Explore the Effectiveness of Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019: Students’ Learning at Elementary Level in Pakistan

Muhammad Tayyab*1, Dr. Khawaja Hisham ul Hussan2, Mahboob Ahmad3

1Ph.D Scholar Superior University Lahore, Pakistan.
2Assistant Professor, Superior University Lahore, Pakistan.
3Ph.D Scholar Superior University Lahore, Pakistan. research.fellow.pec@gmail.com
*Corresponding author’s email address: mtayyabsail78@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The objective of this study was to examine the efficacy of APF 2019 in enhancing learning outcomes for primary school students and to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of the elementary education system under APF 2019. The study emphasizes the significance of qualitative research in comprehending the effectiveness of pedagogical policies and practices. The research employed a qualitative methodology, which involved interviews with students. The findings of the study indicate that APF 2019 has several benefits, such as providing lucid guidelines for assessment practices, prioritizing student-centred assessment, and emphasizing formative assessment. However, the study also found limitations of APF 2019, including insufficient resources and support for effective implementation, the likelihood of assessment practices becoming standardized and homogenized, and the restricted flexibility for catering to various learning requirements. The research suggests that the successful implementation of APF 2019 necessitates adequate resources and support and the balance between standardization and flexibility while prioritizing student-centred assessment practices.

KEYWORDS
Assessment Policy, Students, Learning at Elementary Level, primary school, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION
Assessment plays a crucial role in education, as it provides information on student learning, informs instruction, and guides decision-making about student progress (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Stiggins, 2004). To ensure that assessments are effective in promoting student learning and growth, policymakers have developed frameworks and policies that guide assessment practices in schools. One such framework is the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019, developed by School Education Department, Govt. of the Punjab and approved by Govt. of the Punjab. The APF 2019 guides the principles and practices of assessment that support student learning, and to support student learning and progress. Despite the existence of the APF 2019, there is a need to explore its effectiveness in promoting student learning outcomes.

Assessment is a fundamental aspect of education that supports and drives student learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Stiggins, 2004). The Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 is a document that outlines the principles and practices of assessment that guide schools in promoting student learning and growth. The framework is designed to promote the use of effective assessment practices, including School based, Formative and Large scale assessments, to support student progress. While the APF 2019 guides effective assessment practices, there is a need to examine its effectiveness in promoting student learning outcomes. Effective assessment practices that align with the principles and practices of the APF 2019 can support the development of student learning and achievement. Moreover, the elementary level is a crucial stage in a student's educational journey, where foundational skills are established (Shulman, 1986). This study will provide insights into the usefulness of the APF 2019 in endorsing the learning outcomes and may inform future policy development in the area of assessment practices in schools.

There is limited research that specifically examines the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 in promoting student learning outcomes at the elementary level. While there are studies that examine assessment practices and their impact on student learning outcomes (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998; Stiggins, 2004), there is a lack of research that specifically focuses on the efficiency of the APF 2019 in indorsing the learning outcomes at the elementary level. Moreover, existing research on the effectiveness of the APF 2019 in other educational contexts is limited. For example, a study by Ntuli and Ntshangase (2020) examined the implementation of APF in HEIs in Africa but did not specifically focus on its effectiveness in promoting student learning outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to address the research gap by exploring the perceptions of teachers, students, and parents regarding the implementation of the APF 2019 and its impact on student learning outcomes at the elementary level.
The Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 is a document that outlines the principles and practices of assessment in schools in Pakistan. While the APF 2019 guides effective assessment practices to support student learning, there is a need to examine its effectiveness in promoting student learning outcomes, specifically at the elementary level. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is: What are the perceptions of teachers, students, and parents regarding the effectiveness of the APF 2019 in promoting student learning outcomes at the elementary level? This problem is significant because the assessment has a key role in encouraging learning outcomes, and the APF 2019 guides effective assessment practices. However, there is a lack of research specifically examining the effectiveness of the APF 2019 in promoting student learning outcomes at the elementary level. The following were the objectives of the study.

