Content Analysis of National Education Policy 2017: Educational Exertions towards Education for Sustainable Development in Pakistan

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Abstract

The core aim of the current study was to examine the vision and priority areas regarding sustainable development defined in National Education Policy 2017. In this paper, the researchers analyzed the National Education Policy Document of Pakistan (2017) by using N-Vivo for qualitative content analysis. Sustainable development has three main key areas, i.e., society, economy, environment. The paper has tried to explain how far the three aspects of sustainable development have been incorporated in the National Education Policy. The content analysis of the policy indicates that some aspects of sustainable development have been addressed in the policy. Although no separate policy plan regarding education for sustainable development has been mentioned, there are instances that indicate integration of sustainable development in the policy.

Keywords: UNESCO, sustainable development, education for sustainable development, national education policy 2017, education policy

Introduction

Investment in our education system is often seen as a key element of the economic development process. The purpose of this development was to reduce poverty, improve the health facility, gender equality in society, develop the democratic system, and maintain political stability. Education plays a major role in the contribution of different developments, as well as to eradicate illiteracy and unemployment.

The world is focusing on sustainable development for fighting economic, social, and environmental problems (Bolis & Sznelwar, 2014). The sustainable development agenda that developed in 1972 was for environmental protection. Then United Nations felt the need to add social and economic areas into sustainable

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development. It was also emphasized that education should be used as a mean to integrate knowledge, skills and attitude about sustainable development among students. The basic purpose of education for sustainable development agenda is to prepare learners for developing a sustainable world for the present as well as future generations (Murphy, 2012).

In Pakistan, free elementary education is the constitutional right of every child. In 2010, the Pakistani Assembly adopted the 18th amendment to reformulate article 37-B of the 1973 Constitution. The 1973 Constitution stated that: "The government is responsible for the elimination of the illiteracy and will provide free compulsory education up to secondary level within a very short time" (article 37-B, Pakistani constitution of 1973). From 2012 law stated that "The state provides all children between the ages of five and sixteen with free and compulsory education as prescribed by law" (p. 31).

Education in Pakistan has steadily improved over the years. According to UNDP (2016), the adult literacy rate is 58%. According to statistics (2014-15), the gross primary school net enrolment rate was 92%. Despite all improvements, Pakistan still ranks 147th in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016). Since the creation of Pakistan, civil and martial governments have taken initiatives to prepare enlightening strategies to increase the literacy rate and enable our youth to tackle society, climate change, poverty, gender inequality and economy problems.

It is notable that educational policies play a vital role in fulfilling the commitments of countries to meet the growing worldwide challenges for poverty, global warming, economy, environmental problems, climate change, social issues, or violence (Lozano et al., 2017). This study examines how Pakistan's Education Policy (2017) is addressing Sustainable Development and trying to make the learner responsible worldwide citizens.

Literature Review

In 1987, when the concept of sustainable development first emerged, the 'Bruntland Commission' published a report known as "Our Common Future". The report is the first effort that linked the issues and productions of economic development and ecological constancy. This report stated the description of the term sustainable development defines as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987, p. 43). In contrast, long before the 20th century, researchers argued that there was no need for trade relations between economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Sustainability is defined as the process of meeting the needs and challenges of the present without destroying or compromising the capacity of a future nation (Hills &

Welford, 2002). It is further divided into three pillars, i.e., Social, Economic, and Environmental, these are also denoted as people, profit, and the planet, respectively (UNESCO, 2002).

Sustainable development is a growing response to the global relationship between growing environmental issues, socio-economic issues. These problems are linked to poverty and gender discrimination as well as different social problems. In addition, environmental protection is needed for a healthy human future (Majoka & Khan, 2017). Sustainable development combines ecological and socio-economic matters (Jickling & Wals, 2002). Although Dale (2001) stated that there are more than hundreds of descriptions of SD, but the world's widely endorsed accepted description is found in the Brundtland Commission report.

