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## **Deficient Policy Communication Deficient Outcomes – Capacity Building Policy under Education Reforms in Sindh, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

Education decentralisation in Pakistan started from 2001 through an all-out devolution programme of the government across sectors. To strengthen the decentralisation reform and to build capacity of district educational managers a USAID sponsored programme Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) was launched in 2003. In order to assess the impact of these capacity building initiatives, a research study was carried out during 2005-2006. The research used qualitative design and was carried out in one of the ESRA target districts in Sindh province. The paper argues that improper communication of policy severely compromised the achievement of intended policy objectives. The research noted that most of the management staff at district level had limited and distorted understanding of basic policies. This lack of understanding is caused by poor channels through which policy is communicated and which severely compromises the reform initiative.

*Key words:* Capacity building, policy communication, policy implementation, education reform

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### **Introduction**

Pakistan is located in south Asia, neighbouring India, China, Afghanistan and Iran. It gained independence in 1947 from the British Raj. Constrained by myriad problems at the time of independence, education was seen as a tool for social development as well as for building human capital to achieve economic growth and advancement in science and technology (Ministry of the Interior, Education Division, 1947). The newly liberated country had minimal infrastructure to educate a largely illiterate population. Thus the immediate response of the education policy after independence was to increase access and to ensure provision of schooling to the disadvantaged. Most of the education policies since then have mainly focused achieving universal access to primary education and ensuring equity among gender, classes and geographies. Quality in education was discussed and improvements were suggested but the thrust remained towards

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achieving the quantitative targets. Despite this focus, most policies failed to achieve any of the set targets year after year (Ahsan, 2003; Ali, 2006; Bengali, 1999). Currently, the adult literacy rate of Pakistan is 57.7 (69.5% for male and 45.2% for female) ( Ministry of Finance, 2011). Alarming half of the enrolled students drop out of schools before completing their fifth grade. There are significant gender and geographical disparities in this overall picture, whereby female and rural populations stand disadvantaged. Apart from access, the educational inputs that determine quality of teaching and learning such as the skills of teachers, resource material and learning environment are also scarce ( Ministry of Education, 2006). In the light of these discouraging statistics policy production in Pakistan can best be described as a continuous exercise of target revision policy after policy. The Education Sector Reform Action Plan 2001-2006 was one such attempt to improve the educational profile of Pakistan. Recently in 2009, a new education policy has been approved by the government which is yet to be implemented and it will take some time to see its real effect in the field.

Focusing on the earlier policy of education reform, this paper argues that poor policy communication is one of the major reasons for poor policy outcomes in the light of the findings of a recently conducted research study in Pakistan. The paper briefly describes the context of recent education reform in Pakistan and explains the research study. It then shares the findings related to the arguments of this paper and finally moves to discuss the findings in relation to the broader literature. The discussion further shares suggestions for improving the policy communication.

### *Education Sector Reform in Pakistan*

The change of government in Pakistan in 1999 brought renewed commitment of the government towards improving the state of affairs and introducing broad political and structural reforms. In August 2001, the then President of Pakistan, Musharraf announced the Local Government Plan intended to build democratic institutions and empower people at the local levels. The stated objectives were political devolution, administrative decentralization and redistribution of resources to local governments across sectors (Pakistan, 2001). In line with the decentralized governance system, a comprehensive action plan for Education Sector Reform (ESR) was approved in 2001 which inter alia specifically targeted improving literacy, universal primary education and quality of education at primary level (Ministry of Education, 2002).

In order to support the government's programme the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) financed the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) programme to continue from 2003 till 2007. ESRA supported the government's education reform in the areas of policy and planning, professional development of teachers, governance and partnerships. The programme ran in selected districts of Sindh and

Baluchistan provinces. Research Training Institute (RTI), a USA based agency managed the programme along with a consortium of several national and international partners.

### *The Research*

To achieve the objectives of the ESR and for decentralization of the education system to be effective it was felt necessary for education managers to acquire new knowledge and skills as they were the key players in the newly introduced devolved system. ESRA charted a comprehensive programme to build the capacity of different cadres of educational managers in selected districts of Sindh and Baluchistan with a consortium of partners.

