

# A Study of the 12-Year Basic Education Policy Implementation in Taiwan\*

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**Abstract:** The 12-year Basic Education policy has been implemented in Taiwan since 2013. The main objectives of this study were to investigate the condition of how the policy is implemented. In essence, what practices and underlying philosophies are adopted by school leaders and administrators of the implementations in K-12 schools, and trying to understand what and how the practices are being adopted to fulfill the policy objectives, including the enrollment mode, condition and requirement to adjust the 12-year basic education policy. Yet there are still some challenges and problem that need to be clarified and resolved.

The investigation is based on an empirical research on the implementation of the 12-year basic education policy. The study adopted the qualitative approach. The objectives were explored using various qualitative research data collection tools such as document analysis, questionnaire survey the questionnaire of the “process and related issues of 12-year Basic Education policy implementation”. Experts validity and reliability analyses were performed. The questionnaires contain 60 items. The survey objects were public junior high school educators. The questionnaires were distributed to junior high school teachers and 862 were retrieved, with a return rate of 77.2%.

All the data were analyzed by the statistical method of average, standard deviation, t-test and one-way ANOVA. Finally, questionnaire results were summarized to obtain the conclusion and suggestion.

**Key words:** 12-year Basic Education, policy implementation, educational policy

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Motives and Purposes

Education is an initiative stage to bring the benefits to every citizen in the whole society. It aims to develop national cohesion, cultivate the instinct for survival as a nation and boost students' confidence in our nation's future, providing free and basic education for all; promoting learning and life skills for young people and improving the quality of education. It is the essential factor to develop a country to pursuit social progress and education reform. At present, many countries around the world attempt to extend the years of national basic education program follow the trend of economical transform, social development and globalization aspects. It is a

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general national educational policy of developed countries. According to the statistics of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), there are 46 countries in the world that implement at least ten years of national education. The main reason is that many under-developed countries have realized that there is a correlation between basic education and national competitiveness (Chen & Wang, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2015).

The analysis of educational policy is divided into four sections: (1) the formation of policy; (2) policy legalization; (3) policy implementation and policy evaluation, they can be influenced by an environmental network and feedback. Besides, there is a sequential and systematic relation among the 4 stages (Wu, 2003). In other words, without an effective policy implementation, there will be obstacles in policy formulation and evaluation and turns out to a negative setback (Anderson, 2003; Chiu, 2010; Dye, 2005; Lin & Chang, 2006). Thus, this finding implicates an essential and important process to make proper steps which need a collective commitment action based on a vision of the critical role of education for empowering individuals and the transforming societies.

The 12-year Basic Education has been implemented in 2013. However, there are some issues need to be clarified and adjusted, including the disputes on division of school districts, enrollment inquiries and characteristic recruitment, curriculum design and educators' instructional capacity, shortage of funds, homogeneity and high quality of senior high and vocational schools, many stakeholders reacted with a misunderstanding concept of the policy (Chen, 2010; Cheng, 2012 ; Fu, 2012; Hsu, 2012; Lin, 2013; Lin, 2013; Hung, 2013; Shi, 2013; Kuo, 2012; Sie, 2012). Hence, there are still many problems need to be clarified and resolved.

Based on the above, the purposes of this study are shown as below:

- (1) To explore the degree of fulfillment to implement the 12-year Basic education policy.
- (2) To study the enrollment model adjustment on policy implementation of 12-year Basic education policy.
- (3) To understand the issues and challenges on implementation of 12-year Basic Education Policy.
- (4) To analysis effective ways of improving the implementation of 12-year Basic Education Policy.

## **1.2 Definition of Terms**

### **1.2.1 12-year Basic Education Program**

The 12-year Basic Education program is defined as “basic education for learners from K-1 to K-12. The current system is working on the first nine years are Basic education, it includes two stages. The first stage starts from aged of 6~15 and it is Basic it works on the primary and secondary school education. The second stage work on the pupils aged from 15~18. It includes senior high school education and the first three years of five-year colleges. It follows the law of Taiwan national education development program.

### **1.2.2 Educational Policy Implementation**

The implementation of educational policy here refers to the process of the integration of resources by the implementation department and personnel that integrate with the internal and external environment, educational experts took appropriate and effective action, constantly negotiation with the outside world, communicate and adjustment, after the policy have legalized, the scholars who involved in the policy are trying to apply the ideas with suitable procedures in order to ensure an achievement of the goals of the policy. The topic of this thesis is “The Process and related issues of 12-year Basic Education policy implementation”, the purpose of this study is to understand the various perspectives on this new educational policy objectives and the level of the progress achieved in terms of providing various methods of school enrolment system, and to review its various issues involved.

