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SINDH EDUCATION: PROVINCE AUTONOMY AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM: A CASE STUDY OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE WAKE OF THE 18TH AMENDMENT

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Abstract

This was due to the fact that the law (the 18th Constitutional Amendment) essentially restructured the way power was divided in Pakistan giving the provinces a substantial amount of both legislative and administrative power and increasing the responsibility of the provinces in the provision of education. This research paper explores the role of provincial autonomy in the development and adoption of education reforms in Sindh, Pakistan and how it affects the processes in the institutions, experiences of the stakeholders, and the difficulties in implementation processes. To develop the perspectives and experiences of major stakeholders on issues of educational governance and educational reform, a qualitative type of research design was used to study the attitudes of the key stakeholders comprising policymakers, education officials, school heads, teachers, parents, and community representatives. The data were analyzed thematically to find out the common patterns related to the process of policy formulation, implementation capacity, institutional coordination, resource availability, stakeholder participation, and accountability. The results show that provincial autonomy has opened up, more policy space to the Government of Sindh to develop and implement education reforms that reflect provincial priorities. Nevertheless, the decentralization of the formal power has not always been accompanied by the effective execution of the same decentralization on the district and school levels. The researchers cite institutional capacity limitations, poor and unequal distribution of resources, failure in administrative coordininated, a form of limited stakeholder input, disparity in policy enforcement, loophole in monitoring and accountability as factors that significantly hinder effective education reform. The results also indicate that teachers and school heads are vital to the translation of provincial policies to school level practices, but meaningful involvement of parents and communities should still be an essential ingredient in the context sensitive achieving of educational governance. The research finds that provincial autonomy is a condition in its own right that is both necessary and sufficient to improve education. Proper decentralization demands enhanced institutional capacity, appropriate

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resources, enhanced intergovernmental and administrative coordination, ongoing professional growth, participative policy-making and monitoring, evidence-based. The research paper suggests that the provincial educational governance in Sindh should be implemented in an implementation oriented action that focuses on shift of constitutional autonomy into sustainable institutional and educational deliverables.

INTRODUCTION

Education policy is also perceived as not merely one of expanding access and availability of resources, but rather as one of how political control, institutional potential, accountability and local agency interrelate and influence what occurs in the schools. Governments are under pressure to offer inclusive, equitable and quality education as part of the global commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) but the ability of education systems to convert policy intentions into effective institutional and classroom practices is crucial to the achievement of these commitments (UNESCO, 2016, 2024). The experience of other countries shows that educational governance is getting more complex as responsibilities are spread to national, subnational, local, and school levels. This may be a way to bring decision-making nearer to communities and to enable policy to think in response to local needs, yet decentralization is not necessarily the way to better educational outcomes. The effectiveness is based on the transparency of institutional obligations, interdepartmental coordination, administrative capacity, financing, responsibility, and allowing the local players to wield significant power (Tamtik & Colorado, 2022; UNESCO, 2024).

Education systems in developing and decentralized states, where policy ambitions can often be greater than can be executed, find this global debate of interest. In general, decentralization is justified by the fact that subnational governments are more likely to be aware of local needs and make more responsive decisions in regard to specific social, cultural, and geographical realities. There is however, a mixed empirical record. Practice of decentralized education systems indicates that devolution of formal power without a commensurate increase in institutional capacity, resources, coordination, and accountability may result in a lack of cohesive responsibilities instead of good local governance. The Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5, as an example, highlights that the fact that local leaders have either the authority or the capacity to design and implement an educational policy although it is important to note that while decentralization reforms have limited impacts where local capacity is weak or higher government levels maintain a high level of control (UNESCO, 2024). Likewise, systematic studies on the level of school-level decentralization in low- and middle-income countries prove the point that the impact of the decentralized decision-making process can be determined by the conditions under which reforms are implemented and designed instead of the area of decentralization per se (Carr-Hill et al., 2016).

The Pakistani situation is a compelling example to consider these tensions due to the sweeping changes in the institutional structure of federalism as a result of the 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010. By the Amendment, the Concurrent Legislative List was abolished and extensive legislative and administrative powers were passed on to the provinces. Education came to be largely the province responsibility and the constitutional duty of the state to ensure free and compulsory education of children between the ages of five and fifteen years was enacted into law through Article 25-A. Accordingly, the post-2010 period offered a valuable possibility to provinces to develop education policies that would consider their priorities and socio-economic conditions. The reform equally a signified a redistribution of responsibilities rather than a distribution of authority between the federal and provincial governments.

However, the constitutional shift of power failed to address the practical issues of governance in

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education. Pakistan Studies on decentralization experience indicate that the realisation of the 18 th Amendment has entailed conflictual relations between institutions, capacity constraint and resistance related to reallocation of power and resources (Rana, 2020). Although Farooqi and Forbes (2020) in their study consider a parsimony church in a previous era of local-government reform, their work is nonetheless worth referencing in terms of comprehending the greater Pakistani context of implementation formaldehyde: centralized managerial control and limited resource capacity can easily coexist with formal decentralization, leading to significant discrepancies between formally delegated authority and the actual discretion of managerial position. More modern studies also point towards the notion that provincial autonomy has created more room in the policies of provincial education, leaving unanswered questions about intergovernmental coordination, institutional capability, accountability, and effective implementation (Naqvi et al., 2025).

These strains are particularly apparent in Sindh. In the aftermath of devolution, the Government of Sindh became the primal source of school education and crafted a variety of policies and institutional initiatives which were meant to enhance access, quality, governance, teacher management, monitoring, and service delivery. An example is the School Education Sector Plan and Roadmap (SESP&R) 20192024 which set provincial priorities focused on equitable access, the quality of learning, the recruitment and professional development of teachers, infrastructure, and the governance of the education sector. The plan clearly cited governance and management as a significant challenge and it highlighted greater accountability, resources, institutional capacity, and political commitment as pre-requisites of successful reform implementation. Other reforms added by Sindh have been Education Management Organization, school clustering, digital surveillance, school development, recruitment of teachers and other institutional interventions. A key instance of the province trialing alternative governance patterns of their public schools is the Education Management Organization model, launched in 2015, although the newer reforms have focused on decentralised school management structures and electronic surveillance.

The policy implementation literature gives good backing to analysis of this difference. The model presented by Matland (1995), the Ambiguity-Conflict one, contradicts the belief held about implementation as linear progression between the policy formulation and execution. It asserts that the realization of the implementation relies partly on whether policy objectives and tools are vague and the level of conflict in relation to them. This view is applicable in the case of Sindh since reforms could be consciously accepted but later alleviated by policy makers, administrators, school principals and educators. The Street-Level Bureaucracy approach also underlines that public officials on the front lines are not mere receivers of policy. The way they decide, interpret, cope, and make daily choices, to a large extent, can frame the experience and implementation of societal policies (Lipsky, 1980). The studies that used this view on educational policy show that educators, administrators, and other educational professionals can shape the real nature of the policy implementation by interpreting the official requirements and reacting to the local limitations (de Oliveira and Peixoto, 2021). The current qualitative studies also suggest that the views and experiences of the local education administrators can be of significance in the interpretation of how the national policy or the higher-level one is translated into the local practice (Kaya and Yildirim, 2022).

