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Elements of the educational policy model in schools (a systematic review)

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Abstract:

Educational policymaking is a kind of public policy that is done in order to achieve the goals of the educational system in fields areas such as education and students' health. The purpose of this study was to determine the components of educational policymaking model in education. The method of the present study is systematic review. This is done using the SPIDER framework. The statistical population of the study included all related Persian and English articles published in the years 2010–2021 consisting of 98 articles that are indexed in ScienceDirect, Sage, Springer, Wiley, Eric, and PMC English language databases and SID, Irandoc, and Magiran Persian language databases. The research sample included 52 articles selected in the article screening stage. The number of Persian language references was 12 and English language references was 40. Sterberg thematic analysis was used for coding the selected texts of articles. Results of coding the selected texts of the articles showed that the components of the educational policymaking model are included in 11 themes: quiddity of policy and public policy, educational policy's necessity, quiddity of educational policy, process of educational policy, consequences, factors, obstacles, stakeholders, evaluation criteria, and change in educational policies. Paying attention to all the dimensions and factors interacting in educational policy can lead to better education and improve the quality of education in all dimensions, especially in the field of health education.

Keywords:

Education, health, policy, policymaking, process

Background

Policy analysis can help clarify the issue, select the available policy, the effectiveness, and efficiency of a policy, and ultimately can help in the selection and preference of policymakers and the populace.^[1] In fact, policymaking is a political activity that reconciles the opposing dialectics of order and disorder.^[2] Policymaking involves political programs aimed at achieving social goals. In fact, policymaking reflects the activities and intentions of the government.^[3] Public policy is a goal-oriented process that tries to identify the general problem and put it on the policy agenda to achieve the desired goal by applying continuous monitoring and evaluation operations.^[4] Policymaking

has three characteristics, which are being multidisciplinary, seeking to solve problems, and being normative.^[1] The policymaking process is a set of rational actions that have been performed in a process consisting of necessarily political actions^[5] and, in general, it has four main stages of problem definition, policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.^[1] In discussing the position of policy, in the first stage, an unambiguous definition should be provided for each policy element and policymaking institution.^[4] Education is not only one of the most important social institutions, but also has a significant impact on the performance and quality of work of other organs and sectors of any society.^[6] Creating new capacities and producing knowledge and information and communication technologies in the global economy require education to have a system

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of planning, development, evaluation, and accreditation in order to continuously improve quality.^[7] On the other hand, the centralized management of education in the country and the lack of proper participation of principals, staff, parents, and students in decisions related to how the school is run have overshadowed the country's education system for years and reduced effectiveness in schools.^[8] In today's knowledge-based societies, quality and equal education is one of the fundamental rights of citizens and one of the basic duties of the modern government. Governments try to respond to this demand and task through an educational policymaking process. A look at the performance of governments in Iran indicates the weakness and inefficiency of educational policy. Accordingly, policymaking in education is considered one of the most vital areas of public policymaking by the governments.^[9] Principles of policymaking in education are formed according to endogenous development in a holistic model of policymaking.^[10] Chichekchi,^[11] in a study on reform policy, law, and problems in education policy in Turkey, concluded that educational policy in the republican era (including the contemporary era) is a priority and occurs with modern techniques. A study by Adel Kiss in Romania also reported new challenges and opportunities for national education policy.^[12] Darvishi, while reporting the existing shortcomings of the policymaking system, has identified and prioritized the factors affecting the shortcomings of the regional development policymaking system in Iran.^[13] Ghaedi reviewed the problems of scientific policy in the country. These problems are considered in six stages of the policy process, including problem definition, ordering, formation and preparation, legitimacy, implementation, and evaluation.^[14] Heidari dealt with the need to make the policymaking process more effective in education.^[9] Foruzandeh realized the need for the capacity of politics in public administration.^[15] Akbari studied the proposed systematic model for policymaking in education.^[16] Talebi *et al.*^[17] examined and presented a perceptual model of policymaking in Iranian education. Research in the field of providing an appropriate model of educational policymaking in Iran has not been able to provide a comprehensive model based on regular field research or provide the necessary comprehensiveness of the literature, and there is a huge information gap in this issue. Focusing on the existing issues of education^[8] and the need to address optimal policymaking in government systems such as public education,^[5] this study seeks to ask whether the components of the educational policy model in education can be categorized by a systematic review of the existing research and theoretical literature?

