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Evaluating the Internal Policy System of Pakistani Schools in Saudi Arabia: Challenges, Gaps, and Recommendations for Educational Improvement

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Abstract

This study evaluates the internal policy system of Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia, identifying key challenges, gaps, and recommendations for educational improvement. With over 2.5 million Pakistani expatriates in Saudi Arabia, the education of their children is a critical concern. The research focuses on the lack of standardized internal policies, inconsistent implementation, and the need for a robust administrative framework to enhance educational quality. Through a qualitative, descriptive approach, the study examines policies related to school governance, curriculum, teacher training, student assessment, and safety protocols. Data was collected from nine Pakistani schools using surveys, interviews, and checklists. Findings reveal that while 90% of schools have vision and mission policies, only 60% implement them effectively. Similarly, 85% of schools have leave policies, but 25% lack proper implementation. Teacher training policies are present in only 30% of schools, with 35% not implemented. Student counseling policies are available in 50% of schools, but 35% remain unimplemented. The study highlights the absence of uniform guidelines for admissions, fee structures, and safety measures, which adversely affect the quality of education. Recommendations include revising internal policies, involving stakeholders in policy formulation, and ensuring consistent implementation through structured

protocols. The study also emphasizes the need for professional development programs, improved safety measures, and the integration of technology in school administration. By addressing these issues, Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia can provide a more effective and equitable educational experience for students.

Keywords: Pakistani schools, internal policies, educational improvement, Saudi Arabia, policy implementation, school governance.

Introduction

There are 2.5 million Pakistani expatriates residing in Saudi Arabia. The nature of their job is different but the objectives and aims are same to provide remittance to their homeland and to educate their children. They are worried about their children's education. They want international education to be integrated into core subjects to promote basic skills of their children. They need more variety in the curriculum and well-equipped staff to serve their kids.

It is fact that parents, teachers and students are stake holders in the process of education. We need to provide safe and secure learning environment to the students and staff. Expatriates face problems in higher education for their children. The expatriate has either to stay or leave for their countries and in both cases, they are affected negatively. It is therefore, required that Pakistan International Schools in Saudi Arabia must provide a school system having enriched instructional programs to provide quality education, having a cadre of classified personnel for better school administration and developed shared decision-making attributes which require a sound and practical integrated policy.

The researcher's main purpose was to ensure the existing policies to bring about improvements and suggest policies which will help to improve the school system for Pakistani and other international communities residing in the Kingdom. Almost 4 decades ago, there was Abba committee composing of parents from the school. Then with the passage of time it converted into BOG and Now it is SMC. But unfortunately at the present moment, it could not provide a uniform internal

policies system to run Pakistani Schools in the Kingdom. Schools are established for preservation and promotion of ideological, social, cultural, economic and political ideals of the society. There are 46 Pakistani Schools in Gulf region while more than 09 Pakistani Schools are working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There are more than 18,500 students of Pakistani expatriate who are studying in these schools. They have to play a pivotal role in the development of Pakistani state and nation. To run these educational Institutions, it is necessary to prepare internal regulations and policies.

As an Educationist, the researcher has rich experience of 25 years as a teacher, administrator, sectional head, coordinator, senior vice Principal, Principal, Vice Chairman and Chairman of School Management Council. So, the researcher has tried to study the policies in the context of our own situation and to provide suggestions. There was a dire need of internal regulations for Pakistani schools which may define the procedures for the administration and management of the institutions.

Research Objectives

Following were the main objectives of the study

1.   To study the internal Policies system of Pakistani schools in Saudi Arab.

2.   To ensure what policies exist?

3.   To find out the areas where policies are missing?

4.   To identify the areas where policies are required to be developed.

5.   Existing policies and their implementation levels.

6.   To provide recommendations to improve the internal policies system and regular follow up for implementation.

7.   How to ensure financial management.

Hypotheses

H₁: Lack of a standardized internal policy system negatively impacts the organizational structure and administrative efficiency of Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia.

H₂: The absence of uniformity in internal policies, including fee structure, admission criteria, and student promotion policies, creates inconsistencies in educational management and student progression in Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia operate under established educational frameworks designed to ensure effective school administration and policy implementation. Education is considered an effective agent of change; thus, educational institutions play a pivotal role in societal transformation. Effective management of education enhances its impact. School administration encompasses direction, control, and management of educational affairs, serving as the dynamic side of educational philosophy. The administration of an institution plays a vital role in establishing an effective system (Aijaz et., al, 2024).

