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Implementation of School Education Policies in Balochistan: Head Teachers' Perspectives on Governance Challenges

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This study analyzes head teachers' opinions on challenges in governance associated with the implementation of school education policies in Balochistan. The research is based on the notion that school-level implementation relies on the policy's design, as well as the accompanying communication, coordination at the administrative level, district-level support, monitoring, accountability, and provision of resources, along with the level of authority of the school head. Balochistan's public school system operates in a challenging environment because of the dispersed geography, insufficient numbers of teachers, and a lack of infrastructure and administrative support. With a qualitative case study design, the research used semi-structured interviews with 20 public school head teachers from various districts of the province. Purposive combined with maximum variance sampling technique was used to ensure the diversity among respondents. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis and four major themes have been identified. These include policy communication and administrative coordination; barriers related to administration, finance, and institutions; and practical governance reforms related to monitoring, accountability, and resource allocation. The author believes that head teachers are frontline implementers of policy and should be viewed as policy partners. It has been suggested that reforms to policy include guidance, visibility, and allocation of resources based on need, as well as supportive monitoring and leadership and coordination training, and a focus on school and district education office linkages.

Introduction

Policy matters when it is applied in schools every day. The implementation of school education policies is a serious concern of governance in Pakistan, especially Balochistan, as there is a wide policy–practice gap. While policies may be created at the provincial or departmental levels, the division of sub-districts, head teachers, teachers, monitoring staff, school management committees, and the local community are the ultimate implementers. Amongst all of these stakeholders, head teachers play a pivotal role, as they transform government directives into school systems and routines for the supervision of teachers and the management of attendance and records, as well as the engagement of the community.

With challenging structural conditions, the school education system of Balochistan tries to work within gaps such as scattered settlements, long distances between schools and administrative centers, shortages of teachers, and high educational exclusion. A UNICEF report states that Pakistan is estimated to have 25.1 million out-of-school children between the ages of 5-16, and Balochistan has the most severe level of education exclusion with around 3.5 million school-age children, about 69%

of the school-age population, out of school. The challenges of implementation of policies in Balochistan represent practices of social exclusion, equity, and governance.

The foundations of constituting school education are clear. Article 25A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan instructs the State to provide free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 5 and 16 (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2025). A provision within the Constitution is not the same as the execution of that provision. It necessitates planning, volunteering, monitoring, and accountability at the local level, and provides for the deployment of teachers, the resolution of problems at the local level, and the leadership of schools. Therefore, understanding how policy commitments are implemented or obstructed at the school level is impossible without the experience of head teachers.

The Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020-2025 identifies access and participation, learning, governance and management, data and research, human resource management, decentralized structures, accountability, transparency, and monitoring as key reform priorities for the School Education Department (Government of Balochistan, 2020). These priorities reflect that the province has identified governance and management and implementation as the most significant challenges. However, the School Education Department's policy documents state what should happen, while head teachers describe what actually happens at the school level when policies are enacted.

Head teachers are not record keepers or building caretakers. They are education policy implementers. They manage school teachers, school data, and disciplinary measures. They are responders to monitoring and evaluating visits. They interact with and lobby communities and the district offices. They mobilize resources to meet policy objectives. In policy implementation theory, those who apply policy in the field and in difficult circumstances are referred to as street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). They provide reasons for the effectiveness of some policies, while others remain incomplete, delayed, or symbolic.

This study examines Head Teachers' Perceptions on Governance Issues when Implementing School Education Policies in Balochistan. The author uses a qualitative approach since the objective is to understand the challenges faced at the practical level and capture different experiences and perceptions. The author has structured the paper into four sections to address the four research objectives and underlying research questions on governance issues, administrative and financial issues, monitoring and accountability, allocation of resources, and practical reforms.

Literature Review

Policy Implementation in Education

Policy implementation is the transformation of a policy decision into practice. Schools are social institutions that have constraints of resources, local culture, capacity of teachers, expectations of the community, leadership, and administrative system. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) argue that the transformation of policy into practice is impacted by policy in form, resources, form of communication, the implementing agency, social conditions, and the attitude of the implementers. These factors are relevant to the school education system in Balochistan, where implementation of policy depends upon coordination of policy units at the provincial level, district education offices, monitoring staff, head teachers, teachers, and the community.

According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), policy implementation failure is common when a number of actors must work together, but the division of responsibility and authority, resources, and communication channels are lacking. In a school education system, a policy may be issued at the provincial level, but if district level officials do not clarify the policy, if the requisite resources do not reach the target, if the teachers do not comprehend the policy, and if the head teachers do not have the power to enforce the policy, then implementation is a process of governance as opposed to a routine administrative order.

Local actors' policy interpretations influence the extent to which educational policies get implemented. Spillane et al. (2002) note that implementers develop policy ideas based on their personal backgrounds and experiences. From this perspective, head teachers do not just receive policy directives. One must take account of the reality of the school, prioritize, and adapt the policy to the school's context. This school of thought influences the study of head teachers' professional formation.

