

Pakistan

Curriculum design and development

Estimated population (1995)	136,260,000
Public expenditure on education as percentage of Gross National Product (1995)	2.8
Duration of compulsory education (years)	5
Primary or basic education	
Pupils enrolled (1995)	18,400,000
Teachers (1995)	—
Pupil/teacher ratio	38 :1
Gross enrolment ratio (1995)	
—Total	74
—Male	101
—Female	45
Net enrolment ratio (1995)	
—Total	31
—Male	36
—Female	25
Estimated percentage of repeaters (1995)	—
Estimated percentage of drop-outs (1995)	52
School-age population out of school (thousands) 1995	12,700,000
Secondary education	
Students enrolled (1995)	5,300,000
Gross enrolment ratio (1995)	
—Total	21
—Male	28
—Female	13
Third-level enrolment ratio (1991)¹	3.0
Estimated adult literacy rate (1995)	
—Total	38
—Male	50
—Female	24

Notes :

1. Last year available.

Source: UNESCO statistical yearbook, 1998, Paris

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan—governed under the Islamic, democratic, federal Constitution of 1973—is comprised of four autonomous provinces: Punjab, Sindh, North-West Frontier and Balochistan. Education in Pakistan is essentially a provincial affair. However, education is considered to be a vital source of nation-building. Therefore, in order to ensure national cohesion, integration and preservation of the ideological foundation of the State, certain educational functions are the responsibilities of the Federation—via the Federal Ministry of Education. These responsibilities include: curriculum, syllabus, planning, policy and educational standards. The 1976 Act of Parliament authorized the Ministry of Education (MOE) to appoint competent authorities to perform the following curriculum-related functions:

- In connection with the implementation of the education policy of the Federal Government of Pakistan (GOP), prepare or commission: schemes for studies; curricula, textbook manuscripts and strategic schedules for their introduction in various classes of educational institutions;
- Approve manuscripts of textbooks produced by other agencies, before they are prescribed in various classes of an educational institution;
- Direct any person or agency in writing (within a specified period) to delete, amend or withdraw any portion, or the whole, of a curriculum, textbook or reference material prescribed for any class of an educational institution.

Accordingly, a Central/National Bureau of Curriculum and Textbooks (NBCT, commonly known as the *Curriculum Wing*) was appointed to supervise curriculum and textbooks development/approval and to maintain curriculum standards from the primary through to the higher secondary levels. As a logical sequence to this action, four counterpart provincial curriculum centres (one in each province) were established to ensure provincial collaboration and evolve consensus in all activities falling within the purview of the Federation. This initiative was followed by the establishment of four Provincial Textbook Boards (PTTB)—one in each province. Within their respective jurisdictions, these PTTBs are responsible for preparing, publishing, stocking, distributing and marketing school textbooks

Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education responsible for conduct of examinations at Secondary (IX-X) and Higher Secondary (XI-XII) levels were also

established at each of the divisional headquarters. Subsequently, another institution was established—the Inter-Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC)—with the following objectives:

- To exchange information among the member boards on all aspects of secondary and higher secondary education;
- To achieve a fair measure of uniformity in academic evaluation standards;
- To promote inter-board curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- To serve as a board chief executives' discussion and consultation forum for all matters relating to secondary and higher secondary education development, and making suitable recommendations to the GOP;
- advise on and facilitate the exchange of teachers and students;
- perform such other functions as may be incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.

THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Reform

It may be noted that the process of curriculum reform in Pakistan has been introduced as part of the successive series of national education policies (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Education policy and curriculum reform cycle

National Education Policy	Curriculum reform cycle
1972	1st Cycle, 1973-76
1979	2nd Cycle, 1982-85
1992	3rd Cycle, 1992-95
1998	4th Cycle, 1998-01

The following six-phase strategy has been adopted for implementing curriculum change:

1. Evolution of curriculum objectives (by level);
2. Development of scheme of studies (by level);
3. Development of syllabus of each subjects;
4. Development of textbooks/instructional materials;
5. Review/approval of textual material;
6. Teacher training.

Developing objectives

Curriculum objectives are basically derived from the recommendations of National Education Policy, national level seminars and other forums (e.g. forums of the Inter-Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) and research studies conducted at provincial curriculum centres). The NBCT prepares the draft of objectives; which are widely circulated among the provincial institutions responsible for curriculum development, teacher training and examination. Based on their views/comments, these objectives are finalized. They are subsequently translated into the specific teaching objectives for various subjects. Several factors are considered in finalizing curriculum objectives;

including the requirements that objectives should: (a) be precise; (b) assist in the selection of teaching strategy; (c) produce (or contribute to) a designated behaviour pattern; (d) enable the teachers to measure or evaluate the quality and effectiveness of learning.