Materials and Methods

The method of this research was a systematic review of studies on policymaking in education, and education

and health promotion in the educational system. In the present study, the SPIDER (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research type) framework was used to develop the components of the educational policymaking model, with emphasis on education and health promotion in schools. Selecting documents in this method is an important step. In conducting this study, the author referred to Sage, PMC, Springer, Wiley, Eric, and ScienceDirect English language databases and SID, Irandoc, and Magiran Persian language databases. Key search words included policy, educational policy, health education policy, educational policy making. Articles published in Persian and English languages from 2010 to 2021 were included in the study. Criterion for including the analyzed articles was that they provide a description and analysis of policymaking and its approaches in the field of education. The purpose of this study was not to provide a comprehensive review of all sources, but the authors sought to provide a coherent picture of the studies conducted. With this explanation, the main purpose of this research is to present the components of the policymaking model in education in the research done and to combine and analyze the results and formulate these components in a conceptual framework. In the selection of articles, out of 98 studies identified at the beginning of the work, 46 studies were omitted based on title or abstract and 52 full-text articles were selected as a statistical population for further review as well as a sample. The number of Persian language references is 12 and English language references is 40. Thematic analysis of Sterberg was used for analyzing the texts of the articles, and codes and themes are extracted and categorized. Sterberg's method consists of five steps: 1. data management, 2. conflict with data, 3. data mapping, 4. development of analysis, and 5. typology.^[18] We went through these steps. In this research, ethical considerations including observing the fidelity and documenting the material quoted from other authors have been considered. As this article is a review, ethical considerations include fidelity in the use of citations by previous authors, which has been of interest to scholars. The research steps are summarized in Figure 1.

This article is extracted from the research of a doctoral dissertation with ethical code SSRI.REC.2106-1067, and ethical considerations include observance of fiduciary duty and documentation quoted from other authors.

Results

Table 1 shows the themes and codes extracted from the studied research references, which are presented in 74 codes and 11 categories. Each of the codes has been compiled from one or more research references based on the inference from the studied texts and according to its meaning in the form of concepts.

Table 1: Codes and themes describing the elements of the educational policy model

Concepts	Themes
The nature of politics and public policy	Politics is a matter of government, ^[2,5,19] the value of politics, ^[20] participation in policymaking is a function of democratic politics, ^[21] pluralism in policymaking, ^[21] negotiating policy differences, ^[21] citizen-centeredness, ^[21] democratic process, ^[21] leadership ^[22]
Necessity for educational policy	Entry of policy into the educational system, ^[11,23] necessity for educational policy ^[20,24]
The nature of policy	It is an official intention, ^[17,25] it is in line with ensuring the survival of society, ^[26] it is in the direction of development and modernization of the society ^[19]
The nature of educational policy	It is participatory, ^[27,28] it is a fluid process, ^[17,28] the solution is central ^[1,28] it has a logical process, ^[28] it is goal oriented, ^[3,4,28] it is something within the organization, ^[11] it analyzes existing policies and creates new policies, ^[11,17] it is multidimensional, ^[27] it is a bridge between the government and the society, ^[26] education and policymaking are inseparable, ^[26] the main motivation is to become democratic, ^[20] low certainty and high uncertainty in educational decisions, ^[29] it is information based ^[17]
Policymaking process	Develop, implement, evaluate ^[1]
Policy consequences	Quality education, ^[20] educational efficiency, ^[9] accumulation of human, social, and cultural capital, ^[9] educational equality ^[30]
Factors influencing policy	Ideology, ^[11] economy ^[11] (international relations, ^[11] internal political communication, ^[26] government educational acts, ^[31] civic groups, ^[32] social networks, ^[32] the dominant cultural discourse, ^[32] policy layers, ^[33] policy sharing, ^[21] schools are strategic, ^[34] policy insights ^[34]
Barriers of educational policy	Nonparticipation of teachers in policymaking, ^[35] limited understanding of the educational policy process, ^[35] inadequate policy training, ^[35] high administrative focus, ^[28,36-38] lack of funds, ^[30,39] specific problems of public policy design, ^[23] lack of perspective, ^[39] inadequate planning ^[39]
Stakeholders and participants	Teachers, ^[19,40] national and local governments, ^[9,17,39,41] political actors, ^[42] experts, ^[17,43-45] parents, ^[17,46] managers, ^[17,46] students ^[17,43,47]
Evaluation criteria	Quality control, ^[48] innovation evaluation, ^[48] function, ^[48] consistency of specific policy components, ^[43] coordination between different educational policies, ^[43] based on goals, ^[24] evidence-based assessment, ^[17,49] media ^[31]
Changing educational policies	A function of the process of changing societies, ^[11] social networks, ^[31] social discourses, ^[31,50] by teachers, ^[51] due to policy implementation challenges ^[17,51]

