



# A Narrative Consideration Of Contemporary Evidence For Policy Making In Educational Frameworks

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## Abstract

Educational policy-making plays a crucial role in shaping curriculum frameworks, governance structures, institutional innovations, and the integration of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). Despite increased global attention toward educational reforms and innovation-driven frameworks, research on policy-making in educational frameworks remains limited, fragmented, and context-specific. This narrative review synthesizes recent scholarly evidence (2022–2026) on key trends in educational policy-making, including decentralisation reforms, curriculum policy negotiations, leadership and governance, ethical frameworks for AI in education, and researcher–policy maker collaboration. Findings indicate that global policy trends increasingly emphasize ethical accountability, innovation support, stakeholder participation, and culturally reflective practice. However, persistent challenges such as political interference, limited evaluation mechanisms, insufficient community engagement, and poor linkage between research and policy hinder the effectiveness of educational policy outcomes. The review proposes implications and recommendations focusing on inclusive governance, policy monitoring, research-policy partnerships, and ethical AI policy implementation.

**Keywords:** Educational policy, curriculum frameworks, decentralisation, governance, AI in education, policy evaluation, innovation, narrative review

## 1. Introduction

Educational systems worldwide are shaped significantly by public policy decisions, which influence curriculum design, institutional governance, pedagogical reforms, equity mechanisms, and technology integration. Policy-making in education has become increasingly complex because it operates at the intersection of political interests, cultural values, social demands, global reforms, and institutional constraints.

In recent years, issues such as national curriculum policy frameworks, decentralisation in governance, and institutional adoption of generative AI have created new demands for evidence-driven and ethically grounded education policy. However, existing research suggests a gap: while educational reforms are frequently implemented, policy processes are often poorly monitored, politically influenced, and weakly connected with research evidence.

This narrative review examines contemporary research on policy-making in educational frameworks, with emphasis on (a) curriculum frameworks and cultural discourse, (b) decentralisation and governance reforms, (c) innovation trends in higher education, (d) AI policy frameworks and ethical considerations, and (e) collaboration between researchers and policy-makers.

## 2. Methodology

The included studies span 2022–2026 and reflect diverse methodological approaches such as qualitative documentary analysis, mixed-method surveys, thematic analysis, case studies, and interviews. The review does not follow a systematic PRISMA protocol; rather, it provides thematic synthesis and conceptual interpretation of the literature to identify patterns, policy gaps, and strategic recommendations.

## 3. Thematic Review of Literature

### 3.1 Curriculum Policy Frameworks and Cultural Negotiations

Curriculum policies are not neutral documents; they represent negotiated visions of learners, learning, and social development. Xu et al. (2025) explored how universality and cultural specificity appear in national curriculum policy frameworks (NCPFs) for early childhood education across 19 national frameworks. Their findings highlight tensions between dominant global discourses and local cultural discourses. The study proposes culturally reflective policy practices, suggesting that education frameworks must integrate universal principles while enabling local cultural adaptation.

Similarly, Alam and Mohanty (2023) proposed a pedagogical framework for integrating “happiness engineering” into Indian senior secondary schools. Expert feedback strongly supported the model, indicating the feasibility of large-scale policy adoption. Yet, the framework remains conceptual and lacks classroom-level implementation evidence.

Synthesis: Curriculum frameworks increasingly aim to balance universal/global demands with local meaning-making. However, policy design often outpaces implementation research.

### 3.2 Decentralisation Policy Reforms and Governance Politics

Decentralisation reforms are widely promoted as mechanisms to improve accountability and local participation. However, evidence suggests decentralisation frequently becomes symbolic rather than transformative. Kapelela et al. (2025) examined decentralisation reforms in Tanzanian secondary schools and found that despite formal governance changes, political interference and centralised control continued. Appointment processes for School Governing Bodies were politicised, undermining transparency and community participation.

White (2026) adds an important dimension by investigating superintendents' engagement in state-level policy-making. Although most superintendents believed their involvement is valuable, actual engagement remained low. This indicates structural barriers to practitioner involvement in policy decisions.

Synthesis: Decentralisation policies often fail due to persistent political control, weak governance autonomy, and limited practitioner participation.

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### 3.3 Innovation and Policy Support in Higher Education

Policy frameworks are also shaped by institutional innovation, especially in universities. Tassone et al. (2024) analysed 88 innovation project proposals and found innovation was largely incremental rather than radical. The study observed strong focus on digital learning materials and delivery formats, but limited changes in course objectives or rationales. This indicates a trend of “surface innovation,” where technological adoption occurs without deeper curriculum transformation.

