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Policy and Administrative Practices – A Study of District Education Officers

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Abstract

The role of District Education Officers has been redefined due to the rapid growth in technology and new trends in education. The study was carried out in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to compare institutional policies with the actual practices of the District Education Officers to identify gaps for remedial solutions. District Education Officers (male and female) were included in the study. In addition, four provincial-level officers were chosen as key informants for interviews. The data were analyzed and interpreted by statistical instruments. The gaps between policies and practices of District Education Officers that emerged from the study included a need for more in-service training in Computer Literacy, Office Management, Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Planning & Development, and Communication Skills. The study also found a need for more awareness of District Education Officers about the policies. In order to fill up the gaps, the study recommended that the officers involved in formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies should be trained to develop their knowledge and skills in the relevant area.

Keywords: Policies, Education, District Education Officers, Literacy

Introduction

The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faces more challenges and hardships which have adversely affected the process of the policies. District Education

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Officers are critical actors in delivery of education services, as they are often designated as the individuals primarily responsible for delivering public education services.

The administrative practices of District Education Officers are, what they actually do on ground. The theoretical framework given to them in the form of job description, rules and regulations, code of ethics and some of the administrative orders issued to them are some of the parameters of the departmental policies in this study.

As indicated by Shah (2010:110) the fundamental elements of the District Education Officers are the area level arranging inside the structure of the common rules and strategies, quality and benchmarks of training, arranging, execution and checking of improvement ventures, spending planning and its dispersion, usage of assets and their review, observing and supervision of schools, posting and exchange of educators, up-degree, repair, upkeep of structures and arrangement of essential offices to schools, advancement of the group support, honor of grants to the understudies and directing examinations. Habib, (2015, p.30) expressed that common government, with the assistance of benefactor subsidizing is taking a few activities to enhance training. The emphasis is on expanded enrolment, enhanced school foundation, better observing and straightforwardness of school information, an attention on young ladies' enrolment and increment in female supervisory staff.

Alam (2005: 8) is of the view that an important objective of educational administration is to help an individual in achieving the goals of an organization. If the administration is not able to learn from new needs and challenges, the achievement of required targets will not be possible.

Anwer (2005: 15) documented that efficiency is not possible in the absence of effective administration. Educational administration is responsible for the implementation of policy and other decisions to ensure the achievement of desired objectives.

According to Armah, Yawson, Johanna (2009: 75), if someone has to maintain high quality of education then decision-making needs to consider a broad range of stakeholders and various aspects of their opinions.

Objectives of Study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To determine knowledge of District Education Officers regarding various institutional policies in the Elementary and Secondary education department

2. To explore the actual administrative practices of the District Education Officers

Methodology

Methodology is a system of broad rules or principles from which specific methods or procedures are derived to solve different problems within the scope of a discipline (Business Dictionary, 2016).

The purpose of the study was to assess the administrative process in terms of gaps between institutional policies and practices of District Education Officers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. It was a mixed study which used both quantitative and qualitative measures for achieving the research objectives.

Population

All the District Education Officers, twenty-five male and twenty-five female, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan constituted the population of the study.

In addition, all provincial level officers, i.e., Secretary, Special Secretary, Additional Secretary, Deputy Secretaries, Chief Planning Officer, Director, Additional Directors and Deputy Directors of E&SE Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan also comprised the population.

Sample

All the District Education Officers i.e. 50 DEOs, twenty five male and twenty five female, of 25 districts (100%) has been selected for the study.

In addition four provincial level officers, i.e. Additional Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Director E&SE Department, Chief Planning Officer E&SE Department, and Additional Director E&SE Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan were selected as sample for interview. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants for the interview.

Analysis of Data

The data were given both qualitative and quantitative treatment. The data obtained from questionnaire were analyzed in a tabular form. Descriptive statistics like Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Rank order correlation were applied for analysis of data. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 and features in Microsoft Excel 2010 professional.

The qualitative data was placed under different patterns and categories for drawing inference. The interviews were transcribed and coded based on emergent themes. After the data were coded based on the themes, units of text from the interviews supporting the themes were generated. The units of text were

further analyzed searching for emergent themes, patterns, and discrepancies.