School Governance and the Role of Head Teachers

School governance describes how schools are structured to facilitate planning, care and support, and oversight. It includes supervision of teachers, maintenance of records, management of resources, and participation of communities, as well as the monitoring and reporting of activities. According to UNESCO (2017), the blame for the failure of a system to provide support

and resources should not be placed on teachers or schools. This is applicable in Balochistan, where school performance may be attributed to head teachers, when in fact, they do not control teacher appointments, the school infrastructure, the school budget, or transfers.

The World Bank (2018) suggests that education systems should bring actors, resources, and accountability into alignment with learning incentives. Monitoring student attendance, teacher presence, and school resources is essential; however, monitoring on its own will not improve a school unless it is coupled with professional support, appropriate corrections, and improved resources. For head teachers, governance is complete when accountability is accompanied by support and resources.

Head teachers connect policy to practice. Directives may come from the district or even the provincial authorities, but their application rests with the Head Teacher, who works under circumstances sometimes isolated from the main center. In such circumstances, head teachers are the representatives of the education department and poor monitoring and communication, delays in the provision of needed resources, inadequate staff, and inadequate oversight systems impact the head teachers' ability to implement the policies.

Policy and Governance: Context of Balochistan

Balochistan has both reform commitment and implementation pressure throughout its policy environment. The provincial government has adopted a policy framework and a strategic plan known as the Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020–2025 that identifies governance and management as one of the core reform areas along with access, participation, learning, data, and research (Government of Balochistan, 2020). The strategic plan also recognizes the importance of strategic planning and management of results, human resources, and management in a context of devolved structures, accountability, and transparency, as well as political engagement. These issues are among the most pertinent to the governance challenges faced by head teachers.

The School Education Department Balochistan has also developed systems for data and monitoring. The School Education Department Balochistan has developed the Real-Time School Monitoring System to track the functioning of schools, attendance, and school facilities across the province (School Education Department Balochistan, n.d.-a). In the context of the EMIS, it is stated that the Android-based RTSM was developed by the Education Department with support from UNICEF and technical support from the Innovative Development Organization to strengthen management through improved monitoring (School Education Department Balochistan, n.d.-b). While these systems are useful for evidence-based governance, their value will be only realized if the school-level monitoring data are used to address school-level issues.

Recent initiatives have targeted the educational system in Balochistan, including the strengthening of education systems. UNICEF Pakistan reported that 760,000 children had access to quality education as a result of the partnership between the European Union, the Government of Balochistan and UNICEF. The partnership supported the digital school census, real-time tracking, and formed virtual training of teachers and the establishment of parent-teacher and school management committees. Such initiatives show commitment on the part of the government towards school reform; however, the extent of school-level implementation will depend on how head teachers adapt and use these systems.

Governance Challenges in Policy Implementation

Common issues with civil governance within education policy include inadequate/delayed financial resources, frequent changes, a surplus of paperwork, lack of cooperation between districts and schools, insufficient authority of school leaders, persistent teacher absenteeism, political interference, insufficient/gaps in infrastructure, poor/lack of monitoring systems, and an overly-compliance focused monitoring. According to Fullan (2016), education change cannot happen with policy directives. It happens with the capacity building, constructive partnership, and the development of supporting and engaged leadership.

Street-level bureaucracy as described by Lipsky (1980), offers tips on the importance of head teachers' views. In the case of high expectations and limited resources, frontline workers use their discretion to determine what deserves priority. For example, a head teacher may take time to keep records because monitoring requires documentation, while keeping administrative duties as a rationale to avoid class observations. The head teachers' choices should not be viewed as personal preferences. In fact, operating under varied governance frameworks and conditions, explains the rationale for such decisions.

Conceptual Orientation

The research draws from implementations of policy and school governance to examine the implementation of school level policies. It has identified five interrelated factors. These are the clarity of policy communication, administrative support, availability of resources, monitoring and accountability, and the leadership and authority of head teachers. When these factors are present in a certain level of strength, head teachers can transform policy into concrete school improvement. However if these factors exist in a state of weakness, implementation will be fragmented.

The conceptual basis anticipates head teachers as policy actors and not as receivers of instructions. From their point of view, school policy implementation is a great distance from what they will actually accomplish. Thus, the lived experiences of head teachers will be used in the study as evidence for the enhancement of educational governance in Balochistan.

Research Objectives

1. To examine head teachers' views on the challenges of governing school education policies in Balochistan.
2. To identify the administrative, financial, and institutional constraints on the implementation of school education policies.
3. To analyze the impact of monitoring and accountability as well as the allocation of resources on the implementation of school education policies.
4. To propose ways to improve governance of school education policies in the public schools of Balochistan.

Research Questions

1. What are the challenges of governing school education policies in Balochistan as perceived by head teachers?
2. What are the administrative, financial, and institutional constraints on the implementation of school education policies?
3. What impact do monitoring, accountability, and resources have on the implementation of school education policies?
4. What are the practical ways to improve governance of school education policies in the public schools of Balochistan?

Research Methodology

Research Approach

The study uses a qualitative research method. Qualitative methods focus on the analysis of meanings, everyday lives, and the minutiae of social processes and interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this study is to understand the head teachers' perceptions of the challenges of governance faced in the implementation of education policies. Qualitative analysis allows the participants to describe the challenges they face with respect to administrative realities, limited resources, and the pressures of monitoring and the imperatives of practical reform in their own terminology.