The scoring method is thus — the higher the score, the higher the number of goals that has been actualized, and thus showed higher degree of agreement on the issue of enrolment system in schools. On the other hand, the lower the score shows the lower the number of targets that have been reached, and lower degree of support in the school enrolment's adjustment system.

### 1.3 Research Scope

According to Senior High School Education Act, the 12-year Basic Education policy was officially declared and implemented in July, 2013. This study carried out from August, 2013 to August, 2015.

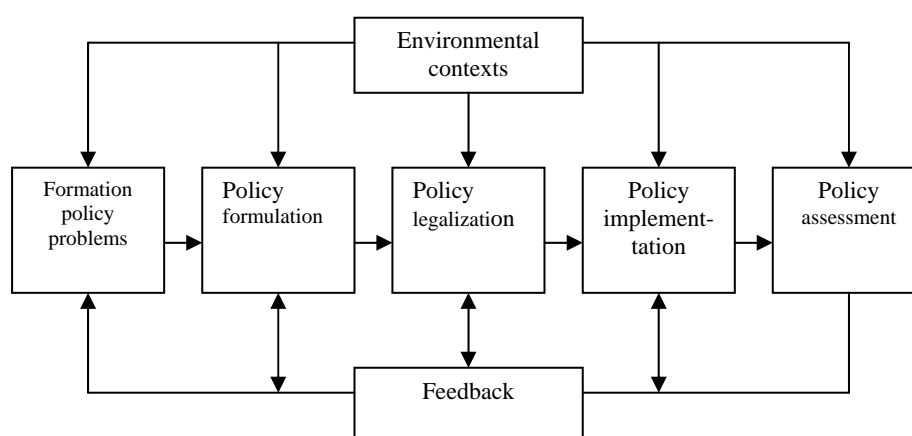
## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Content of Educational Policy Implementation

#### 2.1.1 Relation between Educational Policy Implementation and Policy Analysis Process

Overall, research on the 12-year educational policy integration indicates that there are key components that need to be present to successfully implement in schools. These components always include professional development. Wu (2003) emphasized the circular relation among the stages and components of environmental contexts, they were operated under five phases as shown in Figure 1 as below. These five phases include the formation of (1) policy problems; (2) policy formulation; (3) Policy legalization; (4) policy implementation and policy evaluation. Environmental contexts might contain various kinds of factors which influence the operation among different phases. When educational policy problems are being formed, educational policy implementation would be influenced by external environment such as politics, economy, culture and society, and there would be a feedback that cause by the five different phases.

Hence, an effective basic education policy is a key factor in improving and solving problem; it has to consider inclusive education that stressed on effective strategies to develop benefits plan that contribute to an effective implementation of sound and sustainable sector plans from primary to secondary education priorities. These should be aligned with wider education sectors to assure better results. Without a well-organized and effective plan, the outcome of projects, programs and policies often differ.



**Figure 1 Framework of Public Policy Analysis**

Source: Wu (2003), *Public Policy* (p. 23), Taipei: National Open University

### 2.1.2 Definition of Implementation Education Policy

According to scholars, the implementation of education policy is a unique entity and dynamic process that comprised of various resources; it also contained organization and the executive members, in response to an internal and external environment and moved on to apply with an adequate and effective action. Furthermore, the policy is being negotiated, communicated and revised continuously in order to set up a consensus. It is being implemented under an authorized and legalized process to reach the goal of education (Chang, 2013; Wu, 2003; Lin & Chang, 2006; Yen, 1997, 2010, 2014; Anderson, 2003; Dunn, 2011; Dye, 2005; Hoing, 2006; Odden, 1991; Plaut & Sharkey, 2011).

## 2.2 The Development of 12-Year Basic Education Policy

After implementation of 9-year national education in 1968, Ministry of Education proposed the idea to extend national education to 12-year in 1983. By reviewing nearly 30 years of policy development and generalize the development context of 12-year Basic Education, it is found that there are five critical phases (Chen, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2015):

The first phase: In 1989, Minister of Education, Lee Huan proposed the idea to “extend national education as 12 years within 3 years”.

The second phase: during the presidential election of 2000 in Taiwan, the vice president Lien Chan proposed “the accomplishment of the 12-year Basic Education in 3 years”.