The studies scheme

The scheme of studies is based on three key factors: (1) the national education policy; (2) market demand; (3) global issues that relate to new or contemporary education dimensions. Task work in this area is undertaken with active participation of the provincial government, research organizations and experts; as well as feedback from the IBCC.

Development of syllabi

Based on the objectives and scheme of studies, subject specific syllabi are prepared in consultation with: provincial curriculum centres; subject experts; and psychologists and serving teachers. Collectively, they ensure that the syllabi, in all respects, satisfy the following conditions:

1. They are based on the needs of the learner/child;
2. They take into account the existing knowledge and environmental experience of the learner;
3. The developmental level of the learner is considered in the cognitive, effectiveness and psycho-motor domains;
4. The contents should be focused on attaining the objective(s).

Textbook development

Provincial Textbook Boards (PTBB) are responsible for development of text-books according to the approved syllabi. Established lists of textbook writers in various subjects are kept. From these lists, invitations are issued to writers to submit draft materials within the prescribed syllabus parameters. Selections are made on the basis of the quality and relevance of materials submitted to local situations. Finally, the selected materials are transformed into textbooks; the final versions of which are sent to the NBCT for approval.

Review and approval

A National Review Committee, comprising five or six members includes: at least one expert from the Syllabus Formulation Committee; two subject experts; two school-teachers (one teaching the relevant material and one from a teacher-training institute). On receipt of textual materials from PTBB, this committee conducts textbook reviews based on the following parameters: (a) the book truly reflects the curriculum; (b) it meets the objectives stated in the curriculum; (c) the book does not contain any material repugnant to Islamic and Pakistani ideology.

In the case of approval, the textbook is sent back for publishing and distribution. In case of objection, the specific complaints are relayed along with revision recommendations.

Teacher training

Teacher training for curriculum implementation is the exclusive responsibility of the provincial government. However, it is now being stressed that each textbook must have a teacher's guide—also approved by the NBCT. In some cases, assistance in the training of master trainers is provided to provincial governments.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PITFALLS

Several major obstacles affecting the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum development process in Pakistan are summarized below.

Expertise

Some serving teachers are, of course, involved in curriculum development. But notwithstanding their outstanding subject area expertise, their contribution to the curriculum development is, for all practical purposes, *nominal*. The main reason for this is that they lack the requisite expertise. The existing training programmes provide little exposure in this area, and the teachers' academic qualifications do not necessarily contribute to curricular creativity.

Therefore, at best, the teachers are able to provide opinions about the compatibility between specific concepts or content and the intellectual development level of the children in a specific age group or grade. However, this guidance often reflects, in part, a *particular* situation

with which the teachers have been dealing (e.g. children from a rural background) and, in part, their own capability to render a specific concept *comprehensible*.

Textbook quality

Textbooks often do not reflect the curriculum. Of course, it requires considerable experience and skill to: translate the curriculum in a style that covers the objectives; simultaneously take into consideration the children's language proficiency and background knowledge; and concurrently arrange the content in a logical sequence in a stimulating manner. But the all-important self-assessment questions or activities (especially questions focused on higher order skills) are invariably missing.

Implementation and follow-up

The third problem is that there is lack of follow-up of actual curriculum implementation in classroom practice. The curriculum actually implemented is generally *different* from the official curriculum document. The classroom teacher, who primarily focuses on the textbooks and assessment, does not take into account the educational objectives. No evaluation of the implemented curriculum is carried out; hence no feedback is received to revise the curriculum. In short, each of the steps in the curriculum development process, as outlined above, tends to occur in isolation from the others and there is no visible coherent curriculum development activity.

TABLE 2. The curriculum: who makes what choices?

	Curriculum Wing Ministry of Education	Regional/Provincial level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities • Inspectors • Teacher's Choice 	School level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heads • Teachers • Communities
Aims and objectives	National aims, as reflected in the National Educational Policy	Evaluation/study reports of curriculum centres provide change direction	Some aims of effective domains are suggested by teachers
Curriculum plan	National framework: syllabus and weightage	Introduce unique cultural/regional aspects, including mother tongue	Scheme of work., adjustment of time-table, provision for co-curricular activities, exams
Methods and approaches to learning	Teacher-training courses are designed, also in-service teacher training	Teachers' colleges implement training programmes (pre-service)	Practice different methodology
Materials	Provincial textbooks are reviewed/approved by Federal Ministry through National Review Committee	Provincial Textbooks Boards commission writers and select material on merit basis	Representation of teachers. in the National Review Committee
Evaluation and examination	Inter-Board Committee of Chairmen, co-ordinate activities of the Exams Board	Board of Education holds exams	Trained teachers set the papers and evaluate the script