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Institutional Challenges in the Laws of Iran's 2025 Vision Document and Subordinate Plans

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ABSTRACT

Objective: A vision document represents an idealized depiction of the future, highlighting the long-term objectives of a nation. When discussing the analysis of perspectives on both the national and global scale, it is crucial to reassess the internal and external indicators of the education system. The objective of this article was to investigate the institutional challenges presented in the laws of the Iran vision document 2025 and its subordinate plans.

Methods: The research methodology employed was primarily applied, with a descriptive-analytical and survey approach. The population for this study consisted of the development perspective document of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the horizon of 2025, as well as the fourth, fifth, and sixth development plans of the country, and the performance of the annual budget during the implementation of the development perspective document of 2025. Data collection involved the utilization of both document analysis and survey methods. The process tracking method was employed to analyze the data, search for evidence, and evaluate it in order to elucidate the reasons behind the unaccomplished goals of the 2025 vision document.

Results: Consequently, an effective and dependable system for measurement and evaluation becomes imperative to assess and monitor progress in the realization of long-term visions and plans. However, there are instances where the measurement and evaluation system prove to be inefficient and incomplete, which hinders the identification and rectification of weaknesses, as well as performance enhancement. The implementation of the vision document and its subsequent programs may necessitate substantial financial resources. Inadequate funding or insufficient budget allocation can lead to financial difficulties and delays in the execution of these programs.

Conclusions: To advance with the vision document and downstream plans, it is essential to identify and manage these barriers.

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Introduction

In the contemporary era of transformation, the advancement, growth, and even the survival of nations has evolved into a multifaceted issue, necessitating all nations to establish objectives and formulate a specific plan alongside forward-thinking policies across all developmental dimensions to attain it (([Bardal et al., 2021](#)). Presently, no nation can endure without scrutinizing diverse developmental facets, identifying its capacities and requirements, monitoring the actions of other players within the global system, analyzing the dynamics of competition among nations, alliances, hostilities, anticipating potential domestic and international actions and reactions, and so forth; without these, crafting pragmatic and feasible objectives and strategies aligned with their envisioned future becomes unattainable ([Souki et al., 2020](#)). It holds the responsibility of generating and disseminating knowledge among the populace of the community. Regrettably, the educational sector of our nation, for various reasons, has failed to adequately discharge the aforementioned responsibilities ([SoleimaniPourolak, 2019](#)).

A vision statement embodies an idealized depiction of the future illustrating a country's long-term aspirations ([Rezaian et al., 2015](#)). The twenty-year vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran encompasses four categories of objectives, encompassing economic, political, cultural, and social targets ([Radfar, 2014](#)), by positioning Iran at the forefront scientifically and economically among South Asian nations. Gharbi has unequivocally delineated a goal for Iran, emphasizing a departure from the current state of underdevelopment, serving as an inspiration in the Islamic realm, and fostering constructive and impactful engagement in international affairs ([Rezaian et al., 2015](#)). This document, devised and structured at the highest echelons of governance with the involvement of all relevant and influential sectors, subsequently materializes into a scientific and technological framework featuring defined responsibilities and hierarchical levels. Serving as a roadmap, it outlines the country's outlook for the forthcoming years ([SoleimaniPourolak, 2019](#)), offering a conducive platform for all ministries, governmental bodies, and non-governmental organizations to progress in the desired direction for national development by referencing it ([Heydari Abdi, 2009](#)).

Grounded on this perspective, schools embody the objectives of elementary education and the aims of the initial phase of secondary education by achieving standards of a quality life, serving as hubs for service provision and educational opportunities, fostering comprehension and enhancement by

students, and perpetually evolving and excelling ([Senge et al., 2012](#); [Sinervo et al., 2021](#); [Stevenson, 2007](#)). Their essence adheres to the Islamic normative framework, operating within the philosophy and directives of the official public education system of the Islamic Republic of Iran ([SoleimaniPourelak, 2019](#)).

