

The Dominance of Governance in Educational Management Policy: A Systematic Literature Review of the Effectiveness of Policy Implementation

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyse trends and patterns in education policy and management research, with a focus on how different policy approaches contribute to educational effectiveness. The study is motivated by the growing complexity of education systems and the need to understand the role of management dimensions in policy implementation. This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on PRISMA 2020 guidelines. A total of 24 articles published between 2022 and 2026 were selected from the ScienceDirect database using Boolean-based keyword combinations. The selected studies were analysed using data extraction and classification frameworks, including policy type, management aspects, governance level, methods, and outcomes. The results indicate that governance-based policies dominate the literature (10 out of 24 articles), followed by policy reform (7 articles), accountability (4 articles), and financing (2 articles). In terms of management aspects, governance systems and leadership emerge as the most influential dimensions in determining policy effectiveness. Most studies are concentrated at the macro and meso levels, highlighting the importance of systemic and institutional factors. The findings also reveal that policy effectiveness is closely linked to governance quality and leadership capacity rather than policy design alone. This study highlights the need for integrated policy and management approaches in education systems. However, the findings are limited by the scope of the database and the selected journals, which may affect generalizability. Future research should incorporate broader databases and comparative analyses across contexts.

Key words: Education Policy, Education Management, Governance, Policy Effectiveness, Systematic Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Educational management policy constitutes a strategic instrument for enhancing the quality of education systems and improving the effectiveness of institutional governance within educational organizations (Díez et al., 2020). Numerous studies have demonstrated that the quality of educational management is significantly associated with students' academic achievement, the effectiveness of school organizations, and the overall quality of educational services (Fauzi et al., 2023; Parveen et al., 2024;

Zakaria et al., 2025). In the global context, the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 indicate that the average scores of OECD countries reached 472 in mathematics, 476 in reading literacy, and 485 in science. In contrast, Indonesia recorded substantially lower average scores, with 366 in mathematics, 359 in reading, and 383 in science (PISA 2022 Results Factsheets Indonesia PUBE, 2023; *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I)*, 2023). These findings indicate a persistent gap in educational quality compared to international benchmarks. This condition suggests that the effectiveness of educational policies and management remains a critical challenge in improving students' learning outcomes.

To address these challenges, many countries have implemented education management-based policies, such as educational decentralization, school-based management (SBM), and governance reforms, aimed at enhancing school autonomy, improving decision-making efficiency, and strengthening institutional accountability (Berhanu & Gobie, 2023). Several studies have reported that these policies contribute to improvements in learning quality, organizational effectiveness, and school performance, particularly when supported by strong leadership capacity and effective governance (Damri et al., 2023; Irfansyah et al., 2025; Juharyanto et al., 2023; Wiyono et al., 2023). However, other studies have shown that the implementation of the same policies does not always produce consistent outcomes, as it is influenced by contextual factors, human resource capacity, stakeholder support, and the organizational readiness of educational institutions (Amini et al., 2026; Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022; Syofyan et al., 2024).

In the Indonesian context, the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) has become one of the key strategies in education governance reform. However, existing studies indicate that its implementation continues to face significant challenges, including limited resources, weak managerial capacity, low levels of community participation, and inconsistencies in policy implementation at both the school and regional levels (Amini et al., 2026; Berhanu & Gobie, 2023; Yohanes et al., 2026). Recent studies also indicate that challenges related to human resource management, school program planning, and the effectiveness of decision-making processes remain significant barriers to the optimal achievement of educational policy objectives (Faizuddin et al., 2022; Ghufon et al., 2024).

Although research on educational policy and management has continued to expand in recent years, most studies remain focused on specific cases, regions, or individual policies in isolation. As a result, the findings tend to be fragmented and fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of policy patterns, implementation effectiveness, and the factors that determine the success or failure of educational

management policies. Moreover, the limited availability of systematic syntheses integrating empirical findings has weakened the evidence base required to support data-driven and research-informed educational policymaking (Alonzo et al., 2024; Barthakur et al., 2025; Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025).

Based on the identified gaps, this study aims to conduct a systematic analysis of the literature on educational management policies using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The study focuses on identifying dominant policy patterns, analyzing the effectiveness of policy implementation, and evaluating the factors influencing the success and failure of educational management policies. Ultimately, this study is expected to strengthen the scientific evidence base for developing more effective, adaptive, and context-sensitive education policies, particularly in addressing the challenges of improving educational quality in Indonesia and other developing countries.