The situation also demanded research for understanding what capacity-building was occurring and what implications there were for the success or otherwise of decentralization. The specific research that this paper is concerned with tried to explore the policies and programmes available for managers' capacity building, the extent to which managers were aware of those opportunities, the extent to which they benefited from those opportunities, and the consequences for the overall reform efforts. The study also tried to contrast the post decentralisation situation with the situation prior to it. The research was carried out during 2005-2006.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the research questions in depth. The qualitative research paradigm was chosen for its perceived advantage in providing rich and in-depth understanding of the processes.

The openness of the qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to the complexity, to respect it in its own rights. (Peshkin & Corrine, 1992, p. 9)

The district in Sindh province which was suggested as the most successful case by the ESRA programme was selected for the research. Detailed one-to-one and focus group interviews were carried out with most managerial staff belonging to different levels of district education bureaucracy. The data was gathered from the following participants during six visits at various times:

The interviews (both individual and focus) were used depending on the group of respondents. Most of the interviews were carried out through focus group discussions, while interviews with more senior members and with those who became available later were conducted in one-to-one basis. The interviews followed a semi-structured pattern which allowed for probes by the researchers in order to get enriched data from the participants. Such interviews produce a range of responses, personal context, alternative views and deep rooted assumptions (Stuart, 2000).

There were 7 focus group interviews with DOEs, Deputy DOEs, ADOs, Supervisors, Learning Coordinators & Resource Persons, Female Heads and Male Heads. Some 4 detailed individual interviews were carried out with key informants that include EDO, DOE-Headquarter, Deputy-DOE Academic & Training and DOE-Literacy. The number of participants belonging to each category of managers was as follows:

Executive District Officer of Education (EDOE)	: 1
District Officer Education (DOE)	: 6
Deputy District Officer Education (DDOE)	: 2
Assistant District Officer (ADO)	: 6
Supervisors, Resource Persons & Learning Coordinators	: 15
Head Teachers of Secondary Schools	: 13

The focus group interviews were carried out by two members of research team, where one moderated the discussion while the other took notes. Most of the individual interviews were also conducted by two-member interview team. Gender balance was maintained in the research team during interviews as much as was possible during the field. One focus group interview with the female head-teachers was carried out by female team members in line with cultural ethos. All the interviews were conducted in Urdu.

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English by the research team and analysis was carried out using NVivo Version 2 software. A semi-structured coding scheme based on interview schedule was developed which was later enhanced as the analysis progressed. A detailed report was prepared based on the research findings (see Ali, Alvi, Babur, & Rizvi, 2006). This paper shares part of the findings that are most suitable to the arguments of this paper.

## Findings

The research revealed that in the selected districts there were many programmes for building capacities of teachers as well as managers. Despite the availability of these programmes, around half of the educational managers did not participate in any formal training programme. Capacity building was mainly seen as formal training and workshops. Those who attended the training programmes did feel improvement at both personal and interpersonal levels. These were visible but fragmented improvements which would not yield system improvement. Therefore the desired outcome of improved educational management at district level and overall system improvement did not happen in the ways envisaged.

This paper argues that poor policy communication was one of the major reasons for poor outcomes as revealed by research. In order to show that, the paper will initially describe the levels of understanding of the research

participants about capacity building policies post decentralisation; and then will explore the consequences of such lack of or distorted understanding of the policy (for detailed report please see Ali et. al., 2006). A theoretical discussion will follow the findings and will lead to suggestions and conclusion.

### **Level of understanding post decentralisation**

The Ministry of Education in Pakistan produced an extensive document outlining the education sector reform along with a number of other relevant policy documents which together represent what Ozga (2000) refers as the official policy. The Government also produced a document explaining the roles and responsibilities of different bureaucratic cadres under the devolved governance system (Pakistan, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003, 2004). In addition, each district was supposed to prepare a district development plan, which should have included provisions for capacity building for managers. The research team tried to explore how far the district and sub-district level educational managers were aware of such policy reforms and their implications for their practice.

