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Investigating the Factors Affecting the Applicability of Doctoral Dissertation Findings in the Field of Philosophy of Education in Educational Policy-Making

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Purpose: The objective of this study was to investigate the internal and external factors influencing the applicability of doctoral dissertations in the field of philosophy of education within the policy-making system of Iran's education sector.
Methods and Materials: This study employed a qualitative-exploratory research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 policymakers from the Supreme Council of Education and members of the Curriculum and Educational Planning Commission, selected via purposive sampling based on theoretical saturation. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify categories and themes that reflect the conditions necessary for the practical use of doctoral dissertation findings in educational policy-making.
Findings: The findings revealed that policymakers rarely use doctoral dissertations in philosophy of education as sources for policy-making due to both internal and external barriers. Internally, dissertations often lack strong methodologies, relevant problem selection, practical recommendations, and high-quality, applicable findings. Externally, the absence of structured collaboration between universities and policymakers, weak research culture, inadequate institutional mechanisms for dissemination, and insufficient information literacy among stakeholders hinder the utilization of research outputs. Among internal factors, the most influential were problem-based topic selection, practical findings, and precise problem definition. Among external factors, interaction between policymakers and researchers was identified as the most critical condition for enhancing applicability.
Conclusion: To increase the impact of doctoral dissertations in philosophy of education on policy-making, there is a need for reforms at both academic and institutional levels. These include fostering stronger engagement between researchers and policymakers, improving methodological rigor, promoting applied and needs-based research, and establishing systemic frameworks for research dissemination and policy integration. Enhancing the research culture and institutional support will be essential to bridging the gap between academic inquiry and educational governance.
Keywords: Applicability, Doctoral Dissertations, Philosophy of Education

1. Introduction

The body of knowledge, science, and technology at our disposal today is the result of the inquiries and investigations of both past scholars and contemporary scientists. It is perhaps for this reason that some researchers define research as a process of producing and refining knowledge. Accordingly, research findings can be regarded as new knowledge. Research, as a developmental tool, plays a critical role in national development, preventing deviation from essential trajectories and minimizing the waste of national resources and human capital. The logic of research lies in knowledge production, signifying wisdom, rationalism, and intellectual insight (Ma et al., 2024; Sawe et al., 2024).

Research generates knowledge, and the application of knowledge in practice leads to development. In this way, knowledge improves practice, a notion that reflects John Dewey's assertion that "knowledge is useful only if applied in practice." Hence, an organic and intrinsic connection is established between research, knowledge, practice, and development, underscoring the necessity of utilizing research findings. Applied research conducted by executive organizations aims to implement and exploit its findings in decision-making and planning processes (Feizi et al., 2024; McBeath & Bager-Charleson, 2023).

The primary goal of research in universities, organizations, and executive bodies, and the use of material and human resources, is to improve quality, aid in appropriate decision-making, increase productivity and organizational efficiency, adopt suitable strategies, solve entrepreneurial challenges, and foster trust in micro- and macro-level planning. These objectives can only be realized through the use of research findings in executive decision-making and planning based on research outcomes. Therefore, provisions for the utilization of research results must be established before, during, and after the research process (Maghfouri Farsangi et al., 2021; Maghsoudi, 2007).

A significant portion of systematic research in societies is conducted within universities and higher education institutions. Most novel ideas are the outcome of continuous and systematic research in universities, which serve three main purposes: expanding current knowledge, clarifying prior findings, and enhancing knowledge levels, ultimately leading to the application of such knowledge. Giving importance to research in national policy-making plays a crucial and fundamental role in the development trajectory. Among the research outputs that aid in achieving this goal are master's theses and doctoral dissertations. From a societal perspective, dissertations can address and potentially resolve a variety of pressing issues (Torkashvand, 2015). The doctoral dissertation represents the culmination of a student's academic and research endeavors during their studies, and the value of a dissertation lies in its capacity to generate ideas and propose solutions (Khaki, 2012). In developed countries, there is a widespread belief among policymakers, the public, officials, planners, and decision-makers in the power of research and the importance of applying its findings. The need for research in these societies has evolved from a perceived requirement to an essential necessity (Maghfouri Farsangi et al., 2021).