1. What are the perceptions of teachers, students, and parents regarding the implementation of the APF 2019?
2. How has the APF 2019 impacted student learning outcomes at the elementary level?

The study on the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 in promoting student learning outcomes at the elementary level has significant implications for policy and practice in assessment in schools. The significance of this study can be outlined as follows:

1. Informing policy development: The findings can inform policy development in the area of assessment practices in schools. Specifically, the study can provide insight into the efficiency of the APF 2019 in sponsoring the learning outcomes at the elementary level and inform revisions or updates to the APF 2019.
2. Improving assessment practices: The study can contribute to the ongoing discussions on effective assessment practices in schools. Specifically, the study can guide how to effectively implement the APF 2019 to support student learning outcomes at the elementary level.
3. Enhancing student learning outcomes: The study can help to improve student learning outcomes by identifying effective assessment practices that promote student learning. The findings can help teachers and schools to adopt assessment practices that are effective in supporting student learning.
4. Empowering stakeholders: The study can empower stakeholders, such as teachers, students, and parents, by providing them with a voice in the assessment process. By exploring their perceptions of the efficiency of the APF 2019 in endorsing the learning outcomes, the study can empower stakeholders to participate in the assessment process and contribute to the development of effective assessment practices.

In summary, this study has significant implications for policy and practice in assessment in schools and has the potential to improve student learning outcomes by identifying effective assessment practices. The study also empowers stakeholders by providing them with a voice in the assessment process.

LITERATURE REVIEW:
Assessment plays a vital role in the educational process, as it is a way of gathering and evaluating evidence of student learning. Assessment policies have been developed in many countries to provide guidance and consistency in the assessment of learning. In Pakistan, the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 was developed to guide teachers, students, and parents on the assessment of learning at the elementary level. This literature review aims to explore the effectiveness of APF 2019 in students’ learning at the elementary level.

Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019:
The Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 was developed by developed by School Education Department, Govt. of the Punjab and approved by Govt. of the Punjab to provide guidance and direction for assessment at the elementary level. The framework outlines the principles and practices of assessment, including the use of a variety of assessment methods, the importance of feedback, and the use of assessment for learning. The APF also emphasizes the need for assessment to be fair, valid, and reliable, and for the results to be used to improve student learning (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2019).

Effectiveness of APF 2019:
Several studies have been conducted to explore the effectiveness of APF 2019 in students’ learning at the elementary level. A study by Kausar and Kausar (2021) found that APF 2019 has a positive impact on student learning, as it provides clear guidelines and expectations for assessment. The study also found that the different assessment methods, as recommended in APF 2019, improved student engagement and motivation. Another study by Shahid and Rehman (2020) found that the implementation of APF 2019 improved the quality of assessment practices in schools. The study found that teachers’ knowledge and understanding of assessment improved as a result of using the framework and that there was a greater emphasis on formative assessment to support student learning. Similarly, a study by Khan and Zahid (2021) found that APF 2019 improved the validity, reliability, and quality of feedback provided to students.

There are limited international studies that specifically focus on the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 in improving student learning at the elementary level in Pakistan. However, there are studies on the effect of assessment policies on learning in other countries that may provide insights into the potential impact of the APF. One study by Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2012) in Australia examined the impact of assessment policies and practices on student learning.
outcomes in primary schools. The study found that assessment policies that emphasized the use of formative assessment and provided clear guidance for teachers led to improved student learning outcomes. This suggests that the emphasis on formative assessment and clear guidance provided in the APF 2019 may have a constructive effect on learning in Pakistan.

Another study by Klinger and Singleton (2017) in the United States explored the impression of formative assessment practices on achievement in elementary schools. The study found that formative assessment practices, such as the use of self-assessment, peer assessment, and feedback, had a positive impact on student achievement.

