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### Through the Gender Lens: Formulations of Educational Policies and Decision Making by Bureaucrats for Schools in Punjab

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#### Original Article

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#### Keywords

Policy making and decision making, Perceptions of Educational Managers, Working of Bureaucrats.

#### Abstract

*In the current study, the perceptions of educational administrators about the working of bureaucrats in School Education Department have been examined. The study aims to comprehend administrators' perceptions of the role and influence of bureaucrats in the context of provincial administration for schools, with a focus on the intricate relationships between bureaucracy and educational managers. The Deputy District Education Officers (DDEOs) from district education authorities, Rawalpindi Division served as the sample for the study. The objective of study was to explore the significant difference in the mean scores of male and female educational managers about working of bureaucrats in the school education department. The study explores the way of formulation of educational policies and decision making by the bureaucrats for the educational system of the Punjab. Independent sample t-test was run to compare the difference in the mean score of males and female educational administrators about working of bureaucrats while formulating educational policies and decision making for education in Punjab. The study discovered that when formulating policies, officials consult with stakeholders. Strategic resource allocation and monitoring are carried out via the system's designated mechanisms.*

#### Introduction

The creation of both official and informal rules that govern the public sphere is referred to as governance. Bureaucrats are considered the backbone for the governance and generally known as civil servants. Bureaucracy cannot be limited to execution of the policies but also to governance (Safdar, 2021). In the dynamic landscape of governance, the role of bureaucratic structures is pivotal in shaping and implementing policies that directly influence the mechanism of delivery of government's services to the public. Bureaucratic structures consist of bureaucrats who are individuals, work within a bureaucracy, which is a system of government organizations, are recruited through competitive examination, they are characterized by hierarchical structure, fixed rules, and a division of labor. Public and academic discussions about Pakistan's politics, internal security, foreign policy, and general course invariably center on the "bureaucracy's" involvement (Hull, 2012). The organizational structures, protocols, and policies of an administrative power are referred to as bureaucracy (Naqvi, Hassan, Gull and Capraz, 2024). Bureaucrats are typically responsible for implementing policies, managing public administration, and ensuring that

organizational functions are carried out according to established procedures and regulations. Pakistan's bureaucracy is hierarchical, indicating a centralized government with power concentrated at the top (Dwivedi, 2024).

According to Abbas et.al (2018), education has been recognized as the main driver of development and progress. In all Pakistani constitutions, citizens' basic rights to education has always been recognized and it has been stressed to provide all citizens equal access to basic education (Malik, 2011). The Punjab School Education Department, as a key administrative body for ensuring the right to education in Pakistan, plays a crucial role in formulating and executing educational policies in the province Punjab. Understanding the dynamics between educational managers and bureaucrats within this context is essential for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of educational governance.

This research delves into the perceptions of educational managers regarding the functioning of bureaucrats in the Punjab School Education Department. Educational managers, who hold key positions within District Education Authorities (DEAs), are uniquely positioned to observe, experience, and critique the impact of bureaucratic decisions on the ground. Their insights can provide valuable perspectives on the challenges, successes, and areas for improvement within the bureaucratic framework of the education system. Bureaucratic decisions and policies resonate at the grassroots level of the departments.

Any government that transforms remarks and recommendations into reality and encourages excellent public behavior must be built on bureaucracy (Aftab, Khan and Ali, 2020). Bureaucratic decisions and policies are not confined to boardrooms and administrative offices; rather, they permeate the educational landscape, impacting students, teachers, and administrators at the local level. These decisions have the potential to shape the curriculum, allocate resources, and determine the overall functioning of schools within the Punjab School Education Department. Educational managers must interpret and implement these policies, often facing challenges in aligning bureaucratic directives with the diverse needs and dynamics of their respective institutions.

Gender representation within the bureaucracy itself can impact policy execution and decision-making. A male-dominated bureaucracy might inadvertently overlook issues that predominantly affect female educators, leading to policies that do not fully address their needs. Promoting gender diversity within administrative roles can bring a more balanced perspective to policy formulation and implementation.

The perceptions of educational managers regarding bureaucratic decisions provide valuable insights into how these policies are translated and experienced at the grassroots level. Understanding this dynamic is essential for refining bureaucratic processes, ensuring that policies are not only effective on paper but also responsive to the realities and nuances of the educational environments they are meant to serve.

## **Literature Review**

The system of efficient bureaucracy has been considered as the engine for growth and development of a country. Bureaucracy is not merely an essential part of government rather it shapes the lives of the society through its decisions and policies. Government bureaucracies are essential, and their functions go much beyond simply carrying out directives (Kalia, 2013). Any government's foundation is its bureaucracy, which turns concepts and recommendations into policies and activities that serve the general welfare of society (Shahzad, 2017).

