

## Policy-Making Model in the Private School System

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**Purpose:** This paper mainly aimed to provide a model for policy-making in the private school system.

**Methodology:** Based on the literature review, 17 influential factors were identified with the mixed method of survey and theme analysis. In the qualitative part, the semantic pattern was discovered and analyzed with the RQDA qualitative analysis software, and in the quantitative part, the Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) method was used to determine relationships. Statistical population in the qualitative part were 20 people (policy-making experts, professors and senior managers) were selected and participated in a semi-structured and quantitative interview. A number of 1140 schools were selected from Northern, Central and Southern Khorasan using a simple random sampling method with proof of validity and reliability.

**Findings:** The results of factors affecting policy-making based on fuzzy numerical average are: Investment 0.72, government aid 0.87, managers 0.74, teachers 0.73, executive agents 0.75, educational equipment 0.81, government-approved laws 0.89, banking system 0.88, tax and insurance 0.73, municipal, housing and urban organizations 0.33, community members 0.65, experts 0.8, Farhangian University training 0.8, coordination council 0.81, specialized founders 0.78, special schools 0.78, supervisory council 0.88, which because municipal organizations, housing and urban development 0.33, and community members 0.65 were lower than the average, they were rejected and the rest were accepted. Strategies in the first level (managers, executives and teachers) are the most effective and the sixth level (government laws) is the most effective.

**Conclusion:** Based on the results, the other 15 factors that have a great impact on policy-making should be considered.

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## 1. Introduction

Accepting transformation for the organization requires courage and moving away from stagnation. Basically, transformation is to eliminate stagnation. Lockett says about the necessity of innovation and synchronizing with new developments, “the wave of the sea is a scary experience, if you stand in front of it, it will throw you into a corner, but if you ride it, it can take you to a distant place in a short time. It is certainly much easier to wait and ride the waves of change than to insist on standing still and being pushed aside. Static and inactive management cannot last for a long time, the wave will either drown him or the ship of this management will remain stuck in the mud. (Lockett, 1995, p. 236). The transformation as a result of the interaction will cause more success in the realization of the results and according to the methodological designs, the studies play an important role in our understanding of what non-system actors do and how they interact with schools. Research limitations/implications using a new framework, research on school-NGO interaction through a coherent conceptual framework that views school systems as open systems, in short, with a focus on the intersection of education and organization, treats the system as relevant at the same time. (Cohen et al., 2018).

In this context, it is possible to refer to the emergence of the Islamic revolution under the leadership of the supreme authority, Imam Khomeini, because Amjozi from Tanzania believes: Imam succeeded in transforming a society that was under the influence of America and American culture and was actually considered a society dependent on America, so that now this society, culture and society challenged and rejected the American culture and society, and such a development was created Islamic unity among the people. (Amjozi, 2018, 223)

If private institutions, especially in education system, want to think for their survival, they are necessary to pay attention to two basic dimensions. First, they should have a look at the market and the ups and downs caused by it, and in the next step, they should also look at the category of competition with peers. Therefore, in a competitive environment, it is necessary to review the status quo every day and think about increasing the number of students and the quality of education and service provision. This problem can be seen and thought about in universities. With the increase in the number of students of private institutions, the income of these institutions will also increase, and these institutions will be able to compete with other institutions in today's turbulent and changing world and stand on their own feet, and secondly, the increase in the quality of these institutions will lead to present educated and capable people to the society. People with high scientific and practical ability in their desired field will be able to provide the fields for the development of their country and be a factor for the sustainable growth and development of their communities. (Kariminejad Hossein et al., 2019, 17)

Education organization is not exempt from this issue and it must create rapid changes in the field of education and for this purpose it must make policies and private schools are one of the sectors that meet the social and educational needs of the country. It must be acknowledged that non-governmental organizations, which are sometimes called civil societies, are organized at the community, national and international levels to serve specific social or political goals and are cooperative in nature, rather than commercial (Jean Folger, 2020). It is better to say that it is a system that is present and executed by creating vertical or horizontal steps without breaking the relationship with the previous or subsequent steps until the goal is reached in the surrounding environment or virtual space. This problem can be detected even in the smallest particles of the universe with technological tools, similarly, in the biggest parts of the world. Most organizations have a system to ensure that their technical and managerial ability will be continuously maintained (Toutian Esfahani Siddiqua et al. 2019, 76).

According to Article 110 of the Constitution, policy-making in education, whether in the government sector or in the private sector, should be broad and comprehensive and prevent factors that have a negative impact on its changes.

As Ayatollah Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, announced the general policies of “creating transformation in Iran’s education system” which was determined after consultation with the Expediency Council.

Policy-making in the private sector should be in line with the educational policy of the Ministry of Education and actually help to implement the educational policy properly. But what was the researcher’s motivation for choosing this subject? It is better to state what made some people react against the policies of the private sector. The double standard policy in the private structure, follows irreparable damage. Because education and training is a progressive, interactive, gradual process, based on the Islamic standard system, which provides a suitable field for continuous development and excellence of their identity in line with the formation and progress of society aiming to guide the people towards the preparation for the conscious and voluntary realization of the stages of good life in all dimensions. (Jaafari Ammar, Karimi Fariba, 2017, 48)

In fact, the establishment of private schools is in line with the realization of a part of the fundamental transformation document with a specialized view on the educational policy. In this research, the goals are drawn as follows:

1. Identifying factors influencing policy-making in the private school system;
2. Determining the status of the statistical population in terms of each of the identified factors on policy-making in the private school system;
3. Identifying the relationships between each of the factors affecting policy-making in the private school system;
4. Providing a model for policy-making in the private school system;
5. Determining the degree of appropriateness on policy-making in the private school system;

This model should be able to result in actual development of private schools. The impact of the 14 factors that will be expressed in the following is one of the basic factors in the development structure of private schools. Since the education system is defined as a social system (Hematti et al., 2015), there is a wide and nested network of institutions in the structure of this educational system that are connected horizontally and vertically, and a political decision about any part of this network can have many consequences in the whole system. Rare researches in this field have proved the existence of the following problems, which, if not solved, will involve Iran with fundamental challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

1. Lack of understanding of the school classification and serious opposition at the top of the pyramid
2. The deep gap between theory and practice of private schools’ laws at the top of the pyramid
3. Huge challenge between private and government systems in private schools

And in the constantly competing world and despite the increasing development of science and technology, the competition of organizations to survive and get ahead of the competitors brings huge challenges. For example, the challenge of quality in public and private schools is very important. Because the results of a study by Janelle Cox (2018) show that private schools are not better than public ones in educating children, while research may confirm that there is no difference. But with the start of the school registration season, parents are looking to choose the best school for their child’s education to ensure his future academic and career path (Akbari Zahra, 2019). Although the performance of private schools shows that many factors indicate the superiority of private over government, many challenges arise as a result of competition and involve organizations and schools. Therefore, the adoption of new and innovative policies and measures is one of the inevitable necessities of organizations, and it is more appropriate to say that organization is a world that has emerged on the infrastructure called transformation, and the managers and upper levels of the organization must also make decisions along with these transformations.

To ensure the ultimate quality of education for all programs, each investment must be measured against how it delivers on such aspects. Investing in education enhances the wealth and growth of society, where people can easily improve their personal efficiency, productivity and personal income (Rihaf. A. Madani 2019). On the other hand, policy-making and educational planning, means “how” and “when” to develop education with or without the participation of others. The most important features of modern education and training

according to the phenomenon of globalization can be summarized in these cases: foresight and futurology (Naderi et al., 2016, 15).

Policymaking is not an easy task. It needs its own human resources and organization. People who are engaged in producing ideas in these organizations may exaggerate their findings and prescriptions. In this sense, in many policy faculties, courses with combined titles such as policy-making and management have been defined (Maleki Abbas, Hayeri Yazdi Asieh, 2017).

One of the criteria is attracting, training and maintaining efficient and expert human resources. Because manpower has a constructive and key role in advancing the organization's goals and missions and is considered one of the pillars of the organization's growth, development and survival. Nowadays, the equipment, supplies and machines are not enough to carry out the organization's affairs effectively. Therefore, the importance of focusing on human relations and optimal use of the thinking power and individual skills of employees will make the organization more successful in achieving its goals. In terms of educational policy, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, stated that "everyone has the right to education". Article 26 of this declaration states that "Education must be at least in the basic stages" and "Primary education is compulsory", and "Education must lead to the full development and strengthening of the human personality" (Sabutina, Kruchenko, Vygova, 2019, 24).

This article actually aims to find a model and specify the different steps by which innovative and new and at the same time clear and practical policies can be drawn for private schools, and private schools, including primary and high school education, require special consideration in the education and upbringing of children and teenagers.

The two main and fundamental dimensions in politics are: actors (decision makers) and the process (method) of politics. None of these two dimensions alone can provide a clear picture of politics. The combination of these two leads to the emergence of a new situation and various forms of politics, some of which would be efficient and some others ineffective and unsuccessful (Asghari, 2016).

Quantitative and qualitative characteristics of educational policy-making in private schools, pays attention especially to age, education, skill, marriage, personality, experience, etc. This is important because it will either be a weak or strong point for the organization. This can be investigated in private schools, which are considered as part of educational centers, and by defining and identifying the effective variables in the policy-making of these educational centers, the desired results can be achieved. In this research, the researcher is looking for an answer to the question, where is the missing link of policy-making in the development system of private schools? Or to put it better what model can be presented for policy-making in the private school system?

One of the priorities of private organizations and NGOs in the world has been to pay attention to education. For example, research on policymaking and the role of private organizations in primary education has been registered at the World Bank, Washington, DC. It contains a study of six NGOs in India, which states: NGOs can be a reliable partner for the government in the formation of primary education policies. This requires cooperation, not parallel initiatives, by NGOs. To stay in education system, NGOs must constantly evaluate and refine their models. If NGOs play a political role in education these two domains might be neglected. (Parkesh Javadkar, 2019, 27)

Another study that can be considered in the private education policy of European countries is the European Education Policy Network. The Erasmus project has been implemented by the Department of Foreign Affairs of Croatia to cooperate with NGOs. The core of the Consortium's work is to identify good practices in applied research, educational practice and current policy with a core topic that the Consortium will select at the beginning of each year. This issue is based on the European Education Policy Network on teachers and leaders of private schools. (16, 07, 2019)