The concept of SD is debatable and complex. Numerous efforts to encourage dialogue between science and various partners or stakeholders are defined as sustainable development is understood in completely different ways and contexts. Jickling (1994) states that SD requires a proper concept. The theoretical framework for SD should be reasonable, and progress should be clear to all. Jukkar (2000) claims that in order to improve SD, our path must be more formal and broader. Social justice, economic prosperity, and the development of human skills are the hallmarks of sustainable human societies. Shahbaz (2017) believes that the concept of SD is a process-oriented approach that uses SD concepts to maximize the benefits and uniquely puts them in unique situations and practical situations. Actions are dynamically interdependent and do not appear to be isolated while resolving important issues. Ahmed and Hussain (2014) contended that sustainable development in its physical, economic and cultural nature can be understood and applied by appreciating the dynamic, multifaceted and structural relationship between the global environmental substrate and human societies.

Mensah and Casadevall (2019) claim that sustainable development lies in the process of social reform to increase traditional development goals. A comprehensive or systematic interpretation of sustainable development growth is seen as a modification process guided by a set of SD standards. According to this view, more rational, sustainable development can be linked to the social system for tackling society's problems through education. A sustainable society, largely versatile and intelligent, will last for decades without compromising its physical and social supply structure (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019).

Above all, the debate has indicated that we want development, but on the other hand, we want a sustainable future without the use of capital and resources. McKeown (2003) maintained on the fact that sustainable development is often an abstract intrusion meant at shifting arguments, but at this moment, we are dealing with a disreputable unwritten mystification to render an antinomy of speech. An argument has been

accepted by many scholars that sustainable development is a contradictory term. Sustainable development is only about social welfare, economic growth, and environmental issues.

SD's vision is the cornerstone of the global debate about the human future. In this global debate, the key question identifies a society-based economic performance. It is emphasized that economic growth does not necessarily enhance social well-being. A holistic or universal approach to SD is defined as a modification of a set of standards or values. The SD should theoretically and practically be linked to the education system, in order to improve the social system through training. Sustainable development is known as social change applied to traditional development goals (Caiado et al., 2017).

The literature on sustainable development shows that sustainable development ideas arose when the world realized that the atmosphere, society, natural resources, climate, and related issues are changing rapidly locally and globally. Scientists began to explore and address sustainable development to protect and maintain diversity and the long-term sustainability of the earth (Rampasso, et al., 2019). SD is being addressed at a continuous, more viable, and systematic basis, as well as recommendations are explored. The SDGs are the world's most current economic and sustainable growth agenda. The WCED brief concept of SD means that human needs are fundamental and necessary. Also, economic development must be maintained while resources are shared among developing countries and equality guaranteed by the effective participation of citizens. The word "sustainable development" has become easily recognizable to governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. Since Rio de Janeiro in 1992, although McKeown and Nolet (2013) the words "sustainability" and "sustainable development" have been used as synonyms (p. 76).

Education for Sustainable Development

UNESCO recognizes that education is a tool for developing awareness about SD. Also, UNESCO promoted and provided the impression that there is a need for education that is dedicated to sustainable development. To implement the international plan, UNESCO declared the 2004-2015 periods as the era of Sustainable Education (ESD, 2005-2014). UNESCO argues that the ESD must include input key themes of sustainable development, such as education and climate change, forecasting natural disasters or hazards, and reducing poverty from developing countries through sustainable use of resources (UNESCO, 2005).

The education system includes the implementation of teaching methods that appeal to sustainable development and allow new changes and practices. Teachers consider change agents for sustainable development (Tikly, 2019). For this reason, UNESCO promoted a model of education for sustainable development that focused on providing support (O'Flaherty & Liddy, 2018). Also, it allows students to improve their critical abilities, visualize potential situations, and make joint decisions. Education

is not just about changing knowledge, skills, standards and behaviors, but also about turning individuals into responsible citizens (Singer-Brodowski et al., 2019). This role is primarily in the field of basic education. Early education is an important foundation, and higher education is dynamic to ensure that education makes a useful contribution to a nation (Dlouha & Pospisilova, 2018).

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was emphasized in Agenda 21. This is the first time the word ESD has been formally adopted worldwide, and at the same time, education is seen as a tool to address the concerns of sustainable development (Vargas et al., 2019). Since the concept was introduced at the Rio Conference in 1992, it has been a high priority on the global development agenda in the political area. Arguments and discussions are ongoing between Education and SD for the formation of an association. The multidimensional relationship between education and SD is explained by McKeown. Many advocates support ESD because it is seen as an important and comprehensive strategy to address the challenges of future generations. It regularly adds importance because the ESD function can play a role in dealing with disasters under a practical and defense plan.