Another opinion is Complementary view Multi-Level Governance (MLG). Instead of viewing policy as an up-down chain of command, MLG views policy processes as dynamic interactions of the actors at different levels of government and institutional systems. This is especially appropriate in the case of reduced education systems where policy controls, administration of functions, funds and accountability can be spread among provincial departments, district

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offices, schools and communities, and development partners and other stakeholders. Referring to a review of 50 peer-reviewed studies, Tamtik and Colorado (2022) suggest that MLG has particular application to studying the education policy in decentralized federal systems by revealing the relations, power, coordination issues, and associations among stakeholders that are involved in the formation of the policy processes. Even more recent literature suggests that both successful implementation in multilevel systems and the organization of information-sharing and participation and influence by way of implementation arrangements require coordination among across-jurisdictional actors (Green and Koebele, 2025).

Combined, these theoretical aspects prove to be an invaluable analytical base to the current study. MLG focuses on the location of authority, distribution of responsibilities and the interactions of provincial, district, school and community players. The strength of Matland is that his model places emphasis on policy ambiguity, political contest, and circumstances in which implementation is carried out in various forms; whereas the strength of Street-Level Bureaucracy is on discretion and experiences of people who translate policy to an everyday education. This is in contrast to the transnational view that views provincial autonomy as an autonomous machine that positively leads to reform. Rather, it proposes the conceptualization of autonomy as an institutional state the outcomes of which are mediated by governance structures, organization, stakeholder system, resources, and practices of implementation. This is an especially effective method to use within a qualitative study aimed at knowing not just what reforms are being implemented but also how various actors understand and reveal such reforms.

Although there is an increasing body of literature on the topic of decentralization and education in Pakistan, there is still an empirical gap. Previous research has discussed the constitutional, political consequences of the 18th Amendment, autonomy of higher education, intergovernmental strains, and the overall impacts of decentralization. As an illustration, a study on the higher education in Pakistan has revealed on-going confusion about institutional jurisdictions and relations after devolution (Khan, 2015), and another study by Khawar et al. (2021) has revealed that the purported benefits of devolution were curtailed due to ineffective coordination between policy makers, regulators, and institutions of higher learning. More recent studies have focused on both national-level decentralization and education policy, as well as explored the post-devolution education situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. But these studies fail to sufficiently elaborate how provincial autonomy has been converted into the creation and application of school-education reforms within, in particular, Sindh, and fail to sufficiently bridge the gap between institutional processes and the perceptions of policymakers, education officials, school heads, teachers, parents and community representatives in lived context. Literature is thus still stronger on constitutional change and the formal policy structures than on the meso- and micro-process in which provincial reform is exerted.

The gap is consequential as Sindh is a particularly significant context in which a question about the connection between autonomy and educational reform needs to be explored. The province has a high level of educational diversity, a high level of rural and urban disparity, long-term educational marginalization, a lack of institutional capacity and vulnerable to environmental and socio-economic disruption. Simultaneously, the province has also come up with a rich education reform portfolio as part of the post-devolution mandate. The presence of ambitious provincial policy initiatives and entrenched difficulties in implementation makes Sindh an analytically useful case study of the question whether and on what conditions provincial autonomy can be translated into good educational governance. A policy can be good at the provincial level but there can be obstacles to implementation at the district or school level; there can also be ways to

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

localize policies that help them be more contextually responsive. Any attempt to understand these processes would have to focus on the views of actors in different places within the policy system and not just on policy documents or aggregate educational indicators.

The current work, in this regard, aims to provide the qualitative analysis of the educational reforms implementation in Sindh following the 18 th Constitutional Amendment. In particular, the paper looks at the key education policies and education reforms proposed by the Government of Sindh following devolution; evaluates how the provincial education policies are being translated into implementation practices; identifies the experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders using education reform; and provides evidence-based recommendations on how to reform education governance and practice. These aims acknowledge that the assessing post-devolution reform needs to go beyond the question of whether policies exist to examine how policies are construed, coordinated, resourced, implemented and experienced in institutional levels.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following main research objectives:

- To analyze the significant educational policies and reforms that the Government of Sindh brought post 18th Amendment.
- To examine institutionalized actions that transform provincial education policy into a practice of implementation.
- To find out the experiences and perceptions of major stakeholders in educational reform.
- To come up with evidence-based recommendations on how to enhance educational governance and reform implementation in Sindh in the framework of provincial autonomy.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are the following:

1. How has the Sindh education been changed significantly since the 18th Amendment?
2. What has been the provincial response of instantiating educational policies into practice?
3. What are the perceptions of major stakeholders towards provincial autonomy and its role in education reform?
4. How can the practice of educational reforms in provincial autonomy in Sindh be enhanced?

The research has both academic and policy implications that justify it. Academically, it helps in the constitution of the literature by the move away by a concentration on the formal allocation of constitutional power to what actually happens in bringing power to bear in an education system. It also adds a Sindh-specific point of view to a literature where Pakistan-wide analysis and study of other provinces have been somewhat disproportionately represented. In terms of policy, it is important to learn the chain of implementation since the ultimate achievement in provincial autonomy is whether the institutions can have the capacity and coordination mechanisms to translate authority into better services to the persons they serve. The results can thus guide policymakers and education administrators to define institutional bottlenecks, demystify responsibilities, enhance stakeholder involvement, enhance coordination and even come up with more context sensitive implementation plans.

Key Terms Definitions.

To facilitate the objectives of this paper, **provincial autonomy** is the constitutionally established power of provincial government to make and implement policies in their jurisdiction after the 18th Amendment. **Reform in education** is the intent to make changes and reforms in the education policy, institutions, governance schemes, practice management, system of teachers, curriculum, accessibility to education, quality or accountability of education aimed at enhancing the education system. **Policy implementation** is understood as the process by which the formally adopted policies are read, operationalised, coordinated, resourced, monitored, and implemented by the institutions and actors. **Educational governance** is the form, associations, operations, power systems and

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

accountability systems, by which educational choices and actions are reached and taken. **The stakeholders** in this study will mean policymakers, education officials, school heads, teachers, parents and representatives of the community members whose roles, experiences or interests may be related to educational reform in Sindh.

To conclude, post 18th Amendment era is a major change in the educational governance framework in Pakistan but the subversion of authority to Sindh alone is not sufficient in explaining the avenue of reform in the province. Decentralization has shown to have uneven outcomes due to institutional capacity, coordination, accountability, and local agency, and Pakistan-specific scholarly research indicates intractable conflicts between official devolution and operational practice. The comprehensive reform agenda of Sindh and ongoing educational issues make this relationship an interesting empirical context to analyze. The current qualitative research will concentrate on this requirement by examining what are the reforms introduced, the way reforms are carried out by provincial and local institutions, how the relevant stakeholders feel provincial freedom and what institutional changes can contribute to better implementation. The study therefore not only puts the issue of educational reform in Sindh as an issue of policy choice, but an issue of governance, institutional capacity, intergovernmental coordination, and policy enactment.

Conceptual Framework

The framework suggests that the 18th Constitutional Amendment offers the constitutional basis to an increased provincial autonomy in education. This independence develops policy room in the Government of Sindh to balance and design educational policies and reforms in provincial priorities.

The second facet, educational policies and reforms, is the key initiatives that were formulated by the provincial government following devolution. They can be in the form of reforms in the form of school enhancement, teacher administration, curriculum, access to education, institutional responsibility, and surveillance.

The third is policy implementation and this is what is the main focus of your study. It looks at the way provincial policy is implemented in real practice via provincial, district and school level institutions.