However, more than twenty years have transpired since the proclamation of the vision statement for the advancement of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the year 2025, alongside the unveiling of the strategies of the most recent four-year plan that marks the conclusion of this document's timeframe. Despite some discussions in the media regarding the accomplishments or shortcomings of the objectives outlined in this document, a comprehensive evaluation of its formulation and execution has not been conducted based on existing research findings. As the conclusion of this document's period draws near and the potential drafting of the subsequent strategic document looms, the significance of scrutinizing, reassessing, and appraising this document becomes increasingly apparent. Several studies also highlight that over seventeen years have elapsed since the execution of this document (from 2005 to 2022), during which none of the envisioned goals, particularly in the economic domain, have been achieved as anticipated and warranted. This perspective has not been articulated by researchers such as Iran Statistics Center (2014), [Mousavi and Lohrasbi \(2020\)](#), [SoleimaniPourelak \(2019\)](#), [Alwanchi and Badisar \(2019\)](#), and ([Radfar, 2014](#)). All societies encounter various challenges in the realm of policymaking and the subsequent effective and successful implementation thereof. It is plausible that during the compilation of the document, the perspectives of the intellectual, empirical, and scientific factions across various domains in the country were not adequately considered or their involvement was limited. One of the fundamental objectives of this document is to enhance the influence of the public formal education system and familial structures in fostering the advancement and eminence of the nation, promoting public culture, establishing a basis for scholarly eminence, and nurturing Islamic-Iranian civilization in alignment with the realization of a Mahdavi global society, emphasizing the deepening of religious and political knowledge, adherence to moral principles, allegiance to the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, belief in and practical adherence to the principle of the absolute authority of the jurist and religious democracy, reinforcement of national unity, cultivation of a scientific mindset, respect for social rights and duties, promotion of ethical

conduct, and engagement in spiritual and environmental transcendental practices ([Heydari Abdi, 2009](#)). Consequently, there exists no unanimous consensus on either the contents of the document or its execution. According to [McConnell \(2010\)](#), "Policy encounters a hindrance when it fails to yield the intended outcomes and repercussions, or when there is limited consensus on the extent to which it achieves its desired objectives".

It is conceivable that the objectives of the document may not align with the official or normative legal institutions and the societal realities, potentially hindering enforceability. The complexity arises when the actualities diverge significantly from the intended goals and regulations essential for their achievement. Therefore, a thorough comprehension of the impediments to policy execution is crucial for assessing its efficacy. Within the subsequent three years post-document implementation, the attainment of its objectives seems unattainable, underscoring the necessity to scrutinize the reasons behind this failure comprehensively. Scholars have pinpointed structural roots utilizing functionalism theory, while others have delved into the unmet goals of Vision Document 2025 through a behaviorism lens. Central to the inquiry is the examination of the alignment of official legal and normative institutions with the provisions of Vision Document 2025, as encapsulated in the legislative and developmental frameworks of the fourth, fifth, and sixth plans. How do these development plans designate the legal and official entities crucial for implementation, and what mechanisms ensure the enforcement of the document's provisions? Ultimately, the research aims to elucidate the institutional barriers impeding the compilation and execution of Vision Document 2025 of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Material and Methods

The current research was conducted with a focus on purpose and utilized a descriptive-analytical and survey approach for methodology. Termed as practical due to its applicability in real-world scenarios, the outcomes are pertinent for governmental institutions involved in national policies to enhance the country's development strategies. The descriptive-analytical aspect involves examining the vision document of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the year 2025, along with the fourth, fifth, and sixth development plans, making it a survey that employs preliminary tools for data collection. The statistical population for this study comprised the aforementioned documents, as well as the annual budget performance during the implementation of the 2025 vision document.

Data collection involved two main methods: documentary study and survey study. Information was gathered from credible sources, and data from files were utilized in crafting the treatise's chapters. Descriptive statistics will be employed to assess the progress of the 2025 vision document, while theme analysis will aid in dissecting texts and documents related to the factors influencing the document's development and execution. The process tracking method was utilized to scrutinize data, search for evidence, and elucidate the reasons behind the unmet goals of the 2025 vision document. This method aimed to draw causal inferences from historical cases, explaining past events during the vision document's development and execution years. Challenges in achieving the document's objectives arose post-implementation, necessitating a sequential causal tracing process to comprehend the current situation. Macro case studies like the vision document typically follow the rule that understanding a phenomenon's explanation requires tracing the causal event sequence. Through this approach, researchers clarify the stages of occurrence, test research hypotheses based on a specific case's characteristics, and identify mediating mechanisms linking explanatory variables to effects within the case.

Results

Reasons for not achieving the goals of the five-year development plans of the whole country during the implementation of the vision document 2025

The fourth development plan

The fourth development plan has a total of 96 goals, which would be possible to achieve the majority of these goals if the existing problems are resolved. The fourth development plan was also written by the reform government. The program that was approved in 2004 by the Islamic Council headed by Gholam Ali Haddad Adel for the years 2006 to 2009. However, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the head of the Ninth government, who was the leader of the program, abandoned the program and finally caused the members of parliament to think about its implementation. A report presented by a team of representatives in the parliament in 1990 indicated that according to the numbers that the governments themselves gave to the investigating representatives of the parliament, in the five years of the implementation of this program, the country has improved in most of the important indicators. , has had a "backward" trend. This group of MPs say that based

on their own research and the documents provided to them by the Inspection Organization and the Court of Accounts, they concluded that many of the goals that should have been implemented in the 9th government "have not been implemented".