The research was specifically interested to find participants' understanding about the policies and plans that concerned their professional development and capacity building. Hence the interview questions asked the participants to share their knowledge about: any formal and informal programmes targeted towards building their capacity; their experience of participating in such programmes and the selection process. The research findings reveal a continuum of understanding among the district educational managers ranging from no awareness to a comprehensive understanding of the reform. Almost half of the managers appeared unaware of the policies and plans, while the rest showed varied levels of understanding, only a few could comprehensively explain the relevant policy provisions within the decentralised system. Findings based on the research questions demonstrated that the knowledge levels of the policy practitioners could be described in the following ways:

- i. Largely unaware
- ii. Generally aware
- iii. Somewhat aware
- iv. Greatly aware

Each of these levels will be considered in turn. It is however difficult to classify the awareness levels according to different managerial levels mainly because of the nature of interview technique (focus group interviews) used in the research. In fact, the original research intention was to assess general awareness levels and not to disaggregate them according to managerial

levels. It is also not possible to quantify the difference between various levels because of the qualitative nature of the research.

### *Largely unaware*

The tables that were generated through NVivo show that around half of the research participants were completely unaware of the existence of any policies or plans for their capacity building. It is even more surprising to note that the person who was responsible for the capacity building of teachers in the district and perhaps lower levels of educational management i.e. D-DOE (Deputy District Officer Education) Academic & Training did not know about any capacity building policy. During his interview he flatly refused that he knew anything about capacity building policy. Below is an excerpt from his interview.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to ask ... that, is there any document in which it is written that the training and capacity building should be organised for DDOEs? Have you read any such document as a deputy DOE?

RESPONDENT: I am [repetitively] telling you that I don't have access to such document yet.

In a group interview DOEs (elementary, colleges and SEMIS (Sindh Educational Management Information System)) unanimously agreed that there was no policy for managers' training, though they accepted that there was some initial training in the beginning of decentralisation, but not any longer. DOE literacy, who was interviewed later also agreed with his colleagues on this point.

The focus group discussion with male head teachers also suggests that they did not know about any capacity building policy or the district development plan. They felt that the planning was not shared with them if ever carried out at all. The supervisors also shared similar lack of awareness.

Many of the managers were unaware of such basic policies as their job descriptions, which meant that they were actually unaware of their work requirements. In absence of such information they either assume what is expected of them and practice accordingly, or just wait for somebody to tell them what to do.

When we fill up the ACR [Annual Confidential Report] forms, we just assume our job description, which includes: to supervise, to check schools, to check the punctuality and the attendance. It's our own effort, but we neither had any meeting and nor we are informed about it [job descriptions].

(Focus Group Interview, DOE - elementary, colleges, SEMIS)

It's been two and half months that I am here [on current position] but yet I am not informed about the total and proper job description. I know whatever is going on, but I think it would be much more in job description.

(Interview DOE - literacy)

### *Generally aware*

In this category we included the participants who showed some vague general understanding about the educational policy, but could not describe in detail the capacity building policy. It is astonishing to note that the highest level of district educational bureaucracy i.e. EDO (Executive District Officer Education) did not have full grasp of the policy. Following is an excerpt from his interview to highlight this observation. Note that such vague responses on policy issues are not expected from an EDO who is the top official in the district educational bureaucracy.

INTERVIEWER: Actually I am trying to find out that, is there any written plan that can tell us who should be trained and when? Any thing in black and white?

RESPONDENT: No, this is not much in black and white. Written plan is that everybody needs training and they must be provided training and if they have already done once then they may require refresher courses, as new changes and new techniques are coming. So according to that every person needs guidance at every stage.

(Interview with EDO)

Likewise, a head teacher shared her general understanding about the district plan, but could not explain any further if there were any specific plans or policies for capacity building. It is important to note that the head teacher was a participating in an extensive training course at the time of interview, so was supposed to be more knowledgeable at least about the decentralisation process, its policies and programmes. The superficial understanding of the head teacher also reflects on the capacity and knowledge of her trainers who might also be partially aware of the overall reform.