Unlike previous systematic reviews that primarily summarize findings on educational policy implementation, this study develops an integrated conceptual framework that synthesizes the relationships among policy types, implementation levels, management dimensions, and educational outcomes. By combining these four analytical dimensions within a single synthesis model, the study offers a more comprehensive perspective on how governance and management mechanisms jointly shape policy effectiveness. This framework extends existing literature by providing a structured foundation for future empirical research and evidence-informed educational policy evaluation.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the literature related to educational management policies and the effectiveness of their implementation. The SLR method was selected for its ability to provide a comprehensive synthesis based on empirical evidence while minimizing bias in the processes of literature selection and analysis (Azarian et al., 2023; Pandey et al., 2024).

The research process follows the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and accountability at each stage of article selection.

1. Operational Definition of Implementation Level

In this study, the level of educational policy implementation is classified into two main categories, namely the macro and meso levels, based on the dominant unit of analysis employed in each study. This classification is derived through a content coding

process focusing on the primary research emphasis, rather than merely geographical location or national context.

The macro level refers to studies that examine policy at the broader education system level, including national policies, educational reforms, system governance, education financing, system accountability, and the distribution of access and learning outcomes across regions. Studies at this level typically position the state or education system as the primary unit of analysis.

In contrast, the meso level encompasses studies that focus on policy implementation at the institutional level, particularly within schools. Key areas of analysis include school leadership, institutional management, organizational culture, and the processes of policy adaptation at the operational level. The primary unit of analysis at this level is the school or educational organization.

The classification process was conducted manually through content analysis of each article's research objectives, methods, and unit of analysis. To enhance consistency, the coding process was guided by predefined operational definitions established prior to the analysis.

2. Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using the ScienceDirect database by applying a combination of Boolean-based keywords as follows:

("education policy" OR "education reform" OR "education governance") AND ("school management" OR "educational leadership" OR "education system management") AND ("policy effectiveness" OR "learning outcomes" OR "education quality")

The inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in this study were as follows:

Inclusion

Research articles

Published in the 2022–2026

In English language

Available in open access/open archive

Discusses education policies, management aspects, and their impact on the education system

Exclusion

Studies that focus on classroom practices (classroom practice)

Individual perception-based study (teacher/student) without policy context

Pure psychological or pedagogical studies

Articles that do not discuss outcome education system

3. Article Selection Process (PRISMA)

Based on the initial search, a total of 113 articles were retrieved from the ScienceDirect database. In addition, a snowballing technique was applied by examining relevant references, which yielded 6 additional articles, resulting in a total of 119 articles at the identification stage.

During the screening phase, duplicate records were removed using reference management software (Mendeley), eliminating 38 articles and leaving 81 articles. Title screening was subsequently conducted, excluding 33 articles that were not relevant to educational policy and management. This was followed by abstract screening, which resulted in the exclusion of 7 articles that did not explicitly address policy or management aspects. As a result, 41 articles remained for further assessment.

The eligibility stage involved a full-text review of the 41 articles. A total of 5 articles were excluded due to methodological weaknesses, such as unclear research design and low data validity. No articles were excluded due to access limitations. Consequently, 36 articles met the eligibility criteria.

Finally, a conceptual evaluation was conducted to ensure alignment with the research focus. A total of 24 articles were selected as the primary sources for analysis, while 12 articles were excluded at this stage for failing to meet the conceptual criteria, including not being policy-based, focusing solely on the individual level, and not addressing system-level outcomes. The overall process is illustrated using a PRISMA flow diagram.

Table1. Article Selection Process Summary Table (PRISMA)

Stage	Selection Process	(n)	Keterangan
Identification	Records identified	113	Open access, 2022–2026
	Additional records (snowballing)	(+) 6	Related references
	Total records	119	
Screening	Duplicate removal	38 (-)	Mendeley
	Records screened	81	
	Title screening	33 (-)	Policy & Management
	Abstract screening	7 (-)	Policy & Management
	Records after screening	41	
Eligibility	Full-text assessed	41	
	Excluded: weak methodology	5 (-)	Not scientifically valid
	Excluded: no access	0 (-)	Paywall
	Eligible studies	36	Articles worth analyzing
Included	Final studies included	24	Articles used in SLR analysis

