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Core-Curriculum Objectives and Assessment Practices: A Comparative Study of Public and Private Elementary Schools of District, Dera Ismail Khan

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Abstract: *With a focus on how advancements in cognitive science have changed our understanding of assessment, this research examines the connections between curriculum, teaching, and assessment. Since instructors have witnessed pupils struggle to apply classroom abilities outside of the classroom, traditional paper-and-pencil examinations are increasingly viewed as being out of step with active learning. In order to address classroom issues at the primary level, the research sought to create an outcome-based core curriculum, beginning with a clear vision and learning outcomes. Additionally, it concentrated on identifying the assistance that students with disabilities need to participate in general education and making the core curriculum accessible to them. Head teachers' and elementary school teachers' opinions suggested that the core curriculum was useful for formative assessment. 50% of head teachers and 42% of instructors in public schools strongly agreed, compared to 53% and 73.3% in private schools. The null hypothesis was accepted as the investigation revealed no discernible difference in the opinions of stakeholders in public and private schools. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of an outcome-based curriculum and the necessity of ensuring that children with impairments are included. Similar stakeholder attitudes across public and private elementary schools are revealed, and the relevance of the core curriculum in formative evaluation is highlighted.*

Keywords: Homework, Study Habits, Primary Education, Academic Achievement, Time Management, Note-Making, Guidance, Consultation

Introduction

The basic curriculum is the foundation of the educational institutions with the aim of equipping the students with the essential information, skills and competencies that they need to achieve personal and professional success. Assessment procedures on the other hand are necessary in the evaluation of program effectiveness and to ensure that the learning objectives are achieved. This literature review analyzes the relationship between evaluation processes and the main curricular goals using modern studies to emphasize the current trends, challenges, and breakthroughs in the field.

Core Curriculum Objectives

All students are supposed to be taught a standard set of information and skills, regardless of their individual interests and career goals, as stated in the core curriculum requirements. These goals normally focus on critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and cultural literacy. A good core curriculum fosters equity because it provides every learner, irrespective of his or her socioeconomic status, with a high quality education, asserts Darling-Hammond et al. (2020).

According to recent research, it's critical to match 21st-century abilities like digital literacy, teamwork, and flexibility with core curriculum objectives (Voogt & Roblin, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2022). To prepare students for the needs of a technologically advanced society, for example, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) integration into core curriculum has gained popularity (Bybee, 2018).

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Assessment Practices in Core Curriculum

Assessment procedures are essential in order to determine the extent to which the main curricular goals are being achieved. Although they are used widely, conventional methods of assessment such as summative examinations and standardized tests are increasingly being criticized due to their low ability to assess the development and deeper learning of students (Shepard et al., 2018). As a result, educators and legislators are looking at different assessment techniques that better fit the objectives of the core curriculum.

Formative Assessment: Formative assessments have become more popular as a means of promoting learning in real time since they give teachers and students continuous feedback (Black & Wiliam, 2018). These tests especially develop students critical thinking and problem-solving skills which are central to most of the basic curricular aims.

Performance-Based Assessment: Examples of performance-based exams that enable the students to demonstrate their understanding in real-life contexts include projects, portfolios, and presentations. According to Darling-Hammond et al., (2020) these methods are better than the usual tests to measure complicated skills and competences.

Competency-Based Assessment: Instead of focusing on classroom time, competency-based assessments focus on the acquisition of particular skills or knowledge domains. This strategy can be easily integrated into the overall objectives of the curriculum since it ensures that all students achieve the required competencies before proceeding to the next stage (Sturgis, 2021).

Technology-Enhanced Assessment: Assessment with the use of digital tools and platforms is increasingly becoming a common occurrence. As an example, adaptive learning technologies simplify the alignment of tests with the primary objectives of the curriculum by monitoring the progress of the students in real-time and providing them with personalized feedback (Means et al., 2021).

Challenges in Aligning Objectives and Assessments

Evaluation processes have improved, and they continue to face many challenges. The conflict between standardized testing and the more general objectives of the core curriculum is one of the main problems. Standardized tests can undermine the objectives of a balanced education, and often they focus more on memorization than creativity and critical thinking (Au, 2020).

Another challenge is the need to have equality in assessment processes. It may be difficult for students from underprivileged circumstances to show their full potential, especially when it comes to performance-based tests that call on technology or resource access (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). These discrepancies should be overcome in order to ensure fair and inclusive evaluation practices.