### *Somewhat aware*

The participants belonging to this group could share not only a general educational policy overview for the district, but also shared some concrete examples or references from the district plan. Although they could elaborate a particular aspect of policy, they found it difficult to describe the capacity building policies for the district managerial staff. Below is a representative excerpt from a focus group interview to substantiate this observation.



INTERVIEWER: Are there some particular policies regarding managers' training?

RESPONDENT: The Devolution Plan states bylaws for all the managers, rules and information for them. It mentions powers and job descriptions according to the designations. The Devolution Plan is available in all the districts, which clearly states according to designations, what are the jobs of District Education Elementary, what are the jobs of District Education Secondary and Higher Secondary, what are the jobs of DOE Colleges, what are the jobs of DOE Technical and what are the jobs of DOE SEMIS.

(Focus Group Interview, DOE - elementary, colleges, SEMIS)

It is noticeable here that the question was related to managers' training policy while the response was more focused on powers and job descriptions of managers which are not part of the devolution plan rather they appear in their job description manuals. Further discussion with the same participants showed that they could not elaborate on broader policy and only shared understanding of some specific areas concerning broader policy.

#### *Greatly aware*

The fourth kind of participants who were a rarity included the members who had comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the district planning and policies. DOE-headquarter appears to be one amongst this group. He not only shared in detail the overall district education policies, including capacity building policies, but also shared copies of some official district plans. Below is a detailed excerpt of the interview with DOE-headquarter that shows his in-depth understanding and experience of planning.

INTERVIEWER: Have your department [education] prepared any development plan?

RESPONDENT: A plan was prepared in my tenure which was made by me. The district government had asked us to prepare a plan, I was an EDO in Nawabshah and Gothki then, so there I made a plan. [searching files] I also made a plan recently during my EDO tenure [in current district] titled Sindh Devolved Social Services Program.

INTERVIEWER: OK, in which did you also mention some requirements for training as well?

RESPONDENT: It was component wise plan, we received a list from the [federal] government that you have to work on these guidelines and there was also a training program in that. Then after that there were programmes planned on district level which was under Education for All, in which the planning was to be done from 2003 to 2015. After that

there was an education plan from 2003 to 2006 and that was also from the technical side.

Being a senior educational official the DOE-headquarter had been involved in district development planning and also shared some real district plans. Unfortunately these plans – as became evident after interviewing several officials – have not been disseminated widely, nor have they been consulted during implementation.

### **Consequences of lack of awareness**

The poor policy understanding was caused by inadequate dissemination of policies. The people who knew about the policy were those who made personal efforts to find about it or who happen to be part of some planning efforts. From the excerpt of DOE-headquarter's interview in the previous section, it can be assumed that policy formulation is still a centrally governed task and districts were involved in a limited sense. In addition, those who were involved from the districts did not share any information with colleagues, nor were district level plans consulted in the actual working of the district governance. In the following section I will try and explain some of the negative consequences of poor policy communication followed by discussion and suggestions for improvement.

#### *Policy is implicitly assumed*

Among many other objectives, the research also attempted to note down the awareness of managers about policy provisions. It was discovered that due to improper communication, the policy knowledge of managers was based on their routine tasks and guessed assumptions about their role. Even for such crucial policies as job descriptions, the managers had to rely on guesswork. DOEs in a focus group interview observed, “when we fill up the ACR [Annual Confidential Report] forms and when we write the job description, we ourselves assume that our job is: to supervise, to check in schools, and check the punctuality and the attendance. It's our own effort, but we neither had any meeting and nor we are informed about it.”

Many managers implicitly assumed that there must be policies because only then could they implement them, although they may not necessarily get to see the policy. Hence, they also recommended that not only original policies but amendments made to them should be published and be regularly made available to concerned staff for consultation.