Education combines human growth and social development with cultural legacy, necessitating a strong foundation for holistic learner development (El-Moslimany, 2018). The primary aim of education is to mold individual behavior, which formal education systems facilitate through structured schooling and trained educators. Philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, John Locke, Rousseau, Mozi, and Confucius extensively discussed education's role in shaping societies. In contemporary times, theorists like John Dewey, George Counts, and Mortimer Adler have proposed systematic frameworks explaining schooling's purpose and the need for structured administration in educational institutions (Khattak, 2012). These scholars emphasize that schools must prepare students for active social participation.

Educational administration plays a crucial role in enhancing institutional efficiency by integrating human resources, material resources, and strategic policies (Barnawi & S., 2017). The regulatory oversight provided by the Embassy of Pakistan and the Saudi Ministry of Education has established guidelines for governance, contributing to the structured functioning of these institutions (Embassy of Pakistan, 2007). The "Charter for Pakistani Schools" and the "Organizing Rules for Foreign Schools" define operational standards, enabling these schools to serve a diverse student population. The School Management Council (SMC) oversees administrative affairs, ensuring alignment with prescribed guidelines (Cheng, 2013). Additionally, Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia provide a structured education system across primary, middle, and secondary levels, fostering academic continuity and progression.

The administration of Pakistani schools follows well-established principles, including democratic leadership, coordination, and strategic planning, ensuring a balanced approach to governance. School leadership integrates community-based management models, emphasizing accountability and stakeholder engagement to improve institutional effectiveness. These institutions have demonstrated success in implementing essential administrative functions such as planning, organizing, staffing, and budgeting, creating an environment conducive to academic excellence (McMath, 2016). The presence of experienced faculty, standardized curricula, and adherence to educational policies contribute to the overall academic development of students. Furthermore, schools have adopted digital learning tools and structured teacher training programs to enhance instructional quality and assessment methodologies (Parkhurst, 2014).

Alotaibi (2023) emphasize that weak institutional frameworks contribute to unclear role definitions among school administrators, leading to policy misalignment.

Studies indicate that outdated teaching methodologies and inadequate professional development for teachers further hinder the effectiveness of curriculum delivery (Westbrook., 2013)

Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia follow a dual regulatory structure: compliance with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education (MoE) regulations while adhering to Pakistan's educational framework (Oxford Business Group, 2024).According to the Ministry of Education (2023), Saudi Arabia has implemented reforms under Vision 2030 to enhance educational quality. However, private international schools, including Pakistani institutions, face difficulties in aligning with these reforms due to limited local teacher availability and outdated curriculum frameworks.

One of the key challenges for Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia is the curriculum gap. The World Bank (2023) highlights that many Pakistani schools lack updated curricula that integrate modern pedagogical techniques. Additionally, limited digital infrastructure affects the ability to implement e-learning methods, which became crucial after the COVID-19 pandemic. Another challenge is the qualification of teachers. The Trade.gov (2024) report suggests that many private school teachers lack professional development opportunities due to policy constraints. Saudi Arabia's Saudiization policy mandates a minimum percentage of Saudi teachers in private institutions, further limiting the hiring of trained Pakistani educators.

Despite these strengths, there remains a need to evaluate the internal policy system of Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia, as certain challenges and gaps persist. The absence of uniform policies regarding school hierarchy, admission criteria, student promotion policies, and financial structures creates inconsistencies in educational management (Hermosa & Callo, 2022). Policy adaptation to both Pakistani and Saudi educational requirements requires further refinement to improve institutional effectiveness (Warson & Khan, 2010).

Comparative analysis with other international schools reveals that Pakistani schools can benefit from enhanced teacher development programs, standardized student assessment frameworks, and increased parental involvement in governance (Taylor, 2009). Addressing these gaps through policy improvements will contribute to a more cohesive and efficient administrative system. Therefore, this study aims to critically evaluate the internal policy system of Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia, identifying challenges and gaps while proposing strategic recommendations to enhance educational administration and institutional effectiveness.

Research Method and Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, non-experimental, survey-based approach to evaluate the internal policy system of Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia. The research aims to identify gaps, challenges, and areas for improvement in school policies related to administration, governance, teacher training, student assessment, and overall school management.