Table 1: Training of DEOs on office management

Area	Yes		To some extent		No		Total		X2	Sig
	1		2		3					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Male	7	28	4	16	14	56	25	100	89.77	.00
Female	6	24	2	8	17	68	25	100	112.34	.00
Overall result	13	26	6	12	31	62	50	100		

The analysis mentioned in Table-1 the result of in-service training for office management among the male and female DEOs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The findings suggested that the 7 male 6 female agreed to the question that they got in-service training for the better office management, the combined effect is 13 respondents agreed with the 26 percent of the total sample while 4 respondents from male and 2 from the female got training to some extent with the 12% of the sample. The 14 respondents from male and 17 from female didn't get training on office management with the 62% of the total sample. The study also estimated the chi-square for both male and female and the value of chi-square for male is 89.77 and 112.34 which showed that the variables are having significant relationship with each other. The following is the graphical presentation of the data.

Table-2 Training of DEO's on Financial Management

Area	Yes		To some extent		No		Total		X2	Sig
	1		2		3					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%		
Male	10	40	2	8	13	52	25	100	250.78	.00
Female	2	8	9	36	14	56	25	100	213.33	.00
Overall result	12	24	11	22	27	54	50	100		

The results in the Table-2 demonstrated the findings collected from respondents with the help of questionnaire. The findings suggested that the 10 male 2 female agreed to the question that they got in-service training for the better financial management, the combined effect is 12 respondents agreed with the 24 percent of the total sample while 2 respondents from male and 9 from the female got training to some extent with the combined effect of 22 percent of the total sample.

The rest, 13 respondents from male and 14 from female didn't agree to the statement and they marked as no. The study also estimated the chi-square for both male and female and the value of chi-square for male is 250.78 and 213.33 which shows that the variables are having significant relationship with each other. The following is the graphical presentation of the data.

Table-3 *Training of DEOs on Planning and Development*

Area	Yes		To some extent		No		Total	X ²	Sig	
	1		2		3					
	F	%	F	%	F	%				f
Male	2	8	7	28	16	64	25	100	239.8	.00
Female	0	0	3	12	22	88	25	100	256.77	.00
Overall result	2	4	10	20	38	76	50	100		

The results mentioned in Table-3 showed the sample respondents collected with the help of questionnaire. The findings suggested that the 2 male and no female agreed to the question that they are getting in-service training for the better planning and development, the combined effect is 2 respondents were agreed with the 4 percent of the total sample while 7 respondents from male and 3 from the female got in-service training to some extent. The 16 respondents from male and 22 from female responded the statement no. The study also estimated the chi-square for both male and female and the value of chi-square for male is 239.8 and 256.77 which showed that the variables are having significant relationship with each other. Below is the graphical presentation of the data.

Discussion on responses of District Education Officers

The responses of the 50 District Education Officers were obtained on the qualification, experience, and training to see whether they have the necessary potential to implement Government Policies at the district level. The analysis indicated that all the 50 District Education Officers were adequately qualified both academically and professionally and had also received the necessary orientation in the task related to them. Regarding computer literacy, 15 respondents (30%) of the total sample know it. Concerning personnel management, 07 respondents (14 percent) of the total sample attended the training. The data further revealed that 13 respondents (26 percent) of the total sample have received training in office management, and 12 respondents (24%) have received training in financial management. Similarly, 17 respondents (34 percent) received training in human resource management. In comparison, only 02 respondents (4%) of the total sample received training on planning and

development, and 14 respondents (28 percent) participated in the training to enhance their communication skills.

Analysis of Interviews with Key Informants

Interviewing is a way to collect data as well as to gain knowledge from individuals. Kvale (1996, p. 14) regarded interviews as “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data. “There are many reasons to use interviews for collecting data and using it as a research instrument. Gray (2004, p. 214) has given the following reasons in support of interviews.

- There is a need to attain highly personalized data.
- There are opportunities required for probing.
- A good return rate is important.
- Respondents are not fluent in the native language of the country, or where they have difficulties with written language.

