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CONTENT BASED EVALUATION OF SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Single national curriculum (SNC) framework has been offered by government of Pakistan in order to eliminate all kind of educational discrepancies so that each contributor of society may get equal right and excess towards uniform education. A qualitative review has been performed by conducting interviews of educational experts who have been involved in the process of new curriculum framework development by using purposive sampling technique. The findings revealed that content of SNC has properly defined medium of instruction, yearly distributive core subjects' classification, weightage wise assessment and annual monitoring. In addition to it, all levels of institutes and Deeni Madaris have been incorporated for true implementation by considering activity-based learning and its effectiveness and efficiency has been assured by planned utilization of available resources and considering all possible feasibilities in order to make it aligned with sustainable development goals. Since the content has the designed keeping in view the intended results and has potential to produce fruitful results so this study suggests that continuation of this policy framework is a milestone need to be covered by government through the involvement of all provincial educational departments and religious institutes.

Keywords

Single National Curriculum (SNC), Sustainable Developmental Goals, Stakeholders, Policy Framework



1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Education being a primitive tool at individual and global level demonstrates that people live in less poverty life style who have fine quality education (Hannum & Buchmann, 2005) and have good decision capabilities (Sen, 1999) and is associated globally with innovation and strong financial growth (Danquah & Amankwah-Amoah, 2017). Thus, to maintain the education at a level being necessary to upgrade the society is very important. There has been paid much attention to the quality of education in schools after point out to be a crucial issue of post-2015 educational agenda worldwide (UNESCO, 2015). For which, focus has been paid on the input, process and output of the student recognition to improve quality of education and this movement has been described by many past researches. Pakistan, from its existence has taken serious steps to monitor and control the quality of education. For this purpose, different educational policies were presented in the past to maintain the integrity of education. According to Jamal (2015), average rate of return to next schooling is 5 to 7 percent while children from age of 5 to 16 years can get free education as per constitution of Pakistan. The overall literacy rate was 18% while male and female literacy rate was 19% and 12% respectively in 1951 in Pakistan. It augmented to 60%, 71%, and 49% respectively in 2018-19. Pakistan is ranked 152 out of 189 countries in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Human Development Index (HDI) ranking. According to

human development report (2019), Pakistan didn't show interest to boost indicators of key education like gross enrollment ratio, literacy rate, educational expenditures etc. Pakistan's literacy rate 57 percent lags well behind its neighboring countries. The primary school dropout rate is 22.7 percent (3rd highest in the region after Bangladesh and Nepal), which is alarming given it as at the stage of formative learning (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2019-20). United Nations Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, concluded that Pakistan is 50 years in primary education while 60 years behind in secondary education to achieve the education goals. The number of children at primary, secondary and upper secondary level still from out of school were 5.6, 5.5, 10.4 million respectively (Sattar, 2020). This was an alarming situation which need attention to be paid to resolve and make it better for the future of Pakistan by developing academic goals and align it to the sustainable developmental goals worldwide. Academic goals can be achieved through the pathway of curriculum which may be classified in different ways. Concept of life, religion, beliefs, goals and mindset are represented by national curriculum which basically covers past, present and future of any nation. Single curriculum directs the behavior and mentality of nation in certain direction while different curriculums may produce confusions and ambiguities with misleading from the main track. Single national curriculum (SNC) framework would be beneficial in number of ways as Early childhood care education (ECCE) has been

designed keeping in view the entire scenario of local culture and interacting environment along with national and international standards like SDG-4 (sustainable development goals for education). Secondly, defined student learning outcomes (SLO's) at each level of education provides a direction to students that after reading the specific chapter, student will be able to learn pre- described outcomes. Thirdly, social equality is the major outcome that will create an environment where every child will feel equal to other and will not hesitate to pay his/her role for the betterment of the society. The salient features incorporated in SNC framework as claimed by government of Pakistan are as:

- The SNC is standards, benchmarks and outcomes based across all subjects as compared to the 2006 curriculum in which standards benchmarks and learning outcomes were not developed for each subject curriculum.
- In 2006, the subject of Islamiyat was integrated with General Knowledge up to grade 2 and started as a separate subject from Grade 3 onwards. In the SNC, Islamiyat starts from grade 1 as a separate subject up to grade 12.
- Previously the subject of Ethics was designated for non-Muslim students in lieu of Islamiyat from Grade 3 onwards. Now a new subject Religious Education has been introduced for non-Muslim students from grade 1 onwards for five minority groups of Pakistan.
- The 2006 curriculum was implemented only in government schools and some low-cost private schools. The SNC will be implemented across the board in all schools of Pakistan including government and private schools and Deeni Madaris.
- The content of the SNC for Math and Science has been aligned to the TIMSS content framework.

1.2. Problem Statement

The education system of Pakistan is basically divided into three categories which are public sector, private sector (elite class and local) and madrassah system. The children of lower-class society study in public sector schools or madrassah due to unaffordability of expenses while middle class family prefer to study in local private schools due to limited budget assigned by them for the education of their children. On the other hand, upper class tends to prefer the schooling of their children in elite schools due to different reasons of budgeting, environment and standard. Therefore, such type of division in education system leads to effect socio-economic status of people and Pakistan is already ridden with class disparities resulting in more crucial social and economic issues. Last ruling government paid much attention to resolve these sorts of issues by regularizing the content to be taught in a single manner by designing single national framework which was going to be implement in three phases with completion of first two stages being implemented for primary and middle schools of

Pakistan while 3rd phase in April 2023. Now, it is important to consider whether content of single national curriculum enables to address above mentioned issues and content has the power to achieve intended outcomes for which is has been designed. Moreover, there were observed many issues regarding the syllabus content that was adopted by different level of institutes. Firstly, medium of instruction was a challenge as elite schools were delivering education in English medium while public sector schools were following Urdu medium and deeni madaris were not even linked with formal education that was creating a contrast for putting the same effort into different streams. Secondly, core subjects were also not defined and different schools were using books of their own choice to establish their own criteria of standardization which was creating a huge social gap among the students of different classes within the same society. Thirdly, assessment and evaluation were not conducted for each standard and there was not clear mechanism to deal with the promotion policy due to different time slabs for session being started in different institutes. Fourthly, implementation of SNC was itself a challenge and still two phases have come across to appear till middle level while remaining implementation is pending. In addition to it, different provinces of Pakistan are taking it in different terms so it is necessary to put light on future directions regarding implementation challenges that how it will be followed equally and completely by all parts of the country. Finally, it is important to consider the effectiveness and

efficiency of new developed framework either it is enabled to achieve desired outcomes or not and either available resources are sufficient enough to fulfil the new requirement according to new designed curriculum framework or not.

2. Methodology

The review process is considered to be an integral part during the development and implementation phase of any policy. There are three assessment ways to review a policy: content analysis, implementation analysis and outcome analysis. Current study focused on content-based approach as this framework is in process of implementation so authors considered it important to have a look on content of framework. Theory of change is taken as an approach for analysis due to the reason that since it is a change in educational system in which new strategies are going to be imparted for the betterment and maintenance of quality in education. Research stance taken by authors is ‘for people’ as such type of curriculum is going to affect the future of nation and is based on the concept of equality so it is importance to consider it either this claimed stance is really attached to the people problems and solutions or it is just a fake claim. In addition to it, scope of researched problem is also not so simple and is complex in nature as designing of curriculum is not an easy task due to socio-economic norms, religious sect existence, lower and upper-class expectations and attachment of other stakeholders due to its equivocal nature. Research philosophy adopted in this study is interpretivism as authors are exploring the facts associated with the content of policy

