

ICT AND EIE IN THE EDUCATION POLICY OF 2009; THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AND OTHERWISE

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented shift in global education, where Pakistan faced significant challenge in sustaining learning continuity. This study examines the effectiveness of online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes during the pandemic, within the framework of Pakistan's Education Policy 2009. The policy emphasizes the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a means of improving educational quality and accessibility, particularly in emergencies. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research explores how ICT tools were utilized in the online learning environment and evaluates their impact on students' language acquisition and teachers' instructional methods. Findings indicate that while the policy's vision of ICT inclusion provided a foundational framework, gaps in implementation, digital infrastructure, and teacher training hindered its full potential. The study also highlighted innovative practices adopted by educators to overcome these barriers, as well as the socio-economic disparities that shaped students' learning experiences. This research underscores the need for stronger policy enforcement, equitable resource distribution, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure sustainable educational outcomes in line with Pakistan's national goal.

Keywords: COVID-19, EFL, Education Policy, ICT, capacity-building and capacity-building

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant global effect in 2019. Every aspect of life was impacted, particularly; educational institutes remained closed all over the world. In this crossroad situation, virtual teaching (VT) was devised as an emerging method throughout the globe. Developed countries adopted this approach before developing nations, but Pakistani universities, directed by HEC, began virtual teaching as an experimental way of covering up the loss (Mahyoob, 2020). This research focus on the outcome of the virtual English classes at the university level in KP in the framework of 2009 Education Policy with particular emphasis on chapters 5 and 6 that provided for education in emergency and integrated communication technologies, respectively. This research also explored the existing gap between the notion of ICT in the policy and the actual online EFL classes practiced at the university level during the pandemic.

Since the inception of Pakistan, nine education policies have been presented until 2009 (Majoka & Khan, 2017). The national education policy of 2009 was the last policy that preceded the pandemic of 2019 (please refer to the literature review sub-section for a brief sketch of the policy). Our choice for the policy of 2009 was based on two grounds: firstly, it has provision for the use of ICT for educational purposes and secondly, it provides for the notion of education in an emergency through organized and effective responses, to ensure early restoration of education services. As the promulgation of the policy was followed by Covid-19, therefore, it presents a suitable case to gauge the effectiveness of the policy, especially its ICT and EIE notions.

As the unexpected outburst of the pandemic compelled educators to move to students' doorsteps, many countries faced the challenge of online learning. It was quite crucial to teach the students at a distance by using various tools to communicate with the whole class or with an individual (Mahyoob, 2020). This research examines how EFL online classes at the

university level were conducted; what were the experiences of the students and teachers, and how much the relevant parts of the policy were able to cope with the situation.

Statement of the problem

In 2019, an emergency, COVID-19, appeared on the horizon. We had an education policy (2009) in place, which had provisions to deal with such emergencies in the shape of EIE and ICT. Universities and their Departments of English responded by opting for virtual (online) EFL education. The real stakeholders of the University education, i.e., students and teachers, were part of the response. As such a study was needed that uncover the factors that affect the effectiveness of online education, the commitment and implementation gap of online classes, and the challenges it poses for teachers and students.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the effectiveness of online classes in the framework of ICT and EIE in the education policy 2009.
- To highlight the strength and weaknesses of 2009 education policy regarding ICT and EIE.
- To find out the perception of EFL teachers about the intended policy and its implementation in English classes.
- To investigate the perception of EFL students about online classes at the University level.
- To give suggestions and recommendations regarding the policy.

Research Questions

- What are the key points relating to ICT and EIE in 2009 policy?
- What perception do the EFL teachers have about the policy and its implementation for English online classes?
- What perception do students have of online classes at the University level?
- What are the key factors that affect the effectiveness of online classes during the pandemic?

Significance of the study

This was empirical research, used both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the effectiveness of the 2009 policy regarding online EFL classes at the university level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was important in several respects. It will provide information to policymakers for future planning and innovation. It is hoped that this research will help to pinpoint/highlight the prevailing challenges that EFL teachers and students at the university level have been facing. It will assist future researchers in the field of online English classes in times of crisis /emergency. Along with that, it will help the teachers and students on how to use ICT to enhance educational efficiency in non-emergency situations.

Literature Review

Since many researchers had worked on the proposed policy's strengths and weaknesses, there was an obvious need for research to determine the relationship between the commitment and implementation gap of ICT and EIE in the intended policy. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, the educational sector was forced to move online. In that scenario, online classes were taken in Pakistan at university level and 2009 educational policy was the only enlightening force for teachers and students, as for the first time in Pakistan, it mentioned the provision of ICT and EIE for educational purposes, several methodologies, settings, levels,

and viewpoints have been used to examine education policy, however, none of them talk about the impact of 2009 policy on online classes during COVID-19, order to highlight the commitment and implementation gap.