People face great challenges at different levels: locally and globally. The rise of social, financial, and environmental problems caused the man to reflect on human actions and seek explanations for the protection of the world and its inhabitants (Owens, 2017). Some of the social issues that stand in the way of social development are human ethics, discrimination, poverty, peace, welfare, justice, violence against the law, and so on. These social problems exist in Pakistan.

As the population grows, environmental problems are increasing. We are more affected than ever by climate change, global warming, and unpredictable weather. Given the technological advances, we have a long way to go to meet the potential challenges we face if we stay up to date. Pakistan is currently facing major economic, environmental, and social challenges such as rising temperatures, deforestation, unstable weather, chronic smog, climate change and pollution, population expansion, construction of more coal-fired power plants, etc. Pakistan is presently facing enormous financial, ecological, and social problems. One of the proposed solutions seems to provide education for a sustainable system in Pakistan so that people are aware of and tackle SD challenges at the individual level. But first, we need to incorporate education policy at the national level (Zaidi et al., 2019).

United Kingdom's educational policy has focused on excellent ESD practices. Civilized education, improved academic performance and building innovative communities and ESD practice networks were the center of attention. Research found that there is less focus on sustainable development in England and Northern Ireland and this has hindered the widespread adoption of best practice in ESD (Martin et al., 2015).

In the Early 21st Century's Action Overview for Sustainable Development in USA, Education policy stated that it would strongly improve and develop community understanding about sustainable development at all levels of education (McKeown & Nolet, 2012). Along with the international community, China has played its part in strengthening the ESD. The ESD was highlighted and implemented at a time when great efforts were being made for environmental protection and sustainable development. However, environmental education is already popular in all sectors of China. In Chinese primary classrooms, ESD progressively entered. Today, sustainable development principles and concerns are applicable to different forms of informal and formal education. China focused ESD in their education policy. China Ministry of Education promote ESD through school education, higher education, in-service teacher's education as well as focus on public education for aware everybody about ESD (Education Policy of ESD in China, 2020).

ESD has been adopted as a national policy in Japan. In the first and second two eras of DESD, ESD was positioned as an essential strategy for Japan's whole education, with UNESCO Schools as the cornerstone of such promotion. Japan focus on improving both the content and availability of UNESCO Schools, and encourage education that leads to the construction of a sustainable society (Nagata, 2017).

Pakistan National Educational Policy 2017 & ESD

In the existing study, the researchers chose the education policy for a detailed analysis to identify and understand the current scenario status of ESD in the Pakistani education system.

Although, Sustainable development has gradually become a priority area for all governments around the world and requires a positive outcome through education, that reduces the upcoming needs of Pakistan to improve the nation's quality of life and sustainability. The method of planning the education policies is considered to be primarily affected politically (Shah, et al., 2019). Nazar, et al. (2018) stated that education policies do not exist in a vacuum, which is an important factor in determining educational outcomes. This policy focuses on the existence, history, and community of the country. Political planning processes are influenced by financial, political, cultural, geographical, geographical, and global contexts (Ali, 2017). Therefore, educational policy is affected by micro and macro influences. Here, we discuss Pakistan's micro-level education policies to address global sustainable development issues in Pakistan and review Pakistan's sustainable growth educational strategy.

The production of education is a complex and evolving cycle to address existing and future challenges. Therefore, the relationship between education and development is fundamental and dynamic. On the other hand, education is used as a tool for creating responsible individuals who can carefully assess their environmental footprints. Knowledge allows individuals and communities to manage their capital

efficiently and to realize the value of their wealth (Prashar, 2020). In this way, nations will harmonize natural and economic wealth and recognize each nation's capacity for contributing to a better environment (Khan, et al., 2019). The goal of sustainable development is to reconcile the cultural, conservative, and social dimensions of the regional and sustainable context. It explores human rights in a wide-ranging context, taking into account today's long-term implications, and includes complete civil society participation in the quest for feasible solutions. The 2030 agenda covers major issues like sustainable use and growth, climate change and sustainable development, sustainable international exchange and innovation, the advancement of development and sustainable development, sustainable development education, environment, and health (Khanum, 2019).

Research Objective

Keeping in mind the above discussion, the objective of the current study was to:

1. Find out the key areas of ESD that have been focused on in the National Educational Policy 2017 by the Ministry of Education of Pakistan.