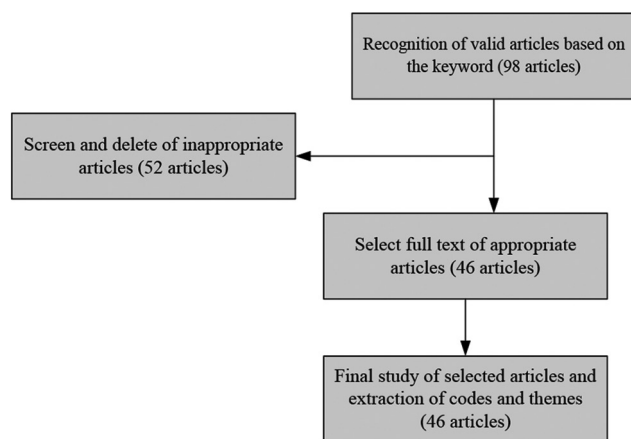


Figure 1: Steps in selecting articles for research

For example, the code “Policy entry into the education system” including “Politics has significantly entered the terminology and decision-making performance in education” has been derived from Chichekchi.^[11]

The code “learning political leadership” is derived from Carter’s article and the phrase “Political leaders are everywhere, but it is not a theory-based model specifically designed for political leaders.”^[22]

The code “For the progress and modernization of society” including “Education policy gives credence to

the development and modernization of society” has been inferred from Ekpiken.^[19]

“Educational equality” code including “Education for all, creating equality through appropriate education for students to learn, effectively provide the government to run schools” has been derived from Benson.^[30]

The “Teacher” code including “Teachers’ experience and expertise may influence participation in the policy process” has been taken from Derrington.^[40]

The code “students” is derived from Adam and the phrase “Students a wide range of actors try to create policy and challenges against it in a constructed way”.^[43]

The code of non-involvement of teachers in policymaking, including “Barriers to policy making that teachers are not used in political opportunities, especially in government leadership” has been derived from Annalee.^[35]

The code “Quality education” including “To achieve quality education, guidelines for fostering sustainable policies” has been inferred from Atenas.^[20]

The code “Policy sharing” including “Policy dialogues are dialogues of interest, which are policy-makers and stakeholders who gather across disciplines to discuss

issues of mutual interest” has been inferred from Sienkiewicz *et al.*^[21]

The code “Strategic school unity” including “Schools are one of the most strategic places” has been inferred from Saito *et al.*^[34]

The code “Lack of sight” including “Institutionalized monitoring systems prevent the implementation of national school health policy” has been inferred from Reeve *et al.*^[39]

Semantic commonalities of the codes have been used to extract the themes based on the codes and the basic concepts. Accordingly, codes that had semantic commonality and explained a single structure were classified under a theme. Table 1 shows the extracted themes.

Discussion

The results of this systematic review study, which was conducted using the SPIDER framework, showed that the educational policy model in schools emphasizing health education could be classified into 11 categories. In other words, the educational policy model with emphasis on health education in schools includes the following elements: the nature of politics and policymaking, necessity for educational policy, the nature of educational policy, policymaking process, consequences of educational policy, factors influencing policy, barriers of educational policy, stakeholders and participants, evaluation criteria, and changing educational policies.