Research Design

The qualitative case study design will be employed in this study. This design enables the researcher to examine a contemporary issue within its contemporary context (Yin, 2018). In this study, the case is the implementation of school education policies in public schools of Balochistan from the perspective of head teachers. This design is appropriate as it reflects the school context and the district administration, and the school's monitoring and resource systems.

Population and Participants

The population of this study consists of the head teachers of the public schools that fall under the School Education Department of the Government of Balochistan. Participants of the study are head teachers of the secondary and higher secondary schools in different districts of Balochistan. As the challenges of governance depend on several factors including

location, gender, school level, and district conditions, the study will include head teachers of both rural and urban schools. Approximately 20 head teachers will be interviewed to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select those head teachers who have hands-on knowledge in the implementation of school education policies. Maximum variation sampling was also used to include participants from different school levels (secondary and higher secondary schools), rural and urban areas, boy's and girl's schools, and districts with disparate service delivery conditions. The method captures a variety of cases and enhances the quality of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Instrumentation

The main data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview guide. The use of semi-structured interviews is justified as it allows the researcher to ask certain questions, while also providing the participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences in detail. The interview guide was developed from the research objectives, policy implementation literature, and the governance priorities articulated in Balochistan's education policy. The interview guide was developed as a tool to capture concerns on policy communication, administrative support, district-school coordination, reflective resources such as finance and material, monitoring and accountability, head teachers' authority, teacher management, community engagement, and practical suggestions for reform.

The interview guide was developed by education policy specialists and qualitative researchers prior to the field work. It also underwent a small pilot interview to test clarity and relevance. It was developed to provide flexibility to the researcher to ask additional relevant questions based on participants' responses. This flexibility is critical to the research because of the likely differences in governance challenges across different school levels and districts.

Table 1

Instrumentation Matrix

Instrument	Purpose	Key Dimensions	Use in Analysis
Semi-structured interview guide	To collect detailed perspectives of head teachers	Policy communication; district support; administrative workload; financial barriers; institutional authority; monitoring; accountability; resource allocation; reforms	Thematic analysis and participant quotation analysis
Document-analysis checklist	To connect interview findings with policy and governance context	Article 25A; BESP 2020–2025; EMIS/RTSM; education statistics; accountability frameworks	Policy contextualization and triangulation
Reflective field notes	To record contextual observations during interviews	School setting; non-verbal emphasis; researcher reflections; emerging patterns	Supplementary interpretation and reflexive checking

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher received approvals and consent for all necessary parties. Informed consent was also received from all study participants. Researcher-led interviews were conducted in the field or, when field conditions were optimal, through video conferencing. It was expected that each interview would last about 40 to 60 minutes. Once a participant agreed to the interview, the researcher began recording the interview. When recording was not possible, extensive field notes were documented. Participants were told their names, the names of their schools, and the exact locations would not be reported in the final document.

Data Analysis

This study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase approach to qualitative thematic analysis in order to analyze the interview data. The phases consist of familiarization with the data, initial code generation, theme identification, theme checking, and naming and finalizing of themes as well as the report writing process. In the current study, codes such as ambiguous instructions, delayed funds, fault-finding monitoring, limited authority, and pending requests were grouped into broader themes related to the research questions and sub-themes.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced by member checking and peer review of coding. Transferability was established by extensive description and/or illustration of context and participants. Dependability was established by an audit trail of decisions/changes made during the entire research process (including interviews and the development of codes). Confirmability was achieved by grounding interpretations in the data against which observations were made and by keeping reflexive notes.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity. All participants were briefed about the aim of the study and were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time during the study. Participant names were replaced with HT-01, HT-02, or HT-03. The data were only used for academic purposes and were kept secured.

Thematic Analysis and Findings

This section presents the final thematic structure resulting from the analysis of head teacher interviews. Emerging themes, sub-themes and codes resulted from iterative reading, coding, comparison and interpretation of the interview data. In order to validate the findings and to reflect on the administrative experiences of head teachers with respect to governance hurdles concerning the implementation of school education policies in Balochistan, selective participant quotes have been provided. To preserve their anonymity, participants have been identified by HT-01, HT-02, HT-03 and not by their real names. Quotes carry context and meaning for each theme and provide evidence from the participants.