Population

The study focuses on Pakistani schools operating in Saudi Arabia, which primarily serve the children of Pakistani expatriates. These schools follow the Pakistani national curriculum while also complying with Saudi educational regulations. There are more than nine Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia, catering to approximately 18,500 students from expatriate families. The key informants for this study include school principals, administrators, and policy stakeholders.

Sampling Technique

A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from different geographical locations and administrative structures. This approach was chosen to:

- Capture diverse school structures and management styles.
- Reflect variations in policy implementation across different regions.

- Ensure representation from both large and small schools.

The schools were divided into strata based on location, and then a random selection was made from each stratum to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Sample Size

The study selected nine Pakistani schools located in major cities, including:

1. Riyadh

2. Al Khobar

3. Jeddah

4. Makkah

5. Taif

These schools were chosen due to their administrative significance and the diversity in their operational structures. The study engaged school principals, administrators, teachers, and School Management Council members as key respondents.

Data Collection Methods

The study employed multiple data collection methods to obtain comprehensive insights into school policies and administrative effectiveness. A primary tool used for structured data collection was a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale, which allowed respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement on various policy-related statements.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to assess key aspects of the internal policy system in Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia, covering:

- School Operations (efficiency, decision-making processes, governance structures).

- Recruitment and Staffing Policies (hiring procedures, job satisfaction, faculty retention).

- Teacher Training Programs (professional development, effectiveness of training, alignment with curriculum needs).

- Student Assessment and Evaluation (fairness of assessment policies, feedback mechanisms, student progression criteria).

- Regulatory Compliance (adherence to Pakistani and Saudi educational policies, policy implementation gaps).

Respondents were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale, with the following options:

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neutral

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

The questionnaire ensured quantifiable data collection, allowing for statistical analysis to identify trends, strengths, and gaps in school policy implementation.

Other Data Collection Methods

To supplement the questionnaire data and provide a more holistic evaluation, the study also employed:

- Checklists to assess compliance with existing policies.

- Structured interviews with administrators to evaluate policy frameworks.

- Unstructured interviews with teachers, staff, and parents to gain qualitative insights.

- Telephonic and email communication for follow-ups and document collection.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the study aimed to provide a well-rounded analysis of the internal policy system in Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia, identifying key challenges and formulating strategic recommendations for improvement.

Table 1: Policies for School Vision, counseling Mission and Advisory Board

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Available	Some what	Not available	Total	Implemented	Some what	Not Implanted	Total
Vision and mission	90%	10	00	100	60	25	15	100
Students conselling	50%	20	30	100	40	25	35	100
Advisory Board	65%	15	20	100	55	20	25	100

Table 1 Shows that 90% schools have policies for Vision and Mission and 10% Schools have policies upto some extent for the vision and mission. 60%policies are Implemented while 15% Polices are not Implemented. 25% policies are partially implemented. 50% School have polices for students counseling to improve their personality grooming while 30% Schools have no Policies for the same. 20% Schools have policies for Students counseling Upto some extent. Regarding Implementation, 40% are implemented, While 35% are not implemented and 25% policies are implemented upto some extent. If we try to ensure the Implementation, Then we will produce better results and 65% Schools have Advisory Board Policy while 20% School have no the Same.55% policies are Implemented and 25% are not. While 20% policies are implemented partially.

Table 2:   Recruitment and Selection Policy

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Available	Some what	Not available	Total	Implemented	Some what	Not Implemented	Total
Recruitment policy	90	10	00	100	75	25	00	100
Selection policy	95	05	00	100	75	20	05	100
Transfer policy	00	00	100	100				
Rehiring policy	00	30	70	100	15	10	75	100

Table 2 shows that 90 % schools have recruitment policy while 10 % Schools have these policy up to some extent. 75 % policies are implemented while 25 % policies are implemented partially, transfer policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia all schools have no transfer policy. 70% school have no rehiring policy while 30 % school have the same, up to some extent. The problem is the same here that 75% policies are not implemented and only 15 % are implemented and 10 % implemented partially.