A number of contextual and institutional factors influence the implementation process, especially the administrative capacity, financial resources, coordination, monitoring, accountability and participation of stakeholders.

Lastly, the framework results in educational governance and reform impacts that do not necessarily mean measured student achievement, but instead the responsiveness, effectiveness, consistency andsustainability of educational policy execution.

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

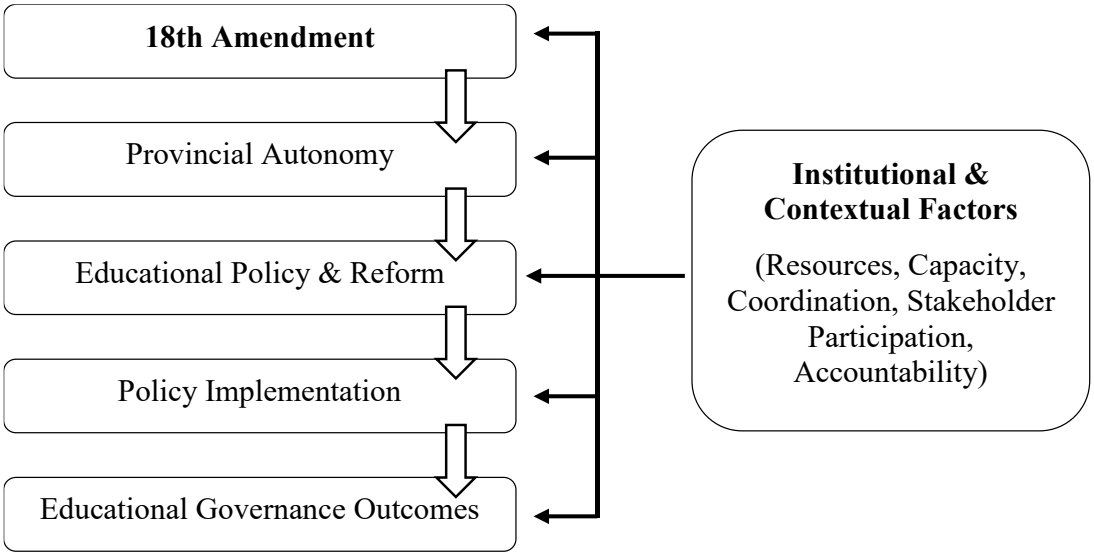


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

The 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010 turned Pakistan into a more centralized state into a stronger federation with significant autonomy granted to four provinces (Anwar et al., 2023; Begum et al., 2024). In the case of the education sector, this translated to the abolishment of the federal Ministry of Education, as well as the province of giving up their responsibilities, such as setting standards, curriculum design, etc. (Shah & Padda, 2023; Ali & Arain, 2025). This change was welcomed as a chance to adapt policies on education to the linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic peculiarities of the province in Sindh (Abbas & Saeed, 2021; Faiz, 2023).

The transition has however not been smooth. The recent five years of literature presentation shows that there is a complicated anatomy of executive federalism in that the center and the province frequently come to the head (Faiz, 2023). Although the 18th Amendment gives the de jure powers of provincial autonomy, the real-world application comes with responding to entrenched political and institutional overlaps (Abbas and Saeed, 2021; Aziz and Naseer, 2024). The report will also analyze the actions of the Sindh in utilizing the power of post-2010 to come up with new laws including the Sindh Universities Amendment Bill and how Sindh has reacted to the federal initiatives to re-centralise some areas of the education policy (Abbas and Saeed, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025).

Legislative and Institutional Autonomy in Higher Education

Higher education sector has been one of the most apparent effects of the 18 th Amendment in Sindh. The province has used its powers to create the Sindh Higher Education Commission (SHEC) that currently acts as a "pinning point regarding university control, financial distributions, and oversight (Jamali et al., 2024). This was aimed at decentralizing the hitherto centralized comprehensive control over issues of concern of universities that was vested in the federal Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Islamabad (Jamali et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, a certain state of institutional overlap remains herinated in the literature. Though SHEC cooperates in the management of provincial universities, HEC Islamabad still retains its control over degree programs accreditation and national level quality setting (Jamali et al., 2024; Ullah, 2024). It has created tension between the provinces, which have been

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

unable to achieve operational operational capabilities and the center, which has retained its control over financial and regulatory oversight (Farukh and Aziz-ur-Rehman, 2024; Jamali et al., 2024).

The Sindh Universities Amendment Bill is a recent measure of the legislative exertion of Sindh (Ahmed et al., 2025). The motive of this bill is to bring changes to the governance of universities and academic autonomy, which indicates the intention of procuring province when it comes to updating the tertiary institutions without necessarily relying on federal models (Ahmed et al., 2025). However, any reforms are easily subjected to criticism or opposition in terms of alleged economic effects and the risk of low academic standards being sacrificed, indicating that national quality assurance and provincial sovereignty are in a delicate balance (Ahmed et al., 2025).

The Curriculum Conflict: Sindh and the Single National Curriculum (SNC)

One of the key sources of tension between the Center and Sindh was the drafting of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) by the federal government (in particular, its implementation in the years 20182022 during the PTI administration) (Abbas and Saeed, 2021; Faiz, 2023). The federal government believed that to implement policy measures of equity, inclusion, integrating, and nationalist, a uniform curriculum is required (Abbas & Saeed, 2021).

Sindh, in its turn, rose to become the main antagonist of the SNC, claiming its constitutional right given by the 18th Amendment to determine its own curriculum and syllabi (Shah and Padda, 2023; Shaikh and Benedetti, 2024). This opposition was based on the fear of the socio-cultural, political and legal implications of a centralized curriculum (Abbas & Saeed, 2021). According to scholars, the federal ambition to have more control was a false ambition disregarding the pluralistic nature of the Pakistani provinces (Abbas & Saeed, 2021). The Sindh government claimed that it was likely that the SNC would erase the local history, language and cultural nuances, and started debating between pluralism and uniformity (Shaikh & Benedetti, 2024). This opposition had the effect of Sindh being left behind by the rest of the provinces (such as Punjab and KPK) that embraced SNC, which resulted in an uneased educational environment in Pakistan (Abbas & Saeed, 2021).

Education Reforms in Schools: Access, Equity and Management

The 18th Amendment allowed Sindh to gain control at the school level, such as planning, policy, quality, and centers of excellence (Shah and Padda, 2023). As of 2010, studies that assess the long-term trends revealed a mixed outcome of the province:

Access and Growth: The average access to primary education in Sindh has significantly increased by 19.65% post-amendment (Shah and Padda, 2023). There was an improvement of 8% in the access to secondary education (Shah and Padda, 2023).

Gap in Equity: The equity index of opportunity in education of secondary education continued to be inequitable even with increased access in Sindh (Shah and Padda, 2023). The shift in social opportunity curves of primary education was an upwards movement, though unevenly distributed across the income lines (Shah and Padda, 2023).

Literacy Stagnation: The post-amendment period in Sindh revealed a negative growth in the average literacy that was less than 2% (Shah and Padda, 2023).

Management Initiatives: Sindh has been emphasizing on the empowerment of School Management Committee (SMC) to enhance the governance at the local level. Evaluations of the effectiveness of pre- and post-SMC support the idea that there is a shift towards community engagement, but the implementation issue is still complicated (Naz et al., 2023).