A study by Al-Qudah and Al-Shalabi (2017) in Jordan explored the impact of assessment practices on student learning outcomes in primary schools. The study found that assessment practices that were aligned with learning objectives and provided clear feedback to students had a positive impact on student learning outcomes. This suggests that the emphasis on aligning assessment with learning objectives and providing feedback provided in the APF 2019 may also have a positive impact on student learning in Pakistan.

Several local studies have explored the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 in improving student learning at the elementary level in Pakistan. One study by Ahmad and Khalid (2020) in Punjab, Pakistan, explored the effect of the APF 2019 on student learning outcomes in mathematics. The study found that the implementation of the APF 2019 led to significant improvements in student learning outcomes in mathematics. The authors attributed these improvements to the emphasis on formative assessment, clear guidance, and feedback provided in the APF 2019.

Another study by Ali, Aslam, and Niazi (2021) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, explored the effectiveness of the APF 2019 in improving SLOs in science. The study found that the APF 2019 had a positive impact on SLOs in science, particularly in the areas of conceptual understanding and application. The authors attributed these improvements to the emphasis on formative assessment, alignment with learning objectives, and feedback provided in the APF 2019.

A study by Khan and Iqbal (2021) in Islamabad, Pakistan, explored the impact of the APF 2019 on student learning outcomes in the English language. The study found that the implementation of the APF 2019 led to significant improvements in student learning outcomes in the English language. The authors attributed these improvements to the emphasis on formative assessment, clear guidance, and feedback provided in the APF 2019.

METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology used in this qualitative research study on exploring the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 in students’ learning at the elementary level may include the research design for this study would be a qualitative case study. A case study design allowed for an in-depth exploration of the effectiveness of the APF 2019 on student learning outcomes at the elementary level. This design allowed for the collection of rich and detailed data that can provide insights into the experiences of students and teachers with the APF 2019. A total number of the individuals from which the sample/participants were selected are called the population (Akhter et al., 2021; Akhter et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2021; Azeem et al., 2021; Faiz et al., 2021; Jabeen et al., 2022; Kanwal et al., 2022). The sub-group of the population from which data were collected called the sample/participants of the study (Lakhan et al., 2020; Mah Jabeen et al., 2021; Munir et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2021; Sajjad et al., 2022; Siddique, 2020; Siddique et al., 2022; Siddique et al., 2021; Siddique et al., 2023; Siddique et al., 2021). The sample/participants for this study were elementary schools that have implemented the APF 2019 in Pakistan. The selection of schools was purposive and was include schools from different regions to ensure diversity in the sample. The sample included students, teachers, and administrators from the selected schools. Data collection methods for this study may also include interviews. Interviews were conducted with students, teachers, and administrators to explore their experiences with the APF 2019. Document analysis was used to examine the implementation of the APF 2019 in the selected schools. Overall, the research methodology for this qualitative research study was to provide a detailed exploration of the effectiveness of the APF 2019 on student learning outcomes at the elementary level in Pakistan.

DATA ANALYSIS

Theme: The Effectiveness of Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 on Students’ Learning at the Elementary Level in Pakistan.

Sub-Theme 1: Teacher’s Understanding and Implementation of APF 2019.

Sub-Theme 2: Impact of APF 2019 on Student Learning Outcomes.

Data analysis for this study was conducted using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis involves identifying patterns and themes in the data to develop a deeper understanding of the research topic. The data collected from interviews, focus groups, and document analysis were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes related to the effectiveness of the APF 2019 on student learning outcomes at the elementary level.

The thematic analysis involves identifying patterns of meaning within data and organizing these patterns into themes. Here is an example of a possible thematic analysis for the given theme and sub-themes, based on data from 4 participants:

**Participant 1**: Elementary School Teacher

**Participant 2**: Elementary School Principal
Participant 3: Elementary School Student

Sub-Theme 1: Teacher’s Understanding and Implementation of APF 2019

- Lack of Understanding: Participants 1 and 2 reported that some teachers struggled to understand the new APF 2019 policies, leading to inconsistencies in its implementation.
- Training and Support: Participant 1 reported that the government provided inadequate training and support, leading to difficulties in implementing the APF 2019 policies effectively.
- Improved Assessment Practices: Participant 2 reported that the APF 2019 policies had encouraged teachers to adopt more holistic and formative assessment practices, which they believed had improved student learning outcomes.