Another policy-related innovation initiative is the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program in Indonesian higher education studied by Supriati et al. (2022). It showed a positive impact on student skills and motivation, but faced constraints like insufficient human resource capacity and underdeveloped information systems.

Synthesis: Innovation-oriented policies yield benefits, but their sustainability depends on institutional capacity, technological infrastructure, and structured evaluation systems.

### 3.4 AI, Generative AI Policies, and Ethical Governance

AI has rapidly emerged as a key policy area in education. Chan (2023) developed an AI education policy framework based on perceptions of students, teachers, and staff. Results revealed optimism about AI's potential alongside concerns regarding misuse, ethics, privacy, and equity. The study argues that AI should complement, not replace human teaching.

Jin et al. (2025) expanded this by analysing generative AI adoption policies from 40 universities across global regions. Institutions largely emphasised academic integrity and ethical use but lacked strong mechanisms for monitoring impact or evaluating implementation, indicating low “observability.”

Holmes et al. (2022) also stress that the AI in Education research community lacks sufficient ethical training and formal ethical frameworks. Major ethical risks include privacy, data ownership, bias, fairness, transparency, learner agency, and pedagogical consequences.

Jesus et al. (2026) similarly found that AI boosts research efficiency and inclusivity but raises serious ethical issues—particularly intellectual property, bias, and dependency. They further note that institutional policies remain early-stage or evolving.

Synthesis: AI policy-making in education is advancing quickly, but regulatory maturity, ethical compliance, evaluation mechanisms, and institutional preparedness remain weak.

### 3.5 Bridging the Gap Between Research and Policy-Making

A critical dimension of effective policy-making is research utilization. Alazmi and Alazmi (2023) addressed the gap between research and policy-making by proposing a six-stage collaboration framework (from problem identification through evaluation). Their findings emphasize the need for structured partnership between educational researchers and policy-makers.

Cook et al. (2022) similarly demonstrated the value of stakeholder engagement through the development of a Person-centred Curriculum Framework (PcCF), co-constructed across multiple universities. The framework's strength lies in its philosophical grounding and stakeholder involvement, yet it remains largely conceptual without extensive implementation testing.

Synthesis: There is an emerging consensus that policy frameworks must be co-constructed with stakeholders, but most frameworks require stronger empirical testing.

## 4. Discussion

The reviewed studies indicate that educational policy-making is increasingly shaped by:

1. Global pressures (AI, ethics, universal rights)
2. Local contextual realities (culture, political structures, institutional limitations)
3. Governance reforms (decentralisation and participation)
4. Innovation agendas (technology integration, curriculum modernization)

However, several recurring issues hinder effective policy-making:

- Over-reliance on documentary policy analysis without classroom-level validation.
- Small sample sizes and context-limited qualitative approaches.
- Weak evaluation mechanisms in policy implementation.
- Political influence limiting decentralisation and community governance.
- Limited stakeholder preparedness, especially in AI governance and institutional monitoring.

Thus, while educational policy frameworks increasingly reflect modern needs, their practical impact is constrained by implementation and accountability limitations.

## 5. Implications

This narrative review highlights how educational policy-making is increasingly shaped by decentralisation reforms, curriculum reorientation, leadership governance, and the rapid expansion of Generative AI in academic settings.

### 5.1 Policy Implications

1. **Educational policy must move beyond drafting to implementation accountability.**

Evidence from decentralisation reforms in Tanzania shows that policies can be formally introduced but remain ineffective due to persistent centralised control and political interference.

This implies that policy design must include enforceable implementation mechanisms and safeguards against politicisation.

## **2. Policy frameworks should institutionalise culturally reflective curriculum development.**

Curriculum frameworks are influenced by dominant global discourses, but effective national policy must also preserve cultural specificity and local values. Therefore, policymakers should prioritise curriculum policies that support local contextualisation while remaining aligned with universal rights-based educational aims.

## **3. AI integration requires formal ethical and governance policy structures.**

Multiple studies show strong concern about fairness, bias, privacy, academic misconduct, data ownership, and transparency. The implication is that national and institutional education policy should explicitly include ethical AI governance standards, monitoring, and legal compliance.

## **4. Innovation policies should encourage transformative rather than incremental reforms.**

Higher education innovation is often limited to surface-level changes (digital materials, delivery systems) without changing course objectives or rationales. This implies that innovation policies must incentivise deeper curriculum transformation and evaluation of learning outcomes.

### **5.2 Implications for Educational Leadership and Governance**

#### **1. Leadership structures must strengthen participatory governance.**

Findings suggest decentralisation and governance reforms fail when stakeholder participation is symbolic. This implies that school governance requires structured stakeholder representation and transparent appointment criteria to protect autonomy.