This network shows a wide geographical range and diverse backgrounds of participating institutions and associations of executive policies and examines the issue with a multi-view approach that has led to four research fields: 1. Good practices from the point of view of doctors and parents, 2. Good practices in the

field of consultation and policy implementation, 3. Teacher recruitment, retention and motivation in Europe, 4. Ten projects related to the European Commission for more attractive career paths for teachers and school leaders budget. The most important challenge of policy-making in education in the third millennium is the policy of transformation of the current education system into efficient and effective education. Policy-making models provide a better understanding of environmental factors with the framework they provide in an analytical form, and create and facilitate the conditions for more investigation and more realistic policy analysis. Policy-making in private schools is derived from the thoughts of private actors. The economy in Iran is also divided into three sectors: public, private and cooperative. In Europe, private constituencies also differ greatly in the way they interact with political or economic spheres. Non-state actors are usually thought of as a “third sector” that is independent of the government and market sector. However, NGOs may also be naturally connected to the state or market sectors (Verger Anthony, 429, 2019). What is presented as the third part includes the above and especially cooperatives, but the footprint of cooperatives is less visible in the education category. In order to expand its influence in other countries, Germany’s education has put policymaking in private schools of the target countries at the top of its overseas education program and is trying to spread its desired culture in the international dimension in addition to the domestic scope. Germany has been able to develop its policy in the field of private schools in Ivory Coast, Rwanda and other African countries, as well as in Pakistan and other Asian countries. This 4-year project started in January 2019 with the cooperation of the European Union and continues with the coordination of the Association of European Heads of Schools and currently includes 27 partners from 17 countries. NGOs in Germany are the most influential organizations in the field of education and those are the ones who also understand power, therefore, policymaking is a 3D phenomenon and, accordingly, it activates three main sources of power, i.e. matter, relationship and discourse (Joshua L., Glovers Laura Grote, Butch Blair, 2019). This can also be seen in the policy-making of European education systems, for example, unlike Iran, Switzerland does not have a Ministry of Education, and general education in each province is the responsibility of the same province. In this regard, the structure and organization of education in each province is different, and all these educations are provided by an institution called the Federal Institute of Technology which is evaluated under the supervision of the government. There are a variety of public and private schools in this country, but students prefer private ones, and in our country, Iran, there are various schools and educational centers, including public and private schools, minority schools, teacher training, etc., each has its own audiences and people enroll in these schools based on their capabilities (Rostami et al., 2019, 12). Generally speaking, countries that have policies for private schools are as follows:

Indonesia	India	Italy	Germany	Canada	Australia	Ireland
New Zealand	Netherlands	Nepal	Malaysia	Lebanon	Philippines	Oman
UK	South Africa	Singapore	Portugal	Pakistan	Iran	England and Wales <sup>1</sup>

One of the bills that has been politicized to amend the Australian Education Act as a new national formula in 2020 is the direct measure of income. This budget model, based on the current geographical environment, evaluates the level of government funding for private schools, which is determined based on the average income and education level of the community where the school is located. The new formula is based on the income of taxable parents to know and use their ability to contribute to the expenses of a school. In this model, it is estimated that 810 independent schools increase their annual budget by 2.5% or more, 133 schools experience little or no change, and 59 schools lose their budget (Kerry Adam, 2020) based on the

<sup>1</sup> Independent school From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

theory of Osburg and Schmidpeter (2013), who consider innovative organizations as drivers of social innovation.

Australia's policy for private schools seeks to find new ways of private education, in order to formulate creative and innovative policies until 2029, to bring about a fundamental transformation in the education and development of Iran. As Tahan (2020), the then Minister of Education of Australia, states: "it is possible that private schools will be completely transferred to the new model by 2029".

The participation of the private sector in the politics of private schools in America is very impressive, because in the research of Epad Verger (2019), Latin America has been highlighted by advancing the ranking in the regions that show the highest participation of private education as well as the highest growth in recent decades<sup>2</sup>. By accepting the interview before the arrival of the students, America is trying to show a good view of its progress in policy-making. However, according to Hyman and Stern's (2013) studies, the share of private schools in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia is relatively low; a possible explanation lies in history – strong government control, relatively weak civic participation.

In China, municipalities are in charge of the policy-making for private schools. In fact, the establishment of private schools that also provide higher university education is managed by the municipal education department in an integrated manner and before submitting the plan to the country's education department, it is reported to people's affairs department in the municipality. Shanghai People's Government notice, in the printing and distribution of the procedures of the Shanghai municipality regarding the issuance of a license, the classification and registration of private schools in eight chapters and forty articles and a legalized appendix, showing the policy of private schools in this country.

The statute of Chinese private schools, in most cases is similar to the policies of Iranian private schools of education; the difference is the use of a strong monitoring source in this country. As stated in Article 38 (Government Responsibility): In case the affiliated functional departments, at all levels, commit violations of the laws and regulations in the field of licensing and registration of private schools, their higher departments will order them to correct it.

If the case is serious, the committed person and other persons who are directly responsible will be punished according to the law. If economic damage is caused, they are responsible for compensation according to the law. If a crime is committed, they will be prosecuted according to the law. The distinctive feature of China's private school policy lies in the 38<sup>th</sup> regulatory article. Because in this article, the protection of the founders is considered the essence of the law, and superior experts are also monitored, and in case of damage, they are considered guilty, and the law clearly states that they must compensate for the damage. Comprehensive supervision implemented vertically in the private education structure of China can promise the expansion of public participation in the development of private schools.

In Russia, specialists designed an electronic model that will have the highest quality in education by 2025 by applying technology.

"Modern design and shaping of the educational environment for traffic students, implemented by GEF". Implementation of this program, which is full-time and remote aims to change the classical learning process with the creativity model, which teachers are familiar with. The new methods of education, that is, educational technologies and educational space, are based on the schools' own views on improving the quality of the teacher's skills development program, at the professional standard level, by using games in the educational process. New technology increases school motivation and organizes educational events, and can present your educational experiences. More details about the true fans of this program can be found at omu.ru. (Sabotina et al., 2019, 103).

