

Curriculum Reforms In School Education Sector In Sindh; What Has Changed?

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Abstract

The curriculum decides about the students' abilities because it is substantial for national development to know the gap between what the national education system provide and what our national development demand is to likely to widen in future. This qualitative research study investigated development and implementation of the reforms in curriculum, teacher's readiness about the implementation and assessment of these reforms in Sindh School Education Sector. The data was collected from those who were involved in policy development and implementation process. The tool of data collection was Semi- structured interviews whereas, thematic development method was employed as data analysis. After the 18th Amendment the provinces are responsible for all matters related to policy, curriculum, syllabus and textbook planning and development centers, equally center of excellence and standards of education inclusive of Islamic Education. In this regard Government of Sindh has initiated various reforms in curriculum to meet the global competition with the help of various development partners. The Directorate of Curriculum, Assessment and Research (DCAR) in the province is responsible to develop the curriculum of school and college education in the province. The curriculum experts of DCAR developed conducive environment based curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum makes students familiar to objectives, issues and history of our society and region. Eventually, the assessment and teacher professional development needs more equips for implementing the curriculum reforms.

Keywords: Curriculum Reforms, School Education, Teachers professional Development; Assessment and Evaluation

Introduction

Rapidly changing economic, social and demographic situations that design educational activities for education systems to adjust, improve and drive the future appear reasonable.

There are many evidences shows that the education reforms have a positive effect, because these educational reforms bring up-to-date challenges of these changes. However, when the reforms do have a poor impact, mostly the

stakeholders are easily discontented with the results and they tend to hold policy makers answerable for them (Gallup, 2017; Corbier, 2017). Without considerable change, in the supply of educational systems and demand of the competitive market that needed further widen the system. There is a risk that educationist believe education becomes our next steel industry and schools a artifact of the past, nevertheless to transform schooling at scale, we need not just a radical, alternative vision of what are possible, but also smart strategies that help make change in education happen (Schleicher, A. 2018). Equally, there is a bit of knowledge about the basic processes that provides, or is supposed to provide the reasonable outcomes. These processes develop difference between the policy development and its effects in the field of education (O'Toole, 2000). The reform in education system refers to the evaluation of an education system to provide accountability in the system to inform the public and to inform policies to improve educational system and process for the betterment of the outcomes (OECD, 2013). There had been a bigger challenge for the educational leaders in Education for All (EFA) to ensure the access of all children between the age of 5 to 16 years to universal and quality education, which has been established in strains and squabbling among the major partners (Tikly, 2017). In this regard UNESCO (2014), defined the conviction that it would be necessary indicate basic standards of education quality to measure and track learning process in the globe, post-2015. To meet these standards governance and planning issues may not always be the same in each of these jurisdictions. But what jurisdictions process is the way of the institution to run smoothly and expand them according to the expectations of both governments and societies (Kennedy, 2005). The reforms in education are the educational organization should identify its internal strength and weakness inside the organizational process. Like suitable educational

space, effective teachers and methods and financial strength, might be the organization's strengths and organization should identify and develop its competitive advantages among its strength themes (Tohidi & Jafri, 2010). Education is something beyond the mere academic literacy. It develops complex of knowledge, skills, attitude, and value by which man may improve their masses for the sustainability of the nation. It will be possible and effective because of effective educational management. The management in education is the process of utilizing available resources in such a way to promote efficiently and effectively in the development of human resource (Mishra, 2008). To supply human capital to the international markets educations process faces many managerial and governance issues. To tackle these governance challenges, a many countries of the world have put forward different reform approaches to improve their educational governance structure. However, these governance issues come in the form, sometime government reformate whole the system and sometime partial but there is continuous reforms among them there are sectoral efforts or approaches to improve governance in specific sectors (for example, extractive industries and public procurement), or topical approaches to use governance reform to tackle a specific challenge (for example, anti-corruption strategies), perhaps the broadest governance policy reforms, Transparency International (TI, 2020). Coming to the situation of Pakistan, we observe that there have been number of educational innovations and reform efforts since 1990s which seems quite related to the issues posed by globalization (Ali, S., Tahir, M. S. 2009). After 18th constitutional amendment provinces become responsible to ensure universal quality education. Hence government of Sindh introduced various reforms in the sector. Education Sector Plan (SESP) is the first provincial policy document that empowers the Government of Sindh to assume full