Primary school, infrastructure, and equity still remain the main issue in literature on the Sindh public school system, and researchers urge the need to focus on more specific policies to assist the bottom income groups (Jamali et al., 2025; Shah and Padda, 2023).

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ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

Digital Transition and Teacher Professionalization

Recent sources (20242025) indicate that the reform agenda of Sindh has changed and has moved to modernization and professionalization. School education is undergoing a new paradigm shift of traditional learning to what is being termed as Smart Learning (Muslim et al., 2025). This involves efforts to incorporate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Internet of Things (IoT) into the educational system, which is meant to transform the academic process and running of campuses (Jamali et al., 2024).

In tandem with digital reforms, Sindh has introduced new measures for "teacher licensing" (Akhtar & Kayani, 2024). In a qualitative study on the perceptions of the teachers, it is evident that, although licensing requirement is considered as the necessary aspect of the professionalization, there is only a sense of concern around the readiness of the teaching population and the pedagogical environment of the province (Akhtar and Kayani, 2024). Such reforms are the efforts of Sindh to establish provincial benchmarks of standards and quality of education as allowed by the 18th Amendment (Shah and Padda, 2023).

Research Gaps

According to the review, a number of severe gaps that should be investigated in the future are denoted:

District-Level Decision-Space: District-level analysis of decision-space requires a lot to be done in Sindh to gain insights into the extent to which power is actually devolved at the provincial capital (Karachi) to its local education authorities (Nazar and Rid, 2024).

Effectiveness of Fiscal Decentralization: Although provinces have been able to enjoy budgetary autonomy, the issue of effectiveness of fiscal decentralization and the use of education budgets at the grassroots level requires further research (Amin & Soomro, 2021).

Post-COVID Curriculum Adaptation: Some studies reveal that learning in Sindh has suggested the necessity of a responsive curriculum in the post-pandemic period (Gul & Khilji, 2021), but few studies have been found about the manner in which the autonomous teaching wing in Sindh has responded in terms of incorporating health and crisis management into the provincial curriculum.

Private-Public Divide: How provincial autonomy affects control over the large private sector of education in Sindh is less-studied, especially in terms of the imposition of provincial regulation over private schools.

The 18th Constitutional Amendment has literally enabled Sindh to carve its own path towards education which gives it the ability to protect its socio-cultural identity and establish provincial organizations such as SHEC (Abbas & Saeed, 2021; Jamali et al., 2024; Shah and Padda, 2023). The illusion of such provincial autonomy is most evident in the protest against the Single National Curriculum in the province, which serves as the bravery to prevent excesses of the federal state (Abbas and Saeed, 2021; Shaikh and Benedetti, 2024). Nevertheless, a shift in the legislative autonomy to better educational outcomes is undermine by the existence of power politics, institutional interlacing with the federal authorities, and an ongoing gap in equity dimensions regarding school accessibility (Abbas & Saeed, 2021; Shah and Padda, 2023).

To see the promise of the 18th Amendment come to its fullest in Sindh literature proposes a solution of a better executive federalism to resolve the jurisdiction conflict, concerted effort to increase the human and fiscal capacity of the provincial education departments (Ali & Arain, 2025; Faiz, 2023; Shah and Padda, 2023). With Sindh still undertaking its shift towards the concept of smart learning and the increasing professionalism of teaching, the success of these reforms will be based on whether they can access even the most marginalized of the population, whether provincial autonomy will translate into true growth inclusiveness of all students in the province (Akhtar & Kayani, 2024; Muslim et al., 2025; Shah and Padda, 2023).

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Theoretical Framework

The theoretic backbone of this paper is the Multi-Level Governance (MLG) theory as its major part but also with policy implementation perspectives. The easel models provincial autonomy as a condition of government established through the Constitutional Amendment 18th, which instead of being a determinant of educational outcomes on its own. The shift of educational power to Sindh resulted in more opportunities to develop provincial specific policies; yet, the opportunities will be realized only through interactions among various governance levels and institutional participants. To this end, the framework emphasizes distribution of authority, coordination among governments, institutional capacity, agency of stakeholders, availability of resources, accountability and leadership as important processes where provincial discretion is converted to educational policy practice. The framework also presumes that implementing the policies is an active process where the policymakers, education officials, the school heads, the teachers, the parents, and the community representatives influence, negotiate, modify, defend, or limit the reform efforts. Therefore, the paper does not look at whether the provincial autonomy has brought about educational reform or not, rather, how the multi-level institutional processes work to operationalize autonomy and how they influence the formulation of reforms in Sindh.

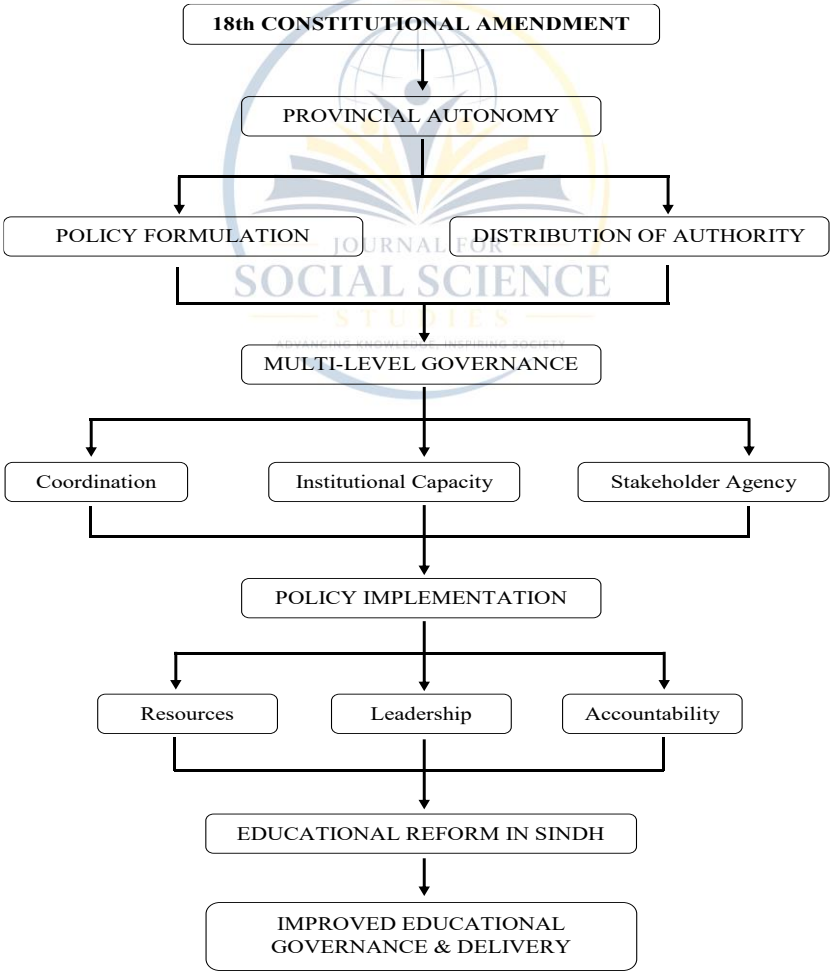


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design.