Studies have shown that various factors influence the use of research findings. These include: conducting needs assessments and prioritizing research topics, maintaining continuous and close contact between researchers and practitioners, evaluating the effectiveness and utility of research results, enhancing researchers' academic competencies, establishing proper information systems and databases, promoting a research culture, organizing training programs, fostering the integration and application of research, incentivizing and encouraging researchers, improving research methodologies, closing the gap between researchers and decision-makers, ensuring effective research management, increasing research awareness among managers, ensuring timely access to research findings, eliminating bureaucratic obstacles, fostering realism, holding discussion sessions, leveraging mass communication media, and activating research centers (Faraji Dehsorkhi, 2015; Iravani et al., 2014; Khaki, 2012; Khosravi, 2013; Maghfouri Farsangi et al., 2021; Momeni Rad et al., 2013; Mosleh Amirdahi & Siadat, 2015; Navid Adham & Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari, 2015; Seraji & Forghan, 2014; Torkashvand, 2015).

Among the academic disciplines that can respond to the diverse needs of the education system, the field of educational sciences holds particular promise. At the postgraduate level, this field branches into several subdisciplines, one of which is the philosophy of education. Philosophy of education, a branch of human knowledge, not only explains the characteristics of human beings but also directs educational studies. It assists educational systems in developing and implementing curricula and reforms and serves as a guide for educational and training activities, providing general standards and guidelines for the education system to devise appropriate educational methods (Enteshari Najafabadi et al., 2011). This field can strengthen the link

between theory and practice in education and thereby improve the quality of the education system (Navabakhsh & Ghajavand, 2008; Navid Adham & Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari, 2015).

Doctoral dissertations in the philosophy of education, like other dissertations in the humanities and social sciences, fall into two main categories: fundamental and applied research. Fundamental research is driven by a quest for truth and aims to generate new knowledge and scientific relationships. It allows for a deep understanding of phenomena. In contrast, applied research seeks to provide practical solutions that are timely and valuable to the educational system, aiding policymakers in daily decision-making, identifying particular realities and relationships, and offering relevant results.

The mission of doctoral dissertations is to expand knowledge and address societal issues both theoretically and practically, guiding the country toward growth and improvement. Society expects research conducted by doctoral students and scholars to be performed in such a way that the findings are considered in policy-making, decision-making, and problem-solving processes (Torkashvand, 2015).

The education system, as one of the most essential pillars of societies, plays a key role in shaping generations and advancing nations. Educational policy-making guides the activities and programs of this system and is thus of great importance. On the other hand, philosophy of education, as the theoretical foundation of educational sciences, examines the foundations and nature of education and can contribute to the formulation and implementation of educational policies.

Doctoral dissertations in the philosophy of education are the result of in-depth and specialized research in this field, and their findings can be a significant step toward enhancing the education system. However, the extent to which these findings are utilized in educational policy-making has always been a topic of debate. When the applicability of research findings is discussed, the traditional concept that comes to most people's minds is often narrow and confined to immediate, observable, and tangible use. However, a newer concept emerging from research in this field emphasizes that in addition to immediate application, long-term and implicit use of research findings is also valid. Researchers have found, through tracking one or more research projects over time, that even after the conclusion of a project and dissemination of results to relevant individuals, those findings may influence the perspectives and mental frameworks of policymakers and educational decision-makers in the long term (Mehrmohammadi, 2001; Momeni Rad et al., 2013).

The application of research results requires prior arrangements and conditions. These may include educational resources, infrastructure, costs, consideration of positive and negative impacts, and more. A key point in the modern concept of applying research findings is not to overlook the influence such findings have on the thought patterns, attitudes, and perceptions of those in executive bodies. It is crucial to examine why findings are not always used in a timely manner—whether in the short term or long term—and to account for the attitudes and perceptions toward educational research and the identification of the actual users of research findings. Another issue is that the traditional view of utilizing educational research outcomes is still highly prevalent. This view often sees application as something that begins only after a study is complete, whereas concerns about application should arise from the very beginning of a research idea or specific topic. Research should inspire decisions from its inception (Ghaedi & Ahanchian, 2008). The challenge of applying research findings exists in both developed and developing countries, and any effective strategy to increase the use of research outcomes in decision-making depends on the level of awareness among decision-makers regarding available research and its findings. Without such awareness, sustainable development will not be achieved (Seraji & Forghan, 2014).