framework and strategy is inductive on which authors followed the track and draw the conclusions. Target population was all those actors and stakeholders that have direct or indirect influential factor with the existence of such kind of policy framework. During the development of scheme of studies, committees were formulated for designing and review consisting of chairpersons and managing directors of concern curriculum and textbook boards, secretaries from all education departments, representatives of public universities, chairpersons of technical commissions and training panels, representatives of Islami Nazriati councils, ittehad-e-tanzeema-e-madaris, Quran boards and ministry of federal education and training and provincial ministries of education act as a actors to influence the development of single national curriculum while other stakeholders were publishing bodies, principals of public and private schools and colleges, school associations, books traders, teachers, parents and students. These identified influential authorities enlisted the option to be chosen for sampling. The criteria for choosing the respondent were to be an expert in the field of education having priority of involvement in development phase of SNC on the basis of interest-power grid (Mendelow, 1981). Authors choose sample size of three persons which were expert in their relevant field and had great impact and attachment with the whole process of framework development. One of the respondents was the secretary of an education department of one province who had 20 years of expertise in

education field and was also involved in the steering committee for designing of scheme of study for single national curriculum, authors offer him a pseudo name as respondent A while respondent with pseudo name B was the chairman of a school association who was himself a school owner and was performing his duties for school and association from last 13 years and was also involved in consultation meetings with government of Pakistan for suggestions and implementation strategies designing. Third respondent was the owner of a publishing company who had done great work in liaison with the guidelines of single national curriculum and books for that publishing company are also approved from different provinces textbook boards of Pakistan and was running the business since 2013 and authors named him respondent C. All these three respondents were approached through non-probability purposive sampling technique (Tongco, 2007) and authors approached them through email. Respondent B and C were easily accessible while respondent A gave the time after a series of reminders. Since this study is a sort of exploratory type, so tool used for data collection was interview and semi-structured interview type was adopted due to the reason of two factors which were expertise in relevant domain and other was complex nature of addressed problem. Since authors were students of business administration and were novice in the field of education and single national curriculum framework development is a matter of complexity so a grid was designed according to which semi-structured

type of interview was most relevant technique to be used for extraction of data in details. When a suitable time was set with the respondents, an interview guide was shared with each of them to study and to be clear in context of interview. First part of interview guide was introduction of authors and second was about the objective of research clearing it an aim/project to complete during their doctorate studies. Third portion was related to confidentiality in which respondents were made clear that all information gathered from them will not be used for any other purpose and their names were also being kept confidential as these respondents were linked with policy formation process. Other protocols during the interview were also mentioned in that clause. Last clause was the list of tentative questions which were based on the formula of Michel Quin Patton and were covering experience, opinion and knowledge of the respondents. The tentative questions were following:

- What is the medium of instruction for single national curriculum?
- What new aspects have been incorporated in new scheme of national curriculum?
- What are the core subjects at each level of education?
- What Is your opinion regarding format of curriculum document?
- What are the protocols for assessment and evaluation?
- What are the strategies for its implementation?

- How curriculum is linked with yearly calendar?
- What is your stance for incorporation of religious institutes under the umbrella of single national curriculum?
- What you see about effectiveness and efficiency of this curriculum?

At the time of interviews, authors spent almost two hours with each of the respondent and answers of the respondents were repeated to make it clear for understanding and write up. Moreover, evaluation themes were also incorporated during discussion to reach out at the decision.

3. Analysis and Findings

According to interviews conducted from the expert of the field, following components were drawn out to be important themes for content evaluation approach based on the coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

- Subjects that have to be studied by the students from pre-classes till intermediate
- Chosen medium for delivering instructions to the students
- Formative weightage with respect to each subject for theory and practical both
- Time allocation for specific subject management
- Channel protocols for evaluation/assessment
- Religious incorporation and its status
- Effectiveness and efficiency of content available in curriculum