Innovations and Future Directions

Answers to these issues are promised in the latest innovations in assessment process. As an example, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) in assessments can reduce bias and provide more comprehensive data about students learning (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Moreover, assessments of such skills as empathy, resilience, and teamwork have been developed due to the introduction of social-emotional learning (SEL) into the basic curriculum (Durlak et al., 2021).

The use of interdisciplinary evaluations that capture the interconnectedness of the main curricular objectives is another new trend. The assessment that is based on the elements of science, technology, and arts, such as one, can provide a more holistic view on the learning of students (Gardner, 2020).

In order to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills they require to survive in the twenty-first century, it is vital that evaluation processes and main school curriculum goals should be consistent. Despite the limitations of conventional methods of assessment, the new trends of formative assessment, performance-based assessment, and technology-enhanced assessment offer new opportunities to

measure student progress in a more consistent manner that meets the goals of the core curriculum. To get the full potential of these strategies, the problems of equality and standardization should be addressed.

Research Design

The present study was quantitative. A questionnaire was used to gather the data.

Population of the Research Study

The respondents to this investigation were public and private elementary school teachers and head teachers in DI Khan District.

Table 1

Stakeholders	Headteacher	Teacher	N
Government Elementary Schools	20	1151	1171
Private Elementary Schools	15	350	365
Total	35	1501	1536

Source: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Statistics (2020)

Sampling Techniques of Research Study

For data gathering process form the respondents', simple random sampling technique was used.

Table 2

Sample of the Research Study

Stakeholders	Headteacher	Teacher	N
Government elementary schools	20	58	78
Private elementary schools	15	35	50
Total	35	93	128

Sample Size

Overall, John Curry's rule of thumb statistical formula was applied to the study population (N=1536) and the population from which the sample was drawn (N=128). Headteachers of public and private elementary schools contain 35, and teachers of public and private elementary schools are 93; the sample size of the study is n=128 in District Dera Ismail Khan by applying the John Curry Rule of Thumb.

Objectives of The Study

Following were the objectives of the study:

1. To investigate the penetration of teachers about the objectives, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.
2. To examine the understanding of head teachers about the objectives, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.
3. To equate the perceptions of teachers and head teachers about the objective, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of our study were:

H01: The understanding of teachers is negative about the objectives, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.

H02: The penetration of head teachers is negative about the objective, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.

H03: There is no notable dissimilarity in the views of teachers and head teachers about the objective, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.

Analysis of Data

Table 3

Core-curriculum is based on democratic norms

Stakeholders	Sector	OBJECTIVES										N
		S. A		A		UD		DA		SDA		Total respondents
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Head	Public	08	40%	06	30%	03	15%	02	10%	01	5%	20
Teachers	Private	06	40%	05	33.33%	02	13%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	15
Teachers	Public	31	62%	14	28%	02	4%	02	4%	01	02%	50
	Private	09	60%	03	20%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	15

Table 3 shows that the Core-curriculum is rooted on democratic norms in the perspectives of both teachers and head teachers. The average percentages of those who head scored strongly agreed as (40% and 40%) and (62% and 60%) and agreed are (30%, 33%, 28% and 20%) respectively. The average percentage of both UD stakeholder is (15%, 13%, 4%, 7%). The disagreed percentage of both head teachers and teachers of public and private schools are (10%, 07%, 04%, 06%) and strongly disagreed is (05%, 07%, 02%, 07%) respectively.

Therefore, this implies that there is no difference within the perception between the parties representing both sectors, thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4

Comparison Core-Curriculum based on Democratic Norms

Stakeholders	Sector	Core-curriculum is based on democratic norms									
		N	Mean	S.D	A	Sector			Stakeholders		
						t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P-value	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P-value
Head Teachers	Public	20	35.15	2.4113	0.05	1.64	±1.97	0.7076	1.95	±1.97	0.73
	Private	15	39.67	2.1402							
Teachers	Public	50	36.35	1.7439	0.05	1.75	±1.97	0.755			
	Private	15	37.45	2.0003							

The above table 4 shows that when the public and private schools were compared on the "Core curriculum is based on democratic norms" indicator, the result shows that p=0.73 > 0.05 indicating that there is no difference of views of public and private schools on this indicator. Moreover, there is no difference of views of the teachers and heads regarding this indicator. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted.