jurisdiction over the provincial education system with all partners, focusing on key areas of education policy planning, curriculum standards, centers of excellence and Islamic education spirit (SESP 2018). Same way government introduced various reforms policy development and implementation, equally curriculum development (SESP 2018).

Problem Statement

Most of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries had been introduced many reforms in education sector (OECD, 2015). These countries consider curriculum reform as an important and make the schools ready to meet the standards of the 21st century to respond fast changing trends in the world (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Because of to these global trends, these countries believe that frequently reviewing the curriculum is a way to equip children with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to make eligible them for competitive market of tomorrow. The reforms are indeed a difference between jurisdiction or a strategy and turning it into daily practices in the schools but planning, policy making, effectively implementing and assessment of the results for administrations and educators (Hess, 2013). In most of the countries these policies often do not get implemented as these policies were planned and implemented to get desired outcomes resultantly the governments, experts and international organizations have come to focus on implementation or assessment processes (Pont, 2008; Wagstaff, 2013; Gurría, 2015). Pakistan has a history of developing detailed and well-designed education policy documents since 1947 but has become unable to implement them (Ahmed. & Hussain, 2014). In this regard, the education has repeatedly set goals to provide free universal education and to provide quality higher education to produce innovative skills, knowledge and scholars in the mainstream of the

nation but due to the lack of commitment the authorities proven unable to implement these good policies and plans through a well- defined monitoring and evaluation system at both, provincial as well as federal levels (Ahmed & Hussain, 2014). The 18th Constitutional Amendment empowers the Sindh Government to assume full jurisdiction over the provincial education system. Resultantly the Government initiated various reforms cum curriculum in whole education sector especially in School Education very soon. The National Curriculum 2006 has been adopted by Sindh, but it has not been implemented due to issues with institutional capacity, resources and expertise (Sindh Education Sector Plan {SESP} 2018). Despite all the facts regarding reforms in Sindh School Sector there are some issues that still exist in current scenario that we need to addressed and create awareness of curriculum reforms initiatives, like curriculum development, implementation and performance in the school education sector.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the curriculum framework of schools, give greater coherence and clarity to national learning goals
- To investigate teacher's ownership; selection and professional development of teachers for curriculum reforms are essential to support change
- To investigate the evaluation and assessment framework how it meets the objectives of curriculum reforms in Sindh School Education Sector.

Research Questions of the Study

- How the current curriculum framework of schools gives greater coherence and clarity to national learning goals?
- How the reforms in curriculum enhance teacher's ownership and professional development of teachers for new curriculum?
- What the role of current evaluation and assessment framework is to meets the objectives of designed curriculum.

Significance of the Study

The confluence of devolution of powers in the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan equally the addition of Article 25-A has intensely affected many departments mainly the education sector. The amendment has devolved education department as a subject to the provincial government however, the article 25-A guaranteed and made provinces responsible to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 5 to 16. The research study strives to identify reasons, like ambiguous planning and poor governance those main causes of failure to provide basic education to its citizens. More than this, the study will be helpful to investigate gaps and weaknesses in the planning process and governance. This study will investigate adequate control over the education planning strategy, direction and policy coherence having due regard for the interests of all learners and stakeholders in school education sector in the Sindh province. Besides this, the study will be helpful to analyses teachers' development process with richer assessment resources that support competency acquisition. More importantly, the study will be helpful to justify the curriculum reform to build global support; transversal agents to coordinate them and ensure the coherence around curriculum reform, teacher's ownership and assessment to analyses the effective outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

