Institutionalizing Civic Engagement through Skilled Civic Education: A Critical Analysis of Youth Development and Education Policies in Punjab Pakistan

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**ARTICLE DETAILS**

**ABSTRACT:** This study critically examines the intricate relationship between youth development and educational policies within the evolving societal landscape of Punjab, Pakistan. Positioned at a pivotal juncture of societal transformation, the study rigorously examines the institutional frameworks in education that influence civic engagement among the youth, thoroughly inspecting the existing policies in place. The primary objective is to discern the key drivers and obstacles impeding the institutionalization of civic engagement within the Pakistani education system. Special attention is given to the impact of both curricular and extracurricular initiatives on youth development, highlighting their potential to instill civic responsibility.

**Purpose:** This article engages with theoretical frameworks that underpin skilled civic education, delving into the broader implications of cultivating an informed and responsible citizenry.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Employing a descriptive approach and qualitative methodology, the investigation aims to comprehensively analyze the policy landscape.

**Findings:** The verdicts of this research make an extensive input to the ongoing discourse on skilled civic education and youth development in Punjab.

**Implications/Originality/Value**

This article concludes with challenges and actionable commendations tailored for policy makers, educators and stakeholders offering insights to enhance the institutionalization of civic engagement through skilled civic education in the region.

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**Keywords**

Institutionalizing Civic Engagement, Skilled Civic Education, Youth Development and Education Policies.

**JEL Classification**

A20, A29

Introduction

Responsible citizens are the hallmark of every society. Citizens are made not born, it takes thoughtful efforts to train young people to contribute effectively and wisely in community life (Levine et al., 2006). To maintain and develop a constitutional democracy, citizens must be knowledgeable, effective, and constructively responsible (Patrick, 1999). The creation of an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry is the most crucial task in a democratic state. Citizens must have adequate knowledge of the state institutions and its principles, their rights and responsibilities, and civic skills in applying this knowledge to community life (Boyd et al., 2018).

Normally, youth is recognized as transitional period during which an individual turns out to be an active and fully responsible citizen of a country (Spence, 2005). During the social integration process, young people gradually acquire new social roles and broaden their range of social performances (Henze, 2015). The structural and institutional forces that gradually separated young people from the rest of their adult contemporaries and confined them to age-streamed cohorts produced specific types of objects, the twelve-year-old, the fifteen-year-old, and the high school student (Sercombe, 2007). Young people are seen as resources and as being in a problematic situation (Unicef, 2016).

There is no universal definition of “youth.” Some organizations recognize individuals 15-24 years old to be youth (UN), while others, including USAID youth development reports, consider individuals 10-29 years old to be youth (K. A. Soomro, 2015). As a result, the modern image of youth combines elements of a educational view of youth (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020), as a shapeable object with the demand for a smooth integration into adult society through biological development (Schäfer & Biegler-könig, 2015).

Youth “civic engagement” is becoming more widely acknowledged as a vital component of youth development (and development in general) because it may teach young people about their rights and duties as citizens (Rafzan et al., 2022). Current political and societal expansions are causing changes in the social edges of the communities (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). The world now has the most youth ever, with approximately 1.20 billion, and this number is growing to make up the largest generation ever to enter adulthood (Alvarado, G., Skinner, M., Plaut, D., Moss, C., Kapungu, C., and Reavley, 2017). The universal youth population is anticipated to reach 1.30 billion in 2030, and nearly 1.35 billion in 2050 (Asia, 2020).

Civic knowledge and civic skills are two main gears of civic education (Branson, 1998). According to the statement of The “Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Civic Mission of Schools, and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement”, clarify the characteristics of responsible citizens that are shaped from operative civic education system (Law, 2018). Civic knowledge is concerned with the individual's understanding of their citizen rights and responsibilities (Mwangi, 2021). Whereas, skills refer to individual’s ability to analyze, evaluate (Kirlin, 2003), and take defend positions on public issues, and to use their knowledge and skills to participate in civic and political processes of the country (Lukman & Audu, 2014).

