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Evaluating the Implementation of Inclusive Education Practices at Secondary Level in Pakistan: A Document Analysis of Pakistan's Education Policy Framework 2009

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Abstract

Inclusive education aims to integrate all students, regardless of their diverse conditions, into mainstream educational systems. In Pakistan, the Education Policy 2009 marked a pivotal shift toward inclusive education, particularly for children with disabilities, aligning with international standards set by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This paper explores the alignment between the goals of the 2009 Education Policy and the actual implementation of inclusive education at the secondary level in Pakistan. Despite policy intentions to promote equity and inclusivity, significant barriers to successful implementation persist. These include inadequate teacher training, limited resource allocation, societal attitudes toward disabilities, and infrastructural challenges, which hinder the full realization of inclusive education. The research utilizes thematic analysis to examine the gaps in the policy framework, focusing on key areas such as teacher preparation, curriculum adaptation, and infrastructure. The study highlights the lack of actionable steps to translate the policy vision into practice, especially at the secondary level, and calls for enhanced strategies, including recurrent teacher training, improved resource allocation, and infrastructural reforms. The findings underscore the need for a more coordinated, systemic approach to bridge the gap between policy and practice, particularly to ensure equal educational opportunities for marginalized students. The paper concludes with recommendations to policymakers and educators for improving inclusive education practices in Pakistan's secondary schools.

Keywords: Inclusive, Education, Pakistan, Social, Intellectual



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Introduction

Inclusive education emphasizes that all students, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions, should be integrated into mainstream education systems (UNESCO, 2019). In Pakistan, inclusive education gained significant policy attention with the Education Policy 2009, which sought to align with international norms, especially following the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008 (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

Education Policy 2009: A Commitment to Inclusive Education

The 2009 Education Policy represented a significant shift in Pakistan's educational philosophy. For the first time, the policy explicitly recognized inclusive education as a means to ensure equal access to education for marginalized groups, including children with disabilities. The policy's framework included specific goals, such as building inclusive schools, training teachers, modifying curricula, and ensuring accessibility of facilities (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

However, scholars have critiqued the gap between policy formulation and its implementation (Hameed, 2021). While the 2009 policy articulated progressive goals, the systemic and structural challenges, such as lack of resources, inadequate teacher training, and societal attitudes towards disability, have hindered its full execution.

Implementation Challenges in Inclusive Education (2018–2023)

Research over the past five years reflects that while inclusive education has been a national priority, its implementation remains inconsistent across provinces and school types. Several studies provide critical insights into the barriers that prevent the effective operationalization of the 2009 policy.

A prominent theme in recent literature is the inadequate preparation of teachers to handle inclusive classrooms (Khan et al., 2021). Many educators lack the pedagogical tools necessary to address the needs of diverse learners. A study by Asim and Batool (2020) found that more than 70% of teachers in secondary schools had not received formal training on inclusive education, contributing to a lack of confidence and competency in teaching students with disabilities.

Research highlights the insufficient allocation of resources as a major barrier to policy implementation. Akram and Malik (2022) note that while the policy recommends infrastructural improvements, few schools have been retrofitted to become accessible to students with physical disabilities. Further, the lack of specialized learning materials and assistive technologies continues to impede students with special needs from participating fully in classroom activities (Siddiqui & Javed, 2020).

Negative societal attitudes towards disability persist as a major impediment to the implementation of inclusive education (Hassan & Iqbal, 2021). Many parents and even educators view children with disabilities as incapable of learning in mainstream classrooms, which results in their marginalization. Ali and Qureshi (2023) argue that these entrenched beliefs contribute to the resistance faced in promoting inclusive practices, especially at the secondary level.



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Pakistan's devolved education system has led to significant provincial variations in the execution of inclusive education practices. While Punjab has made some strides in incorporating inclusive education into its school system, provinces like Balochistan and Sindh lag far behind, primarily due to limited political will and economic constraints (Hameed, 2021). This uneven progress has exacerbated inequalities in education access across the country.

