

## IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM REFORMS IN PAKISTAN (2008-2018): AN ASSESSMENT OF PML-N'S PROMISES IN MANIFESTOES

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the execution of curriculum reforms in Pakistan between 2008 and 2018 emphasizing on commitments outlined in the manifestoes of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. It elucidates the degree to which these commitments were realized and the influence exerted by PML-N's Governments on the education. The article presents the prospective curriculum reforms in Punjab during two consecutive governments of PML-N (2008-18) and at Federal level in Pakistan (2013-18). This study employs a mixed methodology including qualitative, quantitative and analytical methods. It undertakes a comprehensive examination of the manifestoes of PML-N, policy documents, and official. The study elucidated the achievements in the process of implementing reforms, including uniform educational materials and initiatives fostering competencies of educators and pupils. In spite of hindrances such as financial limitations, insufficient teacher training, and opposition from diverse stakeholders, the Government performed well in Punjab where party was also in power at provincial level.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), Manifestoes, Curriculum Reforms, Punjab, Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

Curriculum reforms and proper implementation is a crucial factor for better educational system of a nation. The examining timeframe of curriculum development spans from 2008 to 2018 when Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was in power. The reason behind the research was party made substantial commitments in their manifestoes to reform curriculum. The study have objective to evaluate the implementations of commitments in politically approached educational environment of Pakistan.

Education plays vital role advancing and growing the nation. The political parties incorporate pledges for curriculum development in manifestoes and PML-N also did so in party manifestoes before the general elections of 2008 and 2013 in Pakistan. The curriculum modifications were a regular stance of all governments in Pakistan since the inception of country. These changes are necessary in order to effectively respond to the changing demands of education and to guarantee the better learning outcomes.

#### **Historical Background**

Curriculum Developments is an ongoing process in Pakistan since 2001, after to a prolonged period considered by neglect and stagnation. After 1947 reforms had been done by several governments and many time curriculums were updated as per requirement of the era. However, a deep reflection of political and religious interference had been viewed until 21<sup>st</sup> century. From 2001 to 2003, revision of curriculum was carried out in measured phases in order to mitigate the influence of the powerful religious lobby in the country. In response to criticisms raised by Hoodbhoy & Nayyar (1985), Saigol (1995), Nayyar & Salim (2003), and Aly (2008), a comprehensive reforms plan was implemented for the curriculum improvement of all grades, including I-XII and ECE's, during the academic year 2005-2006. The curriculum had been accused of being exclusive, driven by ideology, exhibiting bigotry, perpetuating negative stereotypes through outdated content, and displaying resistance to change that resulted in its perceived irrelevance and low levels of learning achievement.

In 2005, MoE implemented a series of extensive curriculum reforms at national level as part of three major parallel initiatives. It included the reform process of the national education policy, the implementation of national curriculum reforms, and conduction of education census at national

level that was first-ever census to evaluate the service delivery in educational division. All three entities were important in in shaping the educational landscape of Pakistan, but it remained inquisitively detached. Despite the media explosion in Pakistan, during the same time period, this question remained unanswered, and there had been no vigorous debate on this topic to date. The draft of NEP had not been approved until April 2009 and then government adopted it unexpectedly without substantial public debate, as it was treated as a distinct and concentrated undertaking of the Ministry (Jamil, 2009).

The Curriculum for the academic year 2006/2007 had limited distribution, and its execution was planned for the year 2010-2011 throughout educational institutions. The comprehensive curriculum reforms were designed in English language. Its distribution remained limited to educational institutions of public sector, including departments focused on education, literacy, and training, as well as organizations in civil society that aimed to disseminate the resource and provide support for its application. Little efforts were made to insuring its accessibility to educators and the general public. Because English was the vernacular of the National Curriculum, its use remained extremely restricted (Jamil, 2009).

