.**

Administrators play a major role as agents of mediation between practice and policy making discretion when determining what component of policy to focus on or delay (Spillane et al., 2002). Studies indicate that administrators have views of technology policies in terms of institutional objectives, staff preparedness, and external responsibility imperatives (Dexter, 2011). Discretion of leadership is especially evident where a policy is not aligned with localities, making the administrators to subject the policy mandates to pragmatic and not ideological interpretations (Datnow and Park, 2018).

### **Constraints and Capacity of the Organization.**

The policy enactment is greatly influenced by institutional capacity, which here refers to the infrastructure, professional development, and technical support (Honig, 2006). Research explains that administrators tend to change the policy anticipations to match the resources available, leading to gradual or selective execution (Leithwood et al., 2020). The pressure of time and other competing reform agendas make it even harder to sustain technology integration. These limitations highlight the significance of investigating the aspect of implementation as adaptive process, as opposed to being a compliance activity.

### **Global South Policy Implementation Reflections.**

The Global South studies indicate that technological policies are often applied in the circumstances of disparity in infrastructures, foreign patronage, and looting of policies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). It is stressed in studies that administrators in developing settings have to operate tensions between modernization demands and feasibility (Selwyn and Jandric, 2020). In Pakistan, studies have mostly been based on access and digital literacy, but little has been done regarding the enactment of technology policies in their everyday routine by administrators (Farooq et al., 2020).

### **Synthesis and Research Gap**

In the literature reviewed one can identify six interrelated themes as follows: (a) policy making as interpretation, (b) implementation gaps, (c) discretion and mediation of administrators, (d) constrained organizational capacity, (e) contextual modification and (f) a lack of empirical research on the Global South. Though global literature on policy implementation provides relevant insights in the area, there is a significant research gap in qualitative studies about the lived experiences of administrators with regard to the implementation of educational technology policies in Pakistan. This paper fills this gap by focusing on the views of administrators regarding the process of transitioning between policy documents and practice.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper discussed the interpretation and application of educational technology policies by educational administrators in Pakistan in their day to day institutional practice. The issue that the research addressed was

that policy documents tend to take implementation uniform and ignore the process of interpretation that administrators need to carry out. Taking into consideration emphasis on the policy enactment, discretion and adapting to the context, the research methodology used in the study was the qualitative interpretive research. The study used primary data and had a descriptive and exploratory research design providing the extensive analysis of the experiences of administrators in policy-practice translation. The qualitative approach was chosen as the most appropriate approach to understand in-depth the processes of decision making, institutional pressures, and leadership mediation that could not be easily determined by quantitative approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Public and private schools and colleges of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were used to collect data; these institutions represent different institutional settings and environments involving policy. The participants were [about 25-40] educational administrators, i.e. principals, vice principals, registrars, and academic managers that make decisions regarding technical implementation. The administrative level according to which the administrators who had direct experience as interpreters and implementers of educational technology policies were recruited, was purposive sampling. The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, which were based on the interpretation of policies, strategy of implementation, institutional constraints and discretionary maker of decisions. The ethical approval was received, informed consent, and confidentiality, as well as voluntary participation were established during the study.

Data were captured in the form of audio recordings during the interviews transcribed verbatim and analyzed based on the thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was done in accordance with the six-stage model suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely familiarization of the data, primary coding, formulation of themes, reviewing and polishing. Coding was done on the interpretation of policy, discretionary enactment, implementation barriers, strategies of adaptation, pressures of accountability. The analysis of the types of institutions has been made comparative to draw common and divergent patterns of enactment. Data was put into qualitative data analysis software (e.g., NVivo) in order to have them arranged well. Analytical transparency and rigor was aided by reflexive memo writing.

The qualitative interpretive methodology fitted well in studying the policy implementation as a socially mediated and context-specific process. Semi-structured interviews helped to get the administrators express their interpretation of policy documents and the way they have altered to fit institutional realities. The sample of participants with different backgrounds promoted credibility and transferability. Models such as using self-reported narratives of enactment and lack of analysis of policy documents are some of the limitations that could have enhanced the knowledge of expectations in a formal manner. These were overcome by close probing, cross-context checking and reflexive analysis. Regardless of these limitations, the methodology offers a powerful structure of learning the translation of educational technology policy into practice in Pakistan.

## **Results**

The section uses results obtained as a result of semi-structured interviews with educational administrators employed in a locality and a college in both state and privately-owned schools in Pakistan. The findings are concentrated on the experiences of administrators who translate educational technology policy outlines in written documents into practical institutional life. Results will be systematized into topic themes that develop throughout the sample participants and in the case of the institutional settings.

## **Policy Awareness and Interpretation**

Administrators indicated that they were conversant with the national, provincial and institutional policies of educational technology. The respondents reported their interactions with the policy documents in terms of official circulars and training as well as compliance requirements. To the administrators, however, language

of the policies was usually general or ideal, and had to undergo interpretation before workable application. The participants talked about the interpretation of policies concerning the institutional priorities, feasibility, and resources.

### **Selective and Phased Adoption of Policy Directives.**

Participants stated that they have applied educational technology policies in a selective way instead of thoroughly. Administrators outlined the need to prioritize some of the parts of policy, including the administrative digitization or simple learning management systems, and delay some or hold others back because of limited resources, or capacity. The incremental implementation structures were often stated, with the institutions applying technologies gradually in order to cope with risk and workload.

### **Resource and Capacity Constraints.**

Infrastructure, budget, and restricted technological backup was reported continuously by the administrators as obstacles to full implementation of the policy. The participants reported the lack of hardware, the unreliability of internet accessibility, and an imbalanced personnel digital competence. Such limitations were part of the choices to make adjustments, postpone, or implement policy orders partially. Remarks of resource difficulties were made in both state and privatized institutions but their severity was different.