In the current study, interviews were used as the primary source of data collected. Two Deputy Directors (Male), Two Deputy Directresses (Female), Additional Director Planning and Development, Director Elementary and Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as Additional Secretary Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were interviewed as per schedule shown in Appendix-2. The questions posed to the respondents and the responses obtained are discussed that the following questions analysis of the respondents are discussed below.

What challenges do you face during the:

- i) Policy formulation/adoption phase and***
- ii) Implementation phase?***

In response to the first part of the question, out of 08 respondents'06 replied that they have no concern with policy formulation/adoption, so they showed total ignorance regarding policy formulation/adoption. Regarding per implementation plan at the districts and directorate level, all 08 (100%) respondents identified various implementation challenges. First, there is a lack of ownership of the district and directorate levels' responsibilities. Secondly, lack of capacity at the district level and, thirdly, devolution of powers to district governments created many problems at the district level. Districts are directly facing the problems posed to them by the local governments.

Do you think that sufficient financial and human resources are available provided to the DEO offices? If No, then how these resources can be enhanced?

All the eight (100%) respondents were of the view that they were faced with problems both financial and human resources. They further indicated that they had overcome human abatement to some extent at the district level but districts are still in need of financial support for implementation of policies.

What kind of decisions for policy implementation are made in the Elementary & Secondary Education department?

In the response of this question, all the eight (100%) respondents were of the opinion that repeated school visits, annual inspections and reward and punishment on the basis of annual academic achievements are in practice in the Elementary and Secondary Education Department. However, there is a dire need of acknowledgment of Principals, Teachers and students on the basis of the school performance.

What are the challenges in implementation of institutional policies and rules in the DEO offices?

All the eight respondents viewed that District Education Officers are facing politicization and departmental pressure at their levels. Three respondents were of the view that districts are unaware of background of policies and thus they don't know background of the policy. They further added that policies are not clear both to directorate and district level officers.

How do you work with local Governments in implementation of institutional policies of the department?

All the eight respondents (100%) agreed that they have no proper working relationship with the district governments. So, districts are facing hurdles in the implementation of institutional policies. Another Seven (88%) respondents revealed that Education must be provincial subject and powers may not be devolved to districts.

Please identify the hurdles during the adoption and implementation of institutional policies at district level and what are your strategies to overcome these hurdles?

All the eight interviewees (100%) identified two main hurdles. First, the local government assemblies at district level claim that education is their subject therefore, department will work according to the guidelines/instructions provided to them by the district governments and not by the provincial political setup.

Further, they added that being executing agency for finance, posting transfer, recruitment and other matter in this regard will be their concern. Secondly, as we have different parties' government at provincial and district levels due to which policies implementations become harder. Other factors like language, cultural barriers and diversity are also creating a panic situation at the district level.

What type of resources and support would you find useful for enforcing existing institutional policies at district level?

All the eight (100%) respondents' suggested orientation sessions for District Education Officers to support them in the issues and funds must be increased to support them financially.

What improvement is required in the policy formulation and implementation process?

Out of eight respondents six were of the view that representatives of all stakeholders should be included in policies initiation, adaptation and formulation phases and they should be provided background knowledge for their clarity. They suggested that there are various successful models in the world and we need to focus on them and implement it on the basis of systematic researches. Two (25%) viewed that there must be flexibility in formulation of policies to avoid future hurdles in its implementation.

What process, structure, tools do you have in place to ensure that policy decisions are implemented (e.g. monitoring/evaluation framework)?

All the respondents (100%) were of the view that they did not have any proper tool at any level to measure how much the policies have been implemented. Education Management Information System (EMIS) is the only source check the level of implementation of education policies.

Findings based on responses of District Education Officers

The following responses of 50 District Education Officers are based on the statements contained in the opinionnaire fielded to them:

1. Out of 50 DEOs only 26% had received in-service training in office management. (Table-1).
2. There were only 24% District Education Officers who had received in-service training in financial management (Table-2).
3. The data revealed that only 34% DEOs had received in-service training planning and development (Table-3).