The curriculum is an instrument that provides path for students to meet the national goals and basis for the assessment how they perform. The advancement of the curriculum is it should easily absorb the changes according to the dynamics of the society. Hence, in most of the developed countries, we observed comprehensive curriculum reforms over the past decade, focused on competency-development in education system and the individual needs of each student (Kitchen et al, 2019). Additionally, because of rapidly changes in globally and internationalization, these countries have focused to review the curriculum as a method to train children with the knowledge and skills to meet the competences in the global market. In fact, several countries of Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are updating their curriculum in recent years such as Finland, Estonia, Norway, Japan and Wales. Equally, the countries of the organization are engaged in the OECD-led Education 2030. Broadly they plane projects and programs of educational reforms to enrich the education system that ensure creation skills and competencies in the students that are wanted to prosper in the 21st century (OECD, 2018). In addition to this due to many complexities in the reforms most of the countries come across when trying to policy development and implementation (Fullan, 2015). The reforms development and implementation has broader concept and widely studied in fields such as public management, public policy, organizational change and education administration. He further incorporates that in education these reforms are curriculum development and implementation. It needs to be translating these reforms into classroom practices and achieve these desired goals. The concepts of educational reforms development and implementation are different

from the civic and economic reforms. These educational reforms carry “top-down” perspective, where the “success” of the implementation was measured by the “fidelity” and “adherence” to the reformed curriculum by implementers, such as teachers and school principal (Castro et al, 2015; Wedell & Grassick, 2017). This approach not only gives autonomy to the teachers but it supports autonomy-centered curriculum enactment. This way teachers equally curriculum mediators play central role in the curriculum development and implementation process, both as enactors and mediators of the policy, makes obsolete the concept of reliability itself (Snyder et al, 1992; Braun et al, 2010). Besides this, this approach also supports the educational organization to identify strength and weakness inside the organization like; suitable educational cladder, effective teaching methods and financial support, this way organization can categorize and develop its competitive advantages (Tohidi & Jafri, 2010).

Curriculum Reform

The curriculum may be differing based on its context, but in crux, it is a design path for learners (Akker, 2010). In other words, Akker (2010) defines the curriculum is a plan developed by the experts for what students should learn in an academic process, it also instructs the structures what should be taught through the education system and in the last it also defines how to taught. Stoll et al, (2006) embrace a severer definition of the curriculum. The curriculum mainly includes the documents or material used for academic process, such as textbooks or instructional materials. Meanwhile, the curriculum reforms are to introduce amendments in the curriculum. Saavedra and Steele (2012) defines the curriculum reforms broadly, to put new policies and plans of action of curriculum designs, such as class structure, teaching methodology, learning activities and objectives, learning hours, assessment and examination

methods. Furthermore, Gilbert (2010) explained the reforms are attempts to review or update the content, teaching methods, classroom size, learning objectives and assessment methods, equally it also includes its organizational structure fo education system and all issues concerning student learning. In order to prepare their students for the fast changing world the educational leaders of the various countries are engaged to update the curriculum. These changes in the curriculum ensures to meet the need of individual students equally, the curriculum also augment them with skills and attitudes suited for 21st century (Chingos et al, 2012; Boser et al, 2015; Steiner, 2017).

Curriculum Reform and Implementation

In the OECD countries the curriculum reformers apply “general education policy implementation framework” presented by (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Furthermore, the curriculum reformers by applying this framework gather and analysis the information of main factors which are associated with policy makers or policy making process during the curriculum renewal. Following this information analysis, the framework also helps to structure an implementation plan for curriculum reform. This also provides plans for education systems to initiate a reforms development and implementation or revive the curriculum reform process OECD (2020).