A necessary interaction must be established between research and decision-making. Failure to apply research findings in the decision-making process results in the waste of resources and ineffective implementation. Doctoral students in the philosophy of education, as members of the educational philosophy community, can contribute significantly to the transformation and quality of the education system through research addressing philosophical and educational issues both globally and domestically.

Doctoral research in the philosophy of education is among the scientific inquiries that can help resolve philosophical and educational challenges in the education system. Such research should be designed so that educational policymakers can use the findings as a valuable source of information. From a social perspective, dissertations can tackle a wide range of pressing societal issues (Torkashvand, 2015). The doctoral dissertation represents the synthesis of a student's academic and research activity throughout their studies, and its value lies in its

ability to generate new ideas and offer solutions (Khaki, 2012).

This study seeks to address the question: Are doctoral dissertations in the field of philosophy of education designed in a way that policymakers in the education system can utilize their findings as a source of information? What features should doctoral dissertations possess so that members of the Supreme Council for Education can use them as informational resources?

2.   Methods and Materials

This study is applied in terms of its objective, as it seeks to apply knowledge in various contexts and expand practical knowledge within a specific domain. Regarding the method of data collection, it falls within the category of qualitative-exploratory research. The tool used in this study was the semi-structured interview, which was conducted with policymakers from the Supreme Council of Education, specifically members of the Curriculum and Educational Planning Commission. The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, and the method of data analysis was qualitative content analysis.

The statistical population of the study consisted of knowledgeable human resources, namely the policymakers of the Supreme Council of Education and members of the Curriculum and Educational Planning Commission. From among the members of the Supreme Council of Education, 18 members of the Curriculum and Educational Planning Commission were selected. This study employed purposive sampling.

To select policymakers and experts, purposive sampling was used. The most widely used sampling method in qualitative research is purposive sampling, which means selecting samples that are rich and expert in terms of the research problem and objectives. Purposive sampling was employed specifically for selecting policymakers. The

sample size in the policymakers section was determined based on theoretical saturation, resulting in the selection of 15 policymakers.

In the qualitative approach, theoretical saturation determines the sample size. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain theoretical saturation as follows: "Theoretical saturation refers to the point at which no additional data can be found that would allow the researcher to further develop the properties of a category. Concurrently, when the researcher repeatedly observes the same data, empirical confidence in the adequacy of a category is gained. Once a category reaches sufficient adequacy, the researcher moves on to new groups of data relevant to other categories and seeks to achieve the same level of adequacy for those categories."

3.   Findings and Results

Do education system policymakers use the findings of doctoral dissertations as a source for policy-making?

This question aimed to determine whether policymakers in the education system use the findings of doctoral dissertations as one of the sources for policy-making. If the answer is affirmative, the study sought to understand how these findings are utilized and what positive features make these dissertations valuable for policy-making. Conversely, if the answer is negative, the study explored what characteristics are necessary for the dissertations to be applicable in policy-making. To address this question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the Supreme Council of Education and the Curriculum and Educational Planning Commission.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of policymakers expressed opposition to the use of doctoral dissertation findings in policy-making. They also provided reasons for the inapplicability of these findings, which are summarized in the table.