Table 2

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Code Sections	Illustrative Quotes
Policy Communication and Administrative Coordination	Top-down policy communication	Official orders and WhatsApp messages	<i>"We get policy instructions, but sometimes we are not told how to carry them out with the resources that are accessible." (HT-04)</i>
	Weak coordination	Delayed responses	
	Administrative load	Repeated reporting	
Administrative, Financial and Institutional Barriers	Resource barriers	Delayed funds	<i>"The department expects us to improve the school, but we do not receive funds on time even for basic repairs." (HT-09)</i>
	Barriers of authority and institutional capacity	Unfilled vacancies	
		Lack of classrooms	
Monitoring, Accountability, and	Compliance-focused	Assigned responsibility without corresponding authority	<i>"Monitoring teams visit and note problems, but the same problems remain</i>
		Fault-finding	

Resource Allocation	monitoring	Insufficient and unresolved problems	<i>because no resources are provided.” (HT-13)</i>
	Weak corrective action	Rural neglect	
	Accountability without authority	Blaming the head teacher	
	Unequal allocation		
Practical Governance Reforms	Clear guidelines	Written manuals	<i>“Before issuing a new policy, the department should consult head teachers because we know the real school conditions.” (HT-18)</i>
	Supportive district administration	Problem-solving visits	
	Supportive monitoring	School grants	
	Leadership and resource reforms	Delegated authority	

Themes, Sub-themes, Codes, and Illustrative Participant Evidence

Theme 1: Policy Communication and Administrative Coordination

Figure 1

Theme 1 with sub-themes and codes

Figure 1
Theme 1: Policy Communication and Administrative Coordination



Source: Author's thematic analysis of head teachers' perspectives.

The first theme focuses on head teachers' experiences with policy communication and administrative coordination. Most of the time, head teachers get policies through formal orders, circulars, meetings, and WhatsApp groups. While these are good channels for fast communication, orders and circulars do not provide owners or users of the policy with a clear timeline,

operational instructions, or instructional support. Often, head teachers are unable to carry out the order and are clueless about how the policy is going to be implemented.

This theme consists of the three sub-themes: top-down policy communication, weak district-school coordination, and excessive administrative workload. The codes are : policy orders, circulars, WhatsApp instructions, unclear timelines, no implementation guidelines, faulty administrative systems, delays in providing guidance, unanswered requests, lack of follow up, no feedback, heavy administrative work, repeated reporting, red tape, and clerical burden. “...we receive policy orders, but sometimes we are not told how to implement them with the available resources.” (HT-04, rural high school)

The directive nature of policy orders and circulars may not be sufficiently supportive in their implementation. Policy implementation literature argues that orders to implement a policy on their own do not guarantee successful implementation. Supportive orders or circulars are a clear statement of common standards, instructions, and adequate resources for implementation, along with strong inter-organizational support (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). Supporters of this implementation system also argue that the implementers of policies interpret the policies and guidelines based on their context and prior knowledge. Unclear policy and guidance leads to uneven implementation in schools.

Another aspect of this theme includes an administrative workload. A head teacher is expected to manage many registers, prepare several reports, address monitoring data, manage student enrollment records, and communicate with district offices. Though required, excessive reporting diminishes the time available for local instructional leadership and teacher support. Fullan (2016) believes that educational changes rely on capacity building and creating the understanding and ownership of a new direction. Therefore, great policy communication also involves orientation and provision of written instructions, planning formats at school level, and opportunities for head teachers to be involved in the process by asking questions and offering feedback.

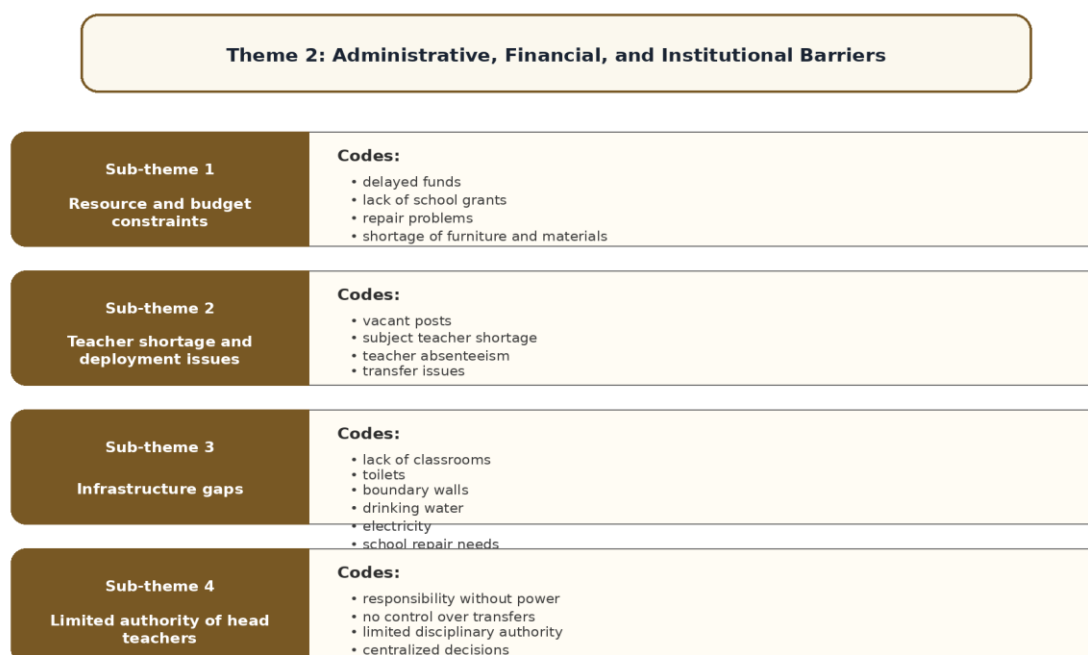
Theme 2: Administrative, Financial, and Institutional Barriers

Figure 2

Theme 2 with sub-themes and codes

Figure 2

Theme 2: Administrative, Financial, and Institutional Barriers



Source: Author's thematic analysis of head teachers' perspectives.