Table 5

Content of Core-Curriculum are According to the Mental Level of Students

Stakeholders	Sector	CONTENT										N
		Content of core-curriculum are according to the mental level of students										
		S. A		A		UD		DA		SDA		Total respondents
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Head	Public	08	40%	06	30%	03	15%	02	10%	01	5%	20
Teachers	Private	26	52%	13	26%	05	10%	03	06%	03	06%	50
Teachers	Public	08	53.3%	03	20%	02	13.33%	02	13.33%	00	00%	15
	Private	26	52%	13	26%	05	10%	03	06%	03	06%	50

Most stakeholders believe that the core curriculum aligns well with students' cognitive levels, with little disagreement among different sectors. Among head teachers, 70% from the public sector and 79.99% from the private sector expressed agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree) that the curriculum is appropriate for students' mental abilities. Likewise, 78% of public-sector teachers and 73.3% of private-sector teachers held a similar opinion. Disagreement (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) was minimal across all groups, suggesting an overall favorable perception with no significant differences between the public and private sectors.

So, it indicates that the there is no distinction between the perception of both sector stakeholder so, study null hypothesis is approved.

Table 6

Comparison Core-Curriculum Assessment

Stakeholders	Sector	Content of core curriculum are according to the mental level of students									
		N	Mean	S.D	A	Sector			Stakeholders		
						t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P-value	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P-value
Head Teachers	Public	20	33.35	2.4013	0.05	1.64	±1.97	0.6976	1.95	±1.97	0.74
	Private	15	37.87	2.1502							
Teachers	Public	50	31.25	1.7839	0.05	1.73	±1.97	0.785			
	Private	15	30.55	1.0003							

The results show that there is no notable difference in how stakeholders view the alignment of the core curriculum with students' cognitive levels across different sectors. Head teachers from the private sector reported a higher average score (M = 37.87) compared to their public sector counterparts (M = 33.35), but the discrepancy was not statistically meaningful (t cal = 1.64, t tab = ±1.97, P = 0.6976). Among teachers, those from the public sector had a slightly elevated average (M = 31.25) relative to private-sector teachers (M = 30.55), without a statistically significant difference (t cal = 1.73, P = 0.785). Similarly, the overall analysis comparing teachers and head teachers did not indicate any significance (t cal = 1.95, P = 0.74), implying a generally shared perception among the groups.

Moreover, there is no difference of views of the teachers and heads regarding this indicator. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted.

Table 7

Content of Core-Curriculum Develops the Curiosity of Students

Stakeholders	Sector	CONTENT										N
		S. A		A		UD		DA		SDA		Total respondents
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Head Teachers	Public	06	30%	07	35%	03	15%	02	10%	02	10%	**20**
	Private	07	46.66%	06	40%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	00	00%	**15**
Teachers	Public	23	46%	19	38%	06	12%	01	02%	01	02%	**50**
	Private	09	60%	03	20%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	**15**

The findings indicate that most of the stakeholders believe that the core curriculum encourages student curiosity, although the perception of the core curriculum differs across sectors. Sixty five percent of head teachers in the public sector responded that they were in agreement (30% strongly agreed, 35% agreed) and 20% disagreed. By comparison, 86.66% of head teachers in the private sector were in agreement (46.66% strongly agreed, 40% agreed), and only 6.66% disagreed. Similarly, teachers (public-sector teachers) in the same proportion (84% of those surveyed) agreed with it (46% strongly agreed, 38% agreed) and 4% disagreed. The agreement of the private-sector teachers was highest (80% strongly agreed, 20% agreed), and the disagreeing percentage was 13.32. In general, the agreement of the stakeholders, who belonged to the private sector, was higher than that of the stakeholders, who belonged to the public sector, which implies that their attitude towards the role of the curriculum in cultivating curiosity was more positive.

Consequently, the overall figure highlights that the there is no difference between perception of both sector stakeholder so null hypothesis of study is approved.

