

## **Schooling reforms: a challenging agenda for government of Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*The current research studies aims to investigate the process of designing a uniform curriculum for the schools and what should be the contents of the curriculum which is according to the national socio-cultural values of the country. The methodology of the existing paper is based on secondary search. Secondary sources were consulted for gathering data and information. The key words identified from the research questions were rigorously searched via reputable data bases such as Emerald Insight Elsevier, JSTOR and Google Scholar. The international literature was searched through the data bases while Google Scholar was consulted for searching Pakistani literature. It is found that curriculum development is an important process which should not be left to any single agency, government, or market driven forces. Rather all the stake holders should be involved to design it. STEM being a new reality should be inculcated in curriculum.*

**Key Words:** *Education, Schooling reforms, Curriculum*

### **Introduction**

Change is considered to be the only new reality that ought be considered by organizations (Beerel, 2009). She further states that a true leader is supposed to identify the new reality through systematic leadership and transform his/her followers to adapt that change. The current government has enchanted the slogan of “change” when it entered the arena of national politics. Education has been captured a prominent place in the manifesto of the government under the title of “Transform Education”. Besides, corruption, justice and health its focus is on the uniformity of different prevailing education systems segregated

into public, private, vocational and madrassa systems (Mehnaz Aziz et al, 2014). This agenda of bringing uniformity in educational system is a “new reality” for the government as its implications are wider on the national landscape. According to the PTI manifesto, education is kept as a priority. Regarding the schooling reforms including primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational education, it states, “PTI will put in place the most ambitious education agenda in Pakistan’s history, spanning reform of primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, and special education”. It further states that, “Pakistan’s National Curriculum has not been reviewed or updated in the past 12 years, and no national consensus on medium of instruction and teaching of languages exists”. (PTI Manifesto, 2018). Similarly it gives policy guide lines for uniformity in curriculum by following goals such as, introduction of Science, Engineering, Technology and Maths (STEM), evaluation of curricula according to demands of labour market through establishing National Commission for Human Capital Development and National Commission for Education Standards which will initiate dialogues and develop strategies for medium of exchange in education institutions. (PTI Manifesto, 2018).

Although, it is not less than a challenge for the government to establish a uniform educational system, in terms of curriculum, for the whole country as it demands a systematic strategic plan through keeping all the stake holders on board. These diverse systems not only the cause of producing students of different schools of thoughts with diverse, at times conflicting, ideologies, hence, ultimately leading the nation into disintegration as for as national unity and economic development are concerned.

Currently, Pakistan’s educational system has 260,903 educational institutes which are imparting education to 41,018,384 pupils by 1535461 teachers. According to a reliable estimate public and private institutions in the country are 180,846 and 80,057 respectively. These figures in percentage are approximately 31% for private and 69% for public educational institutes (Hussain, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015). Similarly, vocational training institutes operating in the According to The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) is the apex body and a national regulatory authority to address the challenges of Technical and Vocational Training in the country. NAVTTTC website, there are 3581 TVET institutes (1177 in the public and 2404 in the private sector) in the country, whereas, the Pakistan Education Statistics (2014-15) reports a total number of TVET institutes as 3579 with 1073 (30%) in the public and 2506 (70%) in the private sector. According to this report, total enrolment in TVET courses is 0.309 million, of which 0.135 million (44%) is in the public sector institutions. NAVTTTC has also established 130 vocational institutions in 79 Tehsils across the country to provide skill training under President’s “Funny Maharat Program”, and had trained 37,521 persons. The National Training Bureau is also implementing important interventions for vocational training in collaboration with Skill Development Councils and affiliated institutions (Economic Survey 2014-15).

The current study aims to fill the gap in existing literature that how, at present, the curricula of different prevailing education systems of the country be developed and what elements or authorities are giving their inputs in it. According to National Education policy 2017 an Advisory Committee headed by national Convener, is responsible for curriculum designing of the primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and madrassahs. The advisory committee works under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (National Education Policy, 2017).

### **Research Questions:**

The current research studies aims to find answers of two questions.

First, how a uniform curriculum can be designed for the schools?

Secondly, what should be the contents of the curriculum which is according to the national socio-cultural values of the nation?

### **Literature review**

#### **Institutional theory and educational institution**

A number of major studies regarding institutional analysis and educational policies and practices have been conducted regarding the educational polices and schooling practices Burch,2 000, 2002; Burch& Spillane,2 004a; Coburn, 2001a, 2001b; Metz, 1990, in press; Ogawa, 1992; Spillane & Burch, 2006). Researchers were of the view that external pressures and culture values combined to assist educational governing bodies to determine what schools should perform and what should be the expectations from it.( Meyer and Rowan1977, 1978). The pressure on the schools by the educational regulatory bodies and governmental agencies in the perspective of organizational theory called as isomorphism (Rowan & Miskel, 1999). In the words of DiMaggio, *“isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population*

*to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions”* (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 66). The three integral elements of isomorphism are coercive, mimetic and normative. *Coercive* isomorphism are the formal or at informal rules and regulations that a school must be developed for compliance by government or regulatory bodies.

*Mimetic* isomorphism is when educational institution when a school perversely follows another one with an aim that achieves it as a bench mark, ideal or standard.

*Normative* isomorphism is linked with professionalism such as codes, values, norms and standard practices by the institution (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

As primary education is the back bone of the secondary and tertiary education. The input received by the primary education is the raw material for the tertiary education which later on turns to be human capital. Although quality of education need to be maintained at secondary and tertiary levels however, drastic improvements are needed at primary

education level where students develop their mindsets and learning approaches (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991).