This paper was written in the above direction by using a qualitative research design that aims at investigating the impact of provincial autonomy on the process of making and ruling educational reforms in Sindh, Pakistan, under the 18th Constitutional Amendment. The qualitative method was believed to be suitable since the research is aimed at knowing the experiences, perceptions, meaning-making and institutional practices of the involved stakeholders in the education policy and reform. Instead of statistically measuring the relationship between pre-determined variables, the study investigates the understanding and experience of provincial autonomy at various levels within the education governance system.

A study perspective was supported by the interpretivist perspective, which presupposes that social and institutional reality is created based on the sense people place on their experiences and interactions. This point of view is especially pertinent to the implementation of an educational policy since the policies are not implemented in a mechanical way; instead, they are oriented towards and acted by the agents who occupy specific institutional and social settings. Recent qualitative studies on education-policy implementation also show the importance of looking at the experiences of actors who translate either policy decisions into practice at local and institutional scales (Karaevli et al., 2022).

A qualitative descriptive design was the research design used to produce a descriptive explanation of how educational policies are developed, conveyed, interpreted, put to action, monitored and experienced in Sindh. The design was suitable given that the objectives of the study are to stay closely tied to the narratives of participants and create an analytical narrative of general trends and variations among the stakeholder groups. The theoretical orientation of the research design was also in line with the multi-level governance and policy implementation studies. Provincial autonomy presents provincial relationships with district institutions, schools and communities, thus determining its educational ramifications demands that relationships between the levels be analyzed, not provincial policy documentation discussed.

Study Context

The research was carried out in Sindh Province, Pakistan as part of the educational governance after the 18 th Constitutional Amendment. The Amendment significantly redistributed the roles of the government between federal and provincial governments and enhanced the role of provinces in such areas of policy that include education. Such transformation is given a significant context by Sindh since educational governance is undertaken in various geographical, socioeconomic, administrative, and institutional contexts. Policies on education made at provincial level need to be disseminated through administrative systems and finally implemented at schools and communities. As a result, institutional capacity variations, resources, coordination of administration, leadership, and stakeholder involvement can become determinants of reforms implementation. In a way the study conceptualizes the implementation of educational reforms as a multi-level process that entails interaction of provincial policymakers and education officials, school heads, teachers, parents and representatives within the community.

Targeted Population

The target population included critical stakeholders who had direct or indirect input in the production of educational policy, administrative, and implementation, and community participation in Sindh. The stakeholder groups were that of the policymakers, education officials, school heads, teachers, parents, and community representatives. Having various groups of stakeholders was intentional. The implementation of educational policy is a task that is based on different responsibilities and experiences at various levels of institutions.

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
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Policymakers will be capable of offering insights into policy making as well as provincial preferences on the other hand, education officials can shed light on administrative mechanisms, and implementation processes. The heads and teachers of schools are able to outline the manner in which the reforms are converted to institutional and classroom practices. Parents and community representatives give local-level insights into local engagement and responsibility as well as the perceived impact of education changes. This multi-stakeholder perspective aligns with the recent qualitative studies that show how valuable analyzing policy implementation is using the experiences of stakeholders who act across the levels of the educational system (Karaevli et al., 2022).

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Such sampling was suitable as the research needed to use participants who had a certain amount of knowledge, experience, or interest in the process of the educational policies and implementation of the reforms. Statistical representativeness was thus not the aim but rather to get accounts that are informative enough to answer the research questions in a comprehensive manner. The criteria used to select participants involved their institutional role, professional experience, engagement in educational reform, experience with provincial education policies and willingness to give comprehensive information. There was an attempt to incorporate the participants who belonged to the various categories of the stakeholders so that the views of the participants at various levels of education governance would be compared. Recent qualitative research of educational policy implementation has effectively applied purposive sampling, especially where scholars aim to find participants who have first-hand experience of policy processes and implementation issues (Karaevli et al., 2022).

Sample Size

The sample was the last, and it comprised of respondents representing the key categories of stakeholders in the research questions. Adequacy of the sample was looked at with respect to the richness and relevance of information of the data and not based on statistical power measures. Since the research covered heterogeneous groups of stakeholders, the focus was made on the adequate representation of the various institutional approaches that were applicable to the research problem. The data collection process (recruitment and interviews) persisted until the data set had enough depth as to allow the research questions and other interviews to cease to provide further significant insight to the evolving thematic interpretation. The final manuscript at least must indicate the actual figures of the exact number of participants in a given stakeholder group on the basis of the figures obtained. There should be no other kinds of estimated and retrospectively constructed participant numbers.

Data Collection Instrument

The collection of data involved semi structured interview using an interview guide that was created based on the objectives of the research, research questions and the theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews were chosen since it offers consistency among participants and gives a researcher opportunity to dive into personal experiences of participants and unforeseen challenges in a deeper way. The interview guide had open-ended questions with regards to participants knowledge on provincial autonomy, educational reforms that were introduced since the 18th Amendment, how the reforms were implemented by the institution, involvement of the stakeholders, coordination of the administration, availability of resources, monitoring and accountability, barriers related to implementation and possible solutions to enhance administrative governance. Semi-structured interviews would have been especially suitable to this study due to their flexibility as the participants had different roles within the

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

education system. The policymakers might talk about formulation of policies, the teachers and heads of school might give a report on interpretation and implementation of policies at school levels. The latest studies concerning education policy have also realized the application of semi-structured interviews to track the experiences of local actors in the implementation of the policy (Karaevli et al., 2022). Also through semi-structured interviewing, the researcher is able to explore emergent issues by probing instead of limiting the participants to pre-set answer choices. Other studies that involved educational researchers and policy-makers have shown that this approach could be useful in examining the complex policy process and institutional relations (Alshammari et al., 2022).

Data Collection Procedure

The process of data collection began with the provision of institutional approval and ethical approval. The potential participants were contacted on the basis of the developed selection criteria and informed about the purpose and methods of the research. In instances where an audio recording was conducted, participants were briefed about the voluntary nature of the interview participation, confidentiality plans, purpose of audio recording and the right to refuse any question or drop out of the research. The interviews were undertaken where appropriate or at a place where the participants could conveniently undertake or communicate effectively. To build an atmosphere that would help to open the discussion the researcher focused on building a rapport and then moved to the main questions. Interviews were held in the language that the participants were most comfortable with. In case the interviews were done in a language other than English, the answers were then translated into English so that they could be analyzed. Audio-recordings of the interviews were made with the consent of the participants. Field notes were also kept up and records made to note of contextual observations and initial analysis thoughts. Other recent qualitative studies incorporating the implementation of educational policies also used semi-structured interviews to get comprehensive narrations of professional interviewees who transform policy into practice (Karaevli et al., 2022).

Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was adopted to analyse the data that were collected in the interview. The reason behind choosing this method is that it offers a methodical but theoretically malleable way of establishing and discerning the designs of meaning throughout the qualitative information. According to Braun and Clarke (2022, 2023), thematic analysis cannot be considered a mechanized process of coding responses; instead, it requires an interpretive interaction with the dataset, where themes get created as the result of interaction of the researcher with the data, theoretically based assumptions, and research questions.

Familiarization with the data has't been left out in the analytical process. The researcher read the transcripts and listened to some of the recordings multiple times as to come up with a holistic picture of the participants stories. This stage was characterized by recording initial observations, recurring problems, contradictions, and possibly meaningful statements.

The second phase was to produce initial codes. Pertinent pieces of text were coded based on substantive meaning and suffering to the research questions. The first codes covered matters like provincial decision-making, communication of policies, institutional capacity, administrative coordination, financial resources, teacher involvement, leadership, monitoring, accountability, stakeholder involvement, barriers to implementation and enabling conditions.