Methodological Approach

Researchers have performed a qualitative content analysis of Education Policy (2017) paper to examine policy understanding and usage of the word ''sustainable development in the education context''. Researchers analyzed the contents of policy documents using an inductive approach to structure the material. For this purpose, the researcher used the thematic analysis approach. N-Vivo software was also used for quantifying codes. The researchers employed a consensus coding system to decide whether researchers agreed to the coding material by using the same coding scheme to monitor the consistency of the content analysis.

In the current research, qualitative data processing of categories fulfills several functions, from defining, identifying, and explaining code to systematization, organizing, and summarization. The adjustment of the hierarchical sequence and structure of codes is part of a day-to-day routine, particularly in the initial stages of the research process (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2019). Specific codes must be transferred and sorted, and a new parent code must be issued to others. Kuckartz and Radiker (2019) further stated that N-Vivo technically enables to create a code system with up to 10 levels of hierarchy and any number of codes. However, it makes rare sense to explore possible and evaluate several hundred codes in operation about the quality of the results. The N-Vivo software inter-code feature is used here to display the distribution of codes on a category level. The N-Vivo results showed eight major themes in the National Education Policy document (2017) related to SD that discussed in the analysis section.

Analysis and Findings

The researcher analyzed policy through content analysis. The major theme found in National Education Policy (2017) related to ESD is discussed below:

Theme 1: Ensure Quality Education. 19 times discussed the quality of education in terms of ecological, social, and economic perspectives. Poverty eradication, women empowerment and women empowerment have also been discussed in the policy.

Theme 2: 18 Constitutional Amendments. For attaining the goals of sustainable development, betterment, the Pakistan government has been developed 18 Constitutional amendments for the synchronization of all associating units of the country to play an important role.

Theme 3: 2030 Agenda for ESD. Pakistani government focused on the 2015-2030 agenda for maintaining the SD future through education for upcoming generations. This Agenda, mainly focused on increasing literacy rates, empowering women, minimizing the ratio of poverty, and making efforts to achieve the 17 SDGs. Pakistan's education policy has not covered all targets of SD. Some aspects of social, economic and environment focused on education policy.

Theme 4: SD for Society. SD is focusing on the logical and competent needs of society through education and attention. Education needs a practical source that effectively maintains and implement in society. The aspects related to the social dimension included peace, harmony among learners, engagement, society development, skills for learners.

Theme 5: In-Service Training about ESD. Pakistan's government focus on the training of teachers. Teachers are the main agent of change, and they play an important role in developing a sustainable society. Although, no official document is available for developing ESD practices among teachers. Training usually covers the SD aspects integrated manner.

Theme 6: Challenge of Education System. Pakistan has a low budget for the education system and faces many challenges. The existing literacy rate is very low, and we jump from 54 to 60 percent only; in this circumstance low literacy rate is the real challenge ahead of us. We need to think about innovations and technologies so that we can incorporate ICT from and on primary schools. It prepares students for ICT knowledge and offers secondary students the expertise and motivation to work.

Theme 7: International Commitment. Increase cooperation in education and literacy at the regional, local, provincial, global, and multinational levels to meet global and foreign commitments, including SDGs. Pakistan has signed 17 SDGs and committed them in these words. "Every girl and child has access to high-quality early

childhood growth, treatment, and pre-primary education by 2030, to be ready for basic education."

   Theme 8: Quality Education and Private Sector. To maximize the literacy rates, invite the private sectors to regulate growing participation in elementary and secondary schools, and manage access and standard of education with provincial governments.
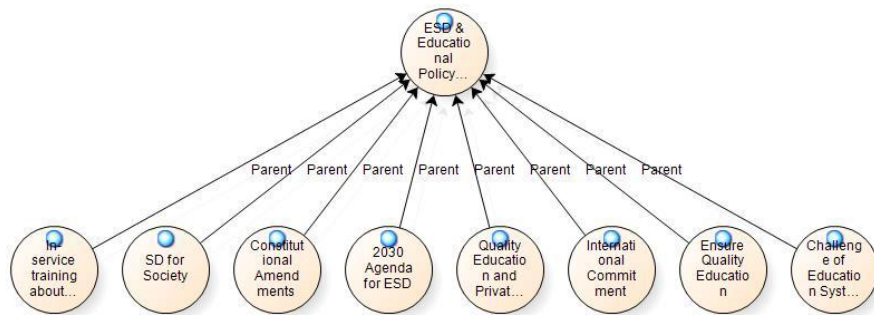
Figure 1. Themes map

   The above figure depicted the main themes that focused on National Education Policy (2017). The purpose of the nodes graphical representation was to conclude the themes of the study in exploring the extent to which national education policy is supporting ESD provision through education in Pakistan.