Governments are made up of numerous departments, organizations, and agencies that collaborate to maintain society's continuous operation (Kalia, 2013). In Pakistan, at federal and provincial level, Government of Pakistan has created departments to run its business. These departments are headed by the bureaucrats with a team that consists on the bureaucrats work on the set hierarchy of the department. These bureaucrats are supposed to design policies for their departments and ultimately, their framed policies and decisions give change to prevailing structure of the departments.

Almost everywhere in the world, bureaucracy's main job is to honestly and diligently carry out the laws that the state is in charge of (Shaikh & Jatoi, 2018). The purpose of bureaucracy is to offer services, including legal, security, infrastructure development, and health services, as well as to intervene and support that (Khan, Rehman & Ahmad, 2021). The governance depends on the working of departments. The beginnings of governance can also be found in the diverse roles that various ministries and societal segments have played together (Aftab, Khan & Ali, 2020).

School Education Department (SED) of Punjab is one of the largest departments in the province. Each district has a District Education Authority (DEA) that is guided and monitored by the secretariat of School Education Department (SED), Lahore. Pakistan's bureaucracy plays a crucial role in delivering essential services, including education. Policy guide lines, monitoring indicators and all other governmental directions are issued from the secretariat to follow and implantation in the field. Each District Education Authority (DEA) works as the field office of the School Education Department (SED).

The field of education management is essential for the efficient operation of educational systems in a country, and bureaucrats play a crucial role in establishing practices and regulations. In Punjab, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), District Education Officers (Male & Female) and Deputy District Education Officers (Male & Female) work as educational managers. These officers have direct link with the secretariat of School Education Department (SED) for various tasks/assignments and interact with the officers who are bureaucrats and working at different positions within the department.

Gender based perceptions about nature of the bureaucratic working are very important in determining to what extent they match to their ways of operation in the lines of rules, regulations and the policy implementation etc. Male and female educational managers experience and perceive. Support & process of decision-making. These could be rooted in different expectations, ways of communication, and often in the historical gender shaped roles in organizations.

The difference in male and female educational managers' perceptions and interaction with bureaucratic processes can have broader implications for implementation of educational policies. If a female educational manager feel unsupported or undervalued, it may affect her working in the field. Addressing gender disparities in bureaucratic practices can contribute to a more positive and productive educational environment for all. Understanding the gender-specific perceptions of bureaucratic effectiveness in the educational sector is essential for identifying potential biases and discrepancies in policy implementation.

The relationship between bureaucrats working in department of education and educational managers is crucial for effective policy implementation. Clear communication and collaboration are necessary for bridging the gap between policy formulation and implementation, decision making, resource allocation, budgeting and regulatory oversight at the bureaucratic level and practical implementation at the school level in the whole province.

### **Rationale of the Study**

This study is focused upon exploring gender decision making in education and aims to reduce the gender-based understanding in the implementation of educational policies and decision making in Punjab School Education Department. Through a comparison of the perceptions of male and female educational managers, the study is expected to improve the existing bureaucratic practices and to increase the efficiency of implementing educational policies in general. Its implications for a vast array of more judicious and sensitive administrative practices and role of bureaucrats towards the educational system in Punjab have been explained in this study. Understanding the perceptions of educational managers can help policymakers and administrators to tailor their approaches to better meet the needs of all stakeholders, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of educational policies. The study explores the broader socioeconomic and cultural context that

influence education decision making from gender point of view however; the study focuses upon the following main objective.

### Objective of the Study

The objective of study is to explore the significant difference in the mean scores for males and females about working of bureaucrats in the school education department

### Limitation of the Study

Keeping in view the time constraints, the study was delimited to the

- i- Educational Managers of Division Rawalpindi.
- ii- Deputy District Education Officers (Male & Female)

### Methodology

#### Sample of the Study

The sample for the study was selected through purposive sampling technique from the district education authorities of Division Rawalpindi. The details of the sample are:

Sr. No	District	No. of Tehsils	No. of Deputy District Education Officers (Male)	No. of Deputy District Education Officers (Female)
1	Attock	6	6	6
2	Rawalpindi	7	7	7
3	Chakwal	5	5	5
4	Jhelum	4	4	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>

Deputy District Education Officers (DDEOs) are considered the base line officers in the district hierarchy who collect the data of every kind that is required by the department. The total number of DDEOs in the tehsils of Division Rawalpindi was 44 (22 males & 22 females) that was considered as the sample for the study.

### Instrument of Data Collection

A questionnaire consisting ten statements on five points Likert scale was formulated and utilized for data collection for the study. The questionnaire was covering two main areas of working of bureaucrats that are policy formulation and decision making for educational system of the Punjab. The questionnaire was used for collecting data from the Deputy District Education Officers (DDEOs). It is tried to explore different aspects of policy and decision making by bureaucrats through the statements of the questionnaire. Each statement ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was sent to the selected sample (respondents) through emails and whatsapp with the request to provide the response. The sample was contacted time and again to get the response over the statements of the questionnaire. The overall responses on the questionnaire was reported as 100%, from all the respondents.