### **Street level bureaucrats share sketchy information**

A general worry raised by many of the respondents is the provision of partial and limited information. The most crucial educational officials like the field supervisors who could be considered as street level bureaucrats

(Lipsky, 1980) and who have to carry the policy messages at the grass roots level, were not often provided with a full picture of any policy action. Supervisors shared their ordeal suggesting that only 'high ups' may have detailed information about the training programmes, their reasons and possible benefits, while they were simply asked to provide the logistical support without receiving detailed briefings about the action. Due to this unawareness, the teachers would also have distorted views of any initiative. Below the supervisors share their lack of full information regarding selecting teachers for training programme,

We just did it and they [higher officials] send us the lists for training mentees [junior teachers] only. But they don't give us any detail about full programme, that we will do like this and this, and this would be the benefit of it. May be the EDO or the DOEs know but we don't get this information from ADO (Focus Group Interview with Supervisors).

### **Exploitation of subordinates is possible**

As shared earlier, even such basic policies as job descriptions are not communicated properly, which causes employees' lack of awareness from their original tasks. Due to such lack of information they either assume what is expected of them or just wait for any order from top.

In addition, when people are unaware of their basic job duties the bosses can ask them to do whatever they wish, taking advantage of this lack of awareness. This is the reason why several DOEs are not doing the job they are supposed to do, for example DOE (Academic and Training) is not engaged in professional development training, which is supposed to be his job responsibility, while at the same time, some other officers were given extra responsibilities and power as desired by EDO. Deputy DOE Primary explained,

Actually policies are made but the concerned officers don't communicate and distribute it properly and in time that is why the person don't know about his actual job description (Interview with Deputy DOE primary).

### **Office orders become the de facto policy**

One of the Deputy DOEs pointed towards an interesting fact that original draft of policy often does not reach to lower levels because of communication barriers; however, any amendments in that draft gets communicated. Although he did not elaborate, these amendments might be communicated through official memos and orders and therefore reach all levels (official memos are more commonly known as officer orders). Since office orders are communicated more directly through bureaucratic channels

compared with any policy document and clearly indicate the expected action, they become the *de facto* policy.

A couple of female head teachers explained that they only received notifications of policy changes and that is all they knew about the content of policy. One of them said,

Whatever new changes are introduced, we receive memos [from directorate] for that. We follow whatever is a regular practice but for any amendments we receive letter [from directorate].

### **Scepticism prevail due to closed policy environment**

The focus group discussion with male head teachers revealed that they did not know about any capacity building policy or the district development plan. They felt that the planning was not shared with them and kept as a secret document by administrators above them. The supervisors also agreed about this lack of awareness. Such sceptical sentiments from lower managerial staff create negative attitudes towards policies communicated from higher officials. The scepticism also leads to more cynical attitude of the lower managerial staff, which certainly affects policy implementation.

### **Consultation is restricted**

Elaborating on the issue of lack of sharing, the DOE-headquarter suggests that if there is a wise person in-charge of the education department then s/he consults people for the betterment of education, but if s/he is not an able person then consultation is not carried out. Specifically talking about the consultation process related to capacity building policy, DOE-headquarter shared a recent example in which a training programme was organized for the head teachers and wide consultation took place. The result of this programme was much more satisfactory than the ones which went ahead without consultations.

### **Policy is held to control and exploit**

Why are policies not shared? The following quote from ADOs focus group discussion is very illuminating,

“...after devolution plan there was a system that for instance if a DOE’s post becomes vacant then his/her authorities were shifted to other positions. If we talk about DOE Elementary, his authorities were not known and therefore assigned to a favourite one [close to EDO] and so the actual DOE Elementary doesn’t have authorities at all. So because of these overlapping, we receive orders after orders which inform us of our responsibilities.”

Perhaps, concealing information from subordinates gives more authority to the officials to manipulate and use policy to their advantage. This might be one of the reasons for not sharing information of policy initiatives widely. Citing examples from the experience of the selection process for capacity building programmes, many of the research participants agreed that they were not consulted before being selected for any training programme. The participants were nominated by the higher authorities based on *ad-hoc* criteria, which were also not explicit or widely shared. Hiding information and policy provisions provide advantage to the authorities to select their favourites and use the process for political patronage.