The features covered with respect to above themes focused on subjects thought at each level in order to make it a controllable factor in determining the quality of education. These themes not only prescribed teaching of Holy Quran and its translation, a separate subject to make it aligned with religious concept of thinking but also incorporated more focused science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics subjects with associated practical application, technological awareness, innovative ideas and modern trends of emerging concept. They also elaborate concept of national integration, ideology of Islam, patriotism and their influence on day to day living standard and its needs to fulfill the concept of single nation. In addition to it, these components linked the students with the vision of our leaders to produce innovative thinking, critical observers and challenge facing youth to overcome the gap in between public sector, private sector schools and deeni madaris through fulfillment of student learning outcomes. One of the educationists said that single national curriculum has assigned specific medium of instruction to each level of education. According to which pre-primary classes may taught in English or Urdu medium depending upon the requirement of the society while in case of primary level education, subject of mathematics and general sciences are in English medium while all other subjects are to be taught in Urdu medium. The medium of guidelines for middle section will be as same for primary with the addition of computer education that will also be in English language. In addition to it, secondary

level institutes will obey English medium for physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, computer and general science and medical/engineering/technical and vocational related subjects while Urdu medium for all other subjects. Moreover, higher secondary institutes will adopt English medium for physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology and medical/engineering/agricultural/veterinary/technical and vocational related subjects while Urdu medium for all other subjects. Another interesting fact revealed by interviewee was that, non-Muslim students, may choose religious education as a separate subject in place of ethics and morality while specific business and commerce group has been introduced for commerce students in higher secondary level students while sports and co-curricular activities have incorporated *bazm-e-adab*, games for primary, nursing and first aid, service community and games for secondary while unarmed combat and martial arts, community services and games for higher secondary institutes. According to respondents, some subjects have been nominated as core subjects which are necessary to be studied at each level. The classification of core subjects is as:

Pre-primary section will adopt English, mathematics and Urdu as core subjects. English, Urdu, mathematics, Islamiyat, general knowledge and Nazrah Quran would be core subjects for grade 1 to grade 3 and English, Urdu, mathematics, Nazrah Quran, Islamiyat, general science and social studies would be core subjects for grade 4 and grade 5. In addition to it, middle

section will select translation of holy Quran, Urdu, English, Islamiyat, mathematics, computer, general science, history/geography as compulsory core subjects and Arabic/art and drawing/Punjabi/home economics/agriculture etc. as elective core subjects while grade IX and X will have the core subjects of translation of holy Quran, Urdu, English, Islamiyat, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology/computer and Pakistan studies for general group, translation of holy Quran, Urdu, English, Islamiyat, Pakistan studies and two elective subjects from general group or humanities social science group along with general science and general mathematics for humanities social science and general group and translation of holy Quran, Urdu, Islamiyat, English, Pakistan studies, medical/engineering/technical related technology along with physics, chemistry and biology/mathematics would be core subjects for technical/vocational related group. In case of higher secondary education, translation of holy Quran, Urdu, English, Islamiyat, Pakistan Studies as core subjects for all disciplines and physics, chemistry, mathematics/computer/biology for pre-engineering/medical group, medical and allied health technology/engineering/technical and vocational education along with chemistry and biology/mathematics for medical and allied health technology/engineering technology/technical and vocational educational group, agricultural and veterinary sciences along with physics, chemistry and biology for agricultural and animal science group and other relevant subjects for general science group, humanities, social science group,

business and commerce group, economics, Islamic studies and applied arts group. In response of curriculum document format, respondents revealed that scheme of studies have been designed in regard of every subject with defined combination of:

- Idea of introduction covering curriculum development circle, focal learning points and associated standards
- Conversion of scheme of studies into curriculum, guiding textbooks, transformation of knowledge and skills to the readers
- Distribution matrix for grade wise chapters
- Student learning outcomes with respect to grade and themes and sub-themes
- Two-way strategies for teaching and learning
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Textbook development guidelines for writers, reviewers, teachers and learners
- Practical activities if any
- Curriculum draft composition and review committee