### Data Analysis

Independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the difference in the mean score of males and females about working of bureaucrats while formulating policies and decision making for education in Punjab.

Table 1: Group Statistics

Sex	N	Means	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	22	4.1440	.79	.26
Female	22	5.5920	.38	.34

Table 1 provide the total number of participants in the group, mean school for each group and standard deviation.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test

			t-test for Equality of Means						
	Levene's test for equality of variance		T	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95 % Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig						Lower	Upper
Equal variance assumed	.375	.47	2.611	42	.40	.380	.15214	.047	.054
Equal variance not assumed			2.245	42	.42	.380	.15214	.660	.660

From table 2, significant level for Levene's test is .47 that is larger than .05, this means the assumption of equal variance has not been violated.

Also, sig (2 tailed) is .40 that is above .05, it means there is no significant difference between the mean scores of males and females about working of bureaucrats for policy and decision making for the education in Punjab.

### Major Findings of the Study

- 1- Both male and female educational mangers agreed that bureaucrats play a critical role in implementations of policies and while making decisions of the cases presented to them.
- 2- Bureaucrats actively engage the diverse stakeholders of education such as parents, educators etc. to ensure that such policies may be framed that are need of the time and address the collective interests of the society.
- 3- While framing policies, bureaucrats consider the data that is offered by the educational managers from the field and steps are ensured for inclusive education for the children.
- 4- Both male and female educational mangers are of the opinion that national goals of education are kept in view by the bureaucrats while designing policies for education.
- 5- Resources are distributed strategically and continuous monitoring is also done through the system by the bureaucrats.
- 6- Educational managers provided that transparency and accountability is considered while communicating the decision in the field.

### Discussion

Examining the formulation of educational policies and decision-making by bureaucrats through a gender lens reveals significant insights into the involvement of stakeholders in formulation of policies for education and male and female educational managers working in the filed agreed that

different stake holders of education such as educators, parents, community leaders, and experts, are taken on board in the policy-making process to ensure that policies reflect the collective needs.

By understanding these gender-specific perceptions and experiences, policymakers and administrators can develop more inclusive, equitable, and effective educational policies. This approach not only supports the professional growth and satisfaction of all stakeholders but also enhances the overall quality of education for students. Gender-sensitive policy execution is thus essential for fostering an equitable educational environment and improving educational outcomes in Punjab.

### **Conclusion**

Concluding the exploration of perceptions about the working of bureaucrats in school education, it is evident that there is no differences in the way males and females perceive the roles of bureaucrats for formulating policies and decision making. The study reveals a multifaceted landscape of opinions shaped by various factors, including involving stakeholders, evidence-based decision making, keeping in view the national goals of education etc. For both genders, there are common themes such as Resource Allocation, Data-Driven Policy and strategic resource allocation etc.

As we move forward, creating avenues for open dialogue, professional development, and opportunities for active participation can contribute to a more collaborative and equitable relationship between bureaucrats and educational managers. By acknowledging and incorporating these diverse perceptions, the education system can strive for greater effectiveness, responsiveness, and inclusivity, ultimately benefiting both male and female stakeholders in the pursuit of educational excellence.

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**Questionnaire**

Sr. No	Statement	SA	A	UNC	DA	SDA
<b>Policy-Making by Bureaucrats for Education</b>						
	Bureaucrats actively engage with diverse stakeholders, including educators, parents, community leaders, and experts, in the policy-making process to ensure that policies reflect the collective needs.					
	Bureaucrats employ evidence-based decision-making, leveraging research, data, and best practices to inform the formulation of education policies in Punjab.					
	Educational bureaucrats in Punjab align their policy-making efforts with national educational goals.					
	Bureaucrats prioritize equity and inclusion in education policies, striving to create an inclusive learning environment.					
	Bureaucrats emphasize a culture of continuous monitoring, regularly reviewing the impact of implemented policies.					
<b>Decision-Making for Education</b>						
	Bureaucrats in the Punjab education system prioritize inclusive decision-making processes.					
	Bureaucratic decision-makers allocate resources strategically, aiming to enhance educational infrastructure.					
	Bureaucrats play a pivotal role in decision-making that drives innovative educational initiatives in Punjab.					
	Bureaucrats prioritize transparency and accountability in decision-making, implementing mechanisms to communicate decisions clearly.					
	Bureaucratic decisions for education in Punjab are informed by robust data analysis, performance indicators, and feedback mechanisms to guide policy implementation and measure the impact on student outcomes.					



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