Pakistan is among the youngest nations not only in its neighborhood but also globally. About two-thirds of Pakistan’s population of 181 million is categorized as youth (I. K. A. Soomro, 2020a). It has one of the world’s youngest populations, with over 64% of the population under the age of 30 (Shahbaz, 2021). The history of Pakistan is marked by periods of democratic rule, interspersed with Martial Laws, civil war, and military coups. General Ayub Khan’s rule from 1958-1969 was marred by interior instability and a war with India in 1965. Yahya Khan's
leadership between 1969 and 1971 saw a civil war resulting in the separation of East Pakistan into Bangladesh. General Zia-ul-Haq introduced the Islamic Sharia legal code in the late 1970s, influencing civic life. Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif served as Prime Ministers in the late 1980s and 1990s (A. J. Khan, 2002).

Pervez Musharraf led a military coup in 1999, and political instability continued with Benazir Bhutto’s assassination in 2007. Imran Khan’s government, established in 2018, promised to lift the ban on student unions but faced challenges. Despite his removal in 2022 through a vote of no-confidence orchestrated by the Pakistan Democratic Movement, however, the ban on student unions remained in place (Mangi et al., 2018). Explicitly political forms of youth civic engagement have met with substantial confrontation, and youth civic contribution has remained low (Etra et al., 2010). This state’s political repression of activists has harmed Pakistani youth civic engagement culture in certain ways (Etra et al., 2010).

There are two types of “youth engagement” in Pakistan normative and, cosmetic. Firstly, the normative engagement, such as state-led civic education. In Pakistan, many Governmental and Non-governmental organizations, civil societies, and other institutions work with youth on a variety of issues, including leadership, political empowerment, anti-extremism, nationalism, democracy, peace, and education, through different advocacy campaigns. Volunteerism is also gaining interaction in major cities such as Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta (Youth Engagement in Pakistan: Baseline Evaluation and Way Forward., 2019). The second type of engagement is cosmetic engagement. According to Zafarullah Khan, “One dosage of seminars organized by NGOs and civil societies is insufficient for a person whose living sociology is deteriorating or extremist”. Limited NOGs working with youth on a variety of issues made efforts the promote civic education and put their rule for community development by civicly engaging the youth (Etra et al., 2010).

In Pakistan, representative democracy conditions have resulted in a greater emphasis on civic education for both the voters & leaders. However, little is known about the civic education work being done in Pakistan (Dean et al., 2007). Subsequently, political scheming and plotting allowed the military and bureaucracy to assume more powerful positions and powerful individuals concluded that Pakistani were unsuited for democracy and that the “Pakistani nation wanted strong leaders, not weak democracy” (Mian, 2012). Democracy has been reduced to just voting for representatives in elections, with the other important pillars being disregarded (Zaidi, 2015).

In 2003, a study revealed that Pakistanis had four concepts of citizenship. They consider citizenship as to be born in Pakistan and sharing a common culture, being patriotic, sharing a mutual spiritual / religious identity, and having responsibilities (Purta et al., 2011). Civic Education is viewed as a panacea for all societal ills, as well in Pakistan, resulted in curriculum accompaniments such as populace education, ecological education, and drug education to address persistent issues in the society (Hoskins et al., 2008). Civic education experts observed that in most cases, these lofty goals were not met because, societal change requires changes in the social, political, economic, and cultural systems in contrast to civic education (Dean et al., 2007).

**Youth Development and Education Policies in Pakistan**

**First Educational Conference 1947**

In 1947, after Independence, the educational base was too weak to build a comprehensive and diverse structure of the education system. The first “Pakistan Educational Conference” was organized in 1947, which gave route to the education system. The conference suggested the review of the curriculum in line with the requirements and ideals of various mechanisms of
In 1959, the commission recommended that primary school curricula emphasize the development of fundamental skills in reading, writing, and math, as well as fostering a strong sense of patriotism and a love of manual labor. Secondary school curricula should include core subjects that are required and electives tailored to particular professions and careers (Waheed & Studies, 2020). Nevertheless, the expansion of civic capabilities, skills, attitudes, and dispositions among the people of the country was ignored by the commission. Furthermore, throughout this period civics was combined with the subjects of geography and history (Education et al., 1960).