Table 3: Performance and Compensation Policy

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Available	Some what	Not available	Total	Implemented	Some what	Not Implemented	Total
Performance Appraisal Policy	70 %	20 %	10 %	100	60%	25%	15%	100
Leave Policy	85	15	00	100	70	15	25	100
Over time Policy	55	15	30	100	60	15	25	100
Incentive Policy	60	20	20	100	50	10	40	100
Medical Policy	80	20	00	100	80	20	00	100
Travelling Policy	70	30	00	100	80	10	10	100
Best Performance Award Policy	80	10	10	100	30	20	50	100
Residence/ Accommodation Policy	75	15	10	100	60	25	15	100

The analysis shows that most schools have key policies, but implementation varies. Performance appraisal policies exist in 70% of schools, with 60% fully implemented. Leave policies are in 85% of schools, with 70% implemented.

Overtime and incentive policies are found in 55% and 60% of schools, yet implementation remains a challenge. Medical policies are widely available (80%), while best performance award policies are in 80% of schools. Residence policies exist in 75% of schools, but implementation is limited. Policy development and enforcement remain key issues.

Table 4: Training and Development Policy

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Training Need Assessment policy	40	30	15	100	30	10	60	100
Professional Development policy	30	20	30	100	40	25	35	100

The analysis of Table 4 highlights the significance of training need assessment and professional development policies in schools. Training need assessment policies exist in 40% of schools, but only 30% are fully implemented, while 60% remain unimplemented and 10% are partially implemented. Since teaching and learning are dynamic processes, continuous professional development is essential. However, only 30% of schools have a professional development policy, with 40% fully implemented, 35% not implemented, and 25% partially implemented. The lack of complete implementation in both areas indicates the need for stronger policy enforcement to enhance the teaching-learning process and all schools need refresher courses.

Table 5: Registration and Admission Policy

| | Availability in %age | | | | Implementation in %age | | | |
Areas	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Admission Policy	80	20	00	100	50	25	25	100
Fee Policy	85	15	00	100	60	15	25	100
Fee Refunding Policy	70	20	10	100	75	15	10	100

Table 5 highlights the registration and admission policies in schools. Admission policies exist in 80% of schools, with 50% fully implemented, while 25% are not and 25% are partially implemented. Fee policies are present in 85% of schools, but only 60% are fully implemented, while 25% remain unimplemented and 15% are partially executed. Similarly, dues refund policies exist in 70% of schools, with 75% fully implemented, 10% unimplemented, and 15% partially enforced. While these policies are in place, inconsistent implementation remains a challenge.

Table 6: Teaching and Learning Policy

| | Availability in %age | | | | Implementation in %age | | | |
Areas	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Subject Policy	75	20	10	100	65	20	15	100
Instructional Policy	70	20	10	100	65	00	35	100
Homework/Assignment Policy	90	10	00	100	70	25	05	100

Table 6 highlights the relevant subject allotment, instructional, programs, and homework/Assignment policies in schools. Relevant subject allotment and workload policies exist in 75% of schools, with 65% implemented, while 15% remain unimplemented and 20% are partially executed. Instructional policies are present in 70% of schools, with 65% implementation, but 35% are not enforced.

Homework policies are found in 90% of schools, with 70% implementation, while 05% are not enforced and 25% are partially implemented. Inconsistent policy enforcement remains a key issue.

Table 7: Assessment And Evaluation policy

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Examination Policy	85	15	00	100	70	20	10	100
Test Construction Policy	60	20	20	100	55	25	20	100
Test Administration Policy	70	20	10	100	60	30	10	100
Marking and Promotion Policy	90	10	00	100	70	20	10	100

Table 7 highlights the examination, test construction, assessment, and promotion policies in schools. Examination policies exist in 85% of schools, with 70% implemented, while 10% remain unimplemented and 20% are partially applied. Test construction policies are present in 60% of schools, but 20% lack them, and 25% of the existing policies are only partially implemented. Test administration policies exist in only 70% of schools, with 10% not implemented, posing a challenge in effective evaluation. Marking and promotion policies are found in 90% of schools, with 70% implementation, though 10% remain unimplemented and 20% are partially enforced. Weak policy implementation remains a major issue for educational institutions.