The 2009 policy emphasized revising curricula to accommodate diverse learning needs, yet many studies reveal that the curriculum remains largely unchanged in practice. Teachers often continue to use traditional, one-size-fits-all methods, which fail to engage students with diverse learning styles (Rahman & Ahmed, 2023). Moreover, standardized testing remains a significant obstacle, as it doesn't account for students with disabilities, pushing them further to the margins of the education system.

International Comparisons: Pakistan's Position in Global Inclusive Education Practices

When evaluated against global benchmarks, Pakistan's progress on inclusive education appears slow. Countries with similar socioeconomic contexts, such as India and Bangladesh, have seen more rapid advancements in policy-to-practice transitions (UNESCO, 2022). Pakistan's relative lag is often attributed to the lack of coordinated efforts between governmental bodies and the local community, as well as the slow pace of legislative reforms (Malik & Akram, 2021).

Despite these challenges, some schools and regions have made notable progress. For instance, initiatives in urban centers like Lahore and Islamabad have shown success in piloting inclusive education models. Pilot programs supported by NGOs, such as the *Pakistan Education and Development Initiative* (PEDI), have developed inclusive teaching methods and demonstrated that with adequate support, inclusive education can thrive (Khan & Batool, 2023).

Objectives of the Research

1. To examine the alignment between the goals of the 2009 National Education Policy and the current practices of inclusive education at the secondary level in Pakistan.
2. To identify the key challenges and barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in secondary schools in Pakistan.
3. To propose recommendations for improving the implementation of inclusive education practices at the secondary level in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This research is conducted to analyze whether the intended outcomes of the 2009 policy are being realized in practice, focusing on key aspects such as infrastructure, teacher training, and resource allocation. It also uncovers the practical difficulties such as inadequate teacher preparation, societal attitudes, and infrastructural deficiencies that hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education. Based on the findings, it offers practical suggestions to policymakers, educators, and stakeholders for enhancing inclusive education practices, particularly focusing on teacher development, resource provision, and societal awareness.



Research Methodology

The research aims to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education practices at the secondary level in Pakistan by analyzing the 2009 Education Policy and the recent research literature (2018–2023). To achieve this, **thematic analysis** employed as the primary qualitative method. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It allows for a comprehensive exploration of recurring issues, challenges, and best practices related to the implementation of inclusive education policy.

A thorough review of the 2009 Education Policy conducted, focusing on sections related to inclusive education along with selected research articles read multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the findings and to highlight recurring themes regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

By using thematic analysis (or manual coding methods), initial codes developed based on relevant passages in the policy and research articles. These codes capture the recurring themes such as "teacher training," "infrastructure," "curriculum adaptation," "resource allocation," and "attitudinal barriers."

After coding the data, related codes grouped together to identify broader **themes**. For example, codes such as "lack of assistive technology" and "inaccessible school buildings" combined under the theme "infrastructural challenges."

The identified themes reviewed gain to ensure that they are coherent and accurately represent the data. Each theme defined clearly to explain its scope and significance to the research question. For example, a theme titled "Teacher Training Deficiencies" defined as a lack of professional development programs focused on inclusive education practices in secondary schools.

Research Instrument

This research is qualitative in nature undertake the document analysis to draw inferences from 2009 Education policy and past five years research articles. So the primary source of the research are 2009 Education Policy and the secondary sources are past (2018-2023) research articles. These structured tools help to identify and consistent themes across the different documents.

Research Analysis

A Document Analysis of Pakistan's Education Policy Framework 2009” investigates the framework, strengths, and gaps in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 regarding inclusive education, particularly at the secondary level. Through a detailed document analysis, this study critiques the extent to which the policy provides clear, actionable guidelines and examines its capacity to address the educational needs of marginalized students, especially those with disabilities.