The third step was to come up with candidate themes through analyzing connections among the original codes. Codes with similar or related meanings were put into an overall pattern of concepts. As an illustration, a set of codes related to ambiguous communication and fragmented roles, coordination delays, and ineffective

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

coordination would possibly be part of a larger theme related to institutional coordination.

The fourth phase entailed screening and narrowing down themes. The coded extracts and the full set of data were compared with the candidate themes in terms of whether they reflected coherent and significant patterns or not. Themes with inadequate supporting evidences were altered, merged, split, or eliminated.

The fifth step entailed defining and naming themes. All the final themes were well outlined against the research questions and theoretical framework. The researcher looked at the unique contribution of each theme, as well as the correlations between themes.

The last step had to do with the creation of the analytical narrative. Themes were proposed regarding the questions of the research and justified with the hoped-of quotations of the participants. This analysis was based not only on what these participants said, but also on the meanings, institutional relationships, similarities, differences and tensions that are found within their accounts.

This method is aligned with modern advice on reflexive thematic analysis including theoretical coherence, researcher reflexivity, depth of interpretation, and development of meaningful themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022, 2023; Byrne, 2022).

Trustworthiness

The users of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability criteria were used to address the trustworthiness of the study. Those criteria offer a standard to evaluate the methodological rigor of the qualitative inquiry and acknowledge that the qualitative research is not aimed at gaining statistical validity, as the quantitative research does.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted under the ethical considerations. All the participants were given sufficient information regarding the aim of the research, the type of involvement in the study, the confidentiality agreement and the participant granted the right of dropping out of the study without receiving any penalty. Prior to every interview, informed consent was acquired. The study participants were also educated on the issue of audio recording and how the interview data are to be used. Participant codes and the elimination of redundant data on participants guaranteed confidentiality. Confidentiality was notably considered, as participants were talking about educational institutions, government policies, and administrative practice and difficulties in implementation. Reporting was thus done in such a way as to downplay the chances of people being identified and having potentially sensitive institutional statements being accredited to identifiable individuals.

All data concerning the research was kept in a safe manner and was allowed only to the researcher and certified personnel. The research also adhered to the dignity, privacy, autonomy and voluntary participation of participants during the research process.

Methodological Limitations

The qualitative design offers contextual, interpretive information but cannot be generalized to statistics. The results are experiences and meaning according to the chosen respondents in the within-the-institutional-province-of-Sindh situation. The narrations of participants can also be affected by their professional status, experiences, institutional interests or attitude towards the researcher. The other limitation touches on the changing nature of educational policy. Administrative arrangements and structures, change in policy priorities, may evolve. In turn, the results can be interpreted as context-specific explanation of the implementation of educational reforms at the time of data life cycle. These shortcomings are typical of the nature of qualitative inquiry, which is to come up with a refined comprehension of meaning, experience, and institutional processes, as opposed to approximating effects on a population-level.

This chapter outlined the methodological processes which were followed to examine the provincial autonomy on the implementation of

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

educational reforms in Sindh after the 18 th Constitutional Amendment. It takes an interpretivist orientation and qualitative descriptive design as the research questions involve carrying out an in-depth study focusing on the experiences of stakeholders, the processes that happen within an institution, and the practices involved in implementing policies. The participants were identified through the use of purposive sampling technique, which was based on selection of participants with pertinent knowledge and experience and semi-structured interviews that served as the major source of empirical data. The outcome was interpreted with the help of the reflexive thematic analysis which included both theoretically motivated and inductively discovered codes and themes.

Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, triangulation, and reflexivity were used to cover methodological rigour. Ethical protection was observed at every data collection, analysis, and reporting. The research design was also developed based on the modern suggestions on clear qualitative reporting. Comprehensively, the research methodology gives a proper foundation on exploring the dynamic relationship between provincial autonomy, education policy formulation, institutional practice, and stakeholder experiences in Sindh.

FINDINGS

This chapter has the results of the qualitative research on the role of provincial autonomy as contained in the 18th Constitutional Amendment on the process of educational reform in the Province of Sindh in Pakistan. The discussion centered on the policy formulation, institutional policy process, experience and perception of the stakeholders, and potential actions to enhance educational governance. Semi-structured interviews with central stakeholders involved in educational policy and practice, such as policymakers, education officials, school heads, teachers, parents, community representatives were used as the sources of data generation.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data and identify common recursive patterns of meaning in the stories of participants. In line with the reflexive thematic analysis, the analysis attempted to go beyond the identification of commonly recurring themes by analyzing how the participants constructed their meanings around provincial autonomy, policy implementation, institutional capacity, accountability, coordination, and the participation of the stakeholders (Braun and Clarke, 2022, 2024). According to modern-day advice, themes are expected to reflect consistent patterns of collective sense as opposed to summarizing interview/topic (Braun and Clarke, 2024).

The results are clustered in accordance with the key themes of research questions. Of special concern is the interplay between formal provincial autonomy and its practical application, as in the process of transferring constitutional responsibility, there is no guarantee of identical institutional capability or successful application at the school level. A similar situation is indicated by recent studies on the topic of decentralization in Pakistan, which reveal that there is always a discrepancy between how things are organized on paper and their execution in educational institutions (Arain & Fakir, 2023).

Theme One: Provincial Autonomy, and Extended Provincial Ownership of Education

One is a significant theme about how provincial responsibility in education was perceived to have expanded following the 18th Constitutional Amendment. The participants were supposed to coines provincial autonomy not just as constitutional conveyance of authority but a shifting to the manner in which educational decisions are made and administered.

The accounts must be assessed regarding the perceptions that the participants are having of provincial autonomy as that which has enhanced the capacity of the Government of Sindh to make decisions on educational priorities, policy formulation, design reforms and reacts to local educational state of things. In the cases in which

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

the participants mention higher provincial ownership, these narratives suggest that the devolution has created institutionally the space of making decisions related to education which are context sensitive.

Meanwhile, the dissection ought to differentiate formal authority and substantive autonomy. The constitutional responsibility of education does not always imply that the provincial institutions have adequate administrative, financial, technical and human resources to fulfil that role effectively. The given difference is essential especially in the interpretation of the narratives of the participants as the autonomy might be perceived differently in various positions within the education system.

Recent Pakistani studies are evidence of this difference. Naqvi et al. (2025) also claim that decentralization has given provinces more powers regarding education policy and still poses the difficulties related to institutional capacity and coordination.

The results ought to consequently be an indication of whether the stakeholders perceived provincial autonomy as innovative opportunity of localized reformation, administrative duty transfer, or both.

Increased Provincial Policy ownership

The interviews of the participants should be reviewed to show that the provincial authorities have become more responsible in making decisions on education priorities after devolution. Examples of such evidence can be provincial education policies, curriculum initiatives, recruiting policies, school management reforms, monitoring systems, and other programs initiated by provincial authorities.

This finding is important in that a provincial ownership may empower policies to be more attuned to local socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and geographical circumstances. The results, however, should also look at how this perceived increase in ownership is seen by the stakeholders as being able to achieve meaningful impacts at the school level.

Theme Two: Education Science Reforms that were brought about by the 18 th amendment

The second is the theme of the educational reforms that were introduced in Sindh in the aftermath of an 18 th Amendment. The answers of its participants can be analyzed to understand what reforms they regard as the most important and the way they perceived the purposes of the reforms.