According to experts, the parts related to the environment of the fourth development plan have not been implemented at all and even caused the country's environmental status to fall by 24 places compared to 2005 based on the EPI index, which was ranked 53. In the same way, according to environmental experts, the most important difference between the fourth program and the previous programs of the environmental protection department (Land Improvement Plan) was that it was not implemented.

In addition, statistics related to employment and the fall in economic growth were also discussed. It is also stated in this report: "Inflation should be below 10 percent annually on average, but the average of the years that the ninth government managed the country was 14.4 percent." That is, according to this report, the price indices of goods have reached from 100 in 2004 to 203 in 2009. In the same way, the investment of government companies is supposed to reach zero from the bank loans. It means that a public company, at least if it is not privatized, will no longer borrow from banks. But not only has it not reached zero, but they have borrowed 26 thousand billion tomans from banks.

Khatami's government predicted that 300 projects would be completed annually in the fourth plan, but Ahmadinejad's government has completed less than 30% of them. In this way, 1,500 projects were supposed to be completed during the fourth program, but only 450 projects have been completed.

According to the fourth development plan, completion of at least 50% of the freeway network and highways connecting the capital of the provinces should be done, but 7.5% in the freeway sector and only 36% in highways have been realized. Also, the amount of Riyal allocated was only 40% of the goals of the fourth plan. In other words, according to the MPs, 60% of the goals of the fourth development program in the transportation sector were not realized.

Finally, in the fourth plan, it was predicted that the government would lend 50% of the foreign exchange reserve account to the private sector, but it has given only 10%. Likewise, 10 percent should be given to the agricultural sector, which has given only "one" percent. Of course, although withdrawals from the foreign exchange reserve account to cover the deficit caused by non-oil

revenues of the public budget were prohibited in the fourth plan, the Ahmadinejad government has been withdrawing from this account due to the budget deficit. According to the parliament's report, government withdrawals were "intensified" and the result was, on the one hand, not providing relief from oil revenue to the private sector, and on the other hand, an increase in cash in the society and rising inflation.

Deficiencies noted in the fourth development program include the absence of measurement indicators for policy-making by the Council of Ministers, implementation of executive actions by ministers and executive bodies, and target setting by the Islamic Council.

Moreover, the fourth program exhibited content flaws during compilation, planning, approval, and regulation, portraying itself as unreliable and more inclined towards a political agenda rather than a scholarly endeavor. Mohammad Reza Khatami, Secretary General of the Participation Front, affirmed this perspective by highlighting the political aspect of the fourth plan over its economic aspects. He articulated that the primary reason for the Seventh Parliament's resistance to the Fourth Plan was the intention to curtail the authority of the sovereign in order to alter the government's relationship with the populace to some extent. While acknowledging that immediate impacts may be minimal, he contended that the long-term approval of this program could lead to a favorable alignment with the current state of affairs (source: Economic Magazine, No. 156, September 2003, page).

Fifth Development Plan

8 administrative working groups, 42 specialized working groups, 366 expert sub-working groups and a total of 2 thousand 350 people have participated in the development of this program so that after going through these steps in more than 10 long meetings of the government, the fifth program was finally approved.

Of course, Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the President, said: This program has been formulated using the experiences of previous programs, fully targeted and internally coherent, compatible with the conditions of the country, and transparently and operationally. Stating that the fifth development plan is clear, operational, concise and useful, he requested the parliament to maintain the flexibility of the fifth plan by the representatives, in this case, half of the goals of the vision document will be realized in this plan.

Unemployment rate of 7%, economic growth of 8%, productivity growth of 2.7%, formation of national development fund and liquidation of foreign exchange reserve account have been announced among the policies of the fifth development plan. The Law of the Fifth Plan of Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the Islamic Republic of Iran was approved by the Islamic Council in 235 articles and nine chapters on January 15, 2009, and its implementation officially began in 2010. According to the timing of the implementation of this program, it was supposed to be finalized by the end of 2014, but since this program could not follow its path properly, its implementation time was extended by one year and the completion of its implementation was postponed to 2015.

The fifth program exhibits numerous technical issues and deficiencies within various environmental contexts. Legal regulations were compiled and ratified as a plan without integration into a coherent macroeconomic model. The program itself was designed with mechanisms that facilitate its violation. This raises inquiries about the distinctiveness of the country's fifth plan compared to other development initiatives, the nation's overarching vision, and the annual budget. Presently, the 1404 twenty-year vision plan embodies the nation's ideals, while the annual budget aims at resolving the country's issues objectively. In contrast, the development plan should establish priorities and elucidate key focal points.

