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Lived Experiences of the Stakeholders about the Implementation of Reform Initiatives in Schools

Asia Shaheen
PhD Scholar, Department of Educational Research & Assessment, University of Okara, Pakistan.
E-mail: asiajamil20@gmail.com

Nadia Gilani
Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, University of Okara, Pakistan.
E-mail: nadia.gilani@uo.edu.pk

Syed Abdul Waheed
Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, University of Okara, Pakistan.
E-mail: s.a.waheed@uo.edu.pk

Abstract

Education reform is the process of continuously modifying and enhancing the quality of schools. The demands and values of society serve as the foundation for this change in education. Through educational reforms, educational standards are constantly reorganized and renegotiated. It seeks to represent social, political, and economic culture's ideals. In the current study, the researchers' objective was to uncover how the ideas, emotions, and opinions of school stakeholders contribute to their understanding of the phenomenon and provide perspectives for their practices. The public-school education system was the setting for this investigation. The phenomenon in this study was explored through qualitative research methods and thorough, semi-structured, in-person interviews with the stakeholders. A thematic analysis of the gathered data was conducted. The themes of the study revealed that there were serious challenges faced by the stakeholders in schools during initiating, carrying out, implementing, and maintaining a reform program. The primary factors that pushed back reform measures were the school environment, lack of motivation among teachers, lack of physical and human resources, and inefficient school management. As a result, it was determined that before developing any reform project, it was vital to comprehend the unique requirements of each region and the obstacles that would arise during implementation.

Keywords: Education, implementation, schools, stakeholders, reforms, initiatives, and lived experiences.

Introduction

Significant changes are occurring in the sector of school education (Fullan, 1983). Rapid global changes brought about by social, cultural, and economic forces have led to a significant administrative revolution (Fullan, 1999; Hornung & Rousseau, 2007; Meyer et al., 2002). To maintain their competitive advantage, businesses around the world are quickly changing, expanding, and implementing new ideas (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). In terms of national development, the main objective of education is to provide free, essential education and training while simultaneously encouraging integrated education,

especially for the most disadvantaged and most at-risk kids. The goal of education reform is to fulfill international commitments. The major goal of education in terms of national development is to ensure free, compulsory education and training while also promoting holistic education, particularly for the most vulnerable and underprivileged children. Reforming education is being done to satisfy international obligations. Reforms in the educational field frequently relate to adjustments, alterations, and modifications to the educational system, including "Philosophy of education, student policy, curriculum, pedagogy, rules, administrative structures, funding, and relations. According to Popkewitz and Lindblad (2004), “Educational reform involves questions about the social structure, production, and government policies and regulations that shape it.

These concepts result in non-neutral power dynamics and social ideals. Although the impact of educational reform on society is certainly complicated and uncertain, the current situation enables us to assess the variables that determine how much reforms influence the educational systems in which they are existing, "Philosophy of education, student policy, curriculum, pedagogy, rules, structures of administration, funding," among others modifications, adjustments, and adaptations to the educational system, are frequently linked to educational reforms. Popkewitz and Lindblad (2004) assert that "questions concerning the social structure, production, and government policies and regulations that shape it" are at the heart of educational reform. These ideas lead to common ideals and powerful associations that are not neutral. Although the impact of educational reform on society is certainly complicated and controversial, the current situation enables us to assess the variables that determine how much reforms impact the educational systems in which they are implemented. Despite all of this, the primary goal of education in a contemporary recognized society is to support the acquisition of technical skills, knowledge, and facilities that enable the provision of thorough and useful information. Effective community members must assist them in actively learning throughout their lives (Arends & Kilcher, 2010).

It is crucial to note that the contemporary globalization landscape is getting more complicated. Today's complicated world presents new demands and difficulties for the educational system. The importance of educational reform in a wider national and worldwide context has been highlighted by globalization and contemporary technology (Davies & Guppy, 1997). The Pakistani educational system was altered by this pressure. Various governments have attempted to implement school-level educational changes since Pakistan's inception. In Pakistan, policymakers, educators, and politicians at the provincial and bureaucratic levels are interested in educational reform (Jampaklay et al., 2017). Unfortunately, as Ullah and Skelton (2013) noted, educational progress in Pakistan did not immediately produce the expected results. The fundamental cause of this failure is that educational programs and reforms fail to reflect the social and financial needs of our community (Aslam, 2009). They refuse to provide researchers with the chance to develop a well-thought-out national education policy. Ullah (2013). They influence the national education system by using it for their political ends (Ditkoff & Grindle, 2017).