The results must classify reforms based on their substantive areas as opposed to enumerating policies. The areas that may be relevant include; curriculum development, teacher recruitment and deployment, school upgrading, school clustering, monitoring and accountability, teacher development, school management, access and enrolment and institutional governance.

According to a list of post-devolution policy and administrative measures maintained by the official Sindh Education Policy Commission, there were a number of such policies as School Upgradation Policy 2021, updated Schools Clustering Policy 2021, policies regarding the recruitment, and the following lines of implementation prescriptions (Sindh Education Policy Commission). The policy developments offer a significant documentary frame through which we can interpret accounts of the participants.

School Management and Decentralization

Another significant aspect of post-devolution reform is school clustering and associated management reforms. Such programs have the potential to enhance coordination of administrations and spread duties within schools. Nevertheless, their success is conditional on the institutional backup, the leadership skills, training, and dedicated roles.

A study in Sindh provided support in the form of gap between the policy and the practice of decentralization and indicated the need to support decentralization with contextual support, expertise, and training to implement school-cluster reforms (Arain & Fakir, 2023).

The connections between school-level decentralization and participation should thus

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

be studied on whether school-level decentralization was felt to be empowering or rather to be an extra burden to the participants.

Theme Three: Policy Implementation challenges, institutionally

Among the analytically important themes is one that has to do with how provincial policies are converted into institutional practice. The results ought to draw the line between policy making and policy implementation, since the participants might see significant differences between the two.

Accounts related to administrative coordination; policy communication, resource availability, institutional capacity, human resources, training, monitoring, accountability and bureaucracy, processes should be looked at.

Policy–Practice Gap

One of the key concerns that will arise out of the study is likely to be the gap between policy intentions and practicality of implementation. Participants can refer to policies as well planned on paper, but hard to execute due to scarcity of resources, lack of preparation, ambiguity in duties and responsibilities, bureaucratic slowness or lack of surveillance.

This concern is especially pertinent to the situation after devolution as the responsibility is transferred to provincial authorities, which does not necessarily remove the obstacles to the implementation. The latest studies of education decentralization in Pakistan signify an on-going divergence of formal and real engagement of decentralization (Naqvi et al., 2025).

These results must then place a greater emphasis on implementation capacity as a key explanatory variable than deem unsuccessful reform as a policy design issue.

Theme Four: Stakeholder Experiences and Participation

The fourth theme is an area of the perception and experience of educational reform among various stakeholders. It is significant that the various groups of stakeholders are included since there is no single homogeneous policy implementation in the education system.

Education Officials and policymakers

The policymakers and the top education administration are the ones who are nearest to the policy and the administration decisions. Their narratives must be reflected on in terms of provincial perceptions of autonomy, their policy priorities, institutional responsibilities, and the mechanisms of exposure.

Special emphasis needs to be on whether the major challenge in the eyes of officials is considered to be policy design, institutional capacity, resource constraints or implementation coordination.

Teachers and School Heads

Teachers and school heads are at a pivotal point between policy and practice. The way that reforms put across at provincial level are translated into real practice in school management and classroom practice can be known through their accounts.

Where there are reports of inadequate training, resource constraints, lack of understanding of instructions or lack of involvement in the policy processes at the school level, these accounts serve as evidence to the implementation challenges faced in the operational level.

This view is of particular relevance since local responsibility can be raised by decentralization without the need of raising local decision-making power. As the school-cluster reforms of Sindh have shown, it is crucial to investigate what it means to experience decentralization at the schools level (Arain and Fakir, 2023).

Parents/Community Representatives

The views of parents and community representatives relate to the complementary evaluation of the reforms in education as you see them outside of the formal administration systems. Perceptions of school quality, access, accountability, communication, community involvement, and responsiveness of the school establishments should be explored in their accounts.

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

This makes their inclusion a strength as the study shifts the focus of analysis beyond the administrative perceptions of reform to the experiences of individuals who engage with schools as members of the community as well as service users.

Theme Five: Accountability, Monitoring, and Governance

The fifth theme deals with the processes by which provincial educational reforms are monitored and reviewed. Decentralization must involve more than just the passage of authority, it must entail accountability, monitoring of performance, an information flow and taking corrective measures.

The perceptions and views of school monitoring, supervisory practice, performance evaluation, reporting system, transparency and institutional accountability should be analyzed.

The results must be able to differentiate between administrative compliance monitoring, and monitoring as a means to enhance educational practice. Should the respondents use the terms monitoring, mostly in the sense of inspection or reporting, this could reflect a compliance-based model of governance. However, when there are links with feedback, reaching the problem to professionals, evidence-based decision-making, and problem-solving, it can indicate a more developmental accountability approach.

Recent studies about decentralization of education in Pakistan also stress the need of a more robust monitoring, governance systems, and institutional capacity after the transfer of funding of educational purposes to provinces (Naqvi et al., 2025).

Overall Finding

Put together, the new structure of analysis helps point to the fact that the key discovery of the research is not that provincial autonomy has been successful or unsuccessful. Instead, the evidence would be perceived in the light of a conditional relationship between implementation capacity and autonomy.

The autonomy of the provinces has led to much room of institution that the Sindh can develop and implement educational reforms. Whether this autonomy will work, however, depends on the ability of provincial and sub-provincial institutions to move the intentions of policies into long-term practice. The key point of analysis might thus be the devolution of authority vs. devolution of effective implementation capacity. This is in line with the recent Pakistan evidence. Naqvi et al. (2025) also highlight the opportunities brought by provincial control and the persevering challenges of institutional capacity, coordination, and implementation. On the same note, the findings of the study on decentralization in Sindh are that decentralization delegation in form does not automatically lead to the closure of the gap between the policy and practice (Arain & Fakir, 2023).

These results seem to indicate that the significance of provincial autonomy as an independent constitutional action cannot be addressed as a singular constitutional structure, rather as the process of governance accompanying policy strength, institutional capacity, coordination, resources, accountability and involvement of stakeholders.

This chapter introduced the thematic results related to the introduction of educational reforms in Sindh after the 18th Constitutional Amendment. The policy ownership in various provinces, post-devolution restructuring of education systems, the problems related to implementation by an institution, experiences of stakeholders and the governance and accountability arrangements were the main points of analysis.

The results provided indicate that provincial autonomy has even more importance than the constitutional transfer of the educational responsibility. Its implications in practice have to do with the ability of provincial and local institutions to develop realistic policies, to coordinate the implementation process, to supply sufficient resources, to support educational staff, to oversee the process of implementation, to include the viewpoint of stakeholders.

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

The study thus leads to the central analytical problem of relationship between autonomy and capacity of implementation. As much as the provincial autonomy can give an institutional power to reform based on the locally responsive means, in order to reform, administrative, financial, technical and human resources must be available to be utilized. The next chapter explains these findings within the current literature and theoretical background and builds evidence-based suggestions on how to enhance educational governance and the implementation of all reforms in Sindh.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter harbours the results of the research named Provincial Autonomy and Educational Reform in Sindh: A Qualitative Study of Policy Implementation after the 18th Amendment. The paper discussed the role of provincial autonomy in the 18th Constitutional Amendment in determining and working out the sphere of educational reforms in the Sindh. Special focus was put on education policies that have been established following the process of devolution, institutionalization aspects where policy is carried into action, experiences and perceptions of main stakeholders and the indicators that are necessary to ensure that education governance is enhanced.