In India, by using the participation of the private sector, with the mobilization of the local community and volunteers, policies have been made until the horizon 2025. As stated: 2030 plan for sustainable development. SDG4 seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO-UIS, 2016 apud Verger, 2019

for all” by 2030. Five of the seven goals of SDG4 focus on quality education and learning. SDG4 is therefore a comprehensive and applicable goal to every nation that tries to create a quality of life for its citizens in a stable situation. “The way, without insulting the environment” is a big challenge (Parkesh Javadkar, 2019, 27).

It is necessary and essential to draw up new and creative and diverse policies to compete and keep private schools at the top of the country’s education.

Due to the increase in institutional diversity, conflicting methods and school systems and the problems we face, researchers have emphasized the need to increase the understanding of the role that educational infrastructure can play in supporting improvement (Cohen and Mefift, 2010; Cohen et al., 2018).

Since developed countries owe most of their achievements to the effective education system, they are always studying and planning to improve and increase its efficiency. Therefore, it is necessary for policymakers to be aware of the principles, academic courses, assessment methods, content of books and educational materials, educational programs, school management, student training methods, and the requirements for hiring employees of the educational system of other developed and developing countries; a goal that requires the use of the comparative education approach (Askari Mehdi et al., 2018). In such a scene, the role of private schools can be very effective with a well-considered and appropriate policy.

This should come to the fore when it is placed in a very vertical system and the high-handed policies of the organization sometimes act as a brake and transform or disable the policies of the private school system. Therefore, horizontal and vertical policies should be coordinated, as well as changes in policy-making should be well-reasoned and appropriate, so that it can be consistent with the macro policies of education, and the resistance of the upper levels can be reduced or at least persuasive. Therefore, the private school organization needs to analyze the system and rethink and constantly restore the way of policy-making for agility and necessary changes. Today, systematic thinking for policy-making is the most important systems analysis to promote global policy challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ramos Gabriel et al., 2019)<sup>3</sup>.

One of the reasons for the failure of macro policies in Iran might be the lack of realism and appropriateness of the policies with the field capabilities in the country. Data available in the economic complexity atlas of countries can be a suitable guide for formulating policies and showing the path of development of countries (Ahmadian Div Koti Mohammad Mahdi et al., 2017, 23) and also the results of a study (Janelle Cox, 2018) show that private schools are not better than public schools in educating children, while research may confirm that there is no difference. But with the start of the school registration season, parents are looking to choose the best school for their child to ensure his future academic and career path (Akbari Zahra, 2019).

Receiving tuition and depending on it in private schools has caused families to be demanding and lead to social control. But to what extent families have the right to interfere, it is a matter of reflection. On the other hand, the organizational supervision and the supervision provided by the law can be a guide and framework for the quality of private schools. However, how to make policies in private schools to improve the quality and quantity of the system requires current information and detailed mechanisms. Copying from other countries is not only ineffective, but sometimes it is very destructive. For example, we can mention the cultural and social category difference, which is not only possible to not be acceptable, but it can bring the impact of foreign culture.

Therefore, in order to continue the policy-making process in private schools, the presence of perceptive, creative, deep-thinking, comprehensive and compassionate thinkers seems to be vital and necessary. Recruiting experts loyal to the organization’s goals is a valuable source that brings capital production and transformation, and in fact, it will form the backbone and main pillars of the organization’s body with human capital. Policy-making, which is an obvious thing to achieve organizational goals, especially in private organizations and including private schools, while being obvious, it is a necessary for agility and keeping pace with the ever-changing conditions of an organization, to realize sustainable development. One of the issues

<sup>3</sup> Gabriela Ramos, William Heinz, Jean-Marco Müller and Martin Lee (September 1-17, 2019, OECD Convention Center)

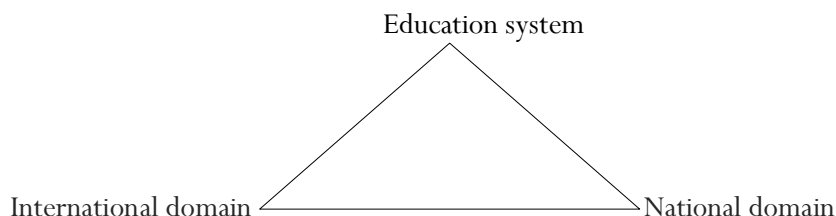
that the UNESCO is looking for is the politicization of the private school system in such a way that an article entitled “basic principles for attracting education participants in policy review”, published in 2020, predicted policy-making until 2030. UNESCO has called all the thinkers in this field to think about this historical moment by posing key questions.

“What types of private schools are there? How are they established? What are the legal and regulatory frameworks and mechanisms? What are the main duties of different levels of government (central, middle, local) in education? What are the main agencies specializing in basic education? How much independence do individual schools have and in what fields do they operate (financial affairs, teacher recruitment and management, curriculum, etc.)? How responsive are schools and teachers? To what extent are private schools required to comply with the same regulations as public schools? Are there any concerns about honesty in the education system? If so, what mechanisms are designed to prevent and address them? (2020, 53)<sup>4</sup>

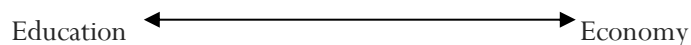
Policy-making is evident for any activity or organization including private schools. Private schools provide the context for private sector participation, and accordingly, Eyal Weberkovich (2019) quoting Patrinos et al. (2009) states that “supporters of private participation in education believe that inter-sector partnerships are an efficient way for organization and the use of participation makes the private sector flourish in public education. From this point of view, partnership with private organizations (NGOs) is a way to introduce new ideas, actors and resources into public education systems. With their entry, investors bring a new platform of policy-making capacities and use of opportunities.