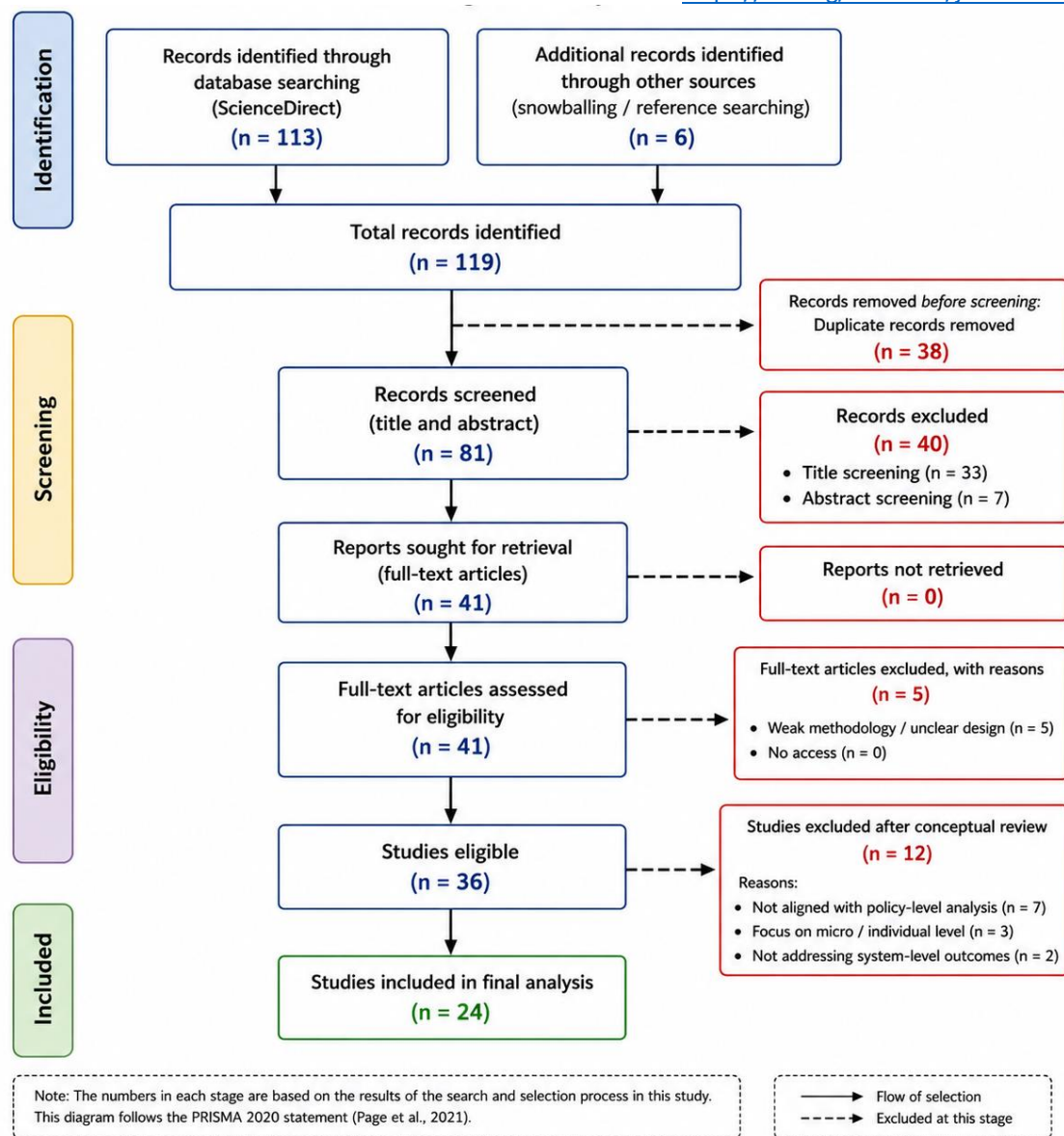


Figure 1. Diagram Systematic Literature Review

4. Data Extraction

Data extraction was performed systematically on selected articles using a standardized table format. The extracted information includes:

Article identity (author, year, and country)

Types of education policies (policy reform, governance, accountability, decentralization, financing)

Management aspects (leadership, resource management, governance system, institutional management)

Levels of analysis (macro and meso)

Research methods

Outcome policy (learning outcomes, quality, equity, efficiency, access)

Main findings

This approach allows for the comparative identification of patterns, trends, and relationships between policies, management, and the effectiveness of education systems.