Similarity among Themes
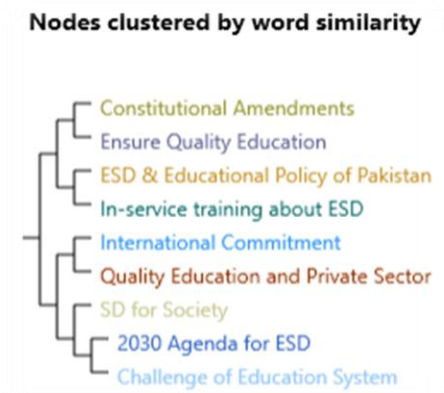
Figure 2. Theme Similarity

   The display above figure shows the association of themes based on their accuracy in the text. The purpose of the nodes clustered word similarity analysis was to

graphically represent the association extent among concluded themes of the study in exploring the extent to which national education policy is supporting ESD provision through education in Pakistan.

Table 1
Word frequency

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
Education	9	1551	3.38
Pakistan	8	391	0.85
Development	11	374	0.81
Sector	6	261	0.57
Social justice	7	257	0.56
Policy	6	248	0.54
Literacy	8	229	0.50
Teachers Training	8	227	0.49
Education System	6	216	0.47
Teachers	8	203	0.44
Quality Education	7	190	0.41
Harmony	7	189	0.41
Economic	7	140	0.30
Skills	10	139	0.30
Educational	11	128	0.28
Research	8	126	0.27
Curriculum	10	121	0.26
Sustainable	11	106	0.23
Social	6	94	0.20
Society	7	85	0.19
Sustainable Development	5	85	0.19
Service	7	83	0.18
Professional	12	73	0.16
Global	6	38	0.08
Environment	11	36	0.08
ESD	3	27	0.06
Indicators	10	25	0.05
Agenda	6	21	0.05
Sustainability	14	16	0.03
Target	6	16	0.03
Educators	9	14	0.03
Environmental	13	11	0.02
Profession	10	9	0.02
Electronic	10	8	0.02

The above table stated the frequency of the keywords used in the National Education policy 2017. The frequency analyses of the keywords support the concluded

theme in quantitative terms. The term sustainability was used 14 times. All the keywords are displayed with frequency, count and weighted percentage (%) along with the key word statement.

Figure 3. Themes Map

Discussion

The study aimed at exploring the status of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Education Policy (2017) of Pakistan. ESD is at the core of UNESCO's initiatives, and it is not limited to education. In fact, it concerns the social, cultural, and institutional dimensions of each country. Education policy emphasizes the values and principles conveyed by sustainable development. It leads to a profound reform of teaching practices. Policy ensures the involvement of various partners at all levels (local, regional, national and international) and in all fields (governments, civil society, NGOs, private sector) is introduced.

The study focused on the education policy of 2017 to see to what extent ESD was implemented in the education sector. At the national level, the Ministry of Education provides a policy framework for formal education and mobilizes resources (including providing knowledge and information to educators and trainers to put ESD into practice). Although, in the Education Policy (2017) of Pakistan, there is no clear

framework for the implementation of ESD. The sustainability term discussed in education policy to ensure success and sustainability of the teachers in the schools, specialized teacher training programs, in technical and vocational training, will be established. The results of the content analysis were presented in terms of study and previous policy analysis.

Content analysis of education policy document showed that the term Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was mentioned only one time in terms of teachers' training and capacity building. Education policy was more focused on social dimension such as social justice, social development, social harmony, social disparities, social progress, social engagement of learner, democratic behaviour, peace and social responsibility among learner, social change, etc. Moreover, there is no framework for ESD implementation. Also, no teaching standard meets the definition of ESD understanding for teachers. Similarly, the economic and environmental dimension is somehow focused in terms of ESD in education policy.

In terms of the economic dimension of ESD, Pakistan ought to have one of the youngest countries in the world by 2025. To improve the economic standard of the country, population growth should address the challenges of youth employment, progress, quality of life, and basic infrastructure. If viewed as an incentive, this population is a profit but in the case of Pakistan still suffering from poverty. This would pose greater difficulties.