- Since the policy maker’s duty is to regulate the staff and line relationship in the private school system, private schools also need special policies to establish and continue their activities. It is necessary to pay attention to the three sides of the triangle for policy-making in any system of private schools. These three sides are: the international domain, the national domain and the educational system.

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It should be kept in mind that private institutions in education increasingly rely on the expression and mobilization of different forms of capital: economic, social and symbolic (Fontdevila, 2019) and it is concluded that policy thinking in private schools is a fluid thinking between two sides: the side related to education and the side related to economy.



To create such a structure, we need various sources of investment. This investment can be provided through financial credits, skilled and specialized manpower, location, hardware and software equipment, etc. Student attraction is an important and vital issue in realizing the goals of developing private schools and increasing private sector participation, because it is the main and probably the only source of financing to cover the heavy costs of an educational work. For educational investment, the participation of satisfied and sympathetic founders is very valuable.

<sup>4</sup> WWW.UNESCO.ORG- UNESDOC -Digital Library



## 2. Methodology

In the approach of this research, the mixed method – a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, has been used. It is certain that in order to understand social phenomena that have certain complexities and have qualitative data, we will need to obtain data through interviews, participatory observation, documentation, questionnaires, etc. In principle, it can be said that when it comes to human relations, the qualitative method has its own efficiency to gather human perspectives, because it describes and explains, puts the researcher and the researched face to face, and relies on observable behaviors. It can be admitted that the qualitative method has an interpretative nature and has a bias toward the researcher's tendency to understand the real world.

The data collection tool in this research was divided into two qualitative and quantitative parts. In the qualitative part of this research, a semi-structured interview was used. This interview, which is between two structured and unstructured interviews, can discover and reveal many dark points of the subject. In this interview, similar questions were used and the respondents faced a new challenge.

In the semi-structured interview, despite having a specific framework, the respondents were free to act and could easily express their beliefs regarding the questions raised. The questioner of such an interview can put his ideas in any verbal question and raise his questions with a complete phrase, and the respondent can give his answer in any way he wants and in any word he likes (Lapan et al., 2011) and then the researcher asks questions again from the answers of the technical experts and students who were interviewed and tries to cover the hidden and dark points of the interview by suggesting additional points for the interviewee and after that the data obtained through semi-structured interviews are analyzed using the content analysis method in the RQDA qualitative analysis software.

Competent and expert people, in other words, key experts in the field and subject area of qualitative research, were invited to an interview in three departments: 1. Managers of the private education organization, 2. Expert professors, 3. Ministry of Education and its educational policy makers were questioned for theoretical sampling and extraction of theoretical concepts and components. In sampling section, theoretical sampling, which is a type of targeted sampling, helps the researcher in creating or discovering theories or concepts whose theoretical connection with the theory in the state of development has been proven. In this research, the interviews continue until the researcher reaches theoretical saturation.

Theme analysis is used in the qualitative part of this research. In fact, it should be acknowledged that theme analysis is the first method of qualitative analysis that researchers should learn, because this method provides the main skills that are necessary to implement many other methods of qualitative analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2006: 78).

The reason for using this method is that when the analyst is looking for a potential semantic attraction in a topic, he goes to the theme analysis to achieve a semantic pattern. In this way, the analysis in this method starts from the very beginning of the work and continues back and forth between the stages.

### Its 6 steps are:

1. Getting to know the data
2. Creating primary codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Preparing a report

Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) can be used in theme analysis to identify variables in the quantitative part to determine relationships. ISM is a method for designing systems, especially economic and social systems. This method is derived from the first letters of Interpretive Structural Modeling and its purpose is to classify factors and identify relationships between criteria. This is a qualitative-quantitative method widely used in various sciences. This method is among the multi-criteria decision making techniques.

### Steps of the ISM method

1. Forming the structural self-interaction matrix (SSIM): In this step, the experts respond to the pairwise comparisons based on the criteria. That is, in each comparison of two criteria, the letters V, A, X, O are used based on the following example. For example, V: the factor of row  $i$  causes the factor of column  $j$  to be realized.
2. Obtaining the initial access matrix: It is obtained by converting the symbols of the SSIM matrix to the numbers zero and one based on the sub-matrix of the initial access. For example, if the symbol of cell  $ij$  is the letter V, the number 1 is placed in that cell and the number 0 is placed in the corresponding cell.
3. Adjusting the achievement matrix: The primary achievement matrix should be checked by the rule that if  $i, j=1, j, k=1 \rightarrow i, k=1$ . That is, if criterion A is related to criterion B and criterion B is related to criterion C, then criterion A must also be related to C.
4. Determining the level of variables: In this step, we calculate the set of input (prerequisite) and output (achievement) criteria for each criterion and then determine the common factors. In this step, the criterion with the highest ISM level is that the output set (achievement) is equal to the joint set. After identifying this variable or variables, we remove their rows and columns from the table and repeat the operation again on other criteria.
5. Drawing the network of interactions: In this step, according to the levels of criteria in ISM and the relationships between them, the drawing of the network of interactions is created. The first level is chosen as the most effective level and the last level as the most effective level.