Table 1

Policymakers' Perspectives on the Use of Doctoral Dissertation Findings

Row	Policymakers' Views	Statement	Result
1	Due to the missing link between the knowledge system and decision-making in our country—and particularly within the education sector—the lack of "policy research" results in most decisions made for the educational system lacking a research foundation. As a result, either research findings are not used, or policymakers do not feel the need for policy research, leading to decisions being made without research backing, which may have both positive and negative consequences. In general, research findings are unfortunately seldom used.	In general, research findings are either not used, or policymakers do not feel the need for policy research.	Opposed
2	There is a recognized need to use the findings of doctoral dissertations, and this issue must be addressed. However, there is no mechanism or specific law for this—except in rare cases where a thesis has been conducted under the supervision of an organization. So far, the findings of dissertations have not been used.	So far, the findings of dissertations have not been used.	Opposed

3	Generally, research findings are used in decision-making processes. For example, in the Supreme Council, every proposal includes a research appendix. Although relying solely on dissertations has not become common practice, efforts are made to follow through based on research findings.	Generally, research findings are used in decision-making.	In Favor
4	The findings of doctoral dissertations are not used in policy-making, which is a weakness.	The findings of doctoral dissertations are not used in policy-making.	Opposed
5	In policy-making, for various decisions within specific commissions of different units, proposals are made and relevant research—both domestic and international—is reviewed. All types of research models are examined.	All types of research models are examined.	Indirect Use
6	The Supreme Council of Education indirectly uses the results of research. Policymakers assign research experts to review prior studies on topics both inside and outside the country.	Research findings are used indirectly.	Indirect Use
7	Doctoral dissertation findings are not directly used. When a policy is to be formulated, extensive studies are conducted, which include, as one component, a review of dissertation results.	Doctoral dissertation findings are not directly used.	Indirect Use
8	Policymakers do not systematically use research findings but rather do so sporadically.	Research findings are not used systematically.	Indirect Use
9	I personally consider it essential to base every decision on research and conduct a literature review before deciding.	Decisions are made based on research and literature review.	In Favor
10	Doctoral dissertations are not used as a source for policy-making.	Not used as a source for policy-making.	Opposed
11	The findings of doctoral dissertations are not used; individuals make decisions based on personal experience and private study. Structurally, there is no requirement to use dissertation findings.	Dissertation findings are not used.	Opposed
12	Depending on the subject under review, policymakers examine all types of research, not only doctoral dissertations. To access findings, various research databases are used, including the Educational Research Institute. Moreover, subject-matter experts on council task forces provide up-to-date guidance. Beyond that, individuals independently search for sources and research findings both domestically and internationally.	Policymakers examine all types of research depending on the topic.	

What Features Are Necessary for the Applicability of Doctoral Dissertations According to Policymakers?

According to policymakers, certain factors, conditions, and characteristics must be in place for doctoral dissertation findings to be effectively used as a policy-making resource. After analyzing the interviews conducted with members of the Supreme Council of Education, the extracted factors, conditions, and characteristics are presented in Table 2:

Table 2

Necessary Features for the Applicability of Doctoral Dissertations Based on Policymakers' Perspectives

Statement	Category
Dissertations have structural weaknesses in methodology, and there is a lack of diversity in qualitative and quantitative methods.	Robust methodology
Policy recommendations provided at the end of dissertations are not operational, feasible, or aligned with policy needs.	Practical recommendations
The overall level of dissertation research is not sufficiently problem-solving, which reduces policymakers' interest in their use.	Research quality
The structure of the education system and the Council Secretariat is not designed to seek and provide prior research on issues to policymakers.	Research-oriented institutional structure
There is no synergy between the academic scientific ecosystem and the governance ecosystem; even high-quality dissertations are ineffective without such interaction.	Policymaker-academic interaction
Information literacy among academics is insufficient.	Enhancing information literacy
There is a lack of proper literature review in many research works.	Adequate literature review
There is little focus on futures studies and foresight; most research is confined to past and present.	Emphasis on futures research
A gap exists between theory and practice.	Theory-practice linkage
Research lacks utility.	Goal-oriented research
Universities are not problem-driven or mission-oriented.	Problem-based academic focus
There is no proper monitoring or issue-identification system, nor adequate interaction with policymakers.	Policymaker-university collaboration
Professors guide students toward topics based on personal preferences, not real problems.	Problem selection based on real needs
The education system lacks a culture of research participation, with little emphasis on teacher and student inquiry.	Research culture in education system
Decision-making is often reactive and ad hoc.	–
Dissertations in philosophy of education focus on micro and case-specific issues, not fundamental or macro-level ones.	Scope of dissertation focus
The process of topic approval is lengthy.	Streamlining research processes