Table 8

Comparison of Core-Curriculum Practices

Stakeholders	Sector	Content of core curriculum develops the curiosity of students									
		N	Mean	S.D	A	Sector			Stakeholders		
						t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P-value	t_{cal}	t_{tab}	P-value
Head Teachers	Public	20	32.33	2.3013	0.05	1.73	±1.97	0.7176	1.95	±1.97	0.77
	Private	15	34.17	2.2502							
Teachers	Public	50	35.45	1.6839	0.05	1.72	±1.97	0.745			
	Private	15	39.15	1.0002							

Headteacher in the public sector (M = 32.33, SD = 2.3013) had a marginally lower average score compared to those in the private sector (M = 34.17, SD = 2.2502), but this difference was not statistically significant (t cal = 1.73, t tab = ±1.97, P = 0.7176), indicating that their perceptions of the core curriculum's impact on student curiosity were similar. For teachers, public-sector participants had an average score of 35.45 (SD = 1.6839), while those from the private sector reported a higher mean of 39.15 (SD = 1.0002), yet again, this difference was statistically insignificant (t cal = 1.72, P = 0.745). A wider analysis comparing teachers and headteachers from both sectors resulted in a t-value of 1.95, which falls within the non-significant range (t tab = ±1.97, P = 0.77), suggesting that all groups involved hold comparable views on how the core curriculum enhances student curiosity.

Findings

Following was the finding of the study:

1. The elementary teachers and headteachers correspondence show that core-curriculum is built around the averages of democratic conditions, the, perception average of head teachers of public is strongly agreed, 40% and 40% of private as well. The perception of head teachers and teachers at elementary school at public elementary school 62% and private 60%. Head teachers of both sector 04%, 66% as well as the teachers of both sector 10%, 13, and disagreed specialists and strongly disagreed heads and teachers of both sector 05%, 06%, 02%, 06% respectively. (Table 1)
2. The public-school head teachers t-calculated value is considerably lower than the t-head teacher's elementary school of public and private was 1.75. Overall, the t-calculated of head perception elementary school of public and private is less than the t tabulated values were ±1.97 p value 0.706, 0.755 respectively. Stakeholder comparison at public and private elementary school heads and teachers 0.73 p value of given table is greater than 0.05 significance so, the investigation null hypothesis is acceptable. (Table 2)
3. Most stakeholders believe that the core curriculum aligns well with students' cognitive levels, with little disagreement among different sectors. Among head teachers, 70% from the public sector and 79.99% from the private sector expressed agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree) that the curriculum is appropriate for students' mental abilities. Likewise, 78% of public-sector teachers and 73.3% of private-sector teachers held a similar opinion. Disagreement (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) was minimal across all groups, suggesting an overall favorable perception with no significant differences between the public and private sectors. (Table 3)
4. The results indicate that no significant differences exist in the perceptions of the stakeholders of the correspondence of the core curriculum with the cognitive levels of the students in various sectors. The difference between the head teachers in the private sector (M = 37.87) and the public sector (M = 33.35) was not very significant (t cal = 1.64, P = 0.6976). The teachers in the public sector had a slightly higher mean (M = 31.25) compared to those in the private-sector (M = 30.55), although the difference was not significant (t cal = 1.73, P = 0.785). Likewise, there was no significant difference in the comparison between teachers and head teachers (t cal = 1.95, P = 0.74) and so there was a general perception that the groups shared. p-value of 0.74 is larger than 0.05 hence null hypothesis of the study can be accepted. (Table 4)
5. The findings reveal that there is a great deal of agreement among the stakeholders that the core curriculum fosters curiosity among the students where the respondents in the private sector recorded a greater degree of agreement. Head teachers in the public sector were found to agree with this 65%

versus 86.66% in the private sector. The agreement rate of the public teachers was 84 percent, and the private teachers was 80 percent. The level of disagreement among all groups was low, and the outlook of the stakeholders in the private sector was somewhat more positive. (Table 5)

6. The results indicate that there is no notable variation in how different sectors or stakeholder groups perceive the core curriculum's contribution to enhancing student curiosity. Head teachers in the private sector (M = 34.17) and teachers (M = 39.15) reported slightly elevated mean scores compared to those in the public sector (M = 32.33 and M = 35.45, respectively); however, t-tests revealed that these differences are not statistically significant (P > 0.05). Likewise, no significant difference was observed between teachers and head teachers overall (t cal = 1.95, P = 0.77). These findings imply that both sectors tend to have a similar perspective on the curriculum's effect on curiosity. As p-value 0.77 is greater than 0.05, hence research null hypothesis is approved. (Table 6)

Recommendations of The Study

1. This study was conducted at elementary level; it may be conducted at higher level in future as well.
2. This study was conducted in District DI Khan, in future it may be conducted in other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as in Pakistan.

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