**Group ISM method:** Group decision-making technique means that the opinion of several people is obtained in the comparison process. In the ISM method, opinions can be integrated in two ways:

1. Frequency method: In this method, the opinion of the majority is chosen as the final opinion.
2. Through the mod: if we have several experts, each of which has a SSIM matrix, we must merge them together.

The statistical population consisted of two parts: in the qualitative part, it included all the policy experts, professors and senior managers in the ministry. Out of 20 people, 10 people were interviewed and a consensus was reached, and in the quantitative part, it includes directors, assistants and founders of 16 thousand existing schools in the country, the sampling method of this community was done randomly and it is assigned to the three provinces of North, Razavi and South Khorasan which included a total of 1,140 schools and were asked through a questionnaire.

One of the most important parts of scientific research is data review and analysis. The first part analyzed the data of the qualitative part obtained with the help of semi-structured interview. In this section, first the oral statements of each of the interviews will be presented, and after presenting the verbal statements, the open codes of each of them will be determined, and in the next step, the central coding of the interviews will be done based on the open codes and then the central codes will be converted into dimensions (selective codes) and finally the conceptual model of the research will be presented according to the three steps above. In the second part, according to the core codes and dimensions identified in the previous section, a researcher-made questionnaire was adjusted and after confirming the validity and reliability of the tool and its distribution in the statistical population, the obtained data were analyzed with the help of the ISM method.

In the quantitative part of the research, we are looking for criteria. What are the effective policy criteria of private schools? After the interview, 17 indicators were extracted. Then, using the fuzzy Delphi technique, 15 criteria were confirmed by experts with a degree of membership above 0.7.

In this method, it is assumed that the evaluation value of criterion  $j$  from the point of view of expert number  $i$  among  $n$  experts is  $w_{ij} = (L_{ij}, M_{ij}, U_{ij})$ , where the value of  $j$  is equal to  $j=1, 2, \dots, m$  and  $i$  is equal to  $i=1, 2, \dots, n$ . In this way, the fuzzy value of criterion  $j$  is calculated from the equations (2-1), (2-2) and (2-3), which is equal to  $w_j = (L_j, M_j, U_j)$ . (4-1). Equations (4-2) and (4-3) are shown below:

$$L_j = \min\{L_{ij}\}$$

$$M_j = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n M_{ij}$$

$$U_j = \max\{U_{ij}\}$$

In order to extract the desired criteria, a limit is considered for acceptance or rejection of that criterion. If the fuzzy numerical value, the triangular fuzzy number is equal to or greater than 0.7 according to experts, then the criterion is accepted, otherwise the criterion is not accepted.

No.	Factors affecting policy-making	Final fuzzy numerical average	Status
1	Investment	0.71667	accepted
2	The amount of government aid	0.86667	accepted
3	Managers	0.74333	accepted
4	Teachers	0.73333	accepted
5	Executive agents	0.75	accepted
6	Educational equipment	0.81	accepted
7	Government approved laws	89	accepted
8	Banking system	0.88333	accepted
9	Tax and insurance system	0.73333	accepted
10	Municipal and housing and urban development organizations	0.3333	rejected
11	Community members	0.65333	rejected
12	Partnership experts	0.8	accepted
13	Education at Farhangian University	0.8	accepted
14	Coordination Council	0.81	accepted
15	Expert founders	0.77667	accepted
16	Special schools	0.77667	accepted
17	Supervisory Council	0.87667	accepted

How are the relationships of the effective policy criteria of private schools? ISM has been used to explain the structural relationships of the criteria. At first, the opinions of experts were collected in the form of a questionnaire, then by converting the symbols of the SSIM matrix to the numbers 0 and 1, the initial achievement matrix was obtained. The method of converting the matrix to the numbers 0 and 1 is used in the current research using Bolaños approach, the experts determine the effect of  $i$  on  $j$  in the range of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and the scale number is  $m=10*3$  (the number of experts in this research is 10).

Third step; Adaptation is the achievement matrix. For the initial access matrix, the rule should be checked that if  $i,j=1, j,k=1 \rightarrow i,k=1$ . That is, if criterion A is related to criterion B and criterion B is related to criterion C, then criterion A must also be related to C.

In this step, we obtain the power of penetration and the degree of dependence for the matrix: in this step, we calculate the set of input (prerequisite) and output (achievement) criteria for each criterion, and then we also specify the common factors. In this step, the criterion with the highest level of ISM is that the output set (achievement) is equal to the joint set. After identifying this variable(s), we remove their row and column from the table and repeat the operation again on other criteria.