According to Saeed (2015, p.30), a policy statement is a written structure that helps multiple groups of participants organize their knowledge of the desired results for the project or program. Faheem Khushik et al. stated (2018, p.9), that the process of establishing educational policy in Pakistan started with the First Pakistan Educational Conference in 1947, which emphasized the importance of education for the newly established nation. Considering hurdles such as migration, refugees, resettlement, poor infrastructure, security, and violence, high-level conferences were convened to discuss educational issues.

Pakistan's advancement in education programs may be classified into four phases. The first spans from the 1947 Pakistan Education Conference to 1970, the second from 1970 to 1990, the third from 1990 to 2009, and the final one is post-2009. These time frames are distinguished by the many policy agendas developed to attain their specific goals. From the policy papers of 1947 until 2009, Pakistan's national education policy, substance, and context appear to have similar aims and issues. However, the periods may be separated by their respective methods. Initially, policies were established using an "Agenda approach," but since 2009, a "policy sectoral approach" has been implemented. In all of these developments, the Pakistani government made guarantees, but not all of them have been fulfilled (Aamir Saeed, 2015.p. 293).

Thus, total nine educational policies have been proclaimed, culminating in the release of the National Education Policy (NEP-2009) in 2009. The fundamental principles were agreed upon during the 13th Meeting of Inter-Provincial Education Ministers (IPEM), held on May 9, 2008 in Islamabad. The meeting decided and instructed that each province/area develop an action plan that would be submitted at the federal level. Choosing stock of the existing situation is a necessary component of every policy planning activity to identify chances for policy action (Ahsan, 2003, pp. 259–280).

A brief sketch of 2009 policy

1. According to the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2009), the National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 is one of a series of the education policies that have been there since the inception of the country in 1947. As per the available record, the review process to frame the NEP started in 2005, and it culminated the production of the White Paper in 2007. Subsequently, a Policy Paper was developed based on the White Paper. The delay in finalizing the text can be attributed to a variety of circumstances, including the consultation process and political situation during the period.

2. The start of the review in 2005 by the MoE was due to two (2) reasons: the policy was not yielding the expected educational outcomes, and performance was still lacking in many important areas, such as access, quality, and equity regarding educational opportunities; and second, global issues like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Also, Education for All (EFA) under the Dakar Framework of Action required a commitment to provide standard education to all.

3. There are nine chapters in the document. Chapter 1 discusses the main issues, pinpoints the two main reasons for the performance gaps (the implementation gap and the commitment gap), and suggests a course of action. The methods for closing the Implementation Gap (ensuring good governance) and Commitment Gap (system values, priorities, and resources) are described in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. The provisions of Islamic education and the reformation of society based on human and Islamic principles are presented in Chapter 4. Sub-sector-level changes and policy initiatives are outlined in chapters 5 through chapter 8. A general framework for carrying out the action plan of this policy paper is proposed in Chapter

9. The current status of the education sector is outlined in Annex I. Data from similar countries has been compared to the available indicators.

4. It is pertinent to mention here that this policy has many topics that had already been presented in one form or another but the problems persisted till that time. The report does, however, acknowledge two shortcomings of earlier documents/ policies. reforms in governance system and a roadmap for execution. If these shortcomings are addressed, the outcomes of the current policy could be changed.

5. Regarding governance, the policy addresses the problem of inter-tier obligations, where it is still unclear what the federal, provincial, and district governments' various roles and responsibilities are. After the "Devolution Plan," confusion increased, particularly at the provincial and district levels, mostly because there was no clear strategy articulation to back it up. The frequent division of ministries for administration of different education sub-sectors and division of a sub-sector is the other issue that has been recognized for governance reforms. Additionally, management and planning issues have been explored and suggestions have been made.

6. The Policy document has a chapter on implementation that explains the framework for implementation. The framework acknowledges the federating units' crucial role in carrying out education. To guarantee sectoral and geographic homogeneity in the accomplishment of educational goals nationwide, the Federal Ministry of Education will play the role of coordinator and facilitator. The National Education Policy is now a genuinely "national" policy rather than a federal formula, marking a change. It has been suggested that the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers' Conference (IPEMC), which includes representatives from all federating units, serve as the highest authority to monitor the nation's educational advancement. The Federal-Provincial partnership continues to be the key to success in this regard.

