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MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE: A CASE OF UNITED KINGDOM AND PAKISTAN

By

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INTRODUCTION

The history of curriculum change seems as long as that of compulsory schooling, however, emphasis was given on 'prescriptive' and 'centralized' model of curriculum change underlying the 'top-down' approach by which changes are proposed by the outside experts for the schools. House (1979) mentions that a paradigm shift in curriculum change has already taken place which has travelled from 'technological' perspective through 'political' to 'cultural' perspective. But, most of curriculum changes were made based on the assumptions of 'technological' and 'political' perspectives rather than the cultural perspective. Thus, curriculum changes were imposed upon the curriculum users without understanding their perspective and frame of reference or needs. Pennell and Alexander (1990) maintain that change must be deeply rooted in the needs of teachers and taught, otherwise, there will be a chaos and innovation would be considered as a major inhibitor of any educational change. The literature also indicates that across the world, the curriculum is mostly developed by the people who are outside the school and whose focus is on the product rather than process; to develop children's critical thinking abilities and problem solving skills. Hoyles (1969) suggests that the change must be taken with the school in order to institutionalize it fully and to help social system of school to absorb the innovation into its normal functioning. Otherwise innovation would remain unimplemented. This is a major dilemma of centralized curriculum based on 'top-down' model where the teachers have no say in the whole process of curriculum change. As a result, it creates a conflict between the curriculum planners and curriculum users. Therefore, the proposed changes are not always fully implemented due to resistance of curriculum users. This issue has been widely debated and recognized as a highly problematic one which needs attention of the people who are responsible for bringing about change in the curriculum. There is no 'silver bullet' to solve this problem without undertaking any in-depth study, however, negotiations and bargaining may help design a "negotiated curriculum" (see Memon 1996).

Hamilton (1982) advocates of the 'participatory approach' in curriculum change where teacher does not function only as a mere agent or curriculum technician, but as an active yet selective amplifier and transmitter of knowledge. He further goes on to say that teacher is a critical mediator between the children on one hand, and the institutional context and the institutional system on the other. In his mediating role, the teacher is not merely a 'stage manager' in the classroom, but also a facilitator, helper, designer and very often, a principal actor which indicates the importance of teachers in the class room. Teacher arranges all teaching learning activities in his / her own way taking into account the needs, interest, ability, and attitude of students. Since teaching is a complex, sophisticated and moral activity, teacher needs professional support to implement the changes effectively which may guide his/her teaching. Teachers may be trained in a way that they must be well-informed, thoughtful and realistic and responsive to change. The literature also suggests that whenever the lack of teacher participation is observed in the curriculum change process, the curriculum change is seen as a threat to the teachers and others. Parson (1987) suggests that the solution of problems regarding failure of innovative curriculum lies with the "teacher-initiated curriculum change". Hence the curriculum users must be given due importance since the failure or success of innovation depends on the attitude of all clientele.

In this paper, an attempt is made to give a comparative perspective of managing curriculum change in the context of United Kingdom and Pakistan. Furthermore, to highlight the various issues 'top down' approach to curriculum design underlying the assumptions embedded in the 'technical' and 'political' perspectives of curriculum change in these two countries.

CURRICULUM CHANGE PERSPECTIVE IN UNITED KINGDOM

Through the Education Act 1944 in U.K., a schooling system was developed to create the right for all children to greater access to free education. Following the speech of former premier of United Kingdom Mr. James Callaghan in 1976, education was made more industrial oriented with the purpose that education should be appropriate for students of all abilities which might help to raise the standards of teaching and learning. However, within the school education, there were revolutions in the curriculum and in teaching and learning processes. The application of active learning methods to an integrated curriculum within the primary schools made those schools examples of good educational practice. Necessary policies and resources were provided by the Department for Education and Science and the teachers enjoyed their participation in the 'secret garden' of curriculum but the Education Act 1988 restricted the teachers' participation in the 'secret garden' of curriculum. Thus the teacher were left at the mercy of the central government.

In 1985, a white paper entitled 'Better Schools was published which addressed the issues such as standards of education, schools' failure in translating curriculum policies into practice, teacher directed teaching, and inappropriate system of assessment. In order to circumvent the above issues, the Department for Education and Science issued guidelines to secure greater clarity about the objectives and content of curriculum; to reform the examination system and improve assessment so that the curriculum objectives are effectively promoted for achieving student outcomes. In the national curriculum emphasis was given on five areas: breadth, balance, relevance, differentiation and assessment which was produced centrally comprising core and foundation subjects for the children between the ages of 5 to 16 in state schools. The students are required to appear in the tests at the interval age 7, 11, 14 and 16. This intervention appears to be more or less similar with the proposed change envisaged in the Education Act 1902. Thus, the national curriculum gives an impression that it is a reassertion of basic grammar school curriculum which is
now extended to primary and comprehensive schools through a central government. Aldrich (1988) mentions that the imposition of the national curriculum will hinder rather than advance individual and national development of the country.