#### **2. School and system leaders require training for policy engagement.**

Superintendents believe policy engagement is important yet remain minimally involved, suggesting insufficient preparation, lack of opportunity, or weak policy access. This implies that leadership development programmes must include policy literacy and advocacy training.

### **5.3 Implications for Educational Practice (Teachers, Institutions, and Stakeholders)**

#### **1. Teachers must be supported as key policy implementers.**

Many frameworks (e.g., AI policies, person-centred curriculum frameworks) remain conceptual without practice-level validation. This implies that teacher voice, training, and implementation support should be embedded in policy frameworks.

## 2. **Institutional readiness determines policy success.**

MBKM implementation challenges show that institutional capacity (information systems, human resources, infrastructure) strongly influences policy outcomes. Hence, policies should include readiness audits and phased implementation models.

## 3. **AI use in teaching and assessment needs structured institutional guidance.**

While stakeholders recognise AI benefits, they also fear misuse. This implies that universities must develop clear guidelines for permissible AI use in assessment, research writing, and student learning support.

### 5.4 Implications for Research and Future Studies

#### 1. **More empirical and classroom-based evidence is needed.**

Several studies depend primarily on policy documents or expert perceptions rather than real classroom implementation. This implies that future studies should incorporate classroom observation, student performance measures, and evaluation research.

#### 2. **Policy evaluation research should become a priority.**

Generative AI adoption guidelines show limited monitoring and observability. The implication is that research must focus not only on policy formulation but also on adoption outcomes, compliance levels, unintended consequences and equity impacts.

#### 3. **Cross-national and comparative policy research is required.**

Since many findings are context-specific (Tanzania, Hong Kong, Netherlands, Philippines), there is limited generalisability. This implies that comparative research across countries/regions can strengthen global policy recommendations.

#### 4. **Research–policy collaboration should be institutionalised.**

The collaboration framework proposed in the literature implies that policymakers should not treat research as external consultation; instead, they should build continuous research-policy partnerships through policy labs, advisory boards, and applied research funding models.

### 5.5 Implications for Equity, Ethics, and Sustainability

#### 1. **Ethics must be treated as a core pillar in education policy-making.**

Ethical concerns around AI are not secondary as they are central risks that can harm learners through bias, privacy breaches, surveillance, and inequality. Therefore, educational policy must prioritise ethical governance as core policy architecture.

#### 2. **Policies must ensure inclusive access and reduce digital inequalities.**

AI integration and innovation policies must address the structural gap between well-resourced and under-resourced institutions, otherwise reforms may increase inequity.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 Strengthen Policy Implementation and Monitoring

- Governments and institutions should establish policy observability mechanisms such as periodic audits, monitoring committees, and impact evaluations to measure policy performance for AI integration.

### 6.2 Promote Stakeholder Participation in Policy Design

- Policymakers should institutionalize participatory governance models, ensuring educators, students, parents, and community members contribute meaningfully to policy development and reform processes.

### 6.3 Limit Political Interference in School Governance

- Transparent criteria for school governance appointments should be legally enforced to reduce politicisation and strengthen decentralised autonomy.

### 6.4 Establish Ethical AI Regulatory Standards in Education

- Universities and schools must adopt:
  - AI ethical guidelines (privacy, fairness, accountability)
  - academic integrity policies for generative AI
  - training programs for staff and students on responsible AI use

### 6.5 Improve Research–Policy Collaboration

- Implement structured partnerships between researchers and policymakers using staged frameworks like the research-policy collaboration model.
- Encourage joint policy labs, evidence briefs, and researcher secondments in education departments.

### 6.6 Encourage Culturally Reflective Curriculum Policy Frameworks

- National curriculum frameworks should balance universal principles with local identities by adopting culturally reflective approaches and continuous policy revision cycles.

## 7. Conclusion

Educational policy-making in contemporary educational frameworks is expanding rapidly in response to decentralisation reforms, curriculum modernization, innovation agendas, and emerging AI technologies. The reviewed evidence shows significant policy progress, particularly in AI ethics awareness, stakeholder-centered frameworks, and curriculum innovation. Yet challenges persist, including political interference, limited practitioner engagement, weak monitoring, and lack of empirical implementation evaluation.

Future research should strengthen evidence through longitudinal designs, comparative cross-national studies, and policy impact studies at classroom and institutional levels. Policymaking must shift from document-driven reforms to practice-validated frameworks supported by inclusive participation, monitoring, and ethical accountability.

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