Materials and Methods

This study was quantitative correlational and descriptive in nature. A correlational study explores the connections or correlations between two or more variables without intervening or manipulating any variables (Asamoah, 2014; Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Therefore, the researcher adopted quantitative data analysis mechanisms to present the results quantitatively following statistical models. For this purpose, the researchers adopted two separate questionnaires for both teachers and students with five Likert scales and were distributed among the teachers and students for data collection. Further, the study was delimited to teachers of English departments, and BS students of the same department in public sector Universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The data for the present study was collected personally by the researcher in an organized method. Before collecting the data, the researcher visited the chairman of all the concerned Universities to take permission for data collection. For present study the researcher adopted Schraw and Dennis (1994) tool in which two separate questionnaires were developed for both teachers and students and which were based on five-point Likert type scale for the collection of concerned data from teachers and students at university level.

Statistical technique used for data analysis and tabulation.

To find out ONLINE EFL CLASSES awareness of university teachers (male and female), to investigate EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE EFL CLASSES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC among university students (male and female), the researcher employed some statistical techniques such as percentage, frequencies, mean scores and chi square formula for the analysis and tabulation of collected data.

Findings

The following two tables gives, in a nutshell, the results that were obtained from our study.

Table No1

Table at a Glance

Opinion in general of academicians about Effectiveness of Online EFL Classes during the COVID-19 Pandemic

T.No	Statement	χ^2
4	Opinion about facilitation with computer	7
5	Opinion about communicating in writing at online EFL classes	8
6	Opinion about access to Internet	5
7	Opinion about reading and speaking in online EFL classes	3.4
8	Opinion about installation of various needed software for online classes	7
9	Opinion about self-motivation and skills for online classes	3.2
10	Opinion about dedicating approximately 10 hours per week	20.6
11	Opinion about audible sound	6.4
12	Satisfaction with the online assessment	2
13	Opinion about training for online classes	1.8
14	Opinion about commute to the university for classes	2.2
15	Opinion about satisfaction with method of online teaching	11.6
16	Opinion about regular personal interaction with learners rather than in an online class	26.4
17	Opinion about online courses	4.2
18	Opinion about asking questions online mode	4.4
19	Opinion about taking EFL exams online	1.4

20	Opinion about online teaching of English as more motivating than a regular face to face teaching	14.4
21	Opinion about taking classes in emergency situation	14.2
22	Opinion about EFL courses can be taught online without difficulty	4.2
23	Opinion about advanced technologies	21.8
24	Opinion about high-quality teaching	22.6
25	Opinion about policy regarding online classes	7
26	Opinion about the policy makers work with local governments to develop initiatives regarding ICT	22.2
27	Opinion about training provided regarding ICT and EIE by the Government	1.8
28	Opinion about the policy makers to have partnership with other institutions	28.6
29	Opinion about the policymakers to collect research information that they use to support ICT	31
30	Opinion about considering a few key factors in improving policy regarding ICT and EIE	22.6
31	Opinion about improvements should be made to the policy development and implementation process	19.4
32	Opinion about considering Pakistan's education policy	14.2
33	Opinion about considering that your policy supports the overall Government Agenda	18.8
	Total of $\chi^2 =$	357.4

	Total of χ^2 / No of Items = Average χ^2	11.91
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As it can be seen from table 4-33 that the average χ^2 (11.91) is higher when compared to the table value of χ^2 (9.488) at P (0.05); as such, the opinion is different among the academicians.

Table No2

Table at a Glance

Opinion in general of the students about Effectiveness of Online EFL Classes during the COVID-19 Pandemic

T.No	Statement	χ^2
37	Opinion about feeling comfortable by using the computer for online classes	15.12
38	Opinion about easy access for a regular class to attend it on time	11.76
39	Opinion about access easily to the Internet without interruption from class	19.36
40	Opinion about enjoying reading and having good reading skills for online EFL classes	6.4
41	Opinion about comfortable communicating in writing regarding online EFL classes	8.64
42	Opinion about comfortable and quick with keyboarding regarding online classes	13.36
43	Opinion about dedicating approximately 10 hours/ week/ course (day or night (any time)) to one's online classes	26.16
44	Opinion about feeling at home about first downloading and then installing software on your computer as suggested by the teacher	13.2
45	Opinion about self-motivation and the ability to work independently for online classes in this emergency situation	8.72
46	Opinion about procrastination when it comes to classwork and deadlines in this emergency situation	3.2
47	Opinion about satisfaction with the method of online teaching	5.44
48	Opinion about comfort ability with a computer if one has to spend several hours in a row to carry out our online assignments	4.64
49	Opinion about clear and audible sound during the lecture	7.2
50	Opinion about familiarity with E-mail use and a web browsing for our online classes	8.72
51	Opinion about satisfaction with online marking	1.36