The Education Policy (1972–1980) advised creating curricula that were both in line with national ideology and the nation's evolving social and economic demands (Suhag & Khan, 2020). Political dissatisfaction with social and economic injustice had an impact on civic education as early as 1972. The social studies subject was established in classes 9 and 10 to cultivate patriotism and build national unity, but the basic and required skills, disposition, and knowledge for effective and responsible citizenship were overlooked for political motives (Sathar et al., 2016).

The Education Policy 1992-2002, 1998-2010 and 2009 focused on restructuring the existing educational system on contemporary shapes following the philosophies of Islam to create a rational Muslim culture and to improve the excellence of education by reviewing curricula. Whereas, NEP-1998-2010 expanding the education system such as curriculum development on regular base, promoting Information Technology, and making the Quran education and Islamic principles an essential part of curricula. NEP, 2009 anticipated stimulating the existing education system to cater to the political, social, and religious needs of individuals and society and also stressed a communal curricular agenda to be applied in educational institutions, both in the public and private sectors (NEP, 2009). The NEP (1998-2010) also emphasizes good Islamic theology while ignoring crucial parts of effective civic education, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions (Hussain, 2007).

The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) introduced this specific policy. “Early Childhood Education-ECE” remained the policy’s principal focus (Khizar et al., 2019). According to this, children aged 3-5 require early education to prepare them for primary school before beginning official schooling in grade one. Furthermore, it was determined that non-formal education was required for all adults to increase the nation's literacy. The approach also aims to increase educational quality, which it may achieve by focusing on six essential areas: teachers, curricula, textbooks, assessments, learning settings, and students’ perspectives on education (Ahmed, 2021).

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) designed this policy framework. The initiative intended to increase the number of public-sector institutions and universities in Pakistan. It was also intended to support private sector universities in raising educational quality and promoting virtual education across Pakistan. The program also prioritized special education, pledging to enroll 50% of special needs children by 2025 and allocating a 5% budget to special education in Pakistan (Khushik, 2018).

On November 18, 2005, the Federal Ministry of Youth Affairs was established. In December
2008, its established the National Youth Policy (NYP), which was accepted in “February 2009” (Hanso, 2016). The draft NYP, prepared in 1989, was not presented to the Cabinet but was made accessible to the press on June 21, 1989. A foreign advisor prepared a new draft of the NYP in 1993 (Najam & Bari, 2017). The fundamental policy shift happened in 2001. From May 2001 to January 2002, the Federal Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth Affairs convened its first consultative national-level workshops. The Pakistani government passed the “NYP” in 2009, to empower Pakistan's youth to become proud Pakistanis and good citizens, educating them for practical life, and securing Pakistan's future. This policy articulates the following principles, Incentives for Talented and High-Performing Youth, Character Building, National Integration, Support Promotion, Academic and Intellectual Development, Enabling Employment, Youth Health, Social Volunteering, and Motivation Awareness (NEP, 2009).

**Punjab Youth Development Policy 2012**
The “PYP 2012” describes youth as a stage during which individuals become responsible members of society. It is a transitional period from family-dependent childhood to independent adulthood and integration into society as a responsible citizen. The UN defines youth between the ages of 15 and 24 (Etra et al., 2010). In Punjab province, the latest youth policy, developed by the provincial departments of Youth Affairs, Sports, Archaeology, and Tourism, was launched in 2012, under the ex-Chief Mr. Shahbaz Sharif. This policy's primary goal is to support and guide young people in leading peaceful, harmonious lives, as well as to develop their attitudes, abilities, and knowledge and get them ready to take their responsibility. The Constitutional 18th Amendment Act of 2010 assigned the subject of youth issues to the provinces. This task was initially given to Punjab's Information, Culture, and Youth Affairs (ICYA) department, which in August 2011 prepared a draft of the PYP (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2020).