Table 2. Data Extraction

Author	Country	Policy	Management	Level	Method	Outcome	Key Findings
(Anlimachie, 2026)	Ghana	Policy Reform	Governance System	Macro	Qualitative	Equity	Culture-based policies increase educational inclusion
(Johansson & Årlestig, 2022)	Swedia	Governance	Leadership	Meso	Qualitative	Quality	School leadership determines policy implementation
(Damoah & Omodan, 2022)	Afrika Selatan	Policy Reform	Governance System	Macro	Qualitative	Quality	Policy effectiveness depends on local implementation
(Kemethofer et al., 2023)	Eropa	Governance	Resource Management	Macro	Quantitative	Efficiency	Data governance improves system efficiency
(Moore, 2024)	India	Accountability	Governance System	Macro	Quantitative	Efficiency	Teacher absenteeism is related to weak control systems
(Jean-Baptiste, 2023)	Global	Policy Reform	Governance System	Macro	Review	Equity	Equality policies are not effective without structural support
(Angrist et al., 2025)	Global	Financing	Resource Management	Macro	Quantitative	Learning Outcome	Educational investment has a significant impact on learning outcomes
(Asadullah et al., 2025)	ASEAN	Policy Reform	Governance System	Macro	Review	Quality	Top-down reforms are not always effective
(Agbadjé, 2026)	Benin	Policy Reform	Institutional Management	Macro	Quantitative	Quality	System effectiveness

							depends on managerial factors
(Dunlop & Bekkouche, 2024)	Global	Governance	Governance System	Macro	Review	Access	Access to education is influenced by global policy structures
(Joshi et al., 2025)	India	Accountability	Leadership	Meso	Mixed	Quality	Teacher performance is influenced by the evaluation system
(Gale et al., 2022)	Australia	Policy Reform	Governance System	Macro	Qualitative	Equity	Inclusion policies increase access to education
(Pearnpitak, 2026)	Thailand	Policy Reform	Institutional Management	Macro	Quantitative	Access	Dropout policy is influenced by economic factors
(Ndaula et al., 2025)	Afrika	Financing	Resource Management	Macro	Quantitative	Learning Outcome	Funding determines the quality of learning
(Ehren & Hwa, 2025)	Global	Accountability	Governance System	Macro	Review	Quality	Accountability system improves the quality of education
(Jailobaeva et al., 2023)	Asia	Accountability	Governance System	Meso	Qualitative	Equity	Community participation increases accountability
(Nadeem, 2024)	Pakistan	Governance	Leadership	Meso	Qualitative	Quality	Distribution leadership increases effectiveness
(Laursen et al., 2025)	Eropa	Governance	Leadership	Meso	Mixed	Quality	Instructional leadership impacts learning outcomes
(Larey, 2024)	Global	Governance	Leadership	Meso	Qualitative	Efficiency	Innovative leadership improves institutional efficiency
(Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023)	Asia	Governance	Institutional Management	Meso	Quantitative	Quality	Service management affects the

							quality of education
(Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025)	OECD	Governance	Leadership	Macro	Quantitative	Equity	Leadership influences educational gaps
(Eryilmaz, 2025)	OECD	Governance	Leadership	Macro	Quantitative	Equity	Leadership policies impact the distribution of learning outcomes
(Alene et al., 2025)	Afrika	Governance	Leadership	Meso	Qualitative	Quality	Adaptive leadership improves policy implementat ion
(Ewulley et al., 2023)	Afrika	Governance	Institutional Management	Meso	Qualitative	Quality	Organization al culture influences the effectiveness of policies

To enhance the reliability and consistency of the coding process, all included studies were coded using predefined operational definitions developed before data extraction. The coding procedure followed a structured coding protocol covering policy type, management dimension, implementation level, research method, and policy outcomes. After the initial coding, the extracted data were reviewed and cross-checked to ensure consistency across all classifications. Any ambiguities identified during the review process were resolved through iterative comparison with the predefined coding framework until conceptual agreement was achieved.

5. Study Quality Assessment

The quality assessment of the article is carried out critically with reference to the principles Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). Evaluation is carried out on several main aspects, namely:

Clarity of research objectives

Methodology design suitability

Validity and reliability of data

Accuracy of analysis techniques

Relevance of findings to the context of education policy

Through this approach, this research not only identifies dominant trends, but also evaluates the effectiveness of policies in various contexts and reveals research gaps.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Distribution of Articles by Policy Type

Based on the extraction of 24 analyzed articles, governance-based policies emerged as the most dominant category, accounting for 11 out of the 24 studies. These studies consistently emphasize the central role of educational governance in enhancing system effectiveness, particularly through strengthened leadership, institutional structures, and coordination among educational stakeholders (Alene et al., 2025; Dunlop & Bekkouche, 2024; Eryilmaz, 2025; Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; Ewulley et al., 2023; Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Kemethofer et al., 2023; Larey, 2024; Laursen et al., 2025; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023; Nadeem, 2024).

