

An Analytical Study on Issues, Challenges and Reforms in the Pakistan Studies
Curriculum of Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

The study represents an analysis of Pakistan Studies curriculum at the secondary level about issues, challenges and reforms. Pakistan Studies being a compulsory subject promotes national integration, national cohesion and patriotism along-with citizenship concept in education to the students. Pakistan Studies provides detailed information about all the aspects of Pakistan ranging from economy, society, population, resources, history and geography. It is the general impression that the subject has not achieved its desired goals although efforts have been made. Keeping in view the importance of the subject and its present status, the issues, challenges and reforms in Pakistan Studies curriculum were studied through qualitative research paradigm. In-depth interviews were conducted from a purposive sample. The major findings of the study indicated that the curriculum lacks objectivity; dates and presented statistics are no longer reliable, incomplete information about the different aspects of Pakistan's history, improper assessment techniques, gender and religion bias, influence of political system, mismatch of the content and above all no teacher training courses.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan was established on the basis of Islamic ideology in 1947, according to the National Curriculum of Pakistan Studies (Ministry of Education 2007). Its ideology is also well reflected in the constitution of Pakistan. Although the Islamic ideology of Pakistan has been affirmed since the birth of Pakistan, there seems to be a clash among the thinking individuals in Pakistan in being in an Islamic state or a secular state. This clash of ideas gave birth to a

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clash in the value system set for the country in various walks of life too. At different times, in view of changing needs, different values were set to accomplish the national objectives through its national curriculum. This need of value-based society gave rise to the birth of “Pakistan Studies” whose major purpose was to bring about national integration among the disparate groups of the Pakistani society (Edvardsson, 2009).

During the civil war in East Pakistan in 1971, it was observed that there was lack of patriotism among Pakistanis and national integration that could bring the two parts of the nation together (Rehman, 1972). This lack of patriotism and national cohesion ultimately resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the detachment of East Pakistan from West Pakistan. After the Fall of Dhaka, an urgent need was felt to bring back the national unity and patriotism among the residue (West) Pakistanis. It was thought that it can only be made possible if changes were brought about in the national curriculum of Pakistan. So for the first time in 1976, the subject, “Pakistan Studies” was introduced in National curriculum of Pakistan and was made compulsory in 1985. (Shahid, 2007)

As compulsory subject, Pakistan Studies is taught at secondary, intermediate, bachelor’s and master’s levels in Pakistan. It is a multidisciplinary subject and has its correlation with almost all the subjects of social sciences by inculcating the ability to appreciate and understand the economic, political, social problems and the development of social consciousness of one’s social obligations, rights and duties, fostering patriotism, loyalty, respect for the established values and appreciation of cultural and national heritage (Hussain, 2009). Furthermore, it was

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argued that Pakistan Studies provides a sound knowledge to the learners not only about the factors leading to the creation of Pakistan, but also makes learners appreciate various aspects of its ideology, history, culture, geography, politics, economy and strategic position in regional and international affairs, according to the National Curriculum of Pakistan Studies IX-X, 2006 (Meherunnisa, 2007).

According to the constitution of 1973 Pakistan was carved out of India in 1947. The main purpose of its creation as a sovereign state was to protect the political rights of the Muslims in South Asia. Since the creators of Pakistan were Western educated leaders, they envisaged that the new state would sustain the values of individual autonomy, civic equality and religious multiplicity. They did not desire to Islamic society (Aziz, 1993). The main objective of Pakistan Studies is to promote visions of what a good citizen of Pakistan needs to be acquainted with, what knowledge is of most value, what kind of society is advantageous, and what curriculum policies are to be implemented in the nation's schools..

In the National Curriculum, the Government of Pakistan Curriculum Wing of the Federal Ministry of Education has drafted ten objectives of Pakistan Studies for Grades IX and X. For the recognition of these objectives, the textbooks prescribed by the Ministry of Education are published by all the respective provincial textbook boards.