The NEP 2009 aims to promote equity in education, as reflected in its provisions for inclusive education. However, the findings reveal a disjoint between policy intent and actual implementation. While the policy lays a general framework, the gaps in critical implementation factors teacher training, instructional material, curriculum adaptation, and infrastructure, present significant barriers to



achieving inclusivity. Further, the shift towards provincial control of education after the 18th Amendment has disproportionately focused on primary education, leaving secondary education in the background of reform efforts.

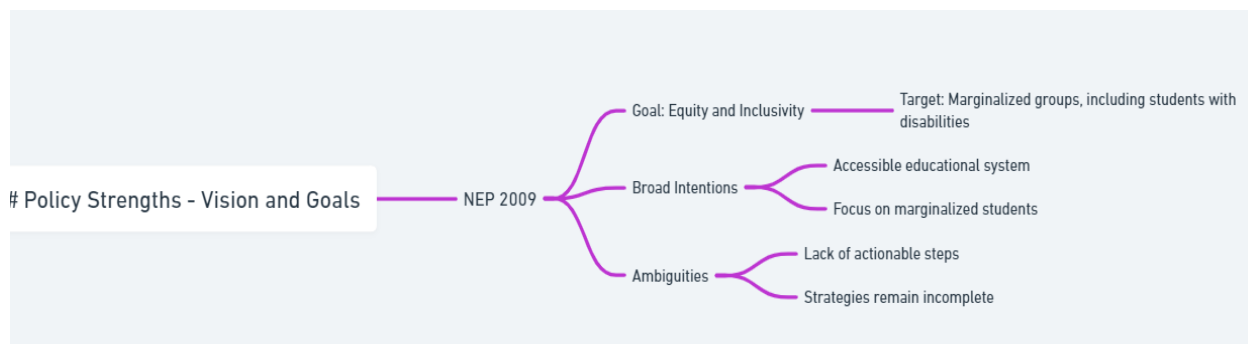
This research highlights systemic issues that persist even a decade after the NEP's introduction. Although the policy espouses inclusivity, inadequate resources, minimal attention to secondary-level needs, and failure to engage communities and manage cultural barriers have hindered progress toward achieving true inclusive education. The paper calls for more robust strategies, emphasizing the need for recurrent teacher training, proper curriculum modifications, and infrastructural improvements that accommodate the needs of all learners.



Thematic Analysis:

1. Policy Strengths: Vision and Goals

- The NEP 2009 explicitly mentions the goal of equity and inclusivity, aiming to address the educational needs of marginalized groups such as students with disabilities.
- The policy articulates broad intentions to create an educational system that is accessible to all, with an emphasis on marginalized students.
- However, while the vision is clear, actionable steps and strategies remain ambiguous and incomplete.



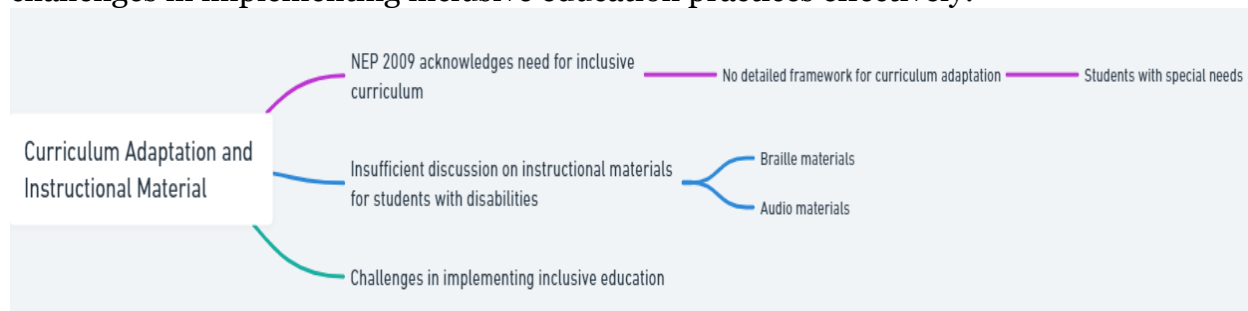
Gaps in Teacher Training and Professional Development

- The analysis reveals a lack of comprehensive teacher training programs for inclusive education at the secondary level. Teachers are not adequately equipped to handle diverse student needs, particularly students with disabilities.
- Professional development, a key element for sustaining inclusive practices, is not sufficiently emphasized in the NEP 2009. This is critical because successful implementation of inclusive education heavily relies on teachers who can adapt instructional methods to accommodate all learners.