Curriculum Reform Requires a Whole-of-system Approach

The policy makers design educational policies that can be practiced and have to coherent with an existing policy frameworks. Mostly the major policy change may weaken or reinforce when the policy making and implementations bodies take slightly (Desimone, 2002). He further integrates sometimes a reform disturb the existing policies when it contrasts and compete them, and may

create obstacles to effective implementation of the designed reforms. For further explanation, Brends et al, (2002) describes increasing teachers work load to work on new policy immediately without readiness, it can be proved as a potential barrier to implement curriculum reforms. Curriculum reforms implementation needs more labor work, it can be achieved by the proper organization of work load for the staff and teachers including other supporting bodies, equally all the factors should involve properly and own the reforms (OECD, 2019). In most of the countries, more teaching hours with full working load has become a main challenge for the teaching professionals, equally this is a big distress for the governments to introduce reforms in the sector. Hence it becomes necessary for these countries to consider overall the system to make successful the reforms; like considering and rescheduling working hours of teaching staff, minimizing class sizes, recruiting more teachers and ensure the availability of all types of supporting technologies (OECD, 2015).

Coherent Curriculum development and Implementation Strategy

The curriculum reforms are a routine I education system to put changes when the leaders fell learning outcomes goes unusual. But most of the developed countries put frequent changes in the curriculum to update respective education system to respond the fast-changing world in 21st century. These countries are highly focused on how to introduce generic education policies and frameworks in effective way (Viennet & Pont, 2017; OECD, 2020). Besides this, these countries also work fast on smart policy design that ensures the development of such curriculum that aims to achieve national objective and vision (OECD, 2020).

Teachers Selection and Professionalism Are Key for Curriculum Reforms Implementation

Teacher pre and post trainings or degree programs of professional development enhance teacher's skills to own and implement the changes in the curriculum (Desimone, 2002; OECD, 2019). The 2014 curriculum reforms in Finland, the leadership authorized local municipalities and educational leadership to develop new curriculum according to the national curriculum development guidelines. The teacher of the country actively participated to develop and implement highly decentralized curriculum because of these teachers are highly professional, qualified autonomous. This mechanism of curriculum reforms also supported the culture of research to introduce new school development programs in the country (Halinen & Holappa, 2018). In India it is contrary, the new curriculum reforms introduced by the government with the name of New Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 was not aligned with existing teacher's preparedness (Betra 2005). Mainly, the principles of the schools guide the NCF, needed more engagement of the teachers. The curriculum reformers did not consider the professional qualification and capacity of teachers to follow these reforms. Further Betra (2005) argues that consequently, most of the leaders emphasized the government to reshape on the job and off the job teachers training programs to enhance the teacher's skills to implement these reforms successfully.

Teacher Skills Development

Education institutions train candidates on "how to become teachers' by preparing them with the necessary pedagogical and content knowledge and skills to facilitate teaching and learning". A study conducted by the OECD on initial teacher education reviewed teacher policies in seven

countries, that concluded that these countries should invest pre and service educational programs to develop skills in teachers to command over the new approaches and methods that are introduced in the new curriculum hence, they will be able to adapt to the new curriculum (OECD, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is a qualitative in nature and phenomenological approach is used to investigate the phenomenon of curriculum reforms initiatives and outcomes. The aim of this study is to investigate the issues related to the reforms in curriculum in Sindh school education sector.

Population of Study

The population of underlying study is all the representatives of education department Government of Sindh. Those possess the key responsibilities including different unit and program heads, Secretaries, directors, District education planners and executives having different authorities, senior teachers, besides this Directorate of Curriculum and Assessment Research (DCAR), Provincial Education Assessment Centre (PEACE), Sindh Teachers Education Development Authority (STADA). The above discussed permanent employees working in education and literacy department government of Sindh are the population of the study.

Sample Size and Technique

To collect primary data of purposive sampling technique was used to detain a wide and in-depth information related to the study. The sample size was concise on fifteen respondents. All respondents of this research possess master degree with master of education, having different experience in their respective field. The

participants of this phenomenological study are all the heads or representatives of different units of education and literacy department government of Sindh.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

In-depth Interviews were semi structured interview schedules procedure of data collection: In depth interviews were incorporated as data collection technique, whereas semi structured interviews used as tool.

