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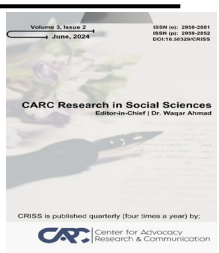

CORE-CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES AND ITS ASSESSMENT PRACTICES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF DISTRICT, DERA ISMAIL KHAN

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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: Core- Curriculum, Objectives, Content, Assessment Practices, Public School And Private School

INTRODUCTION

With the goal of giving students the fundamental information, abilities, and competences required for both personal and professional success, the core curriculum forms the cornerstone of educational institutions. On the other hand, assessment procedures are essential for determining how well the program works and making sure that learning goals are reached. Using contemporary research to highlight trends, issues, and advancements in the discipline, this literature review examines the connection between assessment procedures and key curricular objectives.

Core Curriculum Objectives

Regardless of their unique hobbies or professional aspirations, all students should learn a common set of information and abilities, according to the core curriculum objectives. Critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and cultural literacy are usually highlighted in these goals. A well-designed core curriculum promotes equity by giving all pupils, regardless of their socioeconomic background, access to a top-notch education, claim 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).

Assessment Practices in Core Curriculum

To gauge how well the main curricular objectives are being met, assessment procedures are crucial. Despite their widespread usage, traditional assessment techniques like summative examinations and standardized tests are coming under growing criticism for their poor capacity to measure student development and deeper learning (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.

1. 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). Students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are essential to many fundamental curricular goals, are especially well-developed by these tests.

2. Performance-Based Assessment: Projects, portfolios, and presentations are examples of performance-based exams that let students show their comprehension in real-world settings. These techniques are more appropriate than standard examinations for assessing complex abilities and competences, claim Darling-Hammond et al., (2020).

3. Competency-Based Assessment: Rather than emphasizing classroom time, competency-based assessments concentrate on mastery of certain skills or knowledge areas. Since it guarantees that every student reaches the necessary competencies before moving on, this approach fits in nicely with the main goals of the curriculum (Sturgis, 2021).

4. Technology-Enhanced Assessment: Digital tools and platforms are being used for assessments more and more often. For instance, adaptive learning technologies make it simpler to match tests with the main goals of the curriculum by tracking student progress in real-time and offering personalized feedback (Means et al., 2021).

Challenges in Aligning Objectives and Assessments

Assessment procedures have advanced, but there are still a number of obstacles to overcome. The conflict between standardized testing and the more general objectives of the core curriculum is one of the main problems. The goals of a well-rounded education may be compromised by standardized assessments, which frequently place more emphasis on rote memorization than on creativity and critical thinking (Au, 2020).

Ensuring equality in evaluation procedures is another difficulty. 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). In order to guarantee equitable and inclusive evaluation procedures, these discrepancies must be addressed.

Innovations and Future Directions

Promising answers to these problems can be found in recent advancements in evaluation procedures. For instance, incorporating machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) into assessments can lessen bias and yield more detailed information on students' learning (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Furthermore, tests that gauge abilities like empathy, resilience, and teamwork have been created as a result of the incorporation of social-emotional learning (SEL) into core curriculum (Durlak et al., 2021).

The use of interdisciplinary evaluations that capture the interconnectedness of the main curricular objectives is another new trend. Assessments that incorporate aspects of science, technology, and the arts, for example, can offer a more comprehensive assessment of students' learning (Gardner, 2020).

To guarantee that students get the information and abilities necessary to thrive in the twenty-first century, it is imperative that assessment procedures and core curricular objectives be in line. Although there are drawbacks to traditional assessment techniques, emerging developments in formative, performance-based, and technology-enhanced exams provide fresh chances to gauge student progress in ways that are more consistent with the objectives of the core curriculum. For these strategies to reach their full potential, issues with equality and standardization must be resolved.

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:

H_{01}: The understanding of teachers is negative about the objectives, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.

H_{02}: The penetration of head teachers is negative about the objective, content, and assessment of the core curriculum.

H_{03}: 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 1

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 Teachers	Public	08	40%	06	30%	03	15%	02	10%	01	5%	20
	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 2 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 2

Comparison core-curriculum based on democratic norms

Stakeholders	Sector	Core-curriculum is based on democratic norms									
						Sector			Stakeholders		
		N	Mean	S.D	A	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 # 3 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 3

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		U. D		DA		SDA		Total respondents
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Head Teachers	Public	08	40%	06	30%	03	15%	02	10%	01	5%	20
	Private	5	33.33%	07	46.66%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	01	6.66%	15
Teachers	Public	26	52%	13	26%	05	10%	03	06%	03	06%	50
	Private	08	53.3%	03	20%	02	13.33%	02	13.33%	00	00%	15

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

Table 4
Comparison core-curriculum assessment

Stakeholders	Sector	Content of core curriculum are according to the mental level of students.									
						Sector			Stakeholders		
		N	Mean	S. D	A	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 5

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 results reveal that the majority of stakeholders view the core curriculum as promoting student curiosity, though perceptions vary between sectors. Among head teachers in the public sector, 65% expressed agreement (30% strongly agreed, 35% agreed), while 20% disagreed. In comparison, 86.66% of head teachers in the private sector showed agreement (46.66% strongly agreed, 40% agreed), with only 6.66% expressing disagreement. Likewise, 84% of public-sector teachers supported the statement (46% strongly agreed, 38% agreed), whereas 4% disagreed. Private-sector teachers exhibited the highest level of agreement at 80% (60% strongly agreed, 20% agreed), with 13.32% disagreeing. Overall, stakeholders from the private sector demonstrated a stronger consensus than those from the public sector, indicating a somewhat more favorable view regarding the curriculum's impact on fostering curiosity.

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 6

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 of 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 findings reveal that there are no notable disparities in the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the alignment of the core curriculum with the cognitive levels of students across different sectors. Head teachers from the private sector reported a slightly higher average score (M = 37.87) compared to those in the public sector (M = 33.35), but this variation was insignificant (t cal = 1.64, P = 0.6976). Among teachers, those in the public sector exhibited a marginally higher mean (M = 31.25) than their private-sector colleagues (M = 30.55), though the difference was not statistically significant (t cal = 1.73, P = 0.785). Similarly, comparisons between teachers and head teachers did not reveal any significant differences (t cal = 1.95, P = 0.74), indicating a common perception shared among the groups. As p-value 0.74 is greater than 0.05, therefore null hypothesis of the study is acceptable. (Table 4)
5. The results indicate a significant consensus among stakeholders that the core curriculum encourages student curiosity, with respondents from the private sector displaying a higher level of agreement. In the public sector, 65% of head teachers expressed agreement, in contrast to 86.66% among their private-sector counterparts. Public teachers demonstrated an 84% agreement rate, while private teachers had an 80% agreement. Disagreement levels were low across all groups, with private-sector stakeholders exhibiting a slightly more favorable outlook. (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 KPK as well as in Pakistan.

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