Table 8: Curricular And Co-Curricular – Activities Policies

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Curricular policy	65	25	10	100	65	20	15	100
Co-Curricular Policy	55	30	15	100	60	30	10	100
Function and Exhibition policy	70	20	10	100	65	25	05	100

Table 8 highlights the curricular and co-curricular activity policies in schools. Curriculum policies exist in 65% of schools, with 65% implemented, while 15% remain unimplemented and 20% are partially applied. Co-curricular policies are present in 55% of schools, but 30% are incomplete, with 60% fully implemented, 10% unimplemented, and 30% partially enforced. Functions and exhibition policies exist in 70% of schools, with 65% implementation, though 5% remain unimplemented. Inconsistent policy implementation remains a key issue.

Table 9: School Management Policies

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Record keeping and disposal policy	90	05	00	100	80	10	10	100
Work load policy	80	10	10	100	70	10	20	100

Table 9 highlights management, workload distribution in schools. Management policies exist in 90% of schools, with 80% fully implemented, while 10% remain unimplemented. Workload distribution policies are present in 80% of schools, but 10% lack implementation.

Table 10: School Transportation, Health and Safeties Policies.

Areas	Availability in %age				Implementation in %age			
	Yes	Some what	No	Total	Yes	Some what	No	Total
Pick and drop Policy	70	15	15	100	65	25	10	100
Medical Emergency Policy	85	15	00	100	75	25	00	100

Table 10 highlights school transportation, health, and safety policies. Pick-and-drop policies exist in 70% of schools, with 65% implemented, while 10% remain unimplemented and 25% partially enforced. Medical emergency policies are present in 85% of schools, with 75% implementation and 25% partial execution. Lacking of some safety policies and their implementation indicting a critical gap in school safety measures.

Conclusion

Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia play a vital role in providing quality education to expatriate students, operating under well-established administrative frameworks that ensure structured learning environments. The study acknowledges the positive aspects of these institutions, including their commitment to curriculum implementation, teacher development, and student welfare. Many schools have functional administrative policies in place, fostering an organized educational system. However, variations in policy enforcement particularly in teacher training, assessment methods, employment regulations, and school management highlight areas for improvement. Standardizing guidelines for admissions, fee structures, and safety protocols would enhance overall efficiency and promote consistency across all Pakistani schools in the Kingdom. Strengthening policy enforcement, increasing stakeholder involvement, and improving administrative oversight will

further optimize school governance, ensuring sustainable educational growth and an enriched learning experience for students.

Practical Implications

● Establishing uniform internal policies for school administration, governance, teacher recruitment, and student assessment to ensure consistency across all Pakistani schools in Saudi Arabia.

● Implementing regular professional development workshops to improve teaching methodologies, assessment strategies, and curriculum delivery.

● Strengthening the School Management Council (SMC) to ensure better governance, transparency, and accountability in policy implementation.

● Developing structured and standardized assessment methods to maintain academic excellence and provide fair evaluation processes.

● Encouraging active parental involvement in decision-making processes to create a more collaborative and student-centered learning environment.

● Allocating financial, human, and infrastructural resources effectively to enhance learning outcomes and ensure smooth school operations.

● Promoting the use of digital learning tools and online administrative systems to modernize school management and educational practices.

● Aligning school policies with both Pakistani and Saudi educational regulations to ensure legal compliance and operational efficiency.

● Developing a clear and structured admissions policy with well-defined fee structures to promote equity and accessibility in education.

● Establishing a policy review mechanism to continuously assess and improve school operations, ensuring long-term educational success for Pakistani students in Saudi Arabia.

Recommendations

- The School Management Council (SMC) should periodically review and update the internal policy system to align with evolving educational needs and best practices.

- Teaching and supervisory staff should be actively involved in formulating internal policies to ensure practical and effective implementation.

- A clear hierarchical protocol should be established from top to bottom to streamline policy execution and ensure accountability at all levels.

- At least 40% of SMC members should be educationists to ensure informed decision-making and academic excellence.

- School administrators, based on their practical experience, should be nominated as key contributors to the internal policy system for effective governance.

- Schools should leverage technology and AI-driven solutions for administrative efficiency, student assessment, and curriculum enhancement.

- Regular seminars, workshops, and refresher courses should be introduced to enhance the skills of teachers and administrators.

- Routine safety drills, in collaboration with the Civil Defense Department, should be conducted to ensure a secure learning environment.

- Strengthening parental participation in school decision-making to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational framework.

- Implementing a continuous evaluation mechanism for policy effectiveness, ensuring that schools remain adaptable and future-ready.

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