Chitty (1988) labels the curriculum change approach as a bureaucratic approach curriculum which is being severely criticized by teachers and educationists. The national union of teachers also do not seem happy with the national curriculum; teachers voiced their concerns that these reforms were imposed by the government without consulting teachers. These changes have failed to meet the problems and needs identified by primary teachers and others. Simons (1988) also maintains that the government cannot design and build the new state monopoly without the active collaboration of professional educationists because the task of simplifying, standardizing and monitoring the curriculum is a task that needs sophisticated professional skills. It is suffice to say that the teachers and others have a genuine concern for the bureaucratic model of curriculum and their lack of involvement in curriculum development practice. The teachers and headteachers also shared their concerns with the writer while visiting their primary and secondary schools in England. The views of three teachers are presented below:

"Well, I’ve heard a lot about national curriculum since 1985. National curriculum is a product of experts rather than professionals...the national curriculum needs to be defined in terms of level of attainment...the ceiling record keeping, teaching methodology...I’ve to work more to understand the national curriculum but my salary is not increased..." (Interview with female teacher).

"The national curriculum is broad based wherein a topic has a central importance in our teaching...The objectives are mentioned in the N.C document but my interpretation may be different being a professional...each person has own frame of reference and cannot be expected that each teacher should interpret the objectives in a similar way...You know, I’ve my own ideology and construct system...centralization in curriculum is a new experience but I don’t like it...I can’t teach curriculum as it is, the present curriculum is overloaded and overlapped..." (Interview with male teacher).

"Being a head teacher I’ve to follow the policy as given by the govt...but I’m not happy with the dramatic changes in curriculum, ambiguity is there, we have several meetings with the LEA and others to seek clarification about various issues of curriculum..." (Interview with head teacher).

During the visit of some schools, it was found that the teachers’ class room practice was also affected by the lack of their professional autonomy. However, it was found that:

(a) each school had a curriculum coordinator/ shadow coordinator for the proper implementation and coordination of curriculum activities; (b) teachers had accessibility to national curriculum document; (c) teachers had moved from their old pedagogical traditions to the new ones; (d) there appeared a mismatch between the intended and actual curriculum; (e) content of subjects was determined by the curriculum coordinator with the senior staff member; (f) teachers had to do a detailed daily planning; and (g) teachers assess students in the light of the national curriculum targets after completion of each topic of subjects.

It was further noted that the teachers were also aware of the issues of validity and reliability of testing. Within the framework of national curriculum, teachers had been exercising their limited professional autonomy in their schools. However, they thought they needed more autonomy and incentives. Nias and others (1992) have also identified more or less the same issues of the implementation of national curriculum. The above issues also do not appear to be new and most of them are already identified in various studies on centrally developed curriculum. Kelly (1990) has rightly argued that in the development of a curriculum package at some central point and its implementation in school at some distance from that point, genuine change cannot be made effectively. It is evident that the literature on curriculum change does not recommend the ‘top down’ model of curriculum change. It is said that the centrally developed curriculum leads to a wide gap between the intended and actual curriculum.

Simons (1988) points out that change is a professional and gradual activity and if there is no teacher development then there is no curriculum change. The national union of teachers mentions that if the government is sincere to bring about change in education system then the teachers, parents and pupils have to be consulted and their views and demands have to be taken into account. Otherwise, there is no use of bringing about such change in schooling system. This also suggests that the curriculum specialists should consult the teachers while designing curriculum who have a deep insight and understanding of curriculum issues rather than hiring technicians who have no interest in better schooling. To sum up this debate on the national curriculum I must quote Aldrich (1988) that the whole process of national curriculum development was a hasty and ill-conceived departure toward centralization. The national curriculum may not attract the teachers and others. The government may re-think to allow the teachers to participate in the curriculum development effectively.