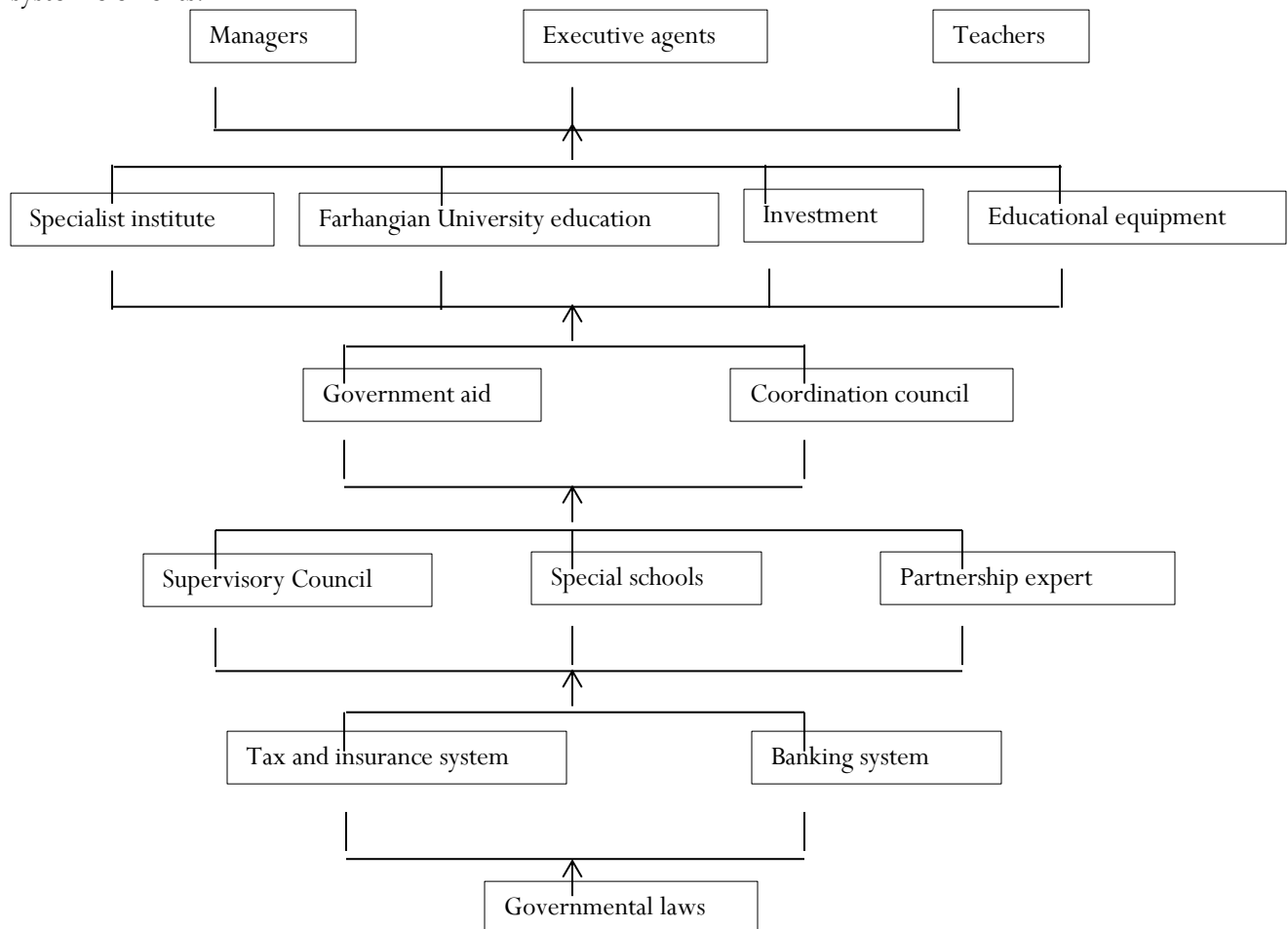
Level	Common	Output	Input	-
-	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C14,C15	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C14,C15	Government aid
-	C2,C3,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C2,C3,C4,C5,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	Special schools
-	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C8,C9,C10,C12,C13,14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C12,C13,14,C15	Farhangian University education
-	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,14	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	Tax and insurance system
-	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	Banking system
1	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C14,C15	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	teachers
-	C1,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C15	C1,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C15	C1,C2,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	Coordinating Council of Founders
-	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C12,C13,C14,C15	Supervisory Council
-	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	investment
1	C1,C3,C5,C6,C7,C10,C11	C1,C3,C5,C6,C7,C10,C11	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14	Executive agents
1	C5,C6,C7,C9,C10,C11,C13,C15	C5,C6,C7,C9,C10,C11,C13,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	resourceful
-	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C7,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C7,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	Expert founders
-	C2,C3,C4,C5,C7,C8,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C7,C8,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	Analytical equipment
-	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C10,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C12,C13,C14,C15	Partnership expert
-	C1,C2,C3,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	C1,C2,C3,C5,C6,C7,C8,C9,C11,C12,C13,C14,C15	Government rules

### Leveling of the achievement matrix (source: ISM output in Excel)

The indicators of managers, executive agents and teachers were identified as the first level among the indicators, by continuing the process of comparing the output set with the common set and removing the row and column of that variable or variables in the table of the rest of the levels are determined.

### The final interpretive structural model of private school policy-making

The final diagram is drawn based on the levels obtained in the previous step and according to the final achievement matrix. According to the levels of each of the indicators as well as the final accessibility matrix, the primary interpretive structural model is drawn considering transferability. The indicators that are in the higher levels of the hierarchy have less influence, in fact, it can be stated that these strategies are mostly derived from the indicators of lower levels. The lower the indicators are, the more effects they have on all system elements.



The final interpretive structural model of private school policy-making

### 3. Findings

This paper aimed to present a model for policy-making in the private school system, which was carried out in 3 general stages.

In the first stage, the effective factors on school policy-making were identified and extracted through interviews.

One of the variables is government assistance. The interviewees have stated that only 10% of government aid has been paid to non-profit schools (P2). If the government gave more aid, we could implement better programs (P1). Due to the importance of private schools, protective laws are being enacted (P3).

Next variable; Creating and renovating schools by standardizing the area (P5), space and educational environment (P6), appropriate educational facilities and equipment (P9) and educational aid are among the issues that both the law and parents of students emphasize on (P7). But the main obstacle in this way is perhaps the small tuition fees of these schools (P9), which is not the answer to the inflationary costs and the increase rate and the explosive condition of the prices of goods and services required by such schools.