The categories from 1 to 11, respectively, justify the nature of the policy or public policy. The codes of state and public policy, value of public policy, effectiveness of public policy participation in democracy, pluralism in policymaking, negotiation to resolve conflict, citizen-centric, and democratic nature of public policy process explain this categorization. Given that each of these codes in some way refers to the nature and characteristics of policy and public policy, the first category has been formed. Regarding the nature of politics and public policy, the results of this study are consistent with the studies of Hesby,^[26] Atenas,^[20] and Ekpiken,^[19] which showed that politics is a governmental and valuable matter. In order to form the necessity of educational policy, the direct code that explains this category is only one code that has been mentioned in four research articles. Due to the high importance of this code based on the need for educational policy, this code is classified as a separate theme. Concurrent research on the need for educational policy has been presented in the studies of Atenas,^[20] Colwell,^[29] and Chichekchi,^[11] which

have emphasized the necessity for educational policy. The next theme contains codes that explain the nature of educational policy. Codes of application of social sciences, formality of educational policy, in line with the survival of society and its progress and modernization, explain this theme. Given that each of these codes has somehow referred to the nature of educational policy, the third category has been formed. Also, the results of this study regarding the nature of educational policy that educational policy is the application of social sciences and a formal intention for the survival of society are consistent with the studies of Ebro^[32] and Kiki.^[31] The next theme deals with educational policy and its nature. Accordingly, educational policy-making is a fluid, participatory, solution-oriented, goal-oriented, multifaceted and information-based process. Educational policy is formed according to public opinion within the organization and its main motivation is the democratization of society. This process is faced with high ambiguity and low certainty in educational decisions, which is formed by a logical process and is not explicitly distinguishable from education. The studies of Kelsey,^[28] Conaway,^[36] and Yemini^[33] are remarkable in the nature of educational and research policies that are consistent with the results of this research. Most of the researchers who initiated the policymaking process referred to policymaking as an independent step or in addition to setting the agenda to policymaking. Researchers also see policy evaluation as a separate part of the policymaking process, while some researchers have not mentioned the separate nature of this stage. The results related to the educational policymaking process are also consistent with the results of research by Kelsey.^[28] The next theme according to the research reports of quality education, educational efficiency, accumulation of human, social, and cultural capital, and promotion of educational justice is the key consequences of educational policy. Regarding the consequences of educational policy, the results of Heidari,^[9] Atenas,^[20] and Talebi *et al.*^[17] are consistent with the results of the present study. The most important factors influencing educational policymaking are the following: ideology, economics, international relations, domestic political relations, government educational measures, civic groups, social networks, and the prevailing cultural discourse. Various researchers have pointed to the existence of barriers in the areas of administration, resources, problems arising from the nature of policy, as well as the policymaking process, which include the following: lack of teachers’ participation in policymaking, limited understanding of the educational policy process, insufficient training on policymaking, high administrative focus, lack of funding, and specific problems of public policy design. The effective factors and obstacles in educational policymaking as reported by Benson,^[30] Annalee,^[35] Saito *et al.*,^[34] and Meemar^[25] are consistent with the results of the present study. Researchers have

pointed to the role of various actors at the macro and micro levels of the education system. Stakeholders such as the government, macro-level political actors, managers, and local government agencies in the education system, as well as managers, parents, students, and teachers at the micro-level are considered. Also, experts as one of the policy stakeholders can have a high participatory role at all three levels. Participants in educational policy have also been considered in various studies. Yemini^[42] refers to the role of the national government and the local branches of government. Stosich & Bae^[48] has mentioned the role of students, and Khelifi^[45] has mentioned the role of specialists. The results of this research are in line with the results of Adam,^[43] Heidari,^[9] and Talebi *et al.*^[17] Researchers reported quality, innovation, performance, compatibility of specific policy components, coordination between different educational policies, achievement of goals (effectiveness), key frameworks, evidence, and media response as the criteria for evaluating educational policy. Policy evaluation criteria are also consistent with the results of studies by Adam^[43] and Sue.^[38] According to the extracted codes, policy changes can be due to changes in societies, pressures from social networks, expectations from social discourses, teachers' expectations, or from policy implementation challenges that are constantly being considered. Policy change is also consistent with the reports of Chichakchi^[11] and Berger.^[46]

Conclusions

According to the results of the present study, elements of educational policy in education can be categorized in the context of interactive relationships between the nature of policy and public policy necessity for educational policy, nature of educational policy, nature and process of educational policy, consequences of educational policy, factors affecting educational policy, barriers of educational policy, stakeholders, participants in educational policy, educational policy evaluation criteria can be categorized. The results of this review study have been separately considered and reported in previous studies. The main limitation of this research is the systematic review of previous studies and the lack of use of other data collection tools. Consistent with the results of the present study, it is suggested to policymakers in education to pay attention to all the elements of the policy model in policymaking and to consider the share of each in policymaking. It is also suggested to future researchers that the findings of this study be examined through a qualitative study based on interviews with experts.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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