The Pakistani Constitution included concurrent provisions for curriculum development, syllabus identification, its planning and devising policies for that, centers of excellence and educational standards. The Acts approved in 1976, known as the “Federal Supervision of Curricula” and “Textbooks and Maintenance of Standards of Education Act,” granted authority to MoE to oversee curriculum, textbook/s, educational resources and ensuring the maintenance of educational standards. In 2000, the MoE revised subjects of Basic Sciences, and in 2002, it revised subjects in the Social Sciences.

Under NEPR, NEC and a comprehensive evaluation of school curriculum was launched by the government in August 2004 and 2005. In the year 2005, the human resource capacity of the Curriculum Wing was expanded that resulted in the addition of two teams consisting of three experts each. These teams named as the “National Curriculum Council” with the purpose of reviewing, updating, and enhancing the curriculum for Basic and Social Science subjects at national level. The scope of their work encompassed ECE to HSS level. This Wing undertook a comprehensive examination, employing a comparative analysis approach, of curriculum reforms implemented in different countries. The study conducted an examination of 25 fundamental subjects for further investigating the remaining subjects outlined in the study plan until the year 2009 (Education, 2009).

The primary characteristics of the National Curriculum were:

- Established criteria and proficiencies for learning objectives in accordance with the SLOs
- Innovative methodologies for ECE to HSSC levels
- Life skills would be included to various academic subjects
- The presence of vertical and horizontal connectors would be guaranteed
- A strong emphasis would be placed on fostering creative writing skills and critical thinking abilities among learners, rather than relying on memorization learning methods
- Highlights the significance of comprehensive rules outlined in the curriculum for textbook authors and educators to proficiently execute the curriculum. (Jamil, 2009)

In 2007, the government officially declared the implementation of a new curriculum, scheduled to commence in August of the same year, coinciding with the start of the upcoming academic year 2008-2009. Nevertheless, the failure to materialize might be ascribed to the MoE’s underestimation of the complex nature of the processes involved in the advancing and producing textbooks (Times, 2007).

#### **Reforms by PML-N’s Governments**

In 2008, Punjab Government presented an assessment report of students’ learning in which they checked the curriculum too. The report presented the results of an assessment of eighth-grade students’ academic achievement in Punjab in 2008. Science and Social Studies achievement tests were devised using assessment frameworks that were associated with the goals of the nationwide curriculum development plan.



For the evaluation of eighth-grade pupils, two distinct types of instruments were used measuring student’s achievement in learning and obtaining evidence on those aspects that were affecting the eminence of pupil’s education. These were:

- Tests for academic achievement in Science and Social Studies
- Learner, Instructor, and Principal related surveys

On the premise of the National Curriculum, 2001 for Science and 2002 for Social Studies, achievement tests were developed. The following process was adopted:

- Capabilities were framed for two disciplines, taking into consideration the topic areas and objectives of curriculum, focusing on the three levels of the cognitive domain of Bloom’s Taxonomy, namely Knowledge, Understanding, and Application
- A comprehensive table of conditions was produced outlining the vital components of the exams, encompassing the content, learning results, quantity of items, and the exact item formats
- Both MCQs and Fill in the Blank formats were employed for the examination. Nevertheless, a decision was made focusing the assessments primarily on MCQs and constructed-response. This option was made with the intention to ensure uniformity in the administration and scoring of the tests

The purpose of these questionnaires was to determine the relationship between several personal, families, schools, teachings, and civic variables and pupil success. For instance, this dataset’s fundamental dimensions comprised parent’s education and profession, family and civic assistance, children’ attitude toward school and educators, instructors’ prerequisite and educating practices as well as multi grade instruction, among others (Punjab, 2008).

The questionnaire was filled by the population throughout Pakistan. Punjab has a considerably higher scaled mean score in Science than other federating units. In a same vein, the average Social Studies score in Punjab was much greater than the national average. In contrast, Punjab’s average score in Science (496) and Social Studies (537) was higher than the national averages in Science (477) and Social Studies (516).