The policy reform category demonstrated a substantial contribution, with 7 studies focusing on systemic transformation aimed at improving access and equity in education. This strand of literature is predominantly situated in developing country contexts, highlighting that policy reform effectiveness depends not only on policy design but also on the readiness of management systems to support implementation (Agbadjé, 2026; Anlimachie, 2026; Asadullah et al., 2025; Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Gale et al., 2022; Jean-Baptiste, 2023; Pearnpitak, 2026).

Accountability-based policies were identified in 4 studies, underscoring the importance of evaluation mechanisms, oversight, and stakeholder participation in improving educational quality and effectiveness (Ehren & Hwa, 2025; Jailobaeva et al., 2023; Joshi et al., 2025; Moore, 2024). In contrast, financing-based policies were the least represented category, appearing in only 2 studies. Despite their limited number, these studies indicate that resource allocation has a direct impact on learning outcomes and overall educational quality (Angrist et al., 2025; Ndaula et al., 2025).

The distribution of policy types indicates that governance has become the dominant analytical perspective in recent educational management research. In contrast, financing-related policies remain relatively underrepresented, suggesting opportunities for future investigation into the relationship between educational investment and policy effectiveness.

2. Management Aspects in Education Policy

Based on the analysis of 24 reviewed articles, the findings indicate that the governance system is the most dominant management dimension in studies on educational policy. Most studies emphasize that the effectiveness of educational policies is strongly influenced by the quality of governance systems, including coordination mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, and decision-making structures

within the education system (Anlimachie, 2026; Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Ehren & Hwa, 2025).

In addition to governance, leadership emerges as another critical dimension in the analyzed literature. The studies reveal that leadership, both at the institutional and system levels, plays a strategic role in determining the success of policy implementation (Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Laursen et al., 2025; Nadeem, 2024). Although leadership is often positioned as part of governance systems, this study treats it as a distinct dimension to highlight the role of actors in policy implementation.

Meanwhile, institutional management is identified in several studies that underline the importance of organizational management in supporting policy implementation. The findings suggest that the quality of institutional management, including organizational culture and service systems, significantly affects policy outcomes at the operational level (Agbadjé, 2026; Ewulley et al., 2023; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023).

On the other hand, resource management appears less frequently in the literature, yet remains a crucial dimension in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of education systems. The studies indicate that effective resource management, including financial and operational support resources, contributes to improved learning outcomes and overall system efficiency (Angrist et al., 2025; Kemethofer et al., 2023; Ndaula et al., 2025). Governance systems and leadership emerge as the most influential management dimensions supporting successful policy implementation. Although resource management appears less frequently in the literature, it remains an important enabling factor for achieving effective educational outcomes.

3. Distribution Based on Implementation Level

The analysis of the 24 selected articles indicates that the implementation of educational policy can be classified into two primary levels: the macro level (system-level) and the meso level (institutional-level). This classification is based on the primary analytical focus of each study, particularly the unit at which policy implementation is examined, whether at the broader education system level or within individual educational institutions. The coding results show that 15 out of 24 articles (62.5%) focus on the macro level, while 9 articles (37.5%) examine the meso level, indicating a clear dominance of systemic approaches in the analyzed literature.

The predominance of macro-level studies suggests that educational policy is largely conceptualized as a systemic instrument operating through national governance mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, financing structures, and large-scale reforms. At this level, policy effectiveness is typically assessed using aggregate indicators such as access to education, system efficiency, and equity of learning outcomes across regions.

Studies by Angrist, Asadullah, and Dunlop highlight that system-level change is highly dependent on policy design and the institutional capacity of the state to ensure consistent implementation across diverse contexts (Angrist et al., 2025; Asadullah et al., 2025; Dunlop & Bekkouche, 2024).

In contrast, meso-level studies focus on policy implementation within educational institutions, particularly schools as the primary unit of analysis. This body of research emphasizes how policies are interpreted, adapted, and enacted through school leadership, managerial capacity, organizational culture, and the participation of local actors. Studies such as Johansson & Ärlestig, Joshi, Nadeem, Laursen, and Ewulley demonstrate that policy success is strongly shaped by leadership quality and the ability of institutions to translate systemic policies into operational practices (Ewulley et al., 2023; Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Joshi et al., 2025; Laursen et al., 2025; Nadeem, 2024).