This theme covers the barriers connected to school-level administration, finances, and institutions. Head teachers may be required to address challenges regarding attendance, enrollment, learning outcomes, cleanliness, discipline in the school, documentation, and community engagement. These challenges often outnumber the administrative, financial, and institutional resources available at the school level.

This theme consists of four sub-themes: constraints in budget and resources, deployment of teachers, shortage of infrastructure, and constraints faced by head teachers in the implementation of their duties. Associated codes include: lack of funds, shortage of school grants, need for repairs, shortage of school furniture, school posts left vacant, shortage of subject teachers, absenteeism, transfers, inadequate school facilities, shortage of classrooms, latrines, and school boundaries, shortage of water and electricity, school in need of repairs, lack of authority, and centralized decisions.

“...the department expects us to improve the school but we do not have funds for basic repairs.” (HT-09, rural middle school)

This quote illustrates the disconnect between expectations of policies and school-level capacity. Lipsky (1980) states that frontline implementers work under excessive expectations while dealing with limited resources. In the school context, head teachers are held accountable for outcomes while the administrative, financial, and institutional resources required for the outcomes are often out of their control. This leads to a huge gap between the expectations and the resources available for accomplishing the outcomes, which has a negative impact on the implementation of the policies.

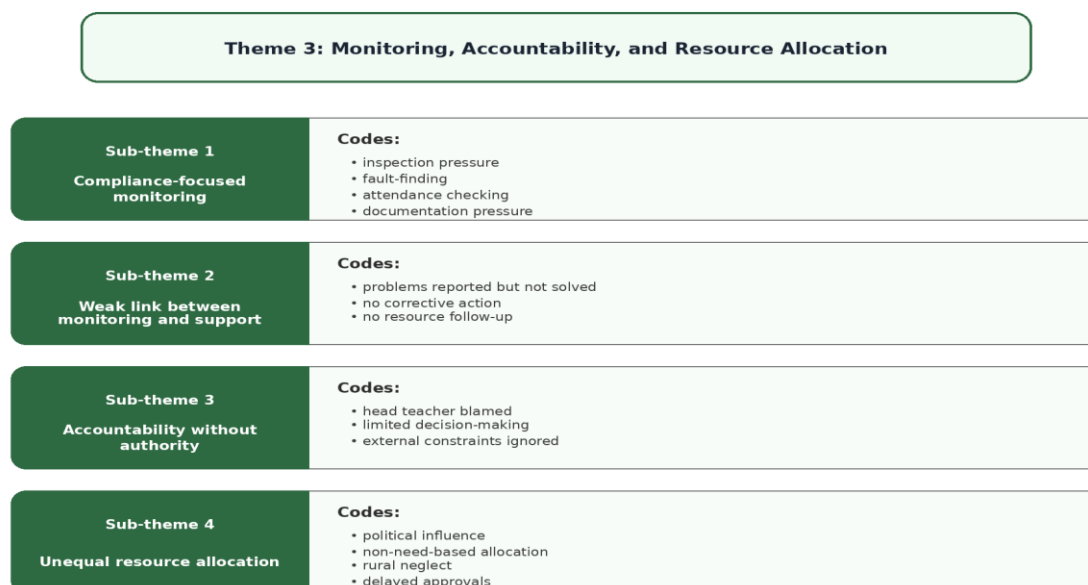
The Balochistan Education Sector Plan 2020–2025 has identified key challenges in the areas of human resource management, strategic planning, governance, accountability, and decentralization (Government of Balochistan, 2020). The priority reforms must focus on ensuring the allocation of time bound school and teacher grants, appointments of teachers, maintenance of school infrastructure and provision of administrative powers. The World Bank (2018) argues that education systems must bring actors and resources closer to learning. If a school does not have teachers, furniture, toilets, walls, and lacks the basic operational funds, the head teacher is ineffectively constrained in policy implementation despite the desire to bring about change.

Theme 3: Monitoring, Accountability, and Resource Allocation

Figure 3

Theme 3 with sub-themes and codes

Figure 3
Theme 3: Monitoring, Accountability, and Resource Allocation



Source: Author's thematic analysis of head teachers' perspectives.

The third theme examines monitoring, accountability, and resource allocation. Head teachers will say that monitoring helps to improve attendance, record keeping, and teacher presence, as well as help to optimize function and performance of the school. However, they will consider monitoring as compliance related to finding fault, and will say that it does not address the issues identified.

The sub-themes are compliance-related monitoring, a lack of a monitoring-to-support link, accountability, and inequitable resource allocation. Codes are inspection pressure, fault-finding, attendance taking, documentation pressure, concerns recorded but unaddressed, no corrective action, no resource provision, head teacher accountability, limited role, constraints beyond the school managed, political influence, inequitable resource allocation, rural neglect, and long delays.