Data Analysis

NVivo is the software feasible to apply for qualitative data analysis. NVivo makes easy for researchers to collect, organize, and analyze different types of qualitative data. The main themes of qualitative data are key characteristic of qualitative research. The process of NVivo is to labels storage flasks as “nodes.” And nodes can present everything that the researcher wants them grant organization and presentation of themes in the data.

FINDINGS OF STUDY

Curriculum Framework of School Education

The curriculum of any education system provides a base for the entire learning process, equally shapes a framework for the assessment that presents the outcomes of learning of that educational system. The curriculum provides the basis for the assessment that how much student focused on competency based development. How much student developed critical thinking and problem solving abilities after a spent of a year in the class room? In the government education system, mainly the curriculum is understood and represented through textbooks, on the base the system assesses the learning outcomes. Addition

of this, the curriculum has the implications for the assessment process, focus on textbooks rather than curriculum. The curriculum assessment process suggests way of teaching and learning and resultantly the improvement of students learning outcomes. Our education system is poor to assess our educational activities in schools or curriculum as compare to the other educational systems assess with more advanced, highly valid and reliable assessment systems produce more satisfactory student learning outcomes. In the province Sindh government utilized more efforts and updates the assessment process more systematically to improve learning outcomes according to the Vision 2030. However, after the 18th Amendment the provinces are responsible for all matters related to education policy, curriculum, syllabus and textbook planning and development centers of excellence and standards of all levels including Islamic Education mercenaries. Because of the absence of new legislation and laws Sindh government like other provinces are unable to support the amendment hinder apex institutions from enacting new roles and responsibilities. The provincial government faces various complexities of legislation to own whole the responsibility of the sector reforms. Respectively the Sindh government adopted the National Curriculum 2006. But it has not been implemented due to the lack of the resources, issues with institutional capacity. The development of new textbooks and learning materials is contingent not only on an implemented curriculum but an articulated comprehensive provincial policy and relevant guidelines. This would be followed by a need to develop subject specialists of 21 subjects, textbook writers equally, book reviewers.

Curriculum, Development, Review and Improvement

The Directorate of Curriculum, Assessment and Research (DCAR) in the province is responsible

to develop the curriculum of school and college education in the province. After 18th constitutional development the directorate tried to develop updated curriculum of all the classes. In this regard DACAR strictly follows the Terms of References (ToRs) of national curriculum 2006 and ToRs provided by the government to develop curriculum student friendly, democratic, free from biasness, equally life skilled based.

Relevance of Contents to Prevailing Social Conditions in the Province

After 18th constitutional amendment Sindh was the first province immediately started work on the curriculum. Initially developed the curriculum for the teachers and then for students in shape of text books. The curriculum experts of DCAR developed conducive environment based curriculum. Additionally, the curriculum makes students familiar objectives, issues and history of our society and region.

Lack of Capacity and Expertise in Research Based Approaches to Develop Curriculum

DCAR has recruited many experienced researchers and Ph. D. qualified experts of curriculum to meet the requirements. Besides this, the directorate still lagging behind in the field of expertise and standards as compare to the curriculum development process of developed countries. In the directorate there is a poor culture of research and development. In the curriculum development DCAR refers international researches and standards. No doubt the exercise is not good but due to the lack of resources the directorate uses to meet the need.

Teacher's Development to Implement Curriculum Reforms

In the province government has tried much to integrate all the aspects to promote professionalism in the teachers of all levels in sector but it still needed more efforts, expertise and commitment. Since the last decade government introduced various reforms such as recruitment, promotion and teacher rationalization integrated into a comprehensive framework to enhance teaching quality in the teachers to implement the reforms. In the perspective of NEP 2009, the Sindh government presented new policy to promote professionalism in the teaching area with the name of Teacher Education and Development (TED) Policy 2009. The main objectives of this policy was to guide reforms in the main areas like, clarified the objectives of Provincial Institute of Teachers Education (PITE), Initial Teacher Education (ITE), this program was introduced to facilitate the various institutions about pre-service teacher education. In the policy government also emphasized on service professional trainings and education, in this regard, program launched with name of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers or in-service teacher education equally, government establishment of a supervisory body for look after all the matters of teachers' education in the province. Because of these all steps and policy documents still the teachers are poorly aware about the aims and objectives of curriculum reforms in the education sector of the province. In the province teacher is too away from the curriculum development process. There is not any communication and feedback system is present by which the teacher suggests or shares any information with curriculum developing experts. Most of the teachers know that our responsibility is to teach just text books and no responsible more. Without few senior teachers or those who are involved in politics like teachers' unions about the policy or documents of the reforms in the sector.