The distinction between macro and meso levels indicates that educational policy implementation is not linear, but rather shaped by the interaction between system-level policy design and institutional-level implementation capacity. Meso-level studies reveal that variations in policy outcomes across schools can occur even within the same policy framework, largely due to differences in managerial capacity, internal resources, and organizational context (Alene et al., 2025; Jailobaeva et al., 2023; Larey, 2024; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023).

The dominance of macro-level research reflects a broader tendency in the educational policy literature to prioritize systemic perspectives over the dynamics of implementation at the school level. This imbalance suggests that policy design has been more extensively examined than the processes through which policies are enacted in practice. Therefore, meso-level studies are essential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how educational policies function in real-world contexts (Ehren & Hwa, 2025; Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; Ewulley et al., 2023; Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Nadeem, 2024). The reviewed studies demonstrate a stronger emphasis on macro-level policy analysis than on institutional implementation processes. This imbalance indicates the need for future research that integrates both systemic and school-level perspectives to better understand policy effectiveness.

4. Education Policy Outcomes

The analysis of 24 articles shows that education policy outcomes can be classified into five main categories: quality, equity, access, efficiency, and learning outcomes. This classification was obtained through a thematic coding process based on outcome indicators explicitly reported in each study.

To clarify the relationship between policy type, implementation level, management aspects, and resulting outcomes, the following synthesis matrix was developed:

Table 3. Educational Policy Outcome Matrix

Policy	Level	Management	Outcome	Key Findings	Reference
Governance	Makro	Governance system	Quality	The quality of education is influenced by the governance structure and implementation of systemic policies	(Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Kemethofer et al., 2023)
Governance	Meso	Leadership	Quality	School leadership contributes to the effectiveness of policy implementation	(Alene et al., 2025; Laursen et al., 2025; Nadeem, 2024)
Policy Reform	Makro	Governance system	Equity	Policy reforms have not been consistent in improving the equality of educational outcomes	(Anlimachie, 2026; Asadullah et al., 2025; Gale et al., 2022; Jean-Baptiste, 2023)
Policy Reform	Makro	Institutional management	Access	Access to education is influenced by policy design and socio-economic conditions	(Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Pearnpitak, 2026)
Accountability	Makro–Meso	Governance system	Quality	Educational accountability improves quality if supported by institutional capacity	(Ehren & Hwa, 2025; Jailobaeva et al., 2023; Joshi et al., 2025; Moore, 2024)
Financing	Makro	Resource management	Learning outcomes	Education financing is related to improving learning outcomes	(Angrist et al., 2025; Ndaula et al., 2025)
Governance	Meso	Institutional management	Quality	School management and organizational culture influence the quality of policy implementation	(Ewulley et al., 2023; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023)
Governance	Makro	Resource management	Efficiency	Resource management contributes to the	(Kemethofer et al., 2023)

				efficiency of the education system
Governance	Makro	Governance system	Equity	The structure of the (Eryilmaz, 2025; education system is Eryilmaz & related to inequality Strietholt, 2025) in educational outcomes

The synthesis results indicate that “quality” is the most dominant outcome category, appearing consistently across different types of policies and levels of implementation. This suggests that the majority of studies continue to position educational quality as the primary indicator of policy success, often at the expense of other outcome dimensions.

In contrast, the equity outcome demonstrates inconsistent patterns, particularly within macro-level education reform policies. Several studies reveal that policy reforms have not been fully effective in reducing educational disparities, highlighting a persistent gap between policy design and on-the-ground implementation (Anlimachie, 2026; Asadullah et al., 2025; Jean-Baptiste, 2023).

Regarding access, the findings suggest that educational access is shaped by the interaction between policy design and broader socio-economic conditions, especially in reform-oriented policies in developing countries (Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Pearnpitak, 2026). Meanwhile, efficiency outcomes are more closely associated with improvements in governance structures and resource management at the system level (Kemethofer et al., 2023).

For learning outcomes, the results indicate a positive relationship with educational financing investments, although the number of studies addressing this category remains relatively limited compared to other outcome dimensions (Angrist et al., 2025; Ndaula et al., 2025).

Taken together, these findings indicate that educational policy outcomes are multidimensional and vary according to policy type, implementation level, and management capacity. Educational quality remains the dominant outcome examined in the literature, while equity, access, efficiency, and learning outcomes receive comparatively less attention.