“...monitoring teams visit and note the problems, but the same problems remain because no resources are provided.” (HT-13, rural primary school)

The quotation distinguishes inspection from improvement. It is useful to capture data, but such data must be used to address issues. The School Education Department Balochistan describes the Real-Time School Monitoring System as a way to monitor school attendance and the use of available facilities (School Education Department Balochistan, n.d.-a). EMIS data also state that the monitoring system was designed using an Android platform to assist effective school management (School Education Department Balochistan, n.d.-b). Whether, and in what way, the data collected are used to support schools is the critical measure of the system's effectiveness.

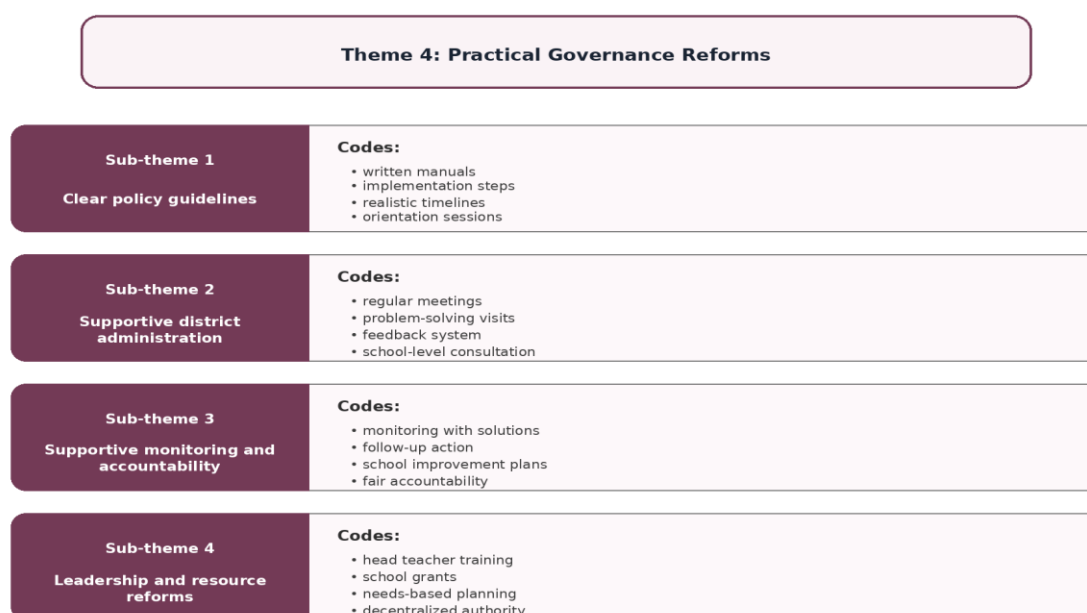
According to UNESCO (2017), holding teachers and schools accountable for issues caused by the breakdown of support systems makes no sense. This is an especially relevant point to head teachers in Balochistan. If the reports on monitoring showed damaged classrooms, absent teachers, or non-working toilets, the head teacher should not be the only staff member in a district or even a province that should be accountable. It should require a collaborative effort. Accountability is only fair and effective if it is complemented by allocation of resources and responsibility.

Theme 4: Practical Governance Reforms

Figure 4

Theme 4 with sub-themes and codes

Figure 4
Theme 4: Practical Governance Reforms



Source: Author's thematic analysis of head teachers' perspectives.

The fourth theme captures head teachers' practical recommendations for policy implementation. Reforms suggested by head teachers typically reflect their first-hand experience with the school. Such reforms may include policy manuals, presentation of clear steps and time frames, orientation, meetings with education authorities at the district level, problem-solving visits, timely releasing of school development funds, planning and leadership, and devolution of authority.

Sub-themes include provision of clear policy directives, supportive district administration, and supportive monitoring and accountability, while reform of leadership and resources includes head teacher training and availability of school development funds. The code includes policy manuals with steps, time frames, orientation, and meetings, problem-solving visits, feedback systems, school-level consultations, monitoring with solutions, follow-up, school improvement plans and Head teacher training, school development funds, provision of resources, and devolution of authority.

"...I would rather say that, before a policy is released, the department must consult with head teachers because we know school conditions." (HT-18, urban high school)

This statement speaks to the head teachers' desire to be included as a policy implementation partner rather than the recipient of a policy directive. According to Fullan (2016), educational change that is successful is achieved through understanding and support. In the same vein as UNESCO (2017), accountability and responsive systems include governance reforms in Balochistan that provide head teachers with the opportunity for consultation, planning, piloting, feedback, and policy evaluation.

At the center of practically transforming reform is moving from a control-based to a support-based system of governance. The monitoring should help identify problems, and the district offices should help in solving the problems, while the provincial authorities should provide the necessary resources. Head teachers should be given leadership training and reasonable authority to implement the policy, resulting in school improvement.

Discussion

The analysis and results indicate that the problems of governance in Balochistan's public schools are not the issues of individual schools or head teachers. Rather, they are problems of the district's implementation of policy relating to planning, instructions, and the allocation of resources as well as the monitoring and accountability framework. This reflects Van Meter and Van Horn's view (1975) that implementation is the result of the interaction of standards, resources, and policy instructions, and the attitude of the implementer(s). When one or more of these factors is weak, school-level implementation becomes fraught.