The results show the 18th Amendment has developed more formal provincial ownership of education in Sindh but that the shift of power has not necessarily implemented the institutional issues that are relative to policy implementation. The indicators indicate that there is a sophisticated interaction amid autonomy, institutional ability, resources, coordination, accountability, and stakeholder participation. The results in this regard are in line with current literature that states that decentralization may enhance the power of provinces but leave a lot of problems with regard to the capacity to impose changes and even the coordination between the governments. Naqvi et al. (2025) is one such author who concludes that provincial autonomy has enabled more opportunities to provinces to develop education policies though the institutional capacity weaknesses have been found to affect the implementation and coordination of education leading to poor educational performance.

Conclusions

This paper concludes that with the 18th Constitutional Amendment, there has been a fundamental change in educational governance in Sindh by enhancing the provincial responsibility in education. Since post-devolution, a number of educational policies and institutional initiatives have been introduced and revised which reflects a significant provincial policy ownership. According to the official Sindh documents, there is still the development of policies in the domains of school upgrading, school clustering, recruitment, monitoring, secondary education and provincial education policy development (Sindh Teacher Education Development Authority [STEDA], 2012).

Nevertheless, the research also finds that such an increase in provincial power did not necessarily result in an efficient practice. The key limitations that were determined in the course of the qualitative analysis are limitations in institutional capacity, resource assets, administrative coordination issues, unequal participation by the stakeholders, and the inadequacies of monitoring and accountability.

The overall verdict is then the provincial autonomy is an essential yet a non-sufficient pre-requisite of the reform of education. The power to make educational choices is created by autonomy but the institutional capacity to execute the choices is needed to bring about a successful reform. The resultant findings then indicate that the subsequent step of the decentralization of educational processes in Sindh needs to be directed not so much towards the transfer of the responsibilities of the mentioned process but rather to be directed at the reinforcement of the systems within the framework of which the specified process will be carried out.

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An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

Recommendations

Strengthen Institutional Capacity

The Government of Sindh is supposed to develop the technical, administrative and managerial capabilities of provincial and district education institutions. Every serious reform must have a plan to carry out which should define responsibilities, resources, timelines, indicators and monitoring arrangements.

Develop Implementation Focused Policies

Implementation readiness assessment needs to be a regular part of policy making. Policymakers ought to check whether schools have human, financial, infrastructural and technical resources necessary to implement major reforms, prior to their introduction.

Strengthen Provincial District Coordination

There should be greater clarity in communication and coordination between provincial departments or between provincial departments and the district education authorities and schools. Distribution of duties ought to be clearly laid out to minimize redundancy and lag in implementation.

Enhance Teacher and School Head Involvement

When significant changes are being implemented, teachers and school heads ought to be consulted in policy making. Their experience can aid in determining the obstacles to implementation and guarantee that reforms are feasible in the real school setting.

Exceed Continuous Professional Development

Teacher training must be an ongoing process, be school-centered and directly connected to reforms. Mentoring, follow-ups support in the form of peer learning, classroom-based surveillance should also be part of professional development as opposed to just short workshops.

Enhance Fairness in Distribution of Resources

It is time to base the allocation of resources on educational need instead of just administrative formula. Additional attention and support should be provided to remote, disadvantaged, and underserved districts with a higher level of infrastructure, staffing, and access difficulties.

Enhance Monitoring and Evaluation

Sindh needs to construct a framework of integrated education monitoring linking the policy goals with the indicators of implementation. Problems and policy improvement should be determined by monitoring data and not by simply ensuring that administration is working on the policies.

Strengthen Community Participation

School governance and accountability should include parents and representatives of the community. They can enhance transparency and assist in ensuring that provincial reforms are aimed at dealing with locally-felt educational issues.

Promote Cooperative Federalism

The federal and provincial governments ought to come up with a means of collaborating on national education priorities without imposing on the provincial governments. The role of federal participation must focus on coordination, technical support, data standards, research and information sharing as opposed to bureaucratic centralization.

Policy Implications

The research has significant implications on educational policy in Sindh. First, the paper shows that the success of decentralization cannot be determined by the number of powers that are given to provincial governments. What is more significant is whether such powers allow making school planning, implementation, accountability, and delivery of services. Second, the results indicate that policy innovation and implementation capacity should be a priority by the Government of Sindh. The fact that there are various policies is not enough that schools do not have the resources and professional competencies to adopt the policies. Third, the reform of education must increasingly become

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

evidence-based. The recent growth of the Sindh Education Policy Commission offers an organizational chance to enhance policy research, stakeholder consultation, implementation reviews and policy review. Lastly, the results suggest that provincial autonomy needs to be coupled with enhanced accountability. Increased authority should be accompanied by clear systems by which authorities and implementing organizations can show how the resources are utilised and whether the reforms are attaining their targeted goals.

Strengths of the Study

The qualitative design allowed the study to delve deep into the experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders, although the results may not apply further to all education stakeholders in Sindh. The research focuses on capturing perceptions in the study setting that is selected and thus is a contextual generalization as opposed to statistical generalization. Moreover, the implementation of policy is dynamic. The policies of education, the organization of institutions, and the priorities of government are subject to change. Future studies should, therefore, investigate the question of whether the patterns of implementation found in this study are maintained in the long-term.

The research mainly focuses on processes of implementation and educational governance as well. Further studies can be used to supplement these findings with quantitative results about enrollment, retention, attendance of teachers, infrastructure, outcomes of the learning process and budgetary spending and disparities within districts.

Directions for Future Research

Further studies must be involved in implementation comparative investigations of provincial education governance in Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to establish the influence that institutional arrangement variations have on policy enactment.

Longitudinal studies would also prove useful since the impacts of the educational reforms cannot necessarily be realized in the short run. The researchers could trace into a number of years the introduction of certain reforms and which factors are influencing sustainability or policy break. Mixed-methods studies may also combine the views of stakeholders in conjunction with quantitative measures of performance in education. This kind of research will give more concrete evidence concerning whether provincial autonomy is linked to quantifiable gains in the access, quality, equity, and learning.

Lastly, further researches must be conducted on the area of decentralization at the district level in Sindh. This especially is crucial since handing over of power to the provincial level does not necessarily imply that decision making has truly become decentralized in the district and school levels. Recent national debate on policy itself has been the concern on whether centralization can exist at a provincial level even though there is formal devolution.

Final Conclusion

The general finding of the study is that the 18th Constitutional Amendment has established a significant institutional base of provincial education autonomy in Sindh yet autonomy is not sufficient to bring change in education. The evidence suggests that Sindh has been able to exercise its augmented authority in the promotions and formulation of various educational policies and structural reforms in institutions. However, the experience of ongoing implementation difficulties shows that decentralization is impossible to be successful with constitutional power alone. It demands strong institutions, sufficient resources, coherent administration, empowered teaching staff, significant involvement of stakeholders and accountability.

Provincial autonomy cannot be successfully achieved by the mere fact of the location of educational authority, but by whether the educational authority is successfully transformed into an institutional capacity and effective educational practice. In the case of Sindh, the educational reform should henceforth cease

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

devolution of authority to consolidation of implementation capacity. This change would allow provincial autonomy to come to be more than an administrative device, but a means of more responsive, equitable and accountable and contextually responsive educational development.

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