Findings based on the Interviews with key Informants

The following findings are based on the interviews held with the Additional Secretary Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Director Elementary and Secondary Education, Additional Director Planning and Development Elementary and Secondary Education, two Deputy Directors (Male) and Two Deputy Directresses (Female) Elementary and Secondary Education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

1. As per implementation plan at the district and directorate levels, all eight (100%) of the respondents identified the following challenges regarding Implementation.
 - There is a lack of ownership of the responsibilities both at the district and directorate levels.
 - There is lack of capacity at the district level.
 - Devolution of powers to district governments created a lot of problems at the district level.
 - Districts are directly facing the problems that are posed to them by the local governments.
2. All the eight (100%) respondents were of the view that they faced problems of financial and human resources.
3. All eight (100%) respondents were of the opinion that repeated school visits, annual inspections, reward and punishment on the basis of annual academic achievements are in practice in the Elementary and Secondary Education Department.
4. All eight (100%) respondents viewed that District Education Officers are facing politicization and departmental pressure at their levels. Three respondents were of the view that districts are unaware of background of policies and thus they don't know background of the policy.
5. All eight respondents (100%) agreed that they have no proper working relationship with the district governments.
6. Another Seven (88%) respondents revealed that Education must be provincial subject and powers may not be devolved to districts.
7. All eight interviewees (100%) identified two main hurdles.
 - Local government assemblies, at district level, claim that education is their subject therefore they will work according to the guidelines/instructions provided to them by the district governments and not by the provincial political setup. Further, they added that being executing agency for finance, posting transfer, recruitment and other matter in this regard will be their concern.
 - Due to different political parties' implementations of policies at any level become difficult.

8. All eight (100%) respondents suggested orientation sessions for District Education Officers to support them in the issues. Funds must be increased to support them financially.
9. All the respondents (100%) were of the view that they did not have any proper tool at any level to measure how much the policies have been implemented.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the findings of the study.

1. The District Education Officers were not fully exposed to in-service training in different areas such as Human Resource Management, Computer Literacy, Personnel Management, Office Management, Financial Management, and Communication Skills.
2. All the DEOs wanted adequate training in educational planning & development.
3. All the District Education Officers and key informants opposed the devolution of powers in education to District Governments.
4. The current political set up is multi layered and devolution of powers to lower-level need orientation sessions due to immature political well at gross route level.
5. The study found that there is lack of awareness regarding policies initiation and formulation which is creating hurdles in implementation of policies at district and directorate levels.
6. The findings further revealed that there is lack of competency in implementation of policies with its true letter and spirit at the district and directorate levels.
7. The study further revealed that districts are facing problems regarding finance and human resources.
8. Politicization and departmental pressure at district levels is also creating hurdles in implementation of policies with its true letter and spirit.
9. The data of the study revealed that district management is unaware of background of the policies and they had problems at their levels.
10. The important gaps between policies and practices of District Education Officers that emerged from the study included:
 - (A) Lack of in-service training in Computer Literacy, Office Management, Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Planning & Development and Communication Skills.
 - (B) Lack of awareness of District Education Officers about the policies.
 - (C) District Education Officers are not a part of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation due to which a gap of policies implementation in letter and spirits is created.

- (D) Lack of empowerment of District Education Officers as they are unable to make decision of posting/transferring and appointments at the districts levels.
- (E) The unwarranted political intervention in the practices of District Education Officers by the District Government is also a big gap in implementation of policies at the districts levels.
- (F) Less resources in both human and finance.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to address the gaps between policies and practices on the basis of findings and discussion drawn from the current research.

- Representatives of stakeholders are recommended to be involved in policy formulation and implementation strategies resulting in bridging the identified gaps of the study.
- Strong coordination and cooperation is recommended among the districts and the directorate to bridge the identified gaps.
- Accountability system should be initiated to eradicate the malpractices of corruption.
- In order to overcome financial constraints, practical measures should be taken for effective planning and utilization of available both human and developmental resources.
- The people involved in the process of formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies should be trained to develop their knowledge and skills in the area of administration, management and coordination.
- The Elementary & Secondary Department should arrange continuing professional development programs both at district and directorate levels.
- The step of decentralization should be strengthened and bridged with district political setup. District political setup should be trained for effective implementation of policies at district levels. It will decrease the delays in implementation measures taken at the central level.

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