Scaled Mean (500), (Score range 0-1000)

Comparison of Punjab With Rest of the Nation	Science	Level of Significance at .05 Alpha	S.Studies	Level of Significance at .05 Alpha
Punjab	496	Sig.	537	Sig.
Rest of the Nation	453		489	
National	477		516	

Source: Provincial Report of PEAS, 2008

Punjab has a considerably higher scaled mean score in Science than other federating units. Likewise, the average score of Social Studies in Punjab was much greater than the national average. In contrast, Punjab has a higher average in Science (519) and Social Studies (564) than the national average (512) and (561), respectively.

Comparison of Punjab With Rest of the Nation	Science	Level of Significance at .05 Alpha	S.Studies	Level of Significance at .05 Alpha
Punjab	519	Sig.	564	Sig.
Rest of the Nation	480		549	
National	512		561	

Source: Provincial Report of PEAS, 2008



The test utilized in two-dimensional framework was designed aligning with the national curriculum and the Science Learning Achievement level was measured. The abilities were encompassed with the "Knowing and Doing Science" framework was identified as a key component with abilities of Theoretical Indulgent, Systematic Examination, and Applied Reasoning. The second component encompassed the "Content of Science," including the disciplines of Life, Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences (Punjab, 2008).

The Education Policy 2009 indicated curriculum as the map that outlines a student's learning course and determined the method of education. A set of courses should be centered on the instructor, but it appeared that textbook development was the only activity resulting from the curriculum and instructors did not use it because of assigned textbook. Even tests were predicated on this text, not the curriculum. The most significant absence in fundamental primary education was a diffused emphasis on the native situation. Nonetheless, efforts had been made to address the insufficiencies in developing curriculum and knowledge conversion. The Education Policy 2009 suggested the following measures:

- Curriculum development must be driven by objectives and outcomes. It would emphasize learning outcomes over content. This ought to closely align with projecting societal concerns and offer increased avenues for cultivating self-directed learning, the essence of analysis, critical discerning, problem solving, as well as teamwork proficiencies.
- The standardizing and institutionalizing the curriculum as well as review process, along with the textbook review, should be implemented within the context of the Supervision of Curricula under Federation, Textbooks, and keeping of Education Standards Act of 1976.
- Professional councils, such as PMDC and PEC should be involved actively in curriculum development consultations.
- The curriculum should place significant emphasis on the basic rights that guaranteed to residents of Pakistan. It will empower both individuals and society as a whole to cultivate culture, which is strong enough to withstand any external intrusion that stances a danger to these rights.
- The addition of education about environment within the curriculum is crucial.
- The MoE would promote the adoption of ICTs in the field of education, as outlined in the NICTSEP.
- The integration of emerging concepts about School Health, HIV/AIDS and other diseases causes infection, Life Skills, Population Development, Human Rights, School protection and DRM, Peace, inter-faith harmony, preventing child abuse, etc., into the curriculum is recommended. Additionally, it was suggested that consciousness and training resources would be established for pupils.
- The integration of Education about School Health and Safety into curriculum and learning materials was recommended, focusing on enhancing the school environment, improving the content of health education, implementing health screening apparatuses and services for students, coordinating with Health, Environment, and Population departments at all government levels to provide nutritional support to underprivileged children.
- The implementation of Entrepreneurial Studies aimed to foster business competencies among students in the realm of general education for nurturing self-directed and industrious individuals who contribute positively to society.
- Ensuring sustained enhancement, a systematic feedback and assessment system would be established to institutionalize a continuous improvement process. It was imperative for the education providers to actively engage in the curriculum development process by offering feedback, while ensuring the involvement of all intermediary actors.
- The Matric-Tech program would be reinstated at the secondary level. (Education, 2009)

The Punjab School roadmap also indicated the upsurge of curriculum with advanced options in education. Punjab had revised its policy regarding the substances and procedure of the curriculum and syllabus. PTB was commended with reevaluating and suggesting contemporary compilation and

publishing techniques for textbooks. The PTB had concluded the workout, and the administration had authorized the proposals for improving books by enlisting brightest academic mindset. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment had changed the dilemma of curriculum development. It can be viewed in the following table:

Policy and Planning about Education, Curriculum Pre and Post 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment

Subject	Pre-18 <sup>th</sup> Amendment				Post 18 <sup>th</sup> Amendment
	GOI Act 1935 (PPCO 1947)	1956 Constitution	1962 Constitution	1973 Constitution	
Right to Education	Recognized but not Justifiable	Recognized but not Justifiable	Recognized but not Justifiable	Recognized but not Justifiable	Article 25-A, makes it a justifiable right
Education Policy and Planning	Provincial Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List	Concurrent Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List
Curriculum	Provincial Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List	Concurrent Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List
Standards in Higher Education	Provincial Legislative List (Except two universities)	Provincial Legislative List	Provincial Legislative List	Concurrent Legislative List	Federal Legislative List Part-II

**Source:** Government of the Punjab, School Education Department 2011: 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment - Challenges & Opportunities for Education Sector

In the majority of instances in the past, provincial administrations were solely responsible for the educational division, with policy and planning, and curricula, with no engrossment from the national government. It also backs the position of federating units that advocate for devolution via 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. PERSP developed Curriculum endorsed a consensus and served as the basis for provincial curriculum development. Curriculum-wise, the devolution of the subject would enhance the education department in provinces and it would be their responsibility to develop, prepare, and update the present set of courses. It was imperative that a central mechanism for curriculum framework coordination be established (Malik, 2011).

On 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012, Punjab Government had passed an act to constitute a curriculum authority for developing more effective curriculum in the province (Punjab P. A., 2012). The Governor of the Punjab returned it for further consideration and the Provincial Assembly accepted the Bill again on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012 (Punjab P. A., Punjab Assembly Debates, July 18, 2012, 2012). The Governor had not approved the Bill so under clause (3) of Article 116 of the Constitution the bill was spontaneously became an act lapsing 10 days on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2012. The act “The Punjab Curriculum Authority Act 2012,” approved establishing the Authority for curriculum, making measures of control of curriculum, books, as well as preserved the Punjabi educational standards, regulating supplemental materials, and dealing with ancillary issues.

The Authority consisted on a Chairperson, Secretary SED, Secretary HED, Secretary SpED or their nominees and Secretary LNFBED, one chairperson of a BISE, the program director of DSD, the chief executive of PEC and one secretary of the board. It also included 3 educators of schools including 1 woman, two males from public and private sector as well as five individuals, two female from private sector academicians, experts, and technocrats pertinent to syllabus and books advancement. The nominated members were termed for three years and they were entitled for reappointment (Punjab G. o., The Punjab Curriculum Authority Act 2012, 2012).

The governing body was responsible for developing educational programs, curriculum, textbook drafts, educational standards, and implementation strategies according to the government's education policy. The responsibility of approving and upholding educational standards, as well as overseeing the development of textbooks and monitoring of implementation of the schemes was





also their obligation. The powers vested to authority included to instruct individuals or organizations for removing, modifying, or retracting certain sections or the entirety of the curricula, textbook/s, or any materials designated for a class within a set timeframe. Similarly, they would be responsible for imposing the restriction on the production, printing and publication, and selling any book/textbook, or additional material. The Authority was posed to disapprove any material that was detrimental for examination or assessment purposes, in violation of Islamic principles, against the integrity or defense or security of Pakistan and its regions, public order, decency, or morality. (Punjab G. o., The Punjab Curriculum Authority Act 2012, 2012).

In Punjab's history, it was first time ever when an authority was established to set curriculum from ECE to Intermediate level. The Shahbaz Government not only established the authority, empowered them and abbreviated the chances of political interferences. The Chairman and Secretary empowered to call meetings and allowed to hold meeting as much as they required. They were entitled to form committees for effectiveness of work and staff, funds, budget appellate powers vested to them. The authority was bound to submit its annual reports to the government of the Punjab.