Universities and the Ministry of Education function independently with limited interaction.	University-policymaker cooperation
The Educational Research Institute fails to formally assign relevant issues to universities.	Institutional research collaboration
Most dissertations are not problem-based and result in abstract models with little practical utility.	Problem-oriented and practical results
Dissertations are largely theoretical, offering limited practical solutions.	Bridging theory and practice
Professors lack practical experience, which limits their ability to guide applied research.	Applied-practical guidance
Theoretical research should be either fundamental or applied; many remain neither.	Clear research classification
There is a disconnect between the philosophy of education field and the education system.	University-policy linkage
Problems are often not correctly identified in academia.	Precise problem identification
Clearly defining the research problem is a major step.	Accurate problem formulation
Professors' preferences dominate topic selection due to the lack of university-policy ties.	Professor-policymaker alignment
Dissertation recommendations are too general and not applicable.	Practical and specific recommendations
Research topics are overly broad and lack depth, failing to produce useful outcomes.	Focused and applicable research
Dissertations are not utilized in policy-making due to lack of strategy and regulatory frameworks.	Policy program design and legal structures
There is no mutual communication between researchers and the education system.	Two-way university-policy interaction
Research is not aligned with the needs identified by the education system.	Needs-based research
Students lack motivation or awareness to share research outcomes with policymakers.	Communicating findings to policymakers
No designated organization exists to track university research outcomes.	Institutional responsibility
Organizations should support dissertations to motivate students and promote problem-driven research.	Organizational support
Although necessary, there is no mechanism or law mandating the use of dissertation findings.	Mandatory regulation
Universities' research is often undervalued due to students' lack of subject expertise.	Researcher subject expertise
Academic research remains theoretical, whereas the Supreme Council deals with practical implementation.	Applied focus in academia
Professors tend to follow personal interests rather than addressing educational needs.	Societal and organizational relevance
Dissertation writing is often seen as a formal requirement rather than a solution-oriented task.	Problem-solving intent
Lack of necessary interaction between universities and policymakers.	Strengthening policy-academic ties
Universities produce little output for the executive sector; applied or fundamental, research should lead to results.	Outcome-driven research
Feedback loops between higher education and general education are absent.	Feedback systems between education levels
The relationship between universities, the Supreme Council, and the education system is dysfunctional.	Institutional synergy
Doctoral dissertations tend to emphasize foundational over practical research.	Practical application of results
There is a misalignment between higher education output and policymakers' concerns.	Research-policy alignment
Policy recommendations are often vague, abstract, and lack innovation.	Clear and innovative solutions
Dissertations should address both current educational problems and future visions.	Societal relevance and vision
Recurring problems result from poor issue recognition; solutions become impractical.	Feasible and applicable results
No institution tracks and applies university research outcomes.	Research application oversight
Neither universities nor the education system are well-equipped for problem identification and resolution.	Capacity for problem-solving
Dissertation topics should reflect real educational issues; research quality and advisors matter.	Topic relevance and supervision
The topic and research quality are more important than other factors.	Topic quality and findings
Title, topic, and findings significantly influence impact, though institutional context matters too.	Topic and institutional factors
Topic significance surpasses other considerations like supervisor influence.	Topic-driven impact
Topic, problem formulation, and results are key criteria for dissertation selection.	Topic, problem, and findings
Topics must address educational needs with valid methodology and originality.	Needs-based topic and methodology
Topic and problem formulation must be appropriate.	Topic and problem definition
For policy use, topic, problem, research questions, methods, and findings are all critical.	Comprehensive research structure
Dissertations titled "Policy-making in the Education System" have higher applicability.	Focused policy-related titles
Problems should be categorized into chronic and emerging; transparency is key.	Problem clarity
Topics should match current educational challenges with high-quality, applicable results.	Relevance and applicability
Researcher expertise and motivation are vital.	Researcher characteristics
Results must be well-analyzed and refined.	Analytical findings
The culture of research and using findings should be strengthened.	Research culture
Dissertation topics should align with societal needs.	Topic alignment with needs
Researchers must possess professional qualifications.	Researcher competence
Findings should reflect real-world conditions.	Realism in analysis
A comprehensive research database should be developed for policymakers.	Research database
Applied research should be emphasized alongside fundamental research.	Balanced research focus