The third phase: In 2003, Minister of Education, Jong-tsun Huang generalized “A precision planning of the 12-year Basic Education”.

The fourth policy window: In 2007, Prime Minister, Su Tseng-chang announced “Main implementation of the 12-year Basic Education in 2009”.

The fifth phase: January 1, 2011, President Ma Ying-jeou announced “Formal implementation of the 12-year Basic Education in 2014”.

The implementation of the 12-year Basic Education has been planned nearly 30 years with the change of different governments and 19 ministers of Education. Although the major objective was to extend the years of national education at different periods, yet various policies proposed were significantly different. Even though the policy has planned with schedules and full details, they were not being implemented soon after the proposal. In fact, if President Ma Ying-Jeou did not announce the Main implementation of the 12-year Basic Education in 2014, the fifth policy window would not have been launched. The policy of extend national education would have been blocked.

## 2.3 The Content of 12-Year Basic Education Program

According to the Senior High School Education Act, the 12-year Basic Education program (from 15 to 18 years old) is run under an open admission. Students can admit to a high school according to their aptitude, interest and capacity, besides, their academy performance are waived upon certain conditions. The vision, concept, objective and relation among the plans of the 12-year Basic Education program (Ministry of Education, 2015) are shown in Figure 2 as below.

As a whole, the 12-year basic education program develop a dedicated, qualified and focused body that drives and is accountable for coordinated scholarly effort.

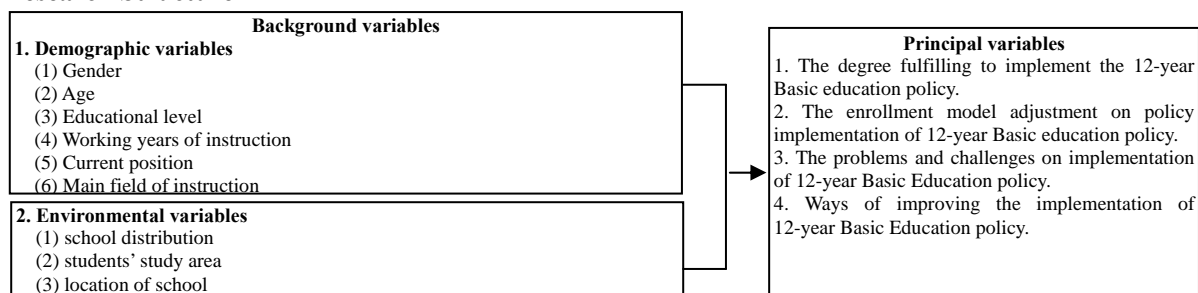
3 visions						
Enhance the educational quality of secondary and primary schools		Assistance with students' achievement		Cultivate a national competitiveness		
5 concepts						
Teaching inclusively	Teaching in accordance of students' aptitude	Adaptive instruction	Diverse channels of development	High-quality connection		
6 objectives						
Cultivation of modern citizens' literacy	Guidance of diverse adaptive development	Guarantee of academic quality	Reduction of stress	Balance between educational development in urban and rural area	Pursuit of social quality and justice	
7 dimensions and 29 plans						
Total tuition waived	High quality and homogeneity	Curriculum and instructional practices	Adaptive guidance of national literacy	Law	Promotion	Admission
1. Tuition waived for 5-year-old children 2. Tuition waived secondary school, vocational school and college 3. Financial planning	4. High-quality senior high schools 5. High-quality vocational schools 6. Resource homogeneity of secondary and vocational schools 7. Resource distribution adjustment of secondary and vocational schools 8. Star-projects for university and technological institutes 9. Evaluation of senior high schools 10. Evaluation of vocational schools 11. Transformation and guidance of dropped out from school	12. Construction of Grade 1-12 Curriculum 13. Normal instruction in junior high schools, adaptive guidance and quality enhancement 14. Remedial instruction for elementary schools and junior high schools 15. Enhancement instructional quality 16. Prevention from dropping out and guidance of return back to school	17. Career guidance for secondary and vocational school. 18. Learning assistance for senior high school and vocational school students 19. Industrial-academic cooperation 20. Promotion of technological education 21. Occupational training for junior high school graduates who do not pursue advanced study and under employment 22. Enhancement of national literacy	23. regulation for Senior High-School Education & adjustment of college	24. Parents' participate 25. Policy promotion	26. open admission area 27. Open admission 28. Characteristic recruitment 29. Guidance for students of physically or mentally disabled

**Figure 2 Policy Framework of 12-year Basic Education**

Source: Ministry of Education (2015), "Website of 12-year basic education", available online at: <http://140.111.34.179/index.php>

### 3. Research methods

#### 3.1 Research Structure



**Figure 3 Research Framework**

### 3.2 Research Method and Subjects

This study adopted questionnaire, survey and interview, “process and related issues of 12-year Basic Education policy implementation”. Expert validity and reliability analyses were performed. The questionnaire contains 60 items.