CURRICULUM CHANGE PERSPECTIVE IN PAKISTAN

Since the creation of Pakistan, the various educational reforms were made intermittently through 'top down' approach. As a result, these reforms could not help improve the quality of education. Several reasons are associated with non-achievement of reforms goals. The successful implementation of curriculum change depends on the teachers’ professional development and negotiated curriculum (See Memon 1989). This will help teachers to own curriculum. I agree with Simons (1988) that the teacher cannot sustain new practice without professional support at the institutional and local advisory level. Failing which the teachers are made scapegoat without realizing the internal and external factors which hinder the implementation of changes. Keeping in my own experience and understanding, the following curricular issues have hindered the implementation of curriculum changes in Pakistan:

(i) The teachers have no say in the curriculum planning and development.

(ii) The curriculum changes are centrally imposed on the teachers.

Kelly (1990) argues that if the teachers are largely passive recipients to change then it would not work. Looking at the nature of the curricular issues of both countries, it appears that the teachers in both countries are facing more or less the same problems in their class rooms since teachers have little or no say in curriculum provision. Hence, the centralized curriculum leaves no room for teachers and other users to decide the curriculum changes. The bureaucrats should not be involved in curriculum change process, however, they can only provide resources and necessary guidelines for the implementation of curriculum changes.

CONCLUSION

Curriculum should not be considered as a simple activity to be done by every one. It has certain philosophical, sociological, psychological and cultural bases that have to be understood before designing any curriculum. The perspective of curriculum users is also very important. In the context of UK, Richards (1983) maintains that most propos-
els for curriculum change made in 1960s and early 1970s were based on assumptions of teaching and learning which were not shared by the majority of teachers. The Hadow Report in 1931 set the direction of curriculum that is to be taught in terms of activity and experience rather than factual knowledge to be acquired and stored. In 1967, Plowden Report came out which was considered to be a major breakthrough in the primary education in U.K. It envisaged that school was not merely a teaching shop, it must teach values, life skills and attitudes of society. This led a paradigm shift towards progressive theory of education underpinning the philosophy of John Dewey, Jerome Bruner and others. However, these changes were implemented through various strategies. For example Bennis, Benne and Chin (1969) referred them to as empirical rational, normative re-educative and power coercive strategies which have their strengths and weaknesses, nevertheless, the power coercive strategy seemed quite popular in the implementation of curriculum change. Since it was not liked by the curriculum users it failed to contribute in making curriculum innovation successful. In order to overcome the problems of innovation, Havelock (1971) proposed alternative three models research development and dissemination (RDD), social interaction (SI), and problem solving (PS). Mclel and Becher (1976) termed them as "instrumental", "interactive" and "individualistic" styles of curriculum change.

These change models are still in practice but they require more trained manpower, time and financial resources. In the absence of trained human power a short cut method (i.e. power coercive) is mostly applied in the management of curriculum change across the world, hence the change mostly stays at the doors of schools. Mclel and Becher (1976) suggest that prior to introducing any change one should begin by trying to seek institutional ways to spread the evolutionary ideas more efficiently and collect evidence of its merits or demerits in practice to facilitate the implementation of curriculum change effectively. Hargreaves (1978) points out that while introducing any new idea in schools we should have enough information about the world of teachers, students and schools. Otherwise, innovation that represents a significant departure from common practice will cause resentment among teachers and others. Therefore, Maule and Becher (1978) argue for the adoption of the balanced view of curriculum change that can help to sustain change by allowing teachers to participate in curriculum change process regularly. This will also help to avoid the 'adhocism' in the curriculum change. The curriculum change process in Pakistan is also based on 'top down' approach that does not leave enough room for teachers participation.

Looking at the process of curriculum change in U.K. and Pakistan in historical perspective, it contains many drawbacks. For example, Lawton (1973) states that curriculum planning is not the strongest part of the English education system either centrally or locally in individual schools. In the context of Pakistan many curriculum changes were made on ad hoc basis which could not be institutionalized at the classroom level (see Memen 1996). Teachers are deprived of their professional autonomy since emphasis is shifted from teachers' participation to centralized curriculum. Given the situation, teachers have difficulty in delivering curriculum. This will affect their quality of teaching and learning process. There is a general impression that the centrally imposed national curriculum would help to improve the standards of education and do away with the bad ones (Lawton and Chitty 1968) but in reality it does not help. Even it creates more professional, pedagogical and managerial problems for teachers and headteachers. The literature on innovation also indicates that change proposed from outside the school shows high degree of unawareness about the innovation. This always happens when the curriculum changes are imposed through a power coercive strategy based on "prescribed" curriculum change model. Therefore, there is a need to develop a viable and coherent model of curriculum change that can help bridge the gap between the curriculum theory and practice. The proposed curriculum change model may be embedded in the practice of negotiated curriculum.

**REFERENCES**


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