Consequently, the program lacks a clear alignment with the country's vision, plan, and annual budget, occasionally encroaching into these domains. The primary issues of the fifth plan encompass the absence of an annual report from the previous development plan, inconsistency and boundary adherence in the fifth plan, lack of coherence, absence of key indicators like growth index and production, inadequacy of tables and resources throughout the plan, and integration of legislative affairs within the plan.

These challenges have notably burdened the parliament, prompting amendments and multiple parliamentary discussions regarding the fifth plan. Notably, recent government budgets have deviated from the objectives outlined in the fifth plan law. In the industrial and mining sectors, substantial deviations from the fifth plan have occurred, partly due to the non-payment of the industry's 30% share post the targeted subsidy implementation. Consequently, many industries are presently operating at minimal capacity.

The initial implementation of the fifth plan faltered as the government and parliament lacked confidence in its viability. The 10th government, serving as the editor, and the parliament, as the approver, displayed skepticism towards the plan's execution. Notably, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad repeatedly criticized the country's 20-year vision document, emphasizing its impracticality. The 9th and 10th administrations consistently doubted the feasibility of macroeconomic and development plans, evident in the annual budget formulation process. Each year, the government's budget approvals underwent revisions by the parliament, eventually accepting the government's proposed amendments.

The sixth development plan

On January 27, 2014, the sixth development plan was presented to the parliament along with the 1995 budget. After preliminary investigations of the sixth development plan, it was found that this bill lacks the conditions mentioned in the plan and budget law and is not a legal example of the five-year plan. According to the report of the Majlis Research Center, there are some other general flaws in the 6th five-year plan, including the lack of figures and quantitative tables, the lack of clear priorities and the appropriateness of permits with economic crises, and the weak connection of the bill with the general policies of the 6th plan and policies. The overall resistance economy pointed out. In the specialized commissions of the (ninth) parliament, after reviewing the general aspects of the sixth plan and introducing fundamental and basic objections to this plan, it was decided not to approve them, and the defects of the sixth development plan were estimated to the extent that they called this plan "a new heresy". The members of the Economic Commission of the Parliament raised the main reason for the general rejection of the proposal of the government for the fifth development plan with the policies of the resistance economy. The members of the Cultural Commission of the parliament (Ninth) were also forced to reject these generalities due to the "inconsistency of the proposed decrees with the announced policies of the supreme leader of the revolution" as well as the "numerous basic problems" in the cultural decrees proposed by the government.

The most important challenges of the sixth development plan:

In the sixth development plan, 13 economic, social and cultural challenges were considered in a 5-year period, which had to be solved from 2017 to 2021. But the investigations show that not only

the challenges predicted in the sixth plan were not resolved, but also 5 more challenges were added to those 13 challenges. These challenges were the continuation of recession, increase in unemployment rate, environmental challenges, the possibility of water crisis and political challenges caused by the government's implementation plans. But now economic corruption and inefficiency and even a sharp decline in the value of the national currency have been added to it.

-Having conflict between the top and bottom of the sixth plan bill in some articles

The top and bottom of the bill are in conflict with each other in some articles, for example, in article 19, which is about cultural excellence, it is stated that the right to broadcast sports programs should be paid to the federations, which should be asked where this topic is related to the concept of cultural excellence. In Article 26, which has raised the strengthening of the family foundation, gender justice has been raised under it, which originated from feminism, and it seems that the sixth plan legalizes influence in the country.

Neglecting the basic issues facing the country: The bill of the 6th development program in its rulings for the most important issues and crises of the country has not provided a suitable solution and has only satisfied itself with some requirements or sometimes tried policies. For example, the solution to solving employment in this bill is only in Article 21 and is limited to two years of non-payment of the employer's contribution and unemployment insurance.

Ignoring the current situation of the country and the feasibility of the program: The quantitative tables presented at the beginning of the bill give the impression that until today we have performed close to the set goals, all the infrastructure and prerequisites are ready and we are going to improve the past situation only a little. This kind of planning is inefficient in practice and its only achievement is a big commitment for the government, the feasibility of which is doubtful.

Uncertainty of the method of determining priorities: It is not clear on what basis the introduced priorities were chosen. For example, it is not clear which private sector is going to operate in Makran and what incentives are there to attract capital in this area? Or why some priorities that were mentioned in previous government documents such as the crisis of social security funds have been removed?