Additionally, through the Basic Education Governance Act of 2001, the Department of Education has created a new framework by incorporating multiple stakeholders in various stages, including the planning, execution, oversight, and assessment of schools (Khorram-Manesh et al., 2015). The nation's school-based management has emerged as the "main answer to the deep-rooted problems of our educational system, particularly, the students' learning outcomes," as stated by the Secretary of Education (Luistro-Jonsson & Nyberg, 2020). They think that the general population is fully aware of the issues that their schools are facing and is capable of thinking through and looking for answers. Initiatives are still

ineffective in high schools because of the system's administrative structure and the often-contradicting stages of forced reform as declared by Diefenbach & Klarner (2008) and some recent Western and Eastern research.

There is a lack of coherence in the implementation of reforms; this opinion was supported by (Hargreaves, 2003; Nazir, 2020; Sarason, 1990). (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Datnow et al., 2002; Baraldi et al., 2010), and systems don't reason properly (Fullan, 2007; Sarason, 1990). Paul T. Hill and James Harvey claim that after two decades, school conditions have not changed and that attempts to reform public schools in the US have failed for several reasons. Seven metrics are deemed crucial in identifying the inadequate state of schools. (1) Academic success in the foundational area is linked to the intended results of achievement. (2) Historical achievement is contrasted with fundamental subject achievement. (3) School dropouts are additionally significant. (4) Is there any training for future job opportunities in schools? (6) Possess a fundamental understanding of the subject matter in particular fields. Have pupils acquired citizenship and higher-order life skills? It is frequently stated that when educational reforms are implemented incorrectly, failure results. The initiatives of the struggling school are not designed to address its issues, which is a harsh fact. Reynolds, Harris, Clarke, Harris, & James, 2006; Sarason, 1990; Smarick, 2010; Wolcott, 1997; Kowal & Hassel, 2005; Fullan, 2010; Herman, 2012; Brady, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

The term "education reform" refers to the ongoing efforts to improve and alter educational institutions. A new strategy or course of action that produces positive outcomes is called an initiative. Those who have relations with schools and can influence and be influenced by them are called stakeholders. The research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the problems faced by the different stakeholders with regard to the execution of the reform initiative in schools. The researcher's goal was to comprehend the phenomenon through the lived experiences of these stakeholders, enable them to make sense of the occurrence, and give their experiences a new perspective.

Research Questions

1. What problems occurred during the implementation of reform initiatives that were faced by the school stakeholders?
2. In what ways are educational reform initiatives pushed back?
3. How do the school reform initiatives affect the school's stakeholders?

Research methodology

The researchers were interested in knowing how school stakeholders' experiences and knowledge contributed to the understanding of the problems during the implementation of reform initiatives. The researchers used an inductive approach that was based on the lived experiences of the stakeholders. Data were obtained through in-person interviews gained through detailed personal experiences of school stakeholders, and the study used a phenomenological design, which is a qualitative approach for the investigation of a problem. Through the experiences of school stakeholders, the study intended to identify the problems in implementing the various reform programs.

Sampling Technique and Data Collection

Selecting the right populations is the fundamental aim of sampling to achieve the study's objective. As the study was qualitative in nature, purposive sampling was used, which was quite suitable

for exploring the current phenomenon. The selected sample had the specific knowledge that could enable them to provide the data. Several variables were included in the purposive sample for this study to maintain diversity. Bernard (2002) asserts that focused sampling employs the key informant method. The sample consisted of 22 participants who were interviewed to gather data. Male and female head teachers and male teachers, along with the deputy district education officers, parents, and students, were interviewed by the researcher. The researchers were permitted to record the interview.

Table 1

Participants of the Study

Participants	Number
Male Headteachers	4
Male teachers	4
Female Headteachers	4
Deputy District Education Officers	4
Parents	3
Students	3

Data Analysis

The experiences and viewpoints of the stakeholders form the basis of this phenomenological study. Recurring themes within and between interviews were examined in the data. The key importance of a "lived" experience is aptly captured by a detailed discussion of the topics in phenomenological research. The steps used to analyze the data in terms of themes included becoming acquainted with the information, generating initial codes, looking for themes, going over the themes /concepts again, identifying the themes in the content of the interviews and writing up.

Results of the Study

Teachers' Lack of Motivation and Training

According to some of the stakeholders, they faced the problem of poor results in the learning process of students; the teachers don't take care of the pupils' school-level study, and don't wish to comprehend the many learning issues that each student faces. They don't care about their study plan; they just waste time in class. In addition, they lack motivation and specialized training. Other aspects of the quality of the teaching and learning process were mentioned by the majority of informants. Less opportunity exists for instructors to develop their capacity. They claimed that teachers lack training, have few opportunities for it, and what little training they do have does not meet our social needs. All education is designed using the international education system, but our education system is different from theirs. They improved care, service, and educational development.