**Punjab Youth Commission (PYC)**
Activities aimed at empowering youth are already being carried out by CBOs, NGOs, foreign donors, philanthropists, corporate entities, and other provincial ministries. A (PYC) will be formed with youth participants from civil society organizations, the youth affairs department, and other stakeholders to foster interaction, synchronization, and better coordination among the activities of different institutions. This commission’s main responsibilities will be to oversee performance, provide general direction, and encourage the harmonious implementation of the Youth Policy. The Commission was comprised of the following (Javed, 2020).

**Youth Development Organization**
YDO is broadly divided into two types: youth-led and youth-serving. A youth-driven organization is primarily headed by young people, whereas a youth-serving organization, which may or may not be youth-led, provides complete or partial youth services for development. PYP 2012 also recognizes the achievements of donors, the commercial sector, charities, foundations, and CBOs, all of whom have varied roles in youth development (Javed, 2020).

**Punjab Youth Endowment Fund**
Public-private collaboration and partnerships with national and international development organizations are how the “PYEF” is developed. Commission on Punjab Youth will raise funds through contributions and cross-cheques sent to the Punjab Youth Endowment Fund’s accounts. The Punjab government will give a one-time payment for seed money (Saqib et al., 2021).

**Chief Minister School Road Map**
The political leadership in Punjab has declared a strong commitment to the execution of Article 25-A, and the government is resolute in its efforts to fulfill its constitutional and statutory commitments. To accomplish the objective and take on new tasks and obligations following the
18th Constitutional Amendment, a thorough strategy has been developed (Shazia et al., 2019).

**Special Education**
A significant rise in student enrolment in special education institutions has been attained since the establishment of a separate department of special education in October 2003. From 2005 to 2009, this increase was 300%. In 2011–2012, its allocation increased to 500 million Pakistani rupees. This has been made possible by the Punjab Government's Special Education Department's numerous incentives (Hafeez, 2018).

**Contemporary Education for Students of Deni Maddaris**
The Punjab government has announced formal curricula, integrating market-oriented skills-based areas of study, to enable students graduating from Deeni Madaris with more employment opportunities (Saqib et al., 2021).

**Entrepreneurship Programs**
The “Punjab Small Industries Corporation” intends to assist jobless talented youth by encouraging entrepreneurship and the creation of small companies. The Punjab government dedicated Rs.1.6 billion in budget estimates for (2011-12) as interest-free credits to PSIC through public-private partnerships (Javed, 2020).

**Special Initiative for Youth in Jails**
The “PYP 2012” also acknowledges that the best method to help young people reintegrate into society and return to a normal life is through counseling. In Bahawalpur and Faisalabad, respectively, there are two juvenile imprisonment facilities known as the Borstal Institute and Juvenile Jails. (B.I & J Jails).

**Vocational Training Programs**
Vocational training programs have started for electrical wiring, computer training, sewing, and tailoring. The majority of home-based workers are female; therefore, the Punjab government established a strategy for them that includes plans, programs, and tactics for upholding and advancing their benefits.

**Punjab Sports and Students Competitions**
The Punjab government launched the biggest sports festival in Pakistan's history at the Union Council, Tehsil, District, and Division levels. The mega-event was planned for February-March 2012 and featured 15 different sports disciplines. A total of 651,000 participants took part in this major endeavor to promote sports at the grassroots level (Punjab & Goals, 2017).

**Youth Political Participation and Engagement**
The PYP recommends a 5% quota for youth in elected Local Governments under previous local government laws, as well as sensitization of educators and parents to stop dismissing politics as a useless exercise. The policy also refers to student unions or councils founded at colleges and universities with pro-peace, women-friendly, and student-centered agendas (Government of Sindh, 2018).

**Youth Education**
The PYP statues provide scholarships to exceptional performers and encourage major companies, firms, and enterprises to provide internship opportunities equal to at least 6 % of their sanctioned officer strength to fresh graduates.