Curriculum Adaptation and Instructional Material

- The research points out that while the NEP 2009 acknowledges the need for an inclusive curriculum, it fails to offer a detailed framework on how to adapt the curriculum for students with special needs.
- Instructional materials that cater to students with disabilities, such as Braille or audio materials, are insufficiently discussed, leading to challenges in implementing inclusive education practices effectively.



Inadequate Infrastructure Development



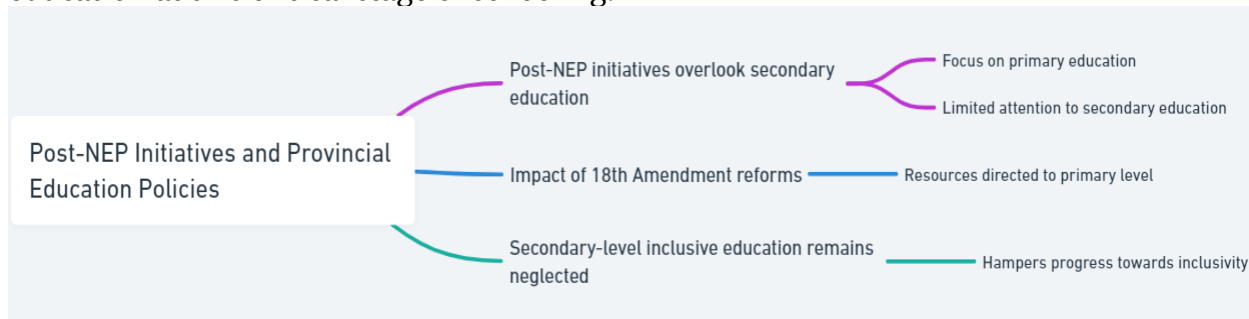
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- Another key theme identified is the lack of infrastructural support to implement inclusive education at the secondary level. Many schools lack accessible facilities such as ramps, appropriate furniture, or learning aids for students with disabilities.
- Without proper infrastructure, the physical and learning environment remains non-conducive to inclusivity, hindering the policy's goals.



Post-NEP Initiatives and Provincial Education Policies

- Post-NEP initiatives and reforms, particularly those following the 18th Amendment, have largely overlooked secondary education. Most efforts and resources have been channeled towards primary education.
- This has left secondary-level inclusive education on the periphery of reforms, thereby hampering progress toward achieving inclusive education at this critical stage of schooling.



Cultural and Societal Barriers

- The research underscores the importance of addressing cultural and societal attitudes toward disability. Inclusive education efforts in Pakistan face significant hurdles due to deep-rooted societal biases that marginalize students with disabilities.
- There is a need for community engagement and awareness programs to shift societal attitudes and create a more accepting and supportive environment for inclusive education.