Farhangian University education to create content (P4), the supervision council of private schools to determine and establish macro policies (P3), the council of founders of private schools to represent the founders, the agent of transmitting opinions and suggestions (P8), special schools (school for talented students, governmental leading and public, private schools) to attract the student population (P9), experts in education partnerships as private school system executives (P10), curriculum and educational topics for content creation, expert founders as the creation and administration of private schools (P1), specialist managers and teachers and executive agents as sub-systems of private schools (P7), the space of real and virtual educational equipment as functional tools of private schools (P4), the laws approved by the Islamic Council as the chapter addressing macro policies (P2), banking system for the financial equipment of private schools, tax and insurance system as economic factors in private schools (P8), municipality and housing and urban development organization as equipment of admission to private schools (P10), members of society as users of private schools services (P9) as well as mass communication tools (P8), judiciary, environmental organizations and other social and international organizations are considered as external influencing factors (P3).

#### The results of selective coding are

- The first stage of factor coding: amount of capital (investment), executive staff (managers, teachers, agents), hardware (educational equipment), macro level (laws approved by the government, banking system, tax system, insurance, municipal organizations, housing and urban development), micro environment (participation experts, cultural university education, coordinating council, supervisory council, expert founders), community members (community culture, community income level, community literacy level), special schools (schools for talented students, governmental leading schools).

- In the second stage, these factors were finalized using the questionnaire tool and the Delphi analysis method.

Investment, amount of government aid, administrators, teachers, executive agents, educational equipment, government approved laws, banking system, tax and insurance system, partnership experts, education of Farhangian University, coordination council of founders, expert founders, special schools, supervisory council that two variable of community members and municipal organizations, housing and urban development has been removed.

- In the third stage, the final model is presented with the ISM method.

The final diagram was drawn based on the obtained levels in the previous step and according to the final achievement matrix. According to the levels of each of the indicators and also the final accessibility matrix, the preliminary structural interpretive model was drawn considering transferability.

Table 1. Leveling challenges (source: ISM output in Excel)

Indicator	level
Managers, executives and teachers	First
Continuous development, investment, expert founders and training equipment	Second
The help of government and coordination council of the founders	Third
Special schools, supervisory council and partnership experts	Fourth
Tax and insurance system and banking system	Fifth
Government rules	Sixth

The indicators that are in the higher levels of the hierarchy have less influence, in fact, it can be stated that these strategies are mostly derived from the indicators of lower levels. The lower the indicators are, the more effects they have on all system elements.

The results showed that at the lowest level of factors in terms of number, the first level (teachers, executive agents and managers) has the most effective factors compared to other factors, and at the highest level, i.e. the sixth level, the factor (government laws) is the most effective factor. Also, the factors (investment, expert founders and educational equipment, government assistance and coordination council of founders, special schools and supervisory council and partnership experts) are the most important factors affecting policy-making that should receive more attention.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results have shown that the influential factors in policy-making are the amount of capital (investment), which is the same as the results of Eyal and Brickson (2019), Robertson et al. (2012), and Verger-Anthony (2019). Another variable is the executive staff (managers, teachers, executive agents) which is the same with the results of Verger-Anthony (2019) and the hardware (educational equipment) which is in line with the results of Glazer et al.'s (2019). The macro level (laws approved by the government, banking system, tax system, insurance, municipal organizations, housing and urban development) which is aligned with the research results of Robertson et al. (2012), Verger-Anthony (2019), Glazer et al. (2019). Community elements (community culture, community income level, literacy level of community members, special schools (schools for talented students, governmental leading schools) is in line with the results of Eyal and Brickson (2019), Verger-Anthony (2019), Glazer et al. (2019). The micro level of participation experts, the education of Farhangian University, the Coordinating Council of Founders, the Supervisory Council, expert founders) that these factors are related to Iran.

#### *Research Limitations*

Due to the situation raised by COVID-19 pandemic, access to all experts has been limited. Also, difficult and time-consuming communication (6 months waiting and follow-up) with some senior experts of the Ministry of Education has been one of the other problems of implementing this project.

#### *Research Recommendation*

##### *Practical recommendations*

Considering the importance and position of the Coordinating Council of Founders of Private Schools, some decision-making power should be transferred to the Coordinating Council of Founders.

Paying attention to the opinions of specialist founders, in attracting departmental experts in the private sector, private forces that are similar to other trade unions (for example, in the sports sector, an athlete is responsible and an expert in the department).

Creating the necessary platform to attract and introduce new educational equipment along with special discounts for private schools.

Government's attention and help in obtaining facilities for the development of private schools through government facilities.

Paying attention to the enrollment schedule of special schools (Schloos for talented students and governmental leading schools) in the enrollment season that does not result in the drop of students in private schools.

Attention to the interaction with the housing organization and municipalities in attracting land for private schools based on the age of the schools.

Paying attention to matching the tuition fee with insurance and salaries of the forces and the rent of schools in provinces far from the center to establish a proper financial balance.

### ***Research Proposals***

It is recommended to conduct a research with the same title, but with a comparative and comparative method with other countries.

It is suggested to conduct another research in the direction of extracting variables from the content analysis method of interviewing experts in this field.

It is suggested to investigate the possible scenarios of policy-making methods through the future research method.

It is suggested that quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and other statistical methods be used to categorize and confirm the presentation of the model of increasing student satisfaction in future studies of private school policy models.



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