**Funding Allocation of Sources**
Punjab Youth Policy mentions a Punjab Youth Endowment Fund, which will be established with
one-time government seed money. Additional funding will be generated through public-private partnerships and international development donors. The Punjab Youth Policy also mentions creating a Youth Venture Capital Fund through a public-private partnership (Sathar et al., 2016).

**Young Women**
According to the Punjab Youth Policy, a 15% quota in the employment sector will be reserved for young women. However, it does not specify which industries will be subject to the quota.

**Young Religious Minorities**
Concerning religious minorities, the Punjab Youth Policy states that it will prioritize efforts and projects aimed at improving the conditions of youth from minorities, economically deprived regions, youth with disabilities, and youth with special needs (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2020).

**National Youth Policy 2019**
On October 10, 2018, EX-Prime Minister Imran Khan designated Mr. Usman Dar as his Special Assistant on Youth Affairs, establishing a Youth Affairs wing within the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The “National Youth Development Framework” is centered on the three E's (Education, Employment, and Engagement). In light of these three E's, the government developed and launched a comprehensive program known as the Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Program. The (NYDF) essentially serves as a comprehensive national level policy guideline under which various programs are being advanced by the government of Pakistan for the growth and engagement of youth. In June (2019), the Federal Government constituted a National Youth Council (NYC) with the Prime Minister as patron-in-chief, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs as Chairperson, and all provincial youth ministers (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2020).

**Implementation and Failures of Educational Policies**
An in-depth analysis of present educational policies and practices reveals major gaps between policy design and effective implementation. Pakistan’s education policy is now deteriorating for a variety of reasons, including “unclear or ambitious policy goals, lack of political commitment; faulty governance structures; centralization; lack of resources; and reliance on foreign aid”. This “Premature Loadbearing” arises when a plan with the potential for success is attempted in an environment where the implementing partners are incapable to adequately perform the required tasks (Prichett et al., n.d.). Educational policies fail to adequately recognize and address such multifaceted challenges, which frequently exacerbate one another, resulting in unfavorable educational outcomes, to cater to this specific issue (I. K. A. Soomro, 2020b).

In Pakistan, successive “National Educational Policies” and Nine Five-Year Plans have been devised and implemented, with minimal effect on literacy, enrollment, and educational attainment. No serious efforts were made to implement the aims and reform measures envisioned in the successive National Education Policies (Suhag & Khan, 2020). Policy discontinuity, which is mostly due to unstable or short-lived democratically elected administrations, is regarded to be
one of the causes of educational reform projects' failure. Pakistan was under military administration for more than three decades (1958-1971, 1977-1988, 1999-2008), disrupting several plans for long-term policy execution. Underutilization or improper use of available resources has also contributed to policy implementation failures (Education Policy 2017 `Undermining Rights and Needs of Minorities,’ n.d.).

Youth Policies define structures, policies, approaches, and a vision with somewhat greater precision (Government of Sindh, 2018). However, when it came to policy formulation in the country, this public political enthusiasm for youth could not compete. In the original draught of the 1973 constitution, no single world of youth is mentioned, nor is Youth Affairs a subject for state intervention at any level federal or concurrent (Kpk Youth Policy., n.d.). Pakistan lacks a coherent National Youth Policy, despite discussions on the topic dating back to 1989 (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Youth Affairs Islamabad, 2008). The issue still exists because the country's common youth are the victims of real problems at the bottom of the policy-making hierarchy since a top-down strategy has been used (NEP, 2009).

Young people who receive a quality education are better equipped to engage in critical and active democratic citizenship. Thus, the nation's civic education system's substance and caliber fail to equip young people to participate fully and responsibly in a democracy. Furthermore, youth involvement in democratic citizenship political processes is not adequately supported by Pakistan's present political party system (Nussbaum, 2011). The 18th Amendment to the constitution granted each province the authority to develop its youth programs rather than relying on the central youth policy. Unfortunately, not all provinces have successfully adopted or implemented youth policies (K. A. Soomro, 2015).