Close communication between researchers and policymakers improves understanding and applicability.	Research-policy dialogue
Clear problem formulation facilitates application.	Problem clarity
Topic selection (applied or basic) should stem from a needs assessment.	Needs-based topic selection
Findings should be clear, precise, and avoid vagueness.	Clarity and specificity
Valid tools must be used for data collection.	Valid data collection tools
Research findings should be compatible with available resources.	Feasibility of findings
Use of updated domestic and international sources is necessary.	Up-to-date references
Findings should be written in practical report formats.	Practical reporting
Policymaker interaction during research execution helps align direction with needs.	Policy-research collaboration
A comprehensive system for disseminating research findings should be developed.	Research dissemination system
Solutions must be compatible with existing resources and conditions.	Feasible recommendations
Supervisors and researchers should have subject-matter expertise.	Expert supervision and research

The characteristics mentioned by policymakers that enable the findings of doctoral dissertations in the field of philosophy of education to be used effectively in policy-making fall into two categories. Some factors are related to the dissertations themselves, referred to as "internal factors," and others pertain to environmental or contextual issues, known as "external factors."

Table 3

Internal Factors Influencing the Applicability of Dissertation Findings According to Policymakers

Factor	Frequency
Robust and appropriate methodology	4
Practical recommendations	2
Quality of findings	4
Adequate literature review	1
Foresight-oriented research	1
Topic selection based on educational and societal needs	12
Practical and problem-based results	12
Precise problem formulation	11
Proper reporting and documentation	2
Titles focused on "Policy-making in the Educational System"	1
Valid data collection instruments	1
Use of appropriate sources	1

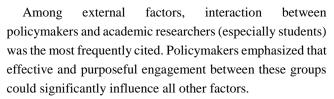Among internal factors, the most influential elements identified are topic selection based on actual needs, practical and problem-oriented results, and precise problem formulation.

Table 4

External Factors Influencing the Applicability of Dissertation Findings in Philosophy of Education According to Policymakers

Factor	Frequency
Structure of the educational system and the Supreme Council	2
Interaction between policymakers and faculty/researchers (students)	12
Enhancing information literacy	2
Linking theory and practice	3
Problem-oriented focus in universities	4
Accelerating research processes (e.g., topic approval)	1
Designing applied programs and enacting laws for research utilization	2
Organizational support for dissertations	1
Emphasis on applied over purely theoretical research	1
Researcher expertise in the topic	2
Supervisor's academic background	1
Researcher characteristics	1
Balance between basic and applied research	1
Creation of a comprehensive research findings database	2
Strengthening research culture	2

Among external factors, interaction between policymakers and academic researchers (especially students) was the most frequently cited. Policymakers emphasized that effective and purposeful engagement between these groups could significantly influence all other factors.

General Summary of Internal Factors (Content of the Dissertation):

- **Research Topic**: The research topic must address current educational needs and societal challenges. Topics aligned with active philosophical and professional discourse are more likely to have broader impacts.

- **Accurate Problem Identification**: Chronic repetition of unresolved issues often stems from poor problem identification. For research to be impactful, both the problem and the proposed solutions must be clearly defined and feasible.

- **Research Methodology**: The methodology must be appropriately selected to address educational and societal needs. Methodological rigor enhances credibility and applicability.

- **Access to Resources**: Access to credible resources—including books, articles, reports, and statistical data—is critical. Reliable and official sources should be used for data collection.

- **Clarity and Quality of Findings**: Findings must be clearly and systematically presented, ideally using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Practical relevance is essential.

- **Dissemination and Reporting**: Publishing and reporting results in accessible formats significantly influence the applicability of dissertation findings.

- **Use of New Technologies**: Utilizing communication technologies and digital platforms (e.g., social media) can facilitate the practical application of research outcomes.