52	Opinion about if never actually meet instructor or classmates face to face in this emergency situation	8.08
53	Opinion about given a chance to ask questions in case of any confusion	9.2
54	Opinion about not having to commute to the university for your classes	13.44
55	Opinion about the answer to the confusing question	8
56	Opinion about having a class where instructors provide constant feedback as compared to an online class	13.36
57	Opinions about online courses are possible but learning EFL would be difficult	9.36
58	Opinion about asking questions when having a problem	9.96
59	Opinion about passing an EFL course online with a better result	9.36
60	Opinion about having the freedom to attend class at times and places of your choice instead of attending them at some fixed times and places	8.72
61	Opinion about online teaching of English as more motivating than a regular face to face teaching	16.88
62	Opinion about attending classes within the country and outside the country in this emergency situation	12.4
63	Opinion about EFL courses can be taught online without difficulty	4
64	Opinion about advanced technologies that may necessitate the use of different approaches for learning your subject	12.56
65	Opinion about quality learning is also possible in the absence of physical interaction regarding your subject in an emergency situation	13.04
66	Opinion about recommending EFL online classes to a friend	5.44
	Total of $\chi^2 =$	307.08

	Total of χ^2 / No of Items = Average χ^2	10.24
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Table no: 37-66 shows that the average χ^2 (10.24) is higher when compared with the table value of χ^2 (9.488) at P (0.05); as such, the opinion is different among the students.

Discussion and Conclusion

Data analysis and findings proved a base for conclusion which is as under:

The effectiveness of online EFL classes during the COVID-19 pandemic was examined in this study, with a focus on the integration of ICT and EIE in Pakistan's 2009 Education Policy. The pandemic has caused unique challenges to the education sector, requiring a rapid shift towards online learning. However, during the study, it was discovered that the academicians as well as EFL learners were not satisfied at all as they were not enjoying reading and speaking in online classes as the audibility of sound was quite poor due to the weak signal or sometime no signal at all. Next, the focuses of varied EFL classes revealed that they were not aided with a computer that would smooth the progress of online classes and might be the biggest cause of their demotivation and dissatisfaction with the method of online teaching. However, they agreed with not having to commute to the University for Classes, giving assignment, taking EFL exams online with much better results along with taking classes with people both inside and outside the country.

On the other hand, EFL students were mostly in disagreement with the ideas such as feeling comfortable by using computer and accessing easily, regularly to attend the class without interruption and feeling comfortable with downloading and installing software and to work independently for online classes due to lack of former preparation or IT training which was needed before the advent of the pandemic. Though they found agreed with the idea of feeling satisfaction with online marking, online assignment, and taking EFL exams online along with the idea that online courses are suitable but learning EFL would be difficult cause face to face continues practice with the correct pronunciation that may not be properly possible through online learning.

Recommendations

In the light of findings and conclusion, a few recommendations are in order:

Since many countries have moved their educational operations online to manage their systems, online learning has proven to be a useful tool for skill development throughout the pandemic. However, there are still concerns that online learning might not be a good replacement for face-to-face education, especially, since infrastructure (hardware and software) is difficult to obtain and both teachers and students are not adequately prepared for the particular requirements of online teaching and learning.

The results show that there is a significant gap between commitment and implementation of ICT and EIE in the 2009 education policy. To fill this gap, it is advised that academics, students, and other university units should be included in any evaluation strategy, at least the university level. The second strain is that teachers have not provided with enough direction or guideline, provides less or nearly no training and support for effective integrated ICT and EIE online classes. Additionally, investment in developing for the needed facilities to support online learning, such as stable connectivity to the internet and provision of various digital devices and finally, designing curricula that incorporate ICT and EIE in manner that improves student educational outcomes and consequences. Most important, policies should be implemented not only in words but also in spirit, continuous monitoring and evaluation

of the established mechanisms of implementation, as well as evaluating the efficiency of ICT and EIE, might be realized and actualized for online learning programs as well as to bridge the gap between implementation and commitment. Further, Exploring and investigating the newest technologies, like AI, GPT-4, even the latest deep-seek and Jasper, should be utilized to improve the overall texture of online learning and to up-grade the education system of Pakistan as a whole.

Consequently, few applications and platforms, software's, used for online academics are susceptible to security threats, especially for students, suggesting that the government and institutions should take preventative measures to ensure the safety of teachers and students. This is especially relevant to student's mental and emotional health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly, at the university level, where the panel must be emotionally advised and directed during such an emergency happening in the future.

Further, Policymakers can work to create more effective and accessible online learning environments that assist Pakistani students' language learning needs, as well as the critical need of the strong application and reinforcement of the various policies in time, impartial resource distribution, and capacity-building initiatives should be taken in order to ensure long-term educational outcomes coherent to Pakistan's nationalized goal.

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