

Hopes and Fears: Teacher Educators' Voices in Curriculum Reform

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Abstract

This article is based upon a qualitative research study conducted at six teacher education institutions of three provinces in Pakistan. The curriculum reform in teacher education was initiated by the centralized body of Higher Education Commission and USAID. The Researcher has adopted an ethnographic approach to conduct a detailed interpretive analysis of the enacted curriculum that was a result of this reform intervention. This article only brings out the hopes and fears shared by the teacher educators and two experts of teacher education who were involved in the planning and implementation of the new curriculum of Associate Degree in Education and B.Ed honors.

Introduction

Actually the curriculum which is written is totally deviation from our old curriculum, text books or the material which is written, being a developing country; I can say it is a drastic change we are trying to bring; especially when the course books are not fully textbooks, it is just a few page chapter guidelines and instruction for the teacher, that is going to be a problem for our teacher educators who are in remote areas or in less developed areas that how to prepare their lecture, they totally depend on the book though we say that they have internet they can use but due to shortage of power in our country when there is not light for 10-20 hours and everyone cannot afford this laptop, internet is not connected many times they cannot even spare time to sit and to browse the internet and to have some material from internet so definitely they have to depend on the text book. (A local Pakistani expert, interviewed in June 2012)

These are the words of a local expert working in a university in the capital city of Pakistan who was a part of the planning team for the new teacher education curriculum reform introduced in Pakistan in 2010. Her words indicate one significant feature of the “interpretive policy analysis,” study of the recent teacher education reform in Pakistan (Yanow, 2000). The highlighted feature is the idealistic approach of the reform in the presence of variations and disparities of conditions in institutions in different regions of Pakistan. At some institutions there could be highly sophisticated infrastructures and facilities available for teacher education, while in the other institutions within the same or different regions there might be completely opposite condition. In Pakistan, there are teacher education institutions that do not even have enough space to accommodate two classes at a time. Looking at all these discrepancies, one thing is clear: in various regions of Pakistan the starting point for institutions might be very different and far ahead or far behind each other. A centralized curriculum for such a diverse population is very idealistic. The “reform ideals” in the words of Kennedy (2005), do not seem to match closely with “institutional realities.”

The other significant observation explored in this study also emerges from the centralized approach adopted in curriculum planning. Hierarchical models prevailing in the administrative structures of Pakistan since independence, when adopted in planning, policy making, and implementation, turn out to be an outside-in or top down approach, no matter what the planners may intend or claim. As per Fullan's (1993) approach, the intended changes cannot be brought about with conformist top down bureaucratic mechanisms. The recent program and curriculum planning under the supervision of The National Curriculum Review Committee, in collaboration with foreign and local experts at the USAID Teacher Education Project (USAID-TEP), was intended to include maximum “actors,” as reports of the project and news on the websites mention. However in this study I found big differences between universities and colleges in the amount of their involvement in curriculum planning. A big gap is that only the teacher educators at the university level were involved at the planning stage, while a large number of teacher educators in the colleges of education around the country were only included at the implementation stage.

How policies are interpreted by teachers influences their practice and those practices can result in the reckonable effects (Coburn, 2001, Hill, 2001, Spillane, 2001). Fullan (1993) states “The individual educator is a critical starting point because the leverage of change can be greater through the efforts of individuals, and each educator has some control” (p.12) and he further mentions “every educator must strive to be an effective change agent” (p.13). He has highlighted the “motives and skills” of the people involved as two important features in “change agency” (p.12). My initial conversations with all the participants were to learn more of how they feel about the change and how they interpret the new TE curriculum reform. During the initial conversations with the teacher educators at six institutions, many of them shared their high hopes with the new TE curriculum reform as well as expressed their anxieties and fears under the current circumstances. They also pointed out some such institutional realities that could help or hinder the implementation of reform.

Until the beginning of 2013, I could not find any comprehensive documented list of salient features of the teacher education reform. So before moving ahead with the analysis here are some salient features of the reformed curriculum as I summarized from the document review and preliminary interviews of local and foreign experts:

- There is no text book. The curriculum booklets and course guides are made available to teacher educators, but not to student teachers. These materials are also available online. These booklets only provide weekly break-up of the course and sample lessons with suggested methods, teaching strategies and activities to be included. Optional ways of teaching the lessons with a list of recommended readings, reference books and websites are given. The idea is that teachers and students may become researchers and curriculum developers for their own learning and collect and share materials through using the internet and library resources. However, internet and library resources are not currently available.
- The new curriculum not only includes Computer Literacy and ICT as two of its core courses, but it also involves strategies through which practical use of technology may become a regular practice of teachers and students. Teachers are supposed to use audio-visual resources in classrooms and students also need to present their work through multimedia. For content development teachers are recommended to use various web resources in the course outline documents. Students are also supposed to use web resources for fulfilling the requirements of their assignments. Libraries are supposed to be equipped with up-to-date books, multimedia resources and web resources, which currently they do not have.
- English is the medium of instruction in the new curriculum reform. Except Islamiyat and Urdu or some regional language courses, all other courses are in English. The suggested books and web materials are also in English. There are two core courses of Functional English and two more courses in the second year for teaching literacy skills and teaching of English. Teachers are supposed to demand that students talk and present in English only. At this time teachers themselves are trying to improve their English language skills.
- The curriculum reform brings a shift in the classroom practices from lecture-based teaching to interactive, collaborative, and student-centered teaching; and passive learning to active and independent learning with the help of in- and out-of-class activities, cooperative learning strategies like pair-and-share and group work. Individual assignments are made an essential element for independent learning. This is an unfamiliar approach to pedagogy.
- The semester system has been introduced in all collaborating universities and colleges. Before this reform almost all teacher education institutions were following the annual examination system. Only the universities in Punjab, where three- to four-year degrees were offered, had already adopted the semester system in teacher education programs.
- New assessment techniques are being introduced with the semester system. Now teachers are supposed to assess students on the bases of their classroom performance, assignments, presentations, practical work and there will be midterm and final exams at the end of each semester. Portfolios and reflection journals are also introduced for the first time.
- Practice teaching has been distributed in four slots over the program of four years at the end of the third, fourth, seventh and eighth semesters. These are supervised practice teaching sessions in which for the first time ever in Pakistan a model of cooperative teachers at the schools is being adopted. These cooperative teachers and heads of the schools where student teachers go for practice teaching also get to attend some briefings and a few days of training.

The Study

This study was conducted as a part of a larger “interpretive analysis” of the recent curriculum reform in Pakistan (Yanow, 2000). A qualitative investigation was done at four colleges of education in three provinces of Pakistan. Interviews of two members from National Curriculum Review committee and nine teacher educators were audio recorded in two and three sittings. Every participant had experience of teaching old programs of teacher education in Pakistan and had been a part of the process of recent teacher education reform in the capacity of expert, college head or teacher educator. The study was completed in two phases therefore the data was also collected at two points with a gap of six months. Here are the major findings and discussion with regards to Hopes and Fears shared by the participant with the new teacher education curriculum reform as described in introduction.

Although I tried to bring up these features of the new TE curriculum reform in conversations, not every participant of the study necessarily talked about each one of the features. In general commenting upon the prospects of the new reform, almost every participant presented a unique perspective, yet there were some common features as well. Appreciating the new classroom culture being developed through the new reform at teacher education institutions, the participants also identified major challenges in the current settings (Appendix A). The two local experts, Professor Anjum (from the private university) and Professor Farida (from the public university) talked about the overall four-year program plan but did not comment upon specific course contents. Both of them seemed to agree upon the point where they found universities in a better position to adopt the new TE curriculum reform, while the colleges being in more difficult position as they do not have enough resources and capacity. Teacher educators and heads of institutions at colleges of education in this conversation were more specific about the content and teaching of specific courses, while teacher educators at universities talked about the course contents, teaching as well as the overall four-year program plan.

Here neither gender nor provincial comparison provided any evidence of similarities in how participants perceived the new teacher education reform. It is also clear that there is not a relationship between liking the substance of the curriculum reform and having a voice in its design. I found individuals at every institution having their own sets of realities that were unique and played a significant for adopting, approving or disapproving the above mentioned elements of the reform. In this chapter I am presenting all the hopes and fears that the participants expressed keeping in view the institutional realities and challenges they are facing under the new TE curriculum reform.

Findings and Discussion

The Two Local Experts in NCRC

About four-year TE program. Professor Anjum who was working at a private university, was of the view that four year undergraduate program is not culturally acceptable for teacher education in Pakistan at large. She said, “Most of the students coming in teacher education are females. At my university we are having a hard time to convince the parents that a four-year program is good for them”. She explained that parents in Pakistan generally want their daughters to get married as early as possible. She informed me that at her university where they adopted a four year scheme a few years ago, they tried through student counseling to explain to them what professional education is, yet the girls after two years tend to leave and get married. So she mentioned that adopting four-year program country wide is a big step and she said, “Who will ensure that teachers will complete four year program. They neither have time nor funds”.

Professor Anjum again and again mentioned that she is not against the reform but she is against the way it is being imposed on institutions without improving their physical conditions and without considering the “realities at grass root level”. This is a clear example of Fullan’s claim that reforms need both top down and bottom-up participation. Her concerns and fears made her believe that this “project” is not going to make a real difference in the institutional culture as well as in the quality of teacher education.

Professor Farida who was teaching in a public university also mentioned some of the concerns, but she was also hopeful about the new reform. She overall liked the idea of a four-year program and had no objection on its design, but she was more concerned about how the institutions and teacher educators would be able to fulfill the requirements of the new reform. She showed her hopes and fears very clearly.

She pointed out that having no clear program goals is a flaw in the plan at the very basic level. She said, “I think there should be some mission statement and we can say that some vision, mission and goals those are missing in the documents and may be at that time it was not visualized that how important these things are”. She liked