The subjects of the research were teachers from public junior high schools in Taiwan. The sampling method consisted of a pre-test questionnaire and a formal questionnaire. The content for the pre-test questionnaire was based on criteria from 22 different schools in the country, and was contributed by a total of 126 teachers. A total of 1117 questionnaires were distributed to junior high school teachers, and 862 were retrieved, with a return rate of 77.2%. Afterward, the data were analyzed by statistical methods including means, standard deviation, t- test and one-way ANOVA.

### 4. Conclusion

(1) The implementation on junior high school students’ aptitude exploration, career assistance and guidance of multiple adaptive advanced study or employment are highly identified. However, the reduction of study stress and guidance of normal instruction of junior high schools, development and reinforcement of evaluation of junior high school students’ learning achievement and guarantee of basic quality of junior high school students” are not identified.

(2) Junior high school teachers showed a moderate degree of identification with the eight enrollment mode adjustment on policy implementation of 12-year Basic Education in 104 schools.

(3) There is a difficult position for the 12-year Basic Education policy implementation, parents’ understanding is the major resistance among the dimensions; the way to carry out the policy is another. In spite of the policy, parents intent to send their children to take certain qualification examination to have better chance to get into “top-ranking high school”.

(4) As to the improvement of 12-year Basic Education policy implementation, regarding the dimensions, parents’ involvement and policy are the identified. As to items, the ways to improve sequentially with providing parents information about student career counseling and advice. Furthermore, building up the capacity of parents multiple intelligences and values, enhancing students’ various potential development, open communication between teachers, students and parents.

(5) As to policy implementation problems, junior high school above 13 classes from northern and southern district located in urban area, male teachers (bachelor, mentors) showed a significantly higher agreement with the policy.

(6) In 104 schools, the improvement of policy formulation, among junior high school from urban and rural area, the educators including bachelor, director showed a significant agreement with the policy.

### 5. Suggestions

Based on the research results, we proposed the following recommendations for both educational administration and schools:

## 5.1 Educational Administration Aspects

5.1.1 In Accordance with the Policy Objectives It's Set with a Goal to Achieve among the Lower Degree of Project Implementation Plan

Based on studies, the junior high school teachers believe, 12-year Basic Education Policy can effectively relieve excessive academic pressure. Normal teaching and guiding can enhance the five domains of balanced development for juniors and the 12-year Basic Education Policy can strengthen students' achievement mechanism in learning process and ensure students can have the foundation of personal quality. Therefore, educational administration and authorities should focus on these two dimensions, and identify the factors and coping strategies and make comprehensive improvement plans.

### 5.1.2 Keep on Adjusting the Implementation of 12-year Basic Education Policy

Based on the studies, teachers in junior high school agreed the aspect of eight measures of student enrollment adjustment of 12-year Basic Education Policy in 104 schools. Therefore, educational authorities should actively respond to the policy objectives and social needs of the public. Besides, they should notice there is a gap between student's performance with the urban and rural area. Enrollment implementation should provide a short term enrollment program, special courses and enrollment that satisfy different needs. Furthermore, the program should include the value of evaluation. Thus, 12-year Basic Education Policy should be well-prepared and implemented in order to achieve the goals and ideals of education policy.

### 5.1.3 12-year Basic Education Policy Plan Should Be More Specific, Clear, Comprehensive and Sustainable

The study found the 12-year Basic education policy still need to be more specifically implemented, there are some major issues still remain unsolved under the circumstance, most of the schools need more supportive measures to overcome the problem they are facing with. The accuracy and understanding of the policy implementation are the critical factors that create a progressive development rather than repeat the same process without supportive response from schools. Thus, the education authorities should put even more efforts and focus on the implementation issues, and then make more specific plans and supportive measures to achieve this policy objective. The specific practices include:

- (1) The establishment of 12-year Basic Education Policy planning and pre-implementation schools, continuing to improve the ideas and values of the policy.
- (2) Provide a convenient and mutual communication channel of "12-year Basic Education Policy" with the interested parties.
- (3) Twenty-nine related measures should be set up with specific evaluation tools.
- (4) Legalized and make a dedicated budget for "12-year Basic Education Policy" and they should also be prepared beforehand.