### **Inequitable distribution of opportunities**

Due to barriers of communication and because the policies are mainly communicated through office orders and memos, the understanding of the policy implementers (sub-district managers in our case) get distorted. For example the criteria for selection of candidates for capacity building get distorted due to fragmented understanding of the educational managers. This results in selecting unsuitable people for any training course. The research team was surprised to notice that a good number of managerial staff never attended any currently on-going capacity building courses within the district. At the same time some managers had been to more programmes than needed.

### **Discussion**

I should now return to the initial argument i.e. the poor policy communication was one of the major reasons for poor policy outcomes or in other words a reason for implementation failure. Based on the selected findings of the research as explained earlier, I will try to add and situate my argument within the broader policy implementation literature.

There is disagreement among policy scholars about distinguishing between policy formulation and implementation as distinctive stages. Stephen Ball (1994, 1998) has shown that policy is continuously formulated and reformulated, moving through different contexts. Likewise, Taylor et al. (1997) speaks of complex relationship between policy formulation and implementation which cannot be separated easily. This is quite true and I agree to it, however I will continue to maintain this formulation-implementation distinction in this discussion for analytical purposes.

The Education Sector Reform Action Plan (ESR) introduced by the Pakistani government in 2001 clearly recognises the need for building capacity of educational managers for achieving the objectives of the reform within a decentralised system. In order to fulfil these, the USAID funded ESRA project tried to arrange several opportunities for educational managers, mainly in the form of training courses and workshops of different

lengths. Ideally the managers should be aware and take advantage of these available opportunities and hypothetically this should build their capacity to deal with their changed roles and responsibilities. The research however shows that majority of the educational managers were not aware at all or had poor understanding about the overall reform programme and about the capacity building policies for themselves. This led to many negative consequences, which have been presented in the findings section above. All of these findings clearly indicate that the policy communication was ruptured and distorted and clearly the policy producers had paid little attention to this aspect i.e. policy being communicated to concerned personnel. As a result the policy messages could not get across different managerial layers. Thus the policy was bound to fall short and face failure to achieve any of its objectives, which then in turn affected the broader reform programme.

Extensive research about policy implementation and issues related to it has been carried out mainly in the Western context, which indicate towards myriad implementation challenges and largely agree that implementation is not a straight process following formulation (see for example Majone & Wildavsky, 1978; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1983; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Timperley & Robinson, 1997; Wildavsky, 1979). In the context of Pakistan, Ali (2006) has pointed out a number of reasons responsible for policy implementation. The main reasons include: non-clarity and ambitiousness of the goals; lack of political commitment of the leadership; incompetent governance structures; centralisation of decision making despite decentralisation of structures; shortage of resources; and demands posed by foreign aid. In order to improve the policy implementation McLaughlin (1987) suggests a number of factors that should be considered. She suggests that policy success depends on: local capacity and will; pressures to implement and matching support; and the behaviour of individual agents at the smallest unit of implementation. She further adds that implementation always evolves and adapts to local situations and may trigger new problems. Thus the policies that are adaptable and incremental have a better chance of implementation than the ones that are externally induced. Based on their vast research experience of implementation of different innovations in Pakistan, Warwick, Reimers and McGinn (1992) present the following factors that affect policy implementation in Pakistan: organizational intelligence both initial and ongoing; the process of policy-setting; tasks and technologies; management and organization; field implementers; clients; culture and politics. They argue that

‘implementation is least likely when implementers do not understand what they are expected to do; are hostile to, ambivalent about, or uninterested in the changes; are concerned that a change will bring them

harm; and are worried that an innovation will mean more work with no other compensations' (p. 298).

All of this literature cited above whether from Western context or the Pakistani context assumes that policy always reaches at the level of practice. The research reported in this paper adds to this literature by going one step backwards and suggests that at least in a developing country's context like Pakistan *poor policy communication* is one of the major reasons for the distorted understanding and resultant negative consequences. It is significant, because even if all other factors cited in the implementation literature are taken care of, improper policy communication mechanisms would still pose a fatal threat to policy implementation. If policy does not reach the context of practice or reach only partially, one can hardly hope for its re-interpretation as Ball (1994; 1998) suggests, what to talk of its implementation.