Recruitment of Subject Specialists

There is a massive shortage of subject specialist in all schools and colleges of the province. Government has tried to meet this shortage but due to the lack of quality education in the province, most of the schools and colleges face the challenge of shortage of subject specialists. Most recently government has introduced major changes in the policy of teacher's recruitment. Very current government different requirements and criteria for the recruitment of arts and science subject teachers.

Evaluation and Assessment Framework, how it meets the objectives of curriculum reforms

There is a multi-level complex assessment process exist in education system that is traditional assess the text books rather than students' performance or curriculum. The current practices of assessment in the public sector of education of the province faces the challenges relates to its conceptualization and commitment of its usage and implementation. In the system there is no comprehensive assessment framework that guides school assessment practices at different levels to the students, resulting in extremely defective student assessment practices. The current assessment exercises mostly enhance memorization practices in the schools, rather than nurturing creativity and skills development. Due to the poor standers of tests it is difficult to draw system-wide inferences on the basis of student performance; hence it is difficult for teachers as well as students to improve the practices. In this way it is difficult for the teachers, parents and decision makers to analyses, report and feedback the results. Mostly the in the system summative assessment is used to take decision about the students' level of achievement at the end of academic year. However, the formative assessment is more effective in the learning process of students. In the majority of the schools

of the province, the major challenge is how to practice formative and class based assessment. To implement effectively these reforms government has established PEACE to assess the quality of education and provide feedback to system improvement through assessment process in the system. However, most recently PEACE has introduced various assessment reforms, the Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) initially conducted by third party, but since few years PEACE conducts these tests. The PEACE assess middle level students; this assessment has the potential to produce better information for decision-makers. Due to the lack of experience, expertise and other resources PEACE still has a long way to go for effective realization of this objective in the future.

Assessment Practice and National Learning Goals

Sindh Government has reviewed its curriculum to make it skilled and knowledge oriented to meet the challenges of 21st century. The stated vision and goals of the sector are well planned in the documents, however, the curriculum and its assessment process is still far from reflecting these goals. After introduction of many reforms in assessment process, still the process continually encourages memorization and the acquisition of knowledge in disconnected areas. Despite of the poor performance of the education in the province the government is still working on standardized and computer based tests like SAT test and annual examinations. These practices of assessment broaden horizons to meet the national learning goals.

Conclusion

The current paper focuses on curriculum reforms that are mainly changes in the learning objectives which involve competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes that should students acquire from

the adapted curriculum. From this we can conclude that the curriculum is highly cultural and political, because it determines the vision of a society by differentiating that what the knowledge and skills are valuable for the society and what should be less valuable. The curriculum reformers decide about the reforms those should reflect broader social and political agreements of society according to the socialist changes and evolvments. The education system of Pakistan is consisting on multi-level in hierarchy of governance, from federal to provincial and local level. It is poorly performing and no doubt the curriculum provides a path to the education system is inadequate to meet global competition. In the province of Sindh, comprehensive curriculum reform since the 18th Constitutional Amendment has been introduced to focus on competitiveness of the student. However, these ambitions are still in policy documents and have not yet been fully translated into practice. Broadly, the curriculum reforms are something change in policy, implementation, objectives and outcomes in the education paradigm with those are embedded in individual and organizational context. In the province of Sindh believes that only change or updating of text books are curriculum reforms. However, the teachers do not know about the curriculum new approaches, objectives and outcomes. Equally the teachers training and assessment institutes are not fully functional to accept these reforms.

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