5. Conceptual Framework Based on SLR Findings

The results of the systematic synthesis indicate that the relationship between education policy and outcomes is multilevel, non-linear, and contextual, formed through the interaction between policy types, implementation levels, and educational

management capacity. The resulting conceptual model is emergent, based on the thematic coding process of the 24 studies analyzed.

At the structural level, education policy consists of four main components: governance, policy reform, accountability, and financing. These four types of policies form the framework of the education system, determining the direction, priorities, and working mechanisms of the policy. Governance and policy reform serve as the primary guides for the structure of the education system, while accountability and financing act as reinforcing mechanisms through system oversight and the distribution of educational resources (Angrist et al., 2025; Asadullah et al., 2025; Kemethofer et al., 2023; Moore, 2024).

At the implementation level, there are two main contexts: macro and meso. The macro level represents policy implementation at the education system level, while the meso level represents implementation at the school level. The synthesis results show that these differences in implementation contexts influence variations in policy outcomes, as the same policy can produce different outcomes depending on institutional capacity and systemic conditions at the implementation level (Eryilmaz & Strietholt, 2025; Ewulley et al., 2023; Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Nadeem, 2024).

At the mechanism level, there are four main management aspects that act as a link between policy and implementation: governance systems, leadership, resource management, and institutional management. The governance system serves as a regulatory structure that directs policy implementation; leadership plays a role in driving implementation at the organizational level; resource management is a supporting factor in providing resources; and institutional management plays a role in the policy adaptation process at the school level. The interaction of these four aspects determines the level of consistency of policy implementation across various educational contexts (Ehren & Hwa, 2025; Laursen et al., 2025; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023).

At the outcome level, education policy generates five main dimensions: quality, equity, access, efficiency, and learning outcomes. Synthesis results indicate that quality is the most dominant outcome in the literature, while equity and access are more influenced by the context of policy implementation. Meanwhile, efficiency and learning outcomes are more sensitive to the quality of system governance and the capacity of educational resources (Anlimachie, 2026; Eryilmaz, 2025; Ndaula et al., 2025; Pearnpitak, 2026).

This conceptual model demonstrates that the effectiveness of education policy is not determined by a single factor, but rather the result of a dynamic interaction between policy design, implementation capacity, and institutional conditions. The relationships between components are contextual and non-linear, so policy outcomes

can vary even within the same policy framework. This model also demonstrates an implicit backward linkage, where policy outcomes can serve as a basis for evaluation for improving policy design and strengthening education system governance in the future.

The proposed conceptual framework also provides practical implications for future empirical research. Researchers may operationalize each component of the framework into measurable variables to examine the relationships among policy type, management dimensions, implementation level, and educational outcomes using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches. From a policy perspective, the framework can be used as an analytical tool to evaluate educational policies by identifying which governance and management dimensions require improvement to enhance policy effectiveness across different educational contexts.

DISCUSSION

1. Interpretation of Key Findings

The synthesis reveals that governance is a central dimension in the educational management policy literature, as consistently reported across multiple studies (Alene et al., 2025; Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Ewulley et al., 2023; Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Kemethofer et al., 2023). This dominance indicates that educational policy is predominantly conceptualized through a governance lens, emphasizing system regulation, coordination mechanisms, and institutional structures.

Furthermore, the literature demonstrates the use of two primary levels of analysis, namely macro (system-level) and meso (institutional-level). Macro-level studies (Asadullah et al., 2025; Dunlop & Bekkouche, 2024; Eryilmaz, 2025) focus on large-scale policy systems, while meso-level studies (Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Laursen et al., 2025; Nadeem, 2024) examine policy enactment within educational institutions. This reflects a clear divergence in analytical perspectives within the field.

In terms of outcomes, the literature encompasses multiple categories, including quality, equity, access, and efficiency (Agbadjé, 2026; Angrist et al., 2025; Anlimachie, 2026; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023; Pearnpitak, 2026), suggesting a multidimensional approach to evaluating educational policy performance.

2. Why These Patterns Occur (Interpretive Explanation)

The prominence of governance as an analytical focus can be attributed to the increasing complexity of education systems, where policy effectiveness is closely linked to coordination across multiple actors and institutional layers. As a result, governance frameworks provide a structured lens for analyzing how policies are formulated,

regulated, and implemented across diverse contexts (Ehren & Hwa, 2025; Eryilmaz, 2025).