**Issues and Challenges**
Following are the challenges related to establishing the institutionalization of civic engagement for community development through skilled civic education.
1. The country lacks a proper education institutional framework or think tanks for policy-making relevant to community service-learning programs.
2. The existing policies in Pakistan regarding civic engagement and skilled civic education are not aligned with the principles of community development and also do not promote the integration of civic education within the academic curriculum.
3. The existing curriculum may lack comprehensive coverage of civic education, and there may be inconsistencies in its implementation across different regions.
4. Policies lack revision, integration, and alignment of curriculum at all levels of education.
5. Current policies do not address the issue of inadequate financial resources for the effective implementation of civic engagement activities in educational institutions.
6. The country observes unplanned and inadequate youth affairs in policy circles.
7. Policy-making offices do not focus on the integration of youth development from a multi-sector perspective.
8. There is a lack of coordination with government stakeholders during policy-making
9. Youth-related policies lack information gaps on youth.
10. Lack of teacher awareness and training programs.
11. Limited integration of technology in civic education programs.
Conclusion

The institutionalization of civic engagement for community development is a complex pedagogical process that necessitates a proper legislation, concrete policy framework, and thorough strategy. In the culmination of the research endeavor, this study examined various aspects, particularly current government policies to institutionalize the civic engagement for community development. Political leaders, lawmakers, and educational administrators within public sector educational institutions must acknowledge the critical importance of civic engagement and education working together to prioritize its integration into the educational curriculum and learning experience. More concrete and dynamic policies are need of the hour aiming that young people may be provided result-oriented platforms to provide them with the opportunity to interact with communities to solve its problems at the educational institution level. This is by helping young people develop and exercise the knowledge and skills needed to contribute in civic life. The educational system as a local social institution can directly provide such opportunities for civic engagement to the youth that can connect young people across the communities to solve its problems.

Civic education is often not integrated effectively into the formal educational policies in Pakistan. The absence of a structured and integrated approach limits the exposure of youth to civic concepts and values. It is vital to advocate for the inclusion of civic education modules within the national and provincial policies, ensuring that it starts from primary education and continues through higher levels. Institutionalization of civic engagement through skilled civic education in Pakistan faces multifaceted challenges. However, overcoming these challenges is paramount for fostering an informed, engaged, and active citizenry. By advocating for proper legislation and globally recognized policies with implementation strategies, Pakistan can pave the way for a robust civic education system. This, in turn, will empower the youth to contribute meaningfully to the socio-political landscape, shaping a future where democratic values and civic responsibilities are at the core of national identity and development.

Recommendations for Appropriate Policies for Promoting Civic Engagement and Skilled Civic Education for Community Development

1. Establish an Effective Institutional Framework to Promote Community: Service Learning.

2. Incorporating skilled civic education into curriculum as a compulsory subject.

3. Develop standardized assessment tools to measure the impact of civic education. Include a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate knowledge acquisition, attitude change, and behavioral outcomes of the students.

4. Develop a well-structured and standardized civic education curriculum that is inclusive, relevant, and applicable nationwide. Develop guidelines that emphasize the importance of non-partisan and unbiased civic education.

5. Disparities in access to quality education, particularly in rural areas, may hinder the equitable distribution of civic education.

6. Policies must include developing and promoting extracurricular activities, student councils, and community service programs to foster practical civic engagement experiences.

7. Device effective policies to establish regular and mandatory training programs for teachers focused on civic education methodologies, content, and pedagogical techniques.

8. Adequate financial resources must be given a room in relevant policies.

9. There should be a mechanism for parent’s engagement in the educational institutions to promote the culture of civic engagement in the society.
10. Initiating Meaningful Policies for Establishing Collaborative Framework with key stakeholders.

11. Effective Pedagogical Strategies must be given room in future policies.

12. It is necessary to invite and engage international experts in policy making.

13. Harnessing technology to enhance civic education delivery, making it more engaging and accessible to tech-savvy youth.

Implementing these ideas needs a coordinated effort from government agencies, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and communities. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of these measures and make adjustments as needed. Additionally, fostering a culture of openness to feedback and continuous improvement is crucial for the success of civic education initiatives and policies in Punjab, Pakistan.

Bibliography