General Summary of External Factors (Environmental Conditions):

- **Interaction Between Policymakers and Researchers**: There must be dynamic and continuous interaction between the scientific community and governance structures. Even the most excellent dissertations will be ineffective without such cooperation.

- **Educational System and Supreme Council Structure**: Research support units must proactively identify and provide relevant research backgrounds to policymakers. A research-driven structure is essential.

- **Information Literacy**: A society's ability to access, evaluate, and use information impacts its capacity to engage in research and policy-making. Promoting information literacy contributes to knowledge growth and the motivation to conduct applied research.

- **Theory-Practice Integration**: Doctoral research must bridge theoretical frameworks with practical realities. Unfortunately, most academic work remains overly theoretical and detached from implementation.

- **Designing Applied Programs and Legal Frameworks**: Institutionalizing the use of research in policy-making requires strategic, regulatory frameworks, and the elimination of bureaucratic obstacles.

- **Needs-Based Research**: Faculty must align their research with practical issues in the education system rather than pursuing topics driven by personal academic interest.

- **Institutional Support for Dissertations**: Organizations should support dissertation projects to encourage alignment with organizational challenges and facilitate the use of findings.

- **Researcher Expertise**: Graduate students must possess adequate knowledge and insight into their research topic to ensure depth and applicability.

- **Strengthening the Research Culture**: Fostering a culture of inquiry and utilization of findings can enhance the social impact of academic research.

- **Creating a Research Dissemination System**: Developing a national mechanism to disseminate and communicate findings can promote the uptake of academic knowledge.

In conclusion, the applicability of research findings in the field of philosophy of education is of critical importance, and achieving this goal requires attention to all contributing factors. The research topic, methodology, access to resources, clarity and quality of findings, publication strategies, and the use of modern technologies all play vital roles. Furthermore, effectively communicating findings in an accessible way, along with strong collaboration between policymakers and researchers, a supportive educational

structure, enhanced information literacy, and a practical orientation in research, are all essential to increasing the policy relevance of academic work.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify the internal and external factors influencing the applicability of doctoral dissertations in the field of philosophy of education in the educational policy-making process in Iran. The findings reveal a notable discrepancy between the production of philosophical-educational knowledge at the doctoral level and its actual utilization in policymaking practices. This misalignment highlights both structural and procedural barriers in connecting academic research to practical decision-making within the educational system.

The results indicate that policymakers do not systematically utilize doctoral dissertations in philosophy of education as direct sources for policy formulation. The reasons for this are multifaceted. Internally, the dissertations often lack problem-oriented design, practical recommendations, methodological rigor, and alignment with current policy needs. Externally, the lack of sustained interaction between policymakers and academic researchers, insufficient structures for disseminating research, and the absence of institutional mechanisms to integrate findings into actionable policy contribute to the gap. These findings support the assertions of scholars like Torkashvand (2016) and Khaki (2012), who argued that dissertations are often perceived more as academic exercises than practical tools for resolving real-world educational issues (Torkashvand, 2015).

One of the strongest findings of this study is the emphasis on problem identification as the foundation for research applicability. When research problems are not accurately formulated, chronic issues are repeated across dissertations, resulting in generic recommendations with limited feasibility for implementation. This observation echoes the critiques of prior studies which noted that much academic research fails to meet the real needs of the education system due to vague problem statements and disconnected topic selection (Forghan & Seraji, 2012; Ghaedi & Ahanchian, 2008; Kabiri, 2009; Navabakhsh & Ghajavand, 2008).

Another significant factor identified was topic selection based on real educational needs. The analysis showed that dissertations with topics aligned to pressing issues within the Iranian educational system had greater potential for influencing policy, though such alignment was rare. This aligns with the arguments presented by Rezaei Soofi (2010), who emphasized the necessity of orienting academic research toward societal needs to maximize its developmental impact.

The findings further show that research methodology plays a crucial role in determining applicability. Dissertations that employ weak, overly theoretical, or unbalanced methodological approaches are less likely to gain traction among policymakers.