Uncertainty of the ratio of the bill's materials with resistance economy: The resistance economy contains a kind of look from the future to the present. In other words, the resistance economy identifies the threats that can cause a crisis in the country in the future and plans with the aim of

increasing resilience and reducing possible injuries. However, the proposed program bill does not have this feature, and it is not clear what the additional policies will be if they are realized and how much it will increase the resistance of the country.

Uncertainty and vagueness of the way to provide the financial resources needed to realize the program: Regarding the resources required by the program and the composition mentioned for the annual average, it is noteworthy that first of all, the resources are unreliable. This issue is related to both internal and external sources.

Uncertainty of the relationship between the goals, priorities and plans proposed in the bill: According to the new classification presented in the Sixth Development Plan bill, goals and priorities have been proposed separately, and the ratio of the introduced priorities, even assuming that there was a scientific basis for their selection, has not been explained with the goals of the program. On the other hand, in line with the priorities of the 6th plan, resistance economy plans and projects have also been introduced as priorities, while it is expected that the goals, priorities and operational projects will be chosen along with each other and in line with development.

Creating extensive financial obligations for the government: Another shortcoming of the 6th Development Plan is "the creation of extensive financial obligations for the government and the uncertainty of how to provide resources". There is no mention of them. Also, the discussed documents do not have specific explanations that show how the financial resources needed by the program are provided and how the government achieves 8% economic growth.

According to the major quantitative and qualitative problems in the 6th five-year development plan, there are other reasons for not fully achieving the goals of this program, which should be investigated and determined in the operational plans of the annual budgets of this period, so the important part of the problems in the budget.

Discussion

The primary challenge encountered when compiling the vision document and development plans lies in the deficiency of fundamental comprehension within the realm of development models. Consequently, even these exhaustive development plans vary due to the absence of a solid grasp on the development concept. This ambiguity raises uncertainties surrounding the essence of

development, the concept of development planning, and the appropriate organizational structure for effective planning. Viewing development as a transformative process that impacts all facets of society - economic, social, political, and cultural - underscores the necessity for development to harmonize with civilization and facilitate the country's comprehensive transition into a new historical epoch. Coordinating the execution of the vision document and its accompanying programs necessitates collaboration among diverse institutions and entities. Insufficient coordination may impede the advancement towards the objectives outlined in the vision document. Certain institutions and societal factions may prioritize their self-interests over the realization of the vision document and related programs, potentially resulting in resistance and opposition to the successful and thorough implementation of these initiatives.

Hence, it is imperative to establish a shared understanding of Islamic civilization or the intended progress before determining the suitable strategic direction for said civilization. Due to the lack of emphasis on this aspect and the deficiency in research planning within Iran, the focus of planning remains predominantly on enhancing physical infrastructure or cultivating specialized human resources. A critical internal challenge in the nation's present situation is the absence of a unified strategic mindset and structured scientific approach. Consequently, policymakers consistently encounter difficulties in formulating a cohesive and organized concept of progress, resulting in challenges in addressing developmental issues effectively. Each policymaker grapples with this issue and proposes individual remedies based on their distinct interpretation of development, often resulting in one-dimensional solutions that align with their particular perspective. This approach frequently hinders the realization of the objectives outlined in the vision document and plan. Governments' developmental initiatives are shaped by their understanding and interpretation of strategic documents like the vision document and 5-year development plans, reflecting varied perceptions of development and its prerequisites. For prolonged strategic success, transparency and restricted community engagement play a pivotal role. Failure to facilitate community participation and heed their views and requirements diminishes the likelihood of successful plan and vision execution.

The vision document for 2025 and its associated programs, designed to advance the country within a specified timeframe, may encounter institutional challenges. Instances arise where these documents conflict with prevailing legislations at the institutional level, leading to confusion and

implementation hurdles. Flaws in methodology, inadequate public involvement, or a lack of transparency during the formulation of vision documents and subsequent plans can impede their effective execution. A robust and dependable measurement and evaluation framework are essential for monitoring progress towards long-term goals and plans. However, an inefficient or incomplete system may hinder the identification and rectification of shortcomings, hindering overall performance. The execution of the vision document and subsequent programs often necessitates substantial financial investments. Insufficient funding or inadequate budget allocation can result in financial constraints and project delays. Overcoming these obstacles requires amendments to laws, enhancing the drafting process, fostering interagency coordination, managing conflicting interests, securing adequate financial backing, and prudent budget planning. Furthermore, enhancing transparency and public involvement in drafting the vision document and associated programs can aid in addressing certain institutional barriers.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Allameh Tabataba'i University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. The author contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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