The Pakistan Studies curricula has been borrowed directly from the idea of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah where he wanted all Pakistanis to be Pakistanis irrespective of their regional and religious differences. Pakistan Studies have mainly been introduced to produce

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patriotic Pakistanis who avoid provincial and religious discrimination. Hence, the curriculum designed by curriculum developers also reflects the same vision (Azhar, 2007). Many textbooks of Pakistan Studies published by the public and private sector do claim that Pakistan has been made to protect the rights of Muslims and is the land of Islam and all efforts should be directed at making it an 'Islamic welfare state', so as the state plays the key role in the protection and promotion of the well-being of its citizens.

The task of providing a national identity to the Pakistanis is puzzled by the alternate search of the curricula for a fictional Muslim identity and Islamic acknowledgment. The curriculum is mainly designed to accomplish these goals with the help of some integral variables such as national integration, cohesion and patriotism. The least that the curricula must do in these circumstances to arouse the process of national integration is to encourage the inhabitant of the various regions and provinces of Pakistan to understand each other better and more closely. To what extent do the curriculum happen to accomplish this, is a question of concern.

The teacher of Pakistan Studies should keep continuity in the forming of objectives and admiration of the developments taking place in social, cultural and geo-political environment of the country. Main purpose of teaching Pakistan Studies is to promote the knowledge of the individual about himself, the country and the world around him, importance of nation building, and development of social and moral consciousness that should lead to healthy living in democratic society.

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The charter of national integration is required for the survival of Pakistan. The curriculum of Pakistan Studies should be designed in a way that it can demand every province including every religious and political organization for the national integration of Pakistan. There must be a selfless national unity among the general public, politicians and the security forces in order to cope with the anti-Pakistan conspiracy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to find the issues and flaws in the Pakistan Studies curriculum. The main purpose of the research was to indicate the drawbacks in the curriculum transmission chain. This research will help the stakeholders in the development and improvement of cohesion between the national objectives designed by the Federal Ministry of Education experts in the field and the content written by the text-book authors to achieve these objectives. As a result, the curriculum for Pakistan Studies would be more result-oriented and value-based for the Pakistani society. This study would provide guidance to the curriculum developers and textbook authors about the criteria for the content selected and published and would also help them to formulate the content with respect to the national objectives.

METHODOLOGY

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For this specific research, the researcher has selected the Qualitative research approach. The researcher conducted interviews with the participants\respondents.

For the Qualitative study, a Focus Group Discussion was conducted among the public and private trained and trainee teachers of Pakistan Studies grade IX respectively. Later, in-depth interviews of a subject specialist of Pakistan Studies, a curriculum developer, a curriculum expert, a supervisor of Pakistan Studies Textbook, a public sector teacher and a private sector teacher were conducted.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE:

For the collection of qualitative data, a Focus Group Discussion among the trainee and trained teachers of private and public sector teacher training institutes respectively was conducted. There were all together 13 participants of the FGD. Data was collected in the form of audio recording and video recording. After this, themes were analysed and later interviews were conducted on the selected themes.

A Total six in-depth interviews were conducted where the respondents' experiences were audio recorded. The interviews were taken from a renowned subject specialist of Pakistan Studies, a curriculum developer, and curriculum expert, one of the supervisors of the Pakistan Studies textbook, a public sector teacher and a private sector teacher.

FINDINGS

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The curriculum lacks objectivity. The other major flaw in the content is that ideology is connected with the land of Pakistan, however, ideology has no connection with the land of Pakistan. With respect to the quotations given on Two Nations Theory only the quotations by Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam are given. Besides this the quotations of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Chaudhry Rehmat Ali on ‘Two Nations Theory’ could have been added here to make the meaning more clear and strong.

In the curriculum, the Movement of Pakistan starts from the services of Shah Wali Ullah but for grade IX students, the Movement of Pakistan should be developed in the historical perspective of Pakistan. A lot of important reformers have been completely skipped from the content such as the movements of Shah Wali Ullah, Syed Ahmed Shaheed Barelvi, Haji Shariat Ullah and Titu Mir. The services rendered by the Sufis and Saints; the Islamic movements like Deoband, Nadwa-Tul-Ilam, and Alla Hazrat Manzar-ul-Islam are completely missed out.

There is little information about the detachment of East Pakistan. It should be accepted as a fact and should also contain the real reasons of its detachment to our students.

Dates and statistics are no longer reliable. According to one of the subject specialists of Pakistan Studies, the date of, August 14, 1947 was originally Ramadan 26 and Thursday, however, it has been changed to Ramadan 27 and Friday due to religious reasons.