This also reflects the sense-making view of policy implementation. Head teachers develop their understanding of policy based on their own experiences, the resources at their disposal, and their context (Spillane et al., 2002). If policy is directed in a brief circular, without financial or implementation support, head teachers need to come up with a solution to what is realistically doable. This accounts for the discrepancy in policy implementation in different schools and districts even though the formal policy remains the same.

The presence of administrative, financial, and institutional barriers suggests that head teachers are burdened with responsibility and accountability with little authority. Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucracy is applicable. Head teachers work in the environment where policy meets the constraints of the real world. They are expected to carry out the policy, but they may lack control of the staffing, the movement of staff, finances, and infrastructure. These constraints will definitely create frustration and will limit the effectiveness of what could be an otherwise good policy.

This study suggests governance hinges on the trio of monitoring and accountability coupled with support. The presence of RTSM and EMIS systems suggests Balochistan has digital tools for monitoring Schools (School Education Department Balochistan, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). While head teachers may view monitoring as punitive, particularly if reported challenges are not addressed with the needed resources or if no corrective action is taken. According to UNESCO (2017), accountability should not be the sole responsibility of school staff, but should involve governments and institutions. Consequently, to improve the quality of the service provided, monitoring should be used in conjunction with a decision making framework.

According to the findings, District Education Authorities play a pivotal role in policy implementation. District level offices create an implementation link between the policy of the province and school level activities. They can improve the implementation of the policy by explaining the policy in detail, holding support meetings, bringing solutions to school level concerns, closely following up on monitoring reports and continuously exerting efforts for the equitable distribution of

resources. However, if the actions of the District are delayed and bureaucratic, head teachers perceive policy implementation as lonely. For sure, this shows the need for stronger collaboration between District and School levels.

Finally, the reform theme illustrates that head teachers, in the absence of support, can develop practical solutions. Their solutions are not abstract, they proposed clearer instructions, timely provision of funds, supportive monitoring, school grants, leadership trainings, and decentralization of power. These suggested reforms, support the Fullan (2016) view that educational change requires capacity, participation, and support. The Balochistan Education Sector Plan acknowledges governance, decentralization, human resource management, and accountability as top priorities (Government of Balochistan, 2020). The challenge lies in provision of school level support.

Conclusion

This research studied head teacher views on governance issues when implementing school education policies in Balochistan. The author contends that the implementation of school education policies and planning is a multi-faceted process involving not just the administrative function, but also the communication function, availability of required resources, support at the system and district levels, and governance and local school context. Of particular importance in the process of policy implementation is the head teacher. This is because head teachers translate policy at the school level.

The study has found four major pillars: policy communication and planning; barriers in administration, finance, and institutions; monitoring and accountability and allocation of resources; and reforms in governance. The pillars indicate that head teachers operate with a lot of expectations and a limited supply of resources and authority. Policy directions reach the head teachers without the adequate planning and instructions. They are bombarded with administrative work, expected to manage schools with limited infrastructural and personnel resources, focus on meeting activities designed to monitor their work, and are expected to account for factors beyond their control.

The author argues that a shift from the current control-based governance to a responsive and support-based governance will allow for effective and equitable implementation of school education policies in Balochistan. Monitoring would be aimed at support and direction instead of control, accountability would be complemented by authority, and resources would be allocated based on need. The author further adds that a strong focus on support, communication, district backing, and leadership of the School Education Department will give a positive and reinforcing effect on the implementation of school education policies in Balochistan.

This paper constructs a School-Level Policy Implementation Support Framework for Balochistan, based on a thematic analysis. There are six major components to the framework: clear policy communication, supportive district administration, needs-based resource allocation, supportive monitoring, head teacher leadership training, and equitable accountability. These components should be implemented collectively, as they are interdependent.

Clear Policy Communication

All new policies must be communicated with implementation guidelines, steps, a timeline, a list of the involved persons, a format for reporting, and an outline of necessary resources. Head teachers must be oriented prior to the implementation of significant policy changes. Clear policy communication minimizes ambiguity and supports policy consistency across the various schools.

Supportive District Administration

District education authorities must go beyond simply forwarding policy instructions. They must hold policy support meetings, make routine visits to provide support, and offer feedback. A record of the barriers to policy implementation at the school level must be maintained, and issues must be reported to the provincial authorities if they remain unresolved.

Needs-Based Resource Allocation

Resources must be allocated based on the needs of individual schools. The most remote and under-resourced schools must receive the highest priority for improvements, additional staff, instructional materials, furnishings, and operational assistance. Resources must be allocated in accordance with the data collected through the monitoring process.

Supportive Monitoring

The purpose of monitoring must be redefined as an improvement mechanism. The monitoring reports must highlight the challenges and assign the responsibility for the challenges. Furthermore, the report must provide recommendations for corrective actions and outline the responsibility for ensuring follow-up actions. If the challenges are beyond the control of the head teacher, the responsibility must be assigned to the district or provincial level.