The distinction between macro and meso levels reflects underlying theoretical differences in how policy processes are understood. Macro-level studies are typically grounded in system-oriented perspectives that prioritize policy design, regulation, and large-scale reform, whereas meso-level studies align with implementation-oriented approaches that emphasize institutional capacity, leadership, and organizational dynamics. This divergence explains why findings across studies often vary, as they capture different stages and mechanisms of the policy process.

The dominance of quality as an outcome dimension can be explained by the global emphasis on performance measurement and accountability in education systems. Standardized assessments and international benchmarks have reinforced the prioritization of quality indicators, often marginalizing other dimensions such as equity and access, which are more context-dependent and difficult to measure consistently.

3. Mechanism of Policy Implementation

The findings suggest that policy implementation operates through a multi-level mechanism in which system-level policies are translated into institutional practices. At the meso level, leadership and institutional management play a critical role in mediating this process. Leadership shapes strategic direction and decision-making within schools, while institutional management governs organizational structures, routines, and resource allocation (Johansson & Ärlestig, 2022; Laursen et al., 2025; Nadeem, 2024).

In addition, governance and institutional capacity function as enabling conditions for effective implementation. Studies highlight that even well-designed policies may fail without adequate institutional readiness and coordination mechanisms (Alene et al., 2025; Ewulley et al., 2023; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023).

Resource management further supports implementation by ensuring the availability and efficient use of financial and operational resources. However, its relatively limited presence in the literature suggests that resource-related mechanisms are underexplored compared to governance and leadership dimensions (Angrist et al., 2025; Kemethofer et al., 2023; Ndaula et al., 2025).

4. Interpretation of Outcomes

The analysis confirms that educational policy outcomes are multidimensional, encompassing quality, equity, access, efficiency, and learning outcomes. Among these, quality emerges as the most frequently examined dimension, reflecting its central role in policy evaluation across contexts (Agbadjé, 2026; Gale et al., 2022; Mamun-ur-Rashid, 2023).

Equity and access are more prominently discussed in studies focusing on education reform and developing country contexts, where disparities in educational provision remain a critical concern (Anlimachie, 2026; Damoah & Omodan, 2022; Jean-Baptiste, 2023; Pearnpitak, 2026). In contrast, efficiency and learning outcomes are typically associated with system performance and resource utilization, often within macro-level analyses (Angrist et al., 2025; Kemethofer et al., 2023; Ndaula et al., 2025).

These patterns suggest that outcome selection is not neutral, but influenced by both the analytical level and the broader policy context in which studies are situated.

5. Research Gap Synthesis

The synthesis reveals a structural imbalance in the literature. While governance and system-level analysis are extensively examined, there is comparatively limited attention to institutional-level dynamics and resource-related mechanisms. Similarly, the strong emphasis on quality outcomes has resulted in the relative underrepresentation of equity, access, and efficiency as equally important dimensions of policy evaluation.

This imbalance indicates that current research tends to prioritize policy design and system performance over the complexities of implementation and contextual variation. Consequently, future research should adopt a more integrative approach that combines multi-level analysis with a balanced consideration of outcome dimensions, in order to better capture how educational policies function in practice.

6. Implications for Future Research and Educational Policy

The conceptual framework proposed in this review provides a foundation for future empirical research by integrating policy types, management dimensions, implementation levels, and educational outcomes within a single analytical structure. Future studies may operationalize these components into measurable constructs to examine their relationships using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method designs across different educational contexts. In addition, the framework offers practical value for educational policy evaluation by enabling policymakers to identify which governance and management dimensions require improvement to strengthen policy implementation and achieve desired educational outcomes. Such applications may contribute to the development of more context-sensitive and evidence-informed educational policies.

CONCLUSION

This study presents a systematic literature review of educational management policy with the aim of identifying policy patterns, management dimensions, levels of implementation, and outcomes reflected in the analyzed literature. The synthesis

reveals that governance is the most consistently reported domain across studies, followed by accountability, financing, leadership, institutional management, and resource management, which appear across various research contexts.

In terms of analytical dimensions, the reviewed literature demonstrates the use of two primary levels, namely macro and meso. The macro level is predominantly employed in studies examining policies at the education system level, while the meso level is more commonly used to understand policy implementation within educational institutions. This pattern reflects variation in units of analysis within the field of educational policy research.

Regarding outcomes, the synthesis indicates that quality is the most frequently reported category, while equity, access, efficiency, and learning outcomes are also identified across studies with varying levels of emphasis. These findings suggest that the evaluation of educational policy is inherently multidimensional, relying on diverse indicators depending on the focus and context of each study.

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