### 5.1.4 Enhancement of Teachers' Adaptive Educational Capacity

The study found that, 12-year Basic Education Policy implementation increases rate for senior high schools, but it also causes the gap of education level between new in-take students. In condition, teachers need to adapt this new policy and it's a key point to lead to a success or failure of the implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen teachers' capacity for adapting to change their teaching methods. As for the specific practices such as:

- (1) Apply differentiate teaching method and learning workshop;
- (2) Establish adaptive instruction; provide related curriculum, videos, and sharing of experiences;
- (3) Coordination of teacher education institutions included pre-vocational education courses;

- (4) Teachers orientation and on-job training system;
- (5) Enhance teachers' adaptability in career counseling expertise.

#### 5.1.5 Provide an Appropriate Master Course Outline with 12-year Basic Education Policy

In order to improve 12-year Basic Education Policy implementation, this study found that, the most agreeable way is to set a proper and consistent course outline for 12 years education program. Thus, in response to the implementation of 12-year Basic Education Policy, it is necessary to set and develop appropriate master courses. The approaches are as follows:

- (1) Invite more experts and scholars, the educational authorities, and school personnel to participate in developing master courses;
- (2) Establish 12-year Basic Education policy dedicated platform, consistently update with the outline of subjects, participants and other relevant information that should be frequently updated online;
- (3) Consistently solving and resurrecting ongoing courses and subjects outline.

## 5.2 Schools Aspects

### 5.2.1 Connection and Communication between Parent and Teacher

The study found that most parents have misleading concept of 12-year Basic Education Policy, this is one of the crucial factor among the barriers. Parents tend to send their children to cram examination for the purpose to increase the chance of getting them to elite schools. So it is necessary to clarify the misunderstanding among parents and teachers. The suggestions are as follow:

- (1) Establish parents' pluralistic values of intellectual capacity and promote diversified development for their children;
- (2) Establish proper communication channels between teachers and students;
- (3) Enhance parents' understanding of 12-year Basic Education policy;
- (4) Provide relative students career counseling, information and consultant.

### 5.2.2 Strengthen the Learning Ability of Students and Exploration of Self-affirmation

Base on the findings, 12-year Basic Education Policy can lead students to explore personal development and career expectation with diversified development. The practices as listed:

- (1) Create in-depth studies projects and social learning community to improve learning skills and capacity.
- (2) Provide appropriate development environment for students set by the teachers and full-time tutors.
- (3) The implementation should include various sources and opportunities for students to engage with according to their aptitude.

### 5.2.3 Reduction of Study Pressure

In terms of 12-year policy implementation, the study found that students are still under a massive stress from schools. Therefore, pressure relieve is still the most concern, suggestions are as follow:

- (1) Create an information learning program of 12-year Basic policy;
- (2) The schools and the public organizations should work together and provide an adequate service and information for learning;
- (3) Design diversity and elective courses for students;
- (4) Provide adequate assessment and program for teachers to focus on educational vision and to develop students' competence;
- (5) Establish a student-centered educational value rather than scores-oriented studies;



- (6) Unify grading standards to enhance autonomous motivation for learning;
- (7) Establish a learning model that allows student to follow and observe.

5.2.4 Improves the Awareness and Understanding of 12-year Basic Education Policy to Educational Authorities, Parents and Students.

The results from the study show that there some problem still need to be solved. Apparently the parents and school teachers need to do more studies about the core value and recognize the purposes of this implementation. Therefore, the policy should reveal itself through marketing strategies and enhancing the public announcement so the main value and purposes of 12-year Basic Education policy can be also discussed by the public. The suggestions are as follow:

Firstly, school staffs, teachers and parents should have fully communicated the extensive idea of the implementation information.

In order to reduce its resistance from the protestant, we should combine all the considerations of school educators' and parents' needs to set related program and get well-prepared for the transformation.

Thirdly, we need to establish a communication channels between education authorities, schools, and parents to reduce the disagreement on the policy implementation.

Lastly, we need to establish a website platform, public policy program and provide information and set feedback mechanisms for public.

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