### **Methodology**

The methodology of the existing paper is based on secondary search. Secondary sources were consulted for gathering data and information. The key words identified from the research questions were rigorously searched via reputable data bases such as Emerald Insight Elsevier, JSTOR and Google Scholar. The international literature was searched through the data bases while Google Scholar was consulted for searching Pakistani literature. Only those articles were retained which were published in blind peer review journals

### **Curriculum change**

According to nation-state model society is made up of individuals and there should be an integration and coherent force that firmly binds the people together. In this regard mass education plays a vital role. However, it is equally important for people to have concise of their rights and responsibilities for effective citizenship (Meyer, 1980; Thomase et al. 1987 ,McEneaney & Meyer, 2000). The importance of mass education was highlighted as the best possible solution for the requirement of a nation in terms of capitalist order. Hence, an educational curriculum containing timetables, books and other supporting materials were consider to be the solution of the problems of national educational requirements (McEneaney & Meyer, 2000). However, according to institutional perspective that curriculum need to be designed as per prevailing industry standard. In the words of *curricular revision can be justified simply on the basis of the need to conform to "industry standards"* ( Sweet, McElrath & Kain, 2014).

### **Contents of curriculum**

Curriculum is a plan an elaborated plan for schools which contains guide line for learning in schools, presented in a documented form and its implementation in the class rooms (Glatthorn, 1987, pp. 1). Different views are established and several studies have been conducted to clarify the contents of the curriculum. Researchers identified three major changes that shift in 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades of schools i.e, large number of education providers mostly market based business oriented institutions, more tight coupling and magnified role of educational institutions in the society (Meyer, Heinz-Dieter and Brian Rowan, 2006). Owing to these changes the contents of the curriculum also underwent changes. Different opinions evolved regarding the curriculum contents. It has been argued that curriculum included learners' abilities, interests, learning styles and experiences (Goodlad, Klein & Tyek, 1979). It is also argued that considering curriculum as a system

it should include the following elements wholeness and coherence, purpose and feedback (PRATT,1978). Humanistic curriculum argues curriculum purely base on academics do not serve the purpose of educating a student as teacher has the responsibility to care the needs of a student's emotional and social learning (Aloni, 2011; Hewitt, 2006; McNeil, 2009). Huebner (1966) opined that curriculum was a valued educational activity. He developed five forms of values for educational activity were technical value, political value, scientific value and ethical values. In other words his version of curriculum should contain these five elements.

### **Curriculum and Pakistan**

The literature on curriculum development in Pakistani is based on several dimensions of the curriculum. Majority of the studies are based on curriculum development in higher or secondary education such as library and information sciences, LIS or health sciences such as nursing (Mahmood, 1996; Mahmood,1999; Mahmood, 2003;Dias, Ajani & Mithani,2010). Besides, these studies focus either text book evaluation (Mehmood, 2011). Although some researchers analysed the primary level curriculum however, they argued Islam as a religion differentiating Pakistani identity from the other ethnicity or religion that they described "others" (Durrani, & Dunne,2010). Similarly in another study it was revealed that curriculum text was responsible for gender injustice and conflict. Teachers lack of understanding regarding their role posed a threat to gender justice and social cohesion that resultantly led to conflict (Farooq, Ullah, Iqbal & Hussain, 2016). Memon (1997) proposed a two factor model of participation and collaboration for curriculum changes however; he unable to explain that either that model can be equally implemented to private public and madrasa school system. Westbrook, et al. (2013) study argued that curriculum should be aligned with teacher education. Their elaborated study focused that what pedagogical techniques should be inculcated in teachers. Some researchers although stressed the need of linking curriculum with industry for elevating economic development (Afridi, & Urooj, 2019), however, the literature is deficient in addressing the question that how a uniform curriculum should be devised on specifically primary level which should be acceptable to public, private and madrasa level.

### **STEM education a "new reality"**

STEM which stands for Sciences, technology, Education and Maths is an educational approach used to instigate the sense of problem solving techniques and innovation among the students (Roberts,2012). It is relevant education approach which best fit for knowledge economy (KE) and fulfills its requirements i.e, innovation and creativity are the factors of production for KE (Kim, & Mauborgne,1999).

### **Recommendations**

Keeping in view the existing literature some recommendations have been proposed for a devising a uniform curriculum for primary education.

### **STEM education**

In order to equip the students with the eminent and future challenges of the “knowledge economy” STEM education system should be introduced (Roberts, 2012). However, moral values should also be integrated with this approach which ultimately helps the students to become a socially and morally responsible human capital in future.

### **Devising the national curriculum.**

In the words of Georges Benjamin Clemenceau “War is too serious a matter to entrust to military men”. However, curriculum devising is more important than any other thing which should no be entrusted to curriculum devising committees or governments. Rather all the key actors and stake holders such as Academia, Industry, religious scholars and government should be the part of these committees.

### **Role of the teachers**

Teachers being important stake holders of all moves that lead to curriculum preparation should be taken on board as they are the actual implementers of curriculum. However, proper training should be provided to them reading the pedagogy, education and relevant skills.

### **Conclusion**

The research study aimed to investigate the answers of two questions that how a uniform curriculum can be designed for the schools? Secondly, what should be the contents of the curriculum which is according to the national socio-cultural values of the nation? The comprehensive international and national literature search has concluded that curriculum development is an important process which should not be left to any single agency, government, or market driven forces. Rather all the stake holders should be involved to design it. Thus a participatory and collaborative approach should be used (Strauss et. al., 1973). Moreover, keeping in view the new reality of “Knowledge Economy” contents shall be technological based and of applied nature. The past research studies also confirmed the findings (Hewitt, 2006; McNeil, 2009) while some researchers even suggested that curriculum may be linked with the mega projects for enhanced economic development (Afridi & Urooj, 2019).

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