### **Administrator Discretion and Mediation.**

The respondents said that they had discretion in mediating policy expectations and institutional realities. Administrators said they made pragmatic choices on timelines, the extent to which it was implemented and employee training. It was reported that discretion is mandatory to stabilize the institution and respond to workload among staff. Respondents also explained how they had to balance the compliance need with a solution that is locally correct.

### **Pressures on Accountability and Reporting.**

Administrators complained that regulatory authorities, governing bodies and accreditation agencies put accountability pressure on them. The participants explained that they need to prove the compliance with the policy in terms of documentation, reporting, and the submission of data. Such pressures affected the priorities of implementation such that in some cases, it resulted in a symbolic or minimal implementation on the basis of reporting requirements rather than a change in practice.

### **Institutional Diversity.**

The respondents indicated that policy enactment varied across the different types of institutions such as schools and colleges and across the public and privates. Differences were blamed on the differences in the form of government, funding sources, and autonomy of leadership. Although there were common policy frames, everyday applications varied significantly in respect to circumstances.

### **Limitations Found in the Data.**

There are some shortcomings that the results should be viewed regarding. Information was based on self-reports by administrators about how the policy was being implemented and this might not be a complete review of the policy being implemented. Verification of the reported enactment processes cannot be done with the absence of analysis and observational data of policy documents. The sample is also qualitative and, therefore, it cannot be generalized to the context of similar institutions. Without interpreting them, these limitations are realized and discussed later in the Discussion section.,

## **Discussion**

This paper has discussed the views of educational administrators towards the introduction of educational technological policies within Pakistani schools and colleges. The results reveal that the administrators in most cases were conscious of the policy directives but adopted selective and gradual implementation. The constraints of resources, capacity bound, and accountability pressures informed the policy enactment process in day-to-day activities. There was also inconsistency of the outcome between institutions because the administrators were left with discretion in balancing policy expectations and institutional realities.

The results indicate that the practice of policy implementation is one that is negotiated rather than translated into practice in a process of linear fashion based on the policy texts. Administrators understood policy in ways that suited their purposes balancing the implementation with the resources, preparedness of the staff and institutional priorities. Phased implementation and selective enactment became the methods to handle risk and provide the institutions with stability. The pressures of accountability made more implementation remain practical, and at times, it enforced symbolic compliance meant not to change the practice but to report. These trends indicate the attempt of administrators to limit compliance and make it feasible.

The results are congruent with the policy enactment literature that highlights the fact that various policies are actively construed and reconstrued in institutions (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011). The pick and roll out indicated in this research relates to the general results of research on the misalignment of policy with practice in terms of integrating technology (Cuban, 2001; Selwyn, 2016). Administrator discretion identified in the Pakistani context reflects the line of research in other global areas that publicize the concept of leadership mediation in situations of constraint and accountability (Spillane et al., 2002; Datnow and Park, 2018). The research builds on Global South views and demonstrates how contextual constraints enhance the policy-practice disjunctions (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014).

There are a few restrictions which are to be taken into consideration. The research was based on self-reported records of the administrators which might not be a complete record of the implementation practices implemented. Triangulation is hampered by the lack of policy document analysis and observational data. Also, the sample, which is qualitative, limits the ability to generalize outside of analogous institution settings. These restrictions indicate the way forward in future research based on multi-method.

In theory, the study will be a contribution to the body of policy enactment since it indicates that administrator agency plays a leading role in the technology policy implementation. In practice, the research indicates that the policymakers need to take into consideration the institutional capacity, offer implementation flexibility, and less dependence on compliance-based accountability. Professional development and investment in infrastructure can help support the work of administrators to have a meaningful enactment of policy.

Other reasons to support selective implementation are that leadership is risk averse to implementation, or they have had a previous experience with negative reforms or an external political pressure, not necessarily capacity constraints. The development of institutional culture and autonomy of governance can also affect patterns of enactment. These aspects imply that organizational and contextual dynamics intersect (to influence policy implementation).

Returning to the research question; how do educational administrators in Pakistan interpret and apply policies related to education technology in their daily practice, the results show that administrators mediate the policy selectively and adaptively by enforcing it selectively and adapting it according to circumstances. The balance in the way they are practiced indicates that there is a between policy adherence and situational realism, as the central place of administrator agency in the policy-dailies adventure has a major role.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has looked into the meanings and applications of the educational technology policies by educational administrators in Pakistan as they proceed beyond the stance of formal documents of policies into

daily institutional experience. Supporting once again the main point about the paper, the research results show that the process of technology policy implementation is not the process of compliance but is a complex implementation process, which depends on the interpretation of the administrators, their discretion and contextual limitation. The administrators were also discovered to be selective, gradual and adaptive in terms of implementation methods in attempts to balance the policy expectations with student realities in the institutions.

The research indicated that there are still inadequate policy-to-practice imbalances, which persist due to the constraints of resources and staff capacity, as well as accountability pressures. These results will help in policy implementation and in educative technology literature as they pre-establish the mediating role of administrators in determining how policies will be actualized on-ground. Through revisiting the introductory part, the research highlights the fact that educational technology reform is not only achieved through policy formulations but also through the interpretive efforts of institutional administrators.

The overridden importance of this study consists in its implication on policy formulation and governmental backing in Pakistan. Implementation realism ought to be acknowledged by policymakers, there should be a flexible policy framework and institutional capacity-building should be invested. Policy document analysis, perceptions of staff, and longitudinal approaches should be reflected in future research in order to gain better insight into how educational technology policies change over time as practice.

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