Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 3, Issue 7 (2025)

# Book Review: Educational Policies in Pakistan: Politics, Projections, and Practices (Revised Edition) by Dr. Shahid Siddiqui

Dr. Farooq Abdullah

## Article Details

**Dr. Farooq Abdullah**
Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST)
farooq.abdullah@must.edu.pk

## BOOK INFORMATION

**Author:** Dr. Shahid Siddiqui
**Publisher:** Oxford University Press, Pakistan
**Edition:** Revised Edition (2021)
**Pages**: 289
**ISBN:** 97801907072897

## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Shaid Siddiqui is renowned educationist, applied linguist, researcher, and novelist from Pakistan. He has been Vice Chancellor (VC) of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Islamabad, Pakistan. He has published scholarly work on language policy, critical pedagogy, teacher education and creative non-fiction. He is author of several academic books including Education Policies in Pakistan: Politics, Projections, and Practices. This revised edition provides an expanded and updated analysis of the complex landscape of education policymaking in Pakistan. Building upon the foundation of his original 2016 work, the revised edition includes recent developments in governance structures, and policy responses to global challenges. Through a critical, historically grounded, and theoretically informed lens, Siddiqui exposes the persistent disconnection between educational rhetoric and realities in Pakistan. Dr. Siddiqui brings together academic rigor and insider knowledge to trace the evolution of educational policies from 1947 to the early 2020s. The revised edition not only updates the data and analysis but also intensifies its focus on contemporary ideological, political, and structural constraints that hinder transformative education.

## CONTENT OVERVIEW

The book is structured into several thematic and chronological chapters that explore education policies developed under various political regimes—from the early post-independence period to the democratic transitions and authoritarian interruptions. Siddiqui discusses major policy documents, such as:

The 1947 Pakistan Educational Conference
The 1959 Commission on National Education
The 1972 Education Policy
The 1979 National Education Policy and Implementation Programme
The 1992 National Education Policy
The 1998 Education Policy
The 2009 National Education Policy

The revised edition offers particular attention to more recent initiatives and the government's emphasis on uniform education. Siddiqui also reflects on the impact of global influences such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and how these frameworks influenced national commitments.

## KEY THEMES AND INSIGHTS

## 1. EDUCATION AS A POLITICAL PROJECT

A central theme running through the book is that education in Pakistan has been more of a political instrument than a genuine tool for transformation. Siddiqui illustrates how successive governments—military and civilian alike—have used education policy to bolster legitimacy, promote ideological conformity, or respond to donor pressures, rather than to address the systemic inequities in access, quality, and equity.

He contends that education policies often serve political ends, projecting grand visions with little practical grounding. For instance, all the documents produced—ignore the deep-rooted structural disparities among public, private, and religious schooling systems.

## 2. THE POLICY-PRACTICE DIVIDE

A consistent critique in Siddiqui's work is the chronic failure to implement educational policies effectively. While policy documents are filled with ambitious goals—universal primary education, gender equality, skill development—they often fall short due to a lack of financial resources, political instability, and bureaucratic inefficiency. The revised edition documents how many goals set decades ago remain unmet, including the promise of allocating 4% of GDP to education.

The author underscores how implementation is obstructed by weak institutional capacities, limited teacher training, corruption, and absence of long-term planning. Policies are frequently designed without engaging those who must implement them—teachers, school heads, and local administrators—resulting in poor ownership and accountability.

## 3. IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS AND CURRICULUM CONTROL

Siddiqui pays considerable attention to how curriculum development in Pakistan has been a site of ideological contestation. From the Islamization of education during Zia-ul-Haq's regime to the recent curriculum reforms are often driven by identity politics rather than pedagogical considerations. The revised edition provides a critical analysis of recent reforms, arguing to promote national cohesion, while it reinforces a singular ideological narrative and fails to accommodate Pakistan's linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity.

Moreover, Siddiqui critiques the top-down nature of curriculum development, where central authorities define what knowledge is legitimate, often ignoring critical thinking, creativity, and local contexts. This approach, he argues, not only marginalizes minority voices but also fails to prepare learners for a globalized, knowledge-based economy.

## 4. LANGUAGE POLITICS IN EDUCATION

Language remains one of the most contentious issues in Pakistan's educational policy. The book

revisits debate around Urdu versus English, the neglect of regional languages, and the impact of language choice on learning outcomes. Siddiqui emphasizes how language policies in education reinforce social hierarchies—where English medium schools cater to the elite, and Urdu or regional language schools serve the marginalized.

He warns that the recent push to introduce Urdu or Islamic content in all streams could further disadvantage students in terms of international competitiveness, particularly in higher education and employment.

### 5. GLOBAL INFLUENCES AND LOCAL REALITIES

While acknowledging the influence of international frameworks such as the SDGs, Siddiqui critiques the often-uncritical adoption of global agendas without considering local needs. He discusses how donor-driven reforms sometimes impose models that are mismatched with Pakistan's socio-cultural and economic context. He calls for a localized vision of education that aligns with democratic values, inclusivity, and critical consciousness.

## CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Dr. Siddiqui's revised edition is a remarkable contribution that combines policy analysis with critical pedagogy. His analysis is layered, drawing from policy documents, and empirical research. One of the book's notable strengths is its accessibility. While deeply analytical, it avoids unnecessary jargon and is equally suited for academics, students, policymakers, and practitioners. The use of excerpts from policy documents and anecdotal evidence makes the arguments vivid and relatable. However, one limitation of the revised edition is that while it expands on recent policy developments, it still could benefit from more field-based case studies of implementation (e.g., classrooms, teacher perspectives, provincial variations post-18th Amendment). Also, while the critique is compelling, readers may expect more concrete policy recommendations or alternative frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

*Educational Policies in Pakistan: Politics, Projections, and Practices* (Revised Edition) is a timely, incisive, and essential text for understanding the enduring challenges of educational reform in Pakistan. It reveals how education has been entangled with ideology, politics, and structural inequality, and urges a rethinking of policy through inclusive, democratic, and critical lenses.

Dr. Shahid Siddiqui's work serves as a wake-up call for policymakers, academicians/educators, and civil society to move beyond performative commitments and embrace education as a transformative force. By documenting not just what has gone wrong, but why it continues to go wrong, the book

remains a key resource for those seeking to bridge the gap between vision and reality in Pakistan's education system.

**REFERENCES**

Siddiqui, S. (2021). *Education policies in Pakistan: Politics, projections, and practices* (2nd ed.). Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press