### **Suggestions for Improving Policy Communication**

Having pointed out the dangers of poor policy communication, it is imperative to suggest some of the ways to improve policy communication in the context of Pakistan. Hence the discussion will now turn to explore and consider those ways:

- The policy makers should not assume that implementation would follow automatically from policy articulation and careful planning. In order for policy to affect action it has to be communicated at all levels, especially to the ones at the bottom end – the so-called street level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). In the context of this research, the critical persons were Educational Supervisors and Learning Coordinators at the sub-district level who were in direct contact with schools.
- The policy literature clearly shows that policy producers cannot fully control the re-interpretation of policy in the contexts of practice (Spillane, 1998). Thus producers should allow for such variations, however, in the context of developing countries like Pakistan equity is another major concern. Thus, policy producers while allowing for local variations in policy should ensure minimum standards to be met as a result of any policy innovation. Effective policy communication across various geographies and across several levels is crucially important for making this happen.
- Small steps can enormously improve policy communication especially in the context of Pakistan, and probably in other developing countries too. The original policy documents should be distributed across the educational system at federal, provincial,

district, sub-district and school levels. Copies of policy should be sent directly to different tiers of educational governance, instead of following a cascade design of distribution. The White Paper on education in Pakistan suggests that such crucial policy documents as curriculum guidelines are not available at schools and many layers above it (Aly, 2007). A longitudinal research conducted in Northern Areas of Pakistan (presently called Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan) showed that merely going through the original policy documents could enormously broaden people's perceptions that can be harnessed favourably for policy reforms (Merchant & Ali, 2003). Thus a simple effort to ensure policy's wide distribution will enhance system's knowledge and hopefully bring positive implementation outcomes.

- Simplified version of policy, particularly the desired changes in actions and management routines at each governance tier should be disseminated through abbreviated and simplified leaflets. The message should be targeted to different stakeholders i.e. educational officials, teachers, parents and students. The popular media can be and should be used for this purpose. The electronic media in Pakistan is quite effective because of its penetration and wide spread viewer ship. The national and local newspapers should also be used to popularise the new policy demands. Although there will be danger of 'mediatization' of policy (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004), that is to say that policy may end up becoming more of a political campaign directed towards media's response rather than a useful guideline for managers. This is a danger and we need to be alert not to fall in this trap.
- The policy production cannot be stopped at one occasion, it is a cyclical process which continuously evolves, creates new problems and seeks new solutions. Thus policy communication is also not a one-time event of public relations. It should continue to inform and affect policy evolution.
- A further complexity in the policy context of countries like Pakistan is its dependence on donor agencies for its educational development. In the context of the present research, ESRA is a USAID funded project to strengthen governments' reform efforts in selected districts. The project itself tends to redesign the policy parameters – intentionally or unintentionally – and may not necessarily appear in tandem with originally proposed reform policy by the government of Pakistan. The projects also tend to pick and choose some reforms proposed by the government but leaving others. This appears as a further element that distorts original policy intention and should be taken care of carefully both by the government and the donor agency that funds any aspect of the



reform. A holistic picture of education reform is to be charted, along with further reshaping by any donor-funded project. This holistic picture needs to be further communicated to all levels.

## **Conclusion**

The paper is based on a research carried out in Pakistan to understand the capacity building policy of educational managers in a selected district. The investigation was important as Pakistan had launched an extensive education reform programme since 2001, which was also being supported by the USAID. This paper only reports the findings related to policy communication and argues that poor policy communication leads to poor policy outcomes. In doing so, the paper explains the levels of understanding of the educational managers about the overall reform programme and particularly about their own capacity building policies. Almost half of the research participants were completely unaware of these policies; there were other groups which were partially aware and only a few demonstrated a comprehensive understanding. This lack of understanding results in severe consequences for policy implementation and education reform in Pakistan, which are shared in the paper. The discussion following the findings tries to situate the argument within the broader policy literature and shares some suggestions to improve policy communication in Pakistan and other possibly in other developing countries. The findings of this paper are not only relevant for theoretical purposes, but have significant relevance for international development agencies and the policy makers of other developing countries if they are committed to more effective policy implementation.

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