Background of the Students

The majority of teachers noted that there are numerous issues with pupils who enroll in public schools. These issues are linked to pupils' low academic achievement, poverty, and parents' ignorance about learning. Some of them explained that most of the problems in rural areas occur during the harvest

season. Students leave class to help their parents. According to one teacher, MEA paid a visit to my school in April. Just 70% of the students in my class were there since they were gone for harvesting; this situation disturbed me. When my class was observed, it was an awkward situation. The next day, I received a letter from the authorities. There was a private hearing and I had to explain my position. One teacher expressed her concern about the students' withdrawal.

> "*Parents cannot send their children to school. Sometimes the school is far away; parents can't arrange a rickshaw or taxi or pay rent. Parents believe that students have wasted their time in school and cannot do anything else to earn money. "When they see that most educated people are unemployed, they feel that it is useless to get an education."*

School Environment

Participants define the school environment as the accessibility of all those resources that support students' academic success. Some of them mentioned that to improve the school environment, these fundamentals should be focused on: first, the classroom's actual layout should be appropriate, with the right amount of light, furniture, and space; second, the teacher should be the most important person, in their opinion. "Another description of the school environment is the emotional, social, and cognitive support available to students throughout their time in school in terms of interaction between students and teachers."

Lack of Human and Physical Resources

It implies that classrooms and schools should provide adequate support for students. The majority of head teachers claim that despite government efforts to improve learning environments, schools continue to face difficulties because of a lack of funding. The lack of sweepers in all school categories—primary, elementary, and high—has made school cleanliness a persistent issue and a crucial metric for determining district ranking. Schools are dealing with a lot of issues related to their infrastructure. The majority of high school administrators expressed dissatisfaction over their *"lack of adequate buildings and rooms, as well as a shortage of teaching staff." A head teacher said: "Now a day government has a great focus on cleanliness. No doubt, it is the best initiative to make school an ideal place for learning. To achieve this target, human and financial resources are required. Mostly Schools have no sweeper and, in some conditions, if students are involved in a cleanliness process, but for this involvement, the head teachers have to be answerable before the authorities. Moreover, there is a lack of funds to hire private sweepers. The reality is bitter; the schools have no sanctioned posts for the sweeper".* Some school principals suggested that the government should provide a cleanliness system in proportion to the schools.

Inconsistencies between Reforms and Prevailing Realities

Nearly all of the participants grumbled about the fact that policies are established from top to bottom in countries with different socioeconomic conditions than Pakistan, which causes local authorities to suffer greatly during the implementation process and occasionally forces them to engage in practices that appear to have positive effects but have negative ones. They used PEC results as a model that shows major inconsistencies when related to student learning outcomes. Once more, there are conflicting claims in our policies. It is stated that mandatory elementary education would be prioritized to get 100% enrollment; nevertheless, the problem is still unresolved because the budget for higher education is set and inaccessible to the poor. It should be highlighted that the principal authorities, as well as the policymakers, are ignorant of this hidden truth. Although authority is adapted to the local context in which implementation occurs, the outcomes of imposition success vary by region. It is also mentioned that if higher authorities do not understand the reality at the ground level, no change initiative can

succeed. Additionally, some of them drew attention to the fact that local authorities frequently displayed fictitious data in order to rank districts based on assessment scores of schools performing measures. Indicators of this kind degraded educational standards and raised questions about how completely reasonable they were.

Difficulties in the Execution of Initiatives

Most of the participants consider that initiatives must be accessible and developed with a solid foundation to be well implemented. They must overcome numerous obstacles at the school level, such as a lack of finances, funds, time, and supervision. They noted that although free books were given out as part of the education for all and mandatory free primary education programs, poverty prevented the goal from being accomplished. Many parents expressed dissatisfaction about their primary necessity being to earn food rather than go to school. The majority of participants believed that adequate preparation and oversight were necessary for reforms to be successful. They pointed out, although books were given out as part of the education for all and mandatory free primary education programs, poverty prevented the goal from being accomplished. Many parents expressed dissatisfaction about their primary necessity being to earn food rather than go to school. The majority of participants believed that adequate preparation and oversight were necessary for reforms to be successful.