Head Teacher Leadership Development

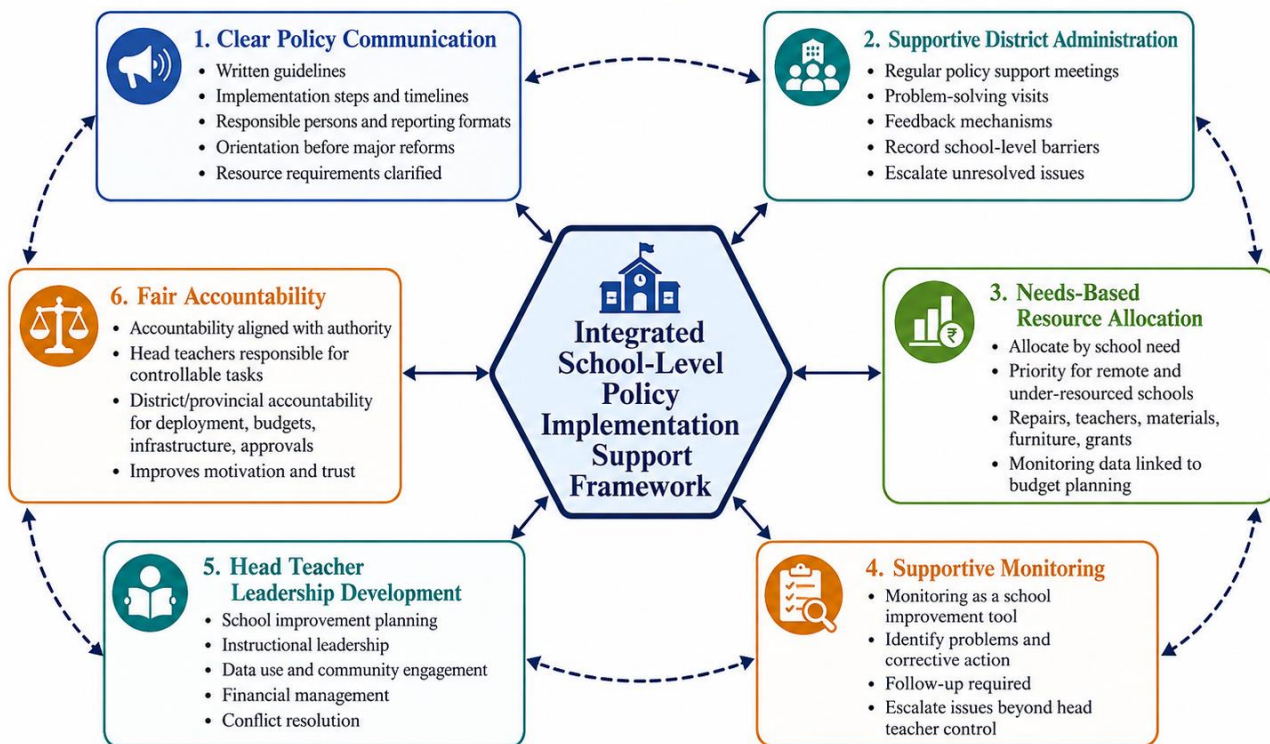
Head Teachers should be offered professional development to support School Improvement Planning, Instructional Leadership, Data Use, Community Engagement, Financial Management, and Conflict Management. Development of these areas is important as Head Teachers are the key people to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

Just Accountability

Just accountability means that Head Teachers should be held accountable for the work that they do, and District and Provincial Authorities should be held accountable for the assignment and management of teachers, the budget and infrastructure, and delays in approvals.

School-Level Policy Implementation Support Framework for Balochistan

Based on thematic analysis of head teachers' perspectives



These six components are mutually reinforcing and should be implemented together rather than separately.

Policy Suggestions

1. The School Education Department Balochistan should seek the opinion of Head Teachers when large scale policy changes are made at the school level.
2. Every policy should come with a brief implementation guide that includes steps, a timeline, indicators, and an articulation of resources.
3. District Education Offices should hold regular policy support meetings for Head Teachers and create a feedback channel for support to address school problems.
4. Routine monitoring systems, such as the RTSM, should be integrated with resource allocation and school improvement planning.
5. Head Teachers should be offered leadership development related to policy, data, and people as well as Community Engagement and School Improvement Planning.
6. School grants and repair funds should be disbursed in a timely manner, and in a transparent manner, with the greatest priority being given to schools that are the most remote and have the least resources.
7. Teacher deployment should be responsive to the needs of the school including the needs for particular subjects, the needs for gender equity, and needs resulting from hardship.
8. Just accountability should be the guiding principle for differentiating accountability of Head Teachers from District and Provincial accountability.
9. Reporting by schools should be consolidated by the department to eliminate redundant reporting and to provide reporting in simpler, digital formats.
10. While planning and implementing school-related policies, the experiences of school staff should be used to create formal feedback mechanisms.

Limitations

This qualitative research paper focuses on the perspectives of head teachers. The views of students, parents, teachers, district officers, and policymakers are not included. Future studies may include all of the aforementioned groups of stakeholders in order to gain a clearer understanding of policy implementation. Because of the nature of qualitative research, the sample size is smaller and the findings are not statistically generalizable. However, qualitative research provides thorough and in-depth context.

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