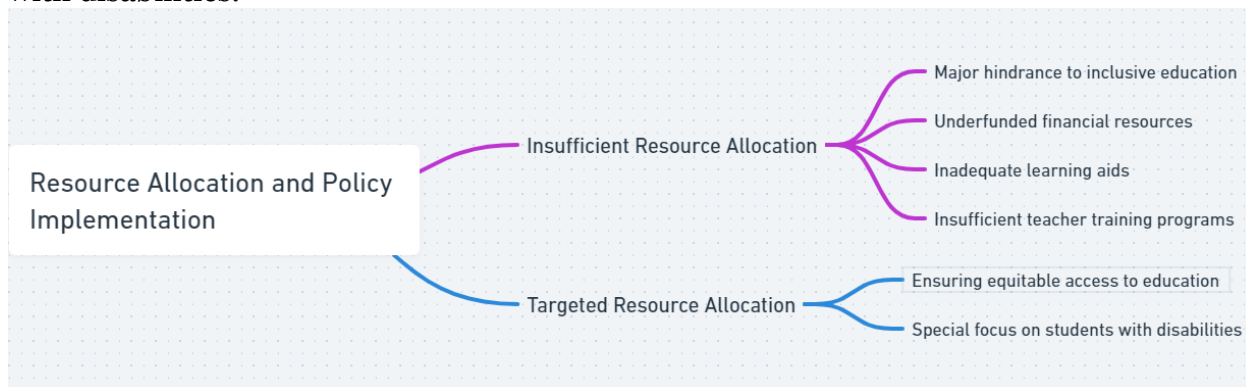


Resource Allocation and Policy Implementation



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- The findings indicate insufficient resource allocation as a major hindrance to the implementation of inclusive education at the secondary level. Financial resources, learning aids, and teacher training programs are either underfunded or inadequately distributed.
- To overcome this challenge, the study calls for targeted resource allocation that ensures equitable access to education for all students, especially those with disabilities.



Call for More Focused Implementation Strategies

- The study concludes that while the NEP 2009 lays the foundation for inclusive education, it lacks detailed, actionable implementation strategies.
- The researchers advocate for more succinct policies that address the specific needs of secondary-level students, teacher training, and infrastructure development.



The thematic analysis of this research highlights a significant gap between the NEP 2009's vision of inclusive education and its actual implementation. The document analysis reveals the NEP's shortcomings in teacher training, curriculum adaptation, resource allocation, and infrastructural development, particularly at the secondary level. Moreover, societal and cultural barriers further complicate the situation, delaying the actualization of true inclusivity. The research emphasizes the need for focused strategies, adequate resource distribution, and regular teacher training to foster an inclusive educational environment for all secondary-level students in Pakistan.

Findings

The policy demonstrates a strong vision for inclusivity, focusing on marginalized



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groups, especially students with disabilities. However, these ambitions remain theoretical due to a lack of specific guidelines and actionable strategies for implementation at the secondary level.

The absence of proper training for teachers to handle diverse needs is a significant barrier. Teachers require the skills to adapt their instruction to meet all students' needs, especially those with disabilities. While the need for curriculum adaptation is acknowledged, the policy lacks clarity on how to make the curriculum accessible. Specialized materials such as Braille or audio tools are not adequately addressed. The schools' physical infrastructure is inadequate, lacking ramps and other facilities to accommodate students with physical disabilities. The shift in focus post-18th Amendment to primary education has left secondary education neglected, which is crucial for continuing inclusivity efforts. Societal attitudes toward disabilities need to be changed through awareness and community engagement. The policy lacks a clear plan for financial and material resource distribution, essential for creating inclusive environments.

Recommendations

To foster true inclusivity at the secondary level in Pakistan, the following strategies are recommended:

1. NEP 2009 needs an actionable implementation plan that includes specific steps for teacher training, curriculum adaptation, and infrastructural development.
2. Recurrent teacher training programs should be established, focusing on inclusive pedagogies and adapting instruction to meet the needs of all learners.
3. A framework for adapting the curriculum and providing necessary instructional materials (e.g., Braille, audio) should be developed.
4. Schools should be equipped with necessary physical and technological infrastructure to ensure accessibility for all students.
5. Adequate and targeted resource allocation is crucial for success, ensuring sufficient funding for inclusive practices at the secondary level.
6. Addressing societal attitudes towards disability is crucial for inclusive education. Community programs should be implemented to promote understanding and acceptance.

Conclusion

The 2009 Education Policy laid a solid foundation for inclusive education in Pakistan, but the country's progress over the past decade, particularly at the secondary level, has been slow and inconsistent. The research from the last five years highlights the continuing challenges, from inadequate teacher training to societal barriers. However, with focused efforts on improving infrastructure, training educators, and shifting societal attitudes, Pakistan has the potential to achieve a more inclusive education system.

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