Discussion

Teaching and learning were found to be of low quality. Examining the curriculum reforms and the recent state of affairs in education revealed that our examination framework, student progress to the next level, pass-fail system, lack of vocational training, excessive workload in education, financial constraints, and inadequate funds to meet the requirements of various needs. It is acknowledged that appropriate teaching and learning cannot occur without training, as demonstrated by the teacher's lack of professional expertise. Additionally, teachers are created, not born. It was also emphasized by the Participants that the necessity for the models of professional development should be updated, as well as the fact that it is in accordance with the literature that big changes for reforming schools are not achievable without the improvement of teachers. (Chukwu, 2009; Little & Lieberman, 1987) .

The socioeconomic status of the parents is one of the main arguments used in the literature to support educational spending. The two primary factors affecting school performance and participation in Punjab province, especially in basic schools, are poverty and distance from school. The findings were compared to studies on "Education gender gaps in Pakistan. " The primary cause of this failure, it was claimed, is that educational reforms and plans do not take into account the sociocultural and economic needs of contemporary society. (2009, Aslam). The nation's school-based management has emerged as the primary solution to the enduring issues with our educational system, especially those pertaining to the students' learning outcomes. As noted by (Khorram-Manesh et al., 2015; Luistro-Jonsson & Nyberg, 2020), the Secretary of the Department of Education.

Three important factors—system management, education, and comfortable physical facilities—that were connected to students' academic progress were covered in the literature. (Ramli and others, 2018). Additionally, learning can only be enhanced by better study habits, associations, and engaging in physical activity, according to Mahmood and Gondal (2017). Reynolds, Harris, Clarke, Harris, & James, 2006; Sarason, 1990; Smarick, 2010; Wolcott, 1997; Kowal & Hassel, 2005; Fullan, 2010; Herman, 2012; Brady, 2003).

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It was discovered that positive outcomes are possible if the government concentrates on improving the educational environment by providing all necessary human and material resources. It was established that numerous educational shortcomings were exposed during the scrutiny of the Fifth Five-Year Plan, which ran from 1977 to 1983.(GOP et al., 1977). Jensen (2012) uses Hong Kong as an example to highlight similarities in his research, noting that the city has spearheaded improvements by carefully examining its educational system and identifying significant flaws.

The results expressed discontent with the unrealistic policy design while addressing the third study issue. Generally, there were a lot of complaints about these programs since the stakeholders were under pressure to carry out unrealistically demanding programs that required 100% teacher and student attendance.

Long-term and sustainable innovations cannot be comprehended in developed and unhealthy societies, claims Fullan (2003). It was clear from the analysis that foreign nations with different socioeconomic circumstances from Pakistan are the target of high-level policy formulation. As a result, local governments face tremendous challenges throughout the implementation process and are frequently compelled to take steps that appear advantageous but have detrimental effects. There were significant differences between the PEC results example and the learning outcomes of the students. Again, a variety of covert, unethical actions undermine the examination's outcomes. Pakistan has established targets to obtain 100% education throughout the past few decades, but progress has been gradual, with the country currently at 62%, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey (PES, 2018). Thus, it would be beneficial to achieve this if lawmakers set reasonable goals and gradually expand their objectives. Additionally, the goals of a few national governing bodies are known as specifically assembled objectives, which include all decisions from a small number to a large number, approved by the board of directors.

Predictions based on central objectives may not be helpful to all the stakeholders in a region, where each region has specific needs and challenges identified (Norris et al., 2014). All stakeholders repeatedly stated that objectives should be set at the foundational level by acknowledging the needs of that particular region.(Diefenbach & Klarner, & By, 2008). This notion was also confirmed by some recent Western and Eastern studies, which pointed out that high school reform initiatives have failed because of the institution's administrative complexity and the often-uneven waves of forced development. This opinion was backed by (Hargreaves, 2003; Sarason, 1990; Shabbir et al., 2010), and reforms have not been implemented to a satisfactory degree. (Baraldi et al., 2010; Datnow et al., 2002); and systems don't think properly. (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Sarason, 1990). Also, the process of building schools necessitates a clear vision, expectations, and a role for each individual in doing their given tasks. (Mithani & Khan, 2010).

Conclusions

The results of the study concluded that the implementation, commencement, and maintenance of the reform project presented a number of challenges for the school stakeholders. It was determined that the factors present in schools, such as teacher demotivation, teacher capacity building, and student educational and home backgrounds, were causing a crisis in the quality of the teaching and learning process. The key problems that pushed back reform measures were the poor state of the nation's economy, the educational system, a lack of political will, inadequate school management, a lack of human and

material resources, and continuous reform measures. The quality of the teaching and learning process was found to be in crisis due to a number of problems found in schools, including low motivation among teachers, capacity building for teachers, and the educational and social backgrounds of students.

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