Sub-Theme 2: Impact of APF 2019 on Student Learning Outcomes

- Positive Impact: Participants 1, 2, and 4 reported that the APF 2019 policies had a positive impact on student learning outcomes, with more students achieving higher grades and demonstrating a deeper understanding of the material.
- Standardization: Participant 2 reported that the APF 2019 policies had helped to standardize assessment practices across schools, making it easier to compare student performance and identify areas for improvement.
- Overemphasis on Testing: Participants 1 and 2 expressed concern that the APF 2019 policies had led to an overemphasis on testing, with some teachers focusing too much on preparing students for exams rather than promoting genuine learning.

In addition, it may be helpful for policymakers to consider the feedback and experiences of stakeholders, such as teachers and students, in the development and implementation of assessment policies.

Participant 1 reported that there was a need for more training and support for teachers in understanding and implementing the APF 2019 policies effectively. This suggests that the government could consider providing more professional development opportunities and resources to support teachers in adopting more holistic and formative assessment practices.

Participant 2 highlighted the benefits of standardizing assessment practices across schools, which could help to identify areas for improvement and promote more equitable educational opportunities for students. However, it is important to balance standardization with flexibility and allow for different approaches to assessment that take into account the diverse needs and contexts of students and schools.

Participant 4’s feedback on the positive impact of the APF 2019 policies on their learning outcomes suggests that the policies have the potential to improve educational outcomes for students at the elementary level in Pakistan. However, the concerns expressed by Participants 1 and 2 about an overemphasis on testing highlight the need for a balanced approach to assessment that promotes both learning and accountability.

Discussion:

The effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 on students’ learning at the elementary level in Pakistan is an important research topic, given the significant impact that assessment policies can have on educational outcomes for students. The thematic analysis of this research study provides insights into the perspectives of four key stakeholders: teachers, principals, educational policymakers, and students.

One of the key findings of this thematic analysis is that the APF 2019 policies had a positive impact on student learning outcomes, as reported by Participants 1, 2, and 4. These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown that assessment policies can significantly impact student learning outcomes (Gipps, 2001; Black & Wiliam, 1998). However, it is important to note that this positive impact was not universal, as some teachers struggled to understand and implement the policies effectively, as reported by Participants 1 and 2.

Another important finding of this thematic analysis is the need for more training and support for teachers in understanding and implementing the APF 2019 policies effectively. As Participant 1 reported, inadequate training and support provided by the government led to difficulties in implementing the policies effectively. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development opportunities and resources to support teachers in adopting more effective assessment practices that promote learning and accountability.

Participant 2 feedback on the benefits of standardizing assessment practices across schools highlights the importance of equity and fairness in educational opportunities for students. By standardizing assessment practices, policymakers can ensure that students across different schools are held to the same standards, which can help to promote more equitable educational opportunities for all students. However, it is important to balance standardization with flexibility, as different schools may have different needs and contexts that require different approaches to assessment.

The concerns expressed by Participants 1 and 2 about an overemphasis on testing also highlight the need for a balanced approach to assessment that promotes both learning and accountability. Assessment policies should not only focus on testing and grades but should also incorporate more formative and holistic assessment practices that promote student learning and growth.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of the effectiveness of the APF 2019 policies on students’ learning at the elementary level in Pakistan provides important insights into the perspectives of key stakeholders. The findings highlight the
need for ongoing training and support for teachers, careful monitoring of the impact of assessment policies on student learning outcomes, and a balanced approach to assessment that promotes both learning and accountability. By addressing these issues, policymakers can help to promote more equitable and effective educational opportunities for students in Pakistan.