In terms of the environmental dimension, the policy document focused on saving the earth from unsustainable activities such as waste of water and other natural resources. The atmosphere is focused; climate change is regarded as a challenge to the country's survival. The results occur throughout the world. This policy document recognized the immediate need to address the climate change crisis. Also, new opportunities are recommended, such as green energies, expanded ability for the vulnerable condition to prevent more climate degradation. This vision also emphasizes the fair use of natural resources. However, for ESD implementation, the government has not provided any framework.

Pakistan has always been involved in meeting much of Pakistan's world development goals, such as educating all people, eliminating polio and tackling climate change, and reducing poverty through educating people under the 2015 Paris Agreement (UNFCC). However, Pakistan has no practical plan for coping with the emergence of several threats on various fronts in terms of ESD. Education is the solution to all these challenges to society's survival. In this situation, the Pakistan Planning Commission needs to take the initiative to establish a roadmap for approaching the educational goals of sustainable development from a sustainable development viewpoint. In the policy document, teacher training was discussed under DESD. ESD was not part of the country's teacher education reform. Moreover, the role

of teachers as agents of ESD implementation was not highlighted in the policy document (Education Policy, 2017). Similarly, education policy documents have not given any suggestion for the implementation of ESD.

The education policy document states: without encouraging high-quality schooling, the dream of a knowledge-based economy cannot be accomplished. Particular focus is placed on science and technological education. Higher education focuses on creating the expertise and skills needed to build a wisdom-based economy to be profitable worldwide (Education Policy, 2017).

The previous research study identified that education needs to be updated, and the method needs to be modified for DESD. It is stated, to increase the standard of education, the curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure, assessment method is modified (Viennet & Pont, 2017).

Allen and Bull (2018) argued that the agenda 2025 states these changes will allow people to build and enhance innovative, critical abilities and problem-solving capabilities across the education system. Sustainability development improves society, and it can be strengthened through rational thinking and help in making responsible citizenship (Ramzan & Khan, 2020). The country's national policy document on Pakistan Vision 2025 includes several components of sustainable development, but no official document on ESD as a mechanism is present for social change, economic betterment, and improves the quality of life on Earth (Ahmad & Haq, 2021). International policy analysis of ESD studies discussed in literature.

In the context of Pakistan, no document is available to put ESD into practice, while NGOs facilitate the exchange of good practices (informal education); the media raise public awareness of sustainable development and ESD. However, these successes do not exhaust the subject, and the challenges remain numerous: education for sustainable development is not yet integrated in a coherent manner in sectorial policies; the position of ESD in primary education is very diverse (major gaps in terms of accessibility and quality of programs). Due to the lack of training of educators at the primary level, educators do not always have the skills to include ESD in their education (Vare et al., 2019).

More efforts need to be made to integrate ESD into technical and vocational education and training in a formal and informal context. It is important to realign education and training in the private and public sectors so that education defines the skills necessary for the implementation of ESD, developing critical skills, decision making, and problem-solving. Finally, the capacities of all the stakeholders that do work in terms of ESD must be widened.

Conclusion

To build a sustainable environment, Pakistan should fully reshape its educational system for making ESD a part of our daily practices through education. Many of the past educational documents in Pakistan concerning building a sustainable world have been influenced by the principles and ideals of Islamic philosophy. The latest policies tackle economic concerns, social development, and national identity building.

For several factors, not all existing government documents accomplished their goals. In the Education Policy Document (2009) when the word sustainable development term was defined and discussed in terms of global responsibility and also emphasized on the need to reorientation of the education system. The 2009 policy also takes economic development into account when supporting the role of higher education. The Current Education Policy (2017) focused on the social dimension as well as economic and environmental dimension, but still, not a single framework was provided by the government for implementation.

This article seeks to connect Pakistan's education policy with ESD. The Pakistani education system and its strategies are question marks to address local and global challenges. From 2015 to 2030, due to growing global challenges in environment, population, health, and education, this period was considered to be the key to meeting international commitments of SD at all levels. However, this sparked a separate debate on the real situation. If we want to achieve 2030 agenda of ESD, there is a need to develop the concrete policy action and to develop a policy and action plans by involving all stakeholders (teacher educators, curriculum and pedagogy experts) for implementation.

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