In the year 2013, Shahbaz Sharif got opportunity to become Chief Minister of the Punjab for second time. As the manifesto of PML-N was in view of curriculum development so the Assembly started working for the composition of new authority to deal with curriculum issues. So, after two years, the Punjab Government had repealed this act with "The Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Ordinance 2014."

The ordinance was passed by the government in order to address the need for establishment of guidelines and procedures for the formation and execution of educational curriculum. It also included the development and endorsement of textbooks, scripts, and additional materials, as well as the producing and publishing the books for grades 1 to 12. Additionally, the ordinance meant to ease the creation of reference and inquiry materials pertaining to study schemes and textbook preparation. Its establishment was intended to facilitate realm of curricula, textbook/s, and other materials as well as any ancillary concerns.

This ordinance incorporated five wings under the said body to work more effectively that included: (Punjab G. o., The Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Ordinance 2014, 2014)

- Curriculum
- Manuscript
- Production
- Administration; and
- Finance

The board of the authority was consisted on the same persons as the previous authority but it added Secretary Finance Department of Punjab Government, Secretary P&D, Chairman of BISE Lahore, Chairman PEC, Chairman PEF and six individuals as previously five individuals were involved. The appointment rules and meetings rules were same; however, the numbers of meetings were lessened to seven from eleven. This time authority was given more powers than the previous one.

In the year 2015, the same ordinance was adopted by provincial Assembly of Punjab on February 23 and Governor approved it on 25<sup>th</sup> February (Punjab G. o., The Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board Act 2015, 2015). The Chief Minister was well aware of the importance of education to a nation's economic and social well-being. The Punjab Government had taken numerous measures to promote education. During his prior tenure as chief minister, Shahbaz Sharif initiated the Punjab Education Reforms Roadmap. In the new education road map, objectives for 2018 have been established.

Shahbaz Sharif asserted that "the promotion of education is of the utmost importance for the country to overcome problems such as terrorism, extremism, poverty, and unemployment." He reiterated that billions of rupees have been and will continue to be allocated to the growth of the educational division. He emphasized the importance of exerting ceaseless effort to achieve educational goals. He ordered the Education Minister and the Schools Education Secretary to visit

the districts and take measures to further accelerate the implementation of the Punjab Schools Reforms Roadmap in the districts (Ramzi, 2015).

The Punjab ECE Policy 2017 indicated that the PCTB would devise a two-year ECE curriculum for public and private schools that was developmentally appropriate. The curriculum would be based on play and reflect the quality standards and early learning competencies established by this policy. Accordingly, learning materials, such as the QAED-designed instructors' guide and parents' activity guide, would be revised and developed. The efficacy of the curriculum and materials would be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis (Punjab G. o., Punjab Early Childhood Education Policy 2017, 2017).

Numerous educational reforms implemented by Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif that had a positive impact on the education system. His work brought innovation, transformation, progressiveness, that unfolded his visionary thinking about educational policies. These curriculum reforms seek to increase access to high-quality education and assist students in skill development.

### CONCLUSION

The time span between 2008 and 2018 witnessed the introduction and upgradation of curriculum reforms in Pakistan as PML-N committed in their manifestoes. This endeavor yielded combination of achievements and obstacles faced by the government. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz made bold pledges to overhaul the curriculum as well as standard of education but the resulting outcomes remained constrained. The party tried to establish a uniform educational structure and implemented rules on textbook boards at the provincial level to guarantee the up-to-date and revised textbooks. A challenge in implementation arose due to the absence of coordination between the federal and provincial administrations during 2008-2013 that caused disparities between provinces.

The matter of teacher training, capacity development and consecutive modification in curriculum were the substantial obstacle in the effective execution of curriculum. Insufficient allocation of funds was a factor impeding the implementation process. The party committed to augment expenditures on education but the allocated budget ultimately failed to meet the set benchmarks. However, PML-N had established the groundwork for subsequent enhancements. The efforts made during their period can be considered as a foundation for reforms, highlighting the significance of ongoing endeavors and a cooperative strategy to enhance the educational standards across the country and particularly in Punjab province.

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