According to research study, students will be assessed on annual basis by their respective institutes along with quarterly test system for grade 1 to grade VIII while grade IX to XII will be assessed theoretically and practically through concern board/Wafaq-ul-Madaris on annual basis under the guidelines of concern government. This all evaluation is currently based on traditional assessment system but will transform to

curriculum-based evaluation with the passage of time under defined phases of curriculum development. On the context of implementation, all respondents strongly enforced that if government wants to make it actually implement, sufficient labs and subject specialist teachers are required for which school education department must ensure adequate collaboration among textbook boards, training institutions, engineering and medical councils and vocational institutions along with strong liaison between school administration and local community, industries and hospitals etc. for exposure to practical awareness of the students. Under the light of yearly calendar, respondents said that curriculum has been divided keeping in view the working days and holidays coming in a year. According to curriculum, there are total 288 weak days in a year, from which 42 are the Sundays so remaining 246 are the working days and after deduction of all kind of formal and informal vocations, academic year comprises of 216 working days in which process of knowledge sharing take place between institutes and students. According to respondents, scheme of studies has been further divided into daily brake-downs for effective delivery of planned outcomes. Moreover, respondents appreciated the approach of incorporation of deeni madaris into this strategy for the equality of nation at all levels. According to them, students coming out from deeni madaris were not competent enough to face the challenges of social life due to lack of awareness of formal educational discontinuation, but this curriculum focus a lot on

this matter and considers it an important factor for the equilibrium of society. Curriculum offers such SLO which would be acceptable by every sect of Islam and its knowledge will be a helping stone for the students to put their feet in practical world. At this moment, incorporation of deeni madaris is pending and will be in practice in upcoming phases of implementation. A committee which was established at the time of developing single national curriculum, was comprised of different religious scholars who were agree to adopt SNC based subject along with the teaching of holy Quran due to its generalizability at every corner of life. According to respondents, scheme of study has been designed according to the requirements of modern culture and are aligned with international goals which will make it more effective than in past. Moreover, the aim behind the development of single national curriculum framework development was to provide equal educational opportunities to all the children of the nation and new scheme of study has been designed accordingly which they hope that it would be achieved through it effectively. As far as efficiency of content is concern, it would be achievable as government can use its current resources by just managing it well and assigning these resources to the authorities who are responsible for its effective implementation. Moreover, formation of single national curriculum framework was through a fair process in which all relevant stakeholders were tried to engage and input of all concerns were taken and incorporated to make it a fair policy framework and its intended

outcomes would be beneficial for all students as it is based on activity-based learning and it will make the students practically valuable in the field. Upon discussion on feasibility, respondents made it clear that current government is supporting in every direction to make it implemented and as we all know that this agenda of SNC is the step of current government so its political feasibility is very much attractive. Anyhow, future governments may take it in their own directions but it totally depends on future. There were also found some resistance administratively and technically due to resource limitations and person's competencies but theme of SNC and its followers ensured that current resources could be managed in such a way that designed content will be effectively implement in the light of current circumstances. Moreover, designed curriculum is enhancing people freedom as every citizen will now free equal to be knowledgeable enough to compete in any field of practice. But there is also some hindrance, as we all know that Punjab government and KPK government has accepted this framework and following the defined directions but Sindh government is refusing to accept it due to the fact that their cultural values and language hasn't been incorporated at the time of designing while Baluchistan government is still neutral about it, so this all making the SNC almost 50% social acceptable change.

4. Conclusion

Single national curriculum developed by government of Pakistan is a step forward for equality of education at all levels in the society

which offers defined medium of instruction guided by set pattern to provide knowledge of national, religious and modern language in order to establish practical exposure along with core subjects' combinations at all levels of education. It is also concluded that single national curriculum offers defined working days and assessment took place on yearly basis along with activity-based learning. Moreover, not only formal education, but Deeni Madaris have also been incorporated into the system for producing good stuff of abilities and skills. Furthermore, developed framework is effective, efficient and provides fair chances of implementation at ground level and all kind of feasibilities have been studied during its formulation in order to get intended results.

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