In terms of external factors, the most significant finding was the lack of effective interaction between policymakers and academic researchers. Despite the growing discourse around knowledge transfer, there remains a fundamental disconnect between the two spheres. This result confirms prior studies (Attaran & Bagheri, 1997; Enteshari Najafabadi et al., 2011; Hashemi Moghadam, 2005; Hassanzadeh, 2004) which showed that policymaking environments often operate in isolation from academic research institutions. The present study reinforces this by demonstrating how even the most well-conducted dissertations have minimal influence unless proactive and sustained collaborations exist between academic and policy communities.

Another important external factor was the lack of an institutionalized system for the dissemination of research findings. Currently, no official body or mechanism ensures that the insights generated by doctoral research are filtered, translated, and communicated to policy audiences. This is aligned with the concerns raised by Somro Summer (1997) and Blakey (2000), who noted that in the absence of centralized databases or research knowledge hubs, the transmission of academic insights into policymaking remains haphazard and inefficient.

The role of information literacy also emerged as a critical issue. Many policymakers, and even academics, lack the necessary competencies to search, assess, and apply research findings effectively. The gap between theory and practice was another recurring theme. Dissertations in philosophy of education tend to be highly abstract and often fail to engage with the operational dimensions of the educational system. This observation supports earlier works by (Forghan & Seraji, 2012; Maghfouri Farsangi et al., 2021; Maghsoudi, 2007; Mehrmohammadi, 2001) which argued that the abstract nature of much educational philosophy makes its integration into policy challenging. The current findings suggest that reducing this gap requires a dual shift: academia must value and pursue practical research more aggressively, while policymakers must become more receptive to philosophical contributions that are policy-relevant.

Moreover, the findings emphasize the need for applied program design and the development of legal frameworks to facilitate the use of doctoral research in educational governance. Without structured pathways and codified procedures for research utilization, even the most valuable insights may remain unused. Another insight concerns the importance of organizational support for doctoral dissertations. Institutions must go beyond formal approvals and create mechanisms for mentoring, funding, and integrating student research into broader institutional agendas. This observation aligns with the conclusions of Hassan-Zadeh (2001), who highlighted that without systemic support, doctoral research remains isolated from organizational needs (Hassanzadeh, 2004).

Finally, the importance of researcher characteristics—particularly subject-matter expertise and motivation—was underscored in the interviews. Policymakers emphasized that doctoral candidates must have a deep understanding of their topics and the capability to produce actionable insights. This supports prior critiques by Matin (2001) who identified the inexperience of many doctoral candidates as a barrier to producing influential research (Matin, 2006).

This study is not without limitations. The primary limitation is its qualitative design, which, while rich in depth and insight, may limit the generalizability of findings to other contexts or academic disciplines beyond the philosophy of education. Additionally, the sample was limited to policymakers within the Supreme Council of Education and its Curriculum and Educational Planning Commission, potentially excluding diverse viewpoints from other branches of the Ministry of Education or regional decision-making bodies. Another limitation is the absence of doctoral candidates' or faculty members' perspectives, which could have enriched the analysis by presenting a fuller picture of the challenges and expectations in producing policy-relevant research.

Future studies should expand the scope to include a broader range of stakeholders such as doctoral students, supervisors, and mid-level education administrators. Comparative research across disciplines (e.g., psychology, curriculum studies, educational management) could offer insights into whether the challenges identified are specific to philosophy of education or reflective of systemic issues in research-policy translation. Longitudinal studies tracking the implementation trajectory of dissertations cited in policy documents could provide evidence on the long-term impact of academic research. Additionally, developing and evaluating intervention models—such as researcher-policy dialogue platforms or institutional repositories—may help bridge the current gaps.

To enhance the applicability of doctoral research in educational policy-making, universities should revise dissertation protocols to emphasize policy relevance and real-world impact. Research methodology courses must include training on problem-based inquiry and stakeholder engagement. Education policymakers should establish dedicated units for research integration and assign liaisons to collaborate with universities. Regular roundtables and knowledge translation workshops involving academics and policymakers can build mutual understanding and trust. Finally, developing accessible and practical summaries of research findings tailored to decision-making contexts can significantly improve uptake and utilization.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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