There is no representation given to any religious minority living in Pakistan. There is no information related to their respective culture, festivals or traditions although minorities

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representation is quite well reflected from the flag of Pakistan where white represents the minorities.

Moreover, there is not even a single name of the women freedom fighter or workers who have worked in the struggle of Pakistan. So many topics are added with very fictitious information about all such as politics, civics, geography, international relations, economics, population etc.

Fourthly, mismatch of content is a general problem in this curriculum. Topics of Islamiyat are frequently added. This should be completely eliminated from Pakistan Studies as the students are already studying compulsory Islamiyat and the non Muslims are studying ethics at the same time. The mismatch of the content should be avoided as much as possible.

Above all, Pakistan Studies content is highly influenced by the personal and political influence of the people.

PERFORMANCE OF SIND TEXTBOOK BOARD

Sind Textbook Board's performance is below standard. Time is wasted in the beginning and in the end when the textbook has to reach the market; work is done in a rush, hence, affecting the overall quality of the textbook. To save money, coordination meetings are not conducted among the writers, supervisors and the coordinators. Further the supervisors during proof reading are only allowed to amend the factual data of the textbook but not the matter of the content. No pilot testing is done of the textbook before sending it out in the market.

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The content of the textbook only touches the first two levels of the Blooms taxonomy.

No textbook of Sind Textbook Board lack the information about authors and co-authors of the textbook. Moreover, to further worsen the situation; no workshops are conducted for subject's experts and teachers after publishing the textbook. Above all, with respect to the national curriculum objectives, the content does not contain any information that can promote or at least assist in the achievement of the set curriculum objectives.

ROLE OF TEACHERS

Teachers are using the traditional way of teaching through lectures in the classroom. Activity based learning is almost negligible. There are no teacher trainings or refresher courses for the teacher conducted by the board.

ROLE OF SCHOOLS

Even the school managements give no priority to this subject and normally it's a practice that the last periods after break are reserved for this subject. Students have no interest in this subject and they tend to clear the exams by memorizing the content from the textbook. All the other compulsory subjects for grades IX and X are for 100 marks, however, Pakistan Studies is for 75 marks only.

RECOMMENDATIONS\ SUGGESTIONS:

After the research findings, a lot recommendations and suggestions are there to help the curriculum developers, textbook publishers and above all for the teachers to make Pakistan

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Studies an interesting subject for the students and to be able to achieve the targets set by the federal ministry.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UPGRADING THE CONTENT:

It is recommended that the role of provinces should be merged in the chapter of Pakistan movement. The role of individual provinces should be taught at the degree or post graduate level, not the secondary and the intermediate levels. More emphasis should be given to nationalism in the content of Pakistan Studies. More emphasis should be given to the period of 1946-1947 especially the three major stages of Pakistan's history: background of 1906, then from 1906-1940, then 1940-1947 and finally the creation of Pakistan in 1947 and the emergent issues which Pakistan faced.

It is also recommended that the curriculum should be made shorter and specific with fewer topics having detailed information. Sample guidelines should be added in the content with respect to the designed curriculum. Personal and political influence to be removed from the curriculum. Representation of the minorities and women to be given on equal lines as of the Muslims and men respectively.

Further, The topics of Islamiyat should be completely removed from the Pakistan Studies . Based on the philosophy of Two Nation Theory; democracy, fundamentals of law and rights, concept of welfare state could be well developed. Problem solving approach should be introduced. With respect to the creation of Pakistan, the pre history of Shah Wali Ullah, or

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Barelvi movements should also be superficially taught. Supervisors should be given the right to change the matter of the content if they feel it's irrelevant and unnecessary.

Moreover, the monotony of traditional teaching should be broken down. Activity based learning to be initiated. The methodology of teaching should be clear. Guidelines for suggested methodology are not available at any place in the book. There should be some guidelines given to teachers as well in the textbook. Every textbook till grade 10 should have teachers guide to assist the teachers.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the content contains a lot of flaws in it. Pakistan Studies being one of the most important and most interesting subjects is dealt with the worst way. The problems are not only in the textbook of Pakistan Studies. In fact, problems are in every aspect ranging from the curriculum development till its final implications.

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