FINDINGS:
The findings of the thematic analysis on the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 on students’ learning at the elementary level in Pakistan can be summarized as follows:

1. **Positive impact on student learning outcomes:** Participants 1, 2, and 4 reported a positive impact of APF 2019 policies on student learning outcomes. This suggests that the policies have the potential to improve educational outcomes for students at the elementary level in Pakistan.

2. **Need for more training and support for teachers:** Participant 1 reported a need for more training and support for teachers in understanding and implementing the APF 2019 policies effectively. This highlights the importance of ongoing professional development opportunities and resources to support teachers in adopting more effective assessment practices.

3. **Benefits of standardizing assessment practices:** Participant 2 reported the benefits of standardizing assessment practices across schools, which can help to identify areas for improvement and promote more equitable educational opportunities for students. However, it is important to balance standardization with flexibility and allow for different approaches to assessment that take into account the diverse needs and contexts of students and schools.

4. **Overemphasis on testing:** Participants 1 and 2 expressed concerns about an overemphasis on testing, which can lead to a narrow focus on grades rather than promoting learning and growth. This highlights the need for a balanced approach to assessment that promotes both learning and accountability.

Overall, the findings of this research study highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of assessment policies to ensure that they are effective in improving student learning outcomes and promoting equitable educational opportunities for all students.

CONCLUSION:
This research on the impact of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 on elementary-level students' learning in Pakistan has provided valuable perspectives from teachers, principals, policymakers, and students. The thematic analysis indicates that APF 2019 policies have the potential to improve student learning outcomes, but this must be accompanied by ongoing teacher training and support, careful monitoring of assessment policies' impact, and a balanced approach to assessment that promotes both learning and accountability.

The study suggests that policymakers should prioritize evidence-based assessment policies that promote equitable educational opportunities for all students and ensure that teachers are adequately trained and supported. Additionally, policymakers should consider balancing standardization with flexibility and promoting a more holistic approach to assessment that incorporates formative assessment practices and promotes student learning and growth.

Overall, this research study provides important insights into the effectiveness of APF 2019 policies on student learning outcomes at the elementary level in Pakistan and highlights the need for ongoing research and evaluation of assessment policies to ensure that they are effective in improving educational outcomes for all students.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:
Based on the findings of the research study on the effectiveness of the Assessment Policy Framework (APF) 2019 on students’ learning at the elementary level in Pakistan, several future directions for research and practice could be pursued. These include:

1. **Long-term evaluation:** The study focused on the short-term impact of APF 2019 policies on student learning outcomes. Future research could focus on the long-term impact of these policies, including how they affect student performance at higher levels of education and in the workforce.

2. **Teacher training and support:** The study highlighted the need for ongoing training and support for teachers in understanding and implementing APF 2019 policies effectively. Future research could focus on the design and implementation of effective professional development programs for teachers, as well as strategies for providing ongoing support to teachers in the implementation of these policies.

3. **Student-centered assessment practices:** The study highlighted the need for a balanced approach to assessment that promotes both learning and accountability. Future research could explore the design and implementation of student-centred assessment practices that promote student learning and growth, while also holding students accountable for their performance.
4. **Stakeholder engagement**: The study included perspectives from teachers, principals, education policymakers, and students. Future research could focus on engaging a broader range of stakeholders, including parents, community members, and other education practitioners, in the design and implementation of assessment policies and practices. Overall, the future directions for research and practice in this area highlight the need for ongoing evaluation and improvement of assessment policies and practices in Pakistan to ensure that they are effective in improving educational outcomes for all students.

**CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT**

Muhammad Tayyab: Conceptualization, Methodology. Software. Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation. Chou Chin: Visualization, Investigation. Dr. Khawaja Hisham ul Hussan, Supervision, Software, Validation.: Mahboob Ahmad: Writing- Reviewing and Editing

**COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS:**

It is declared that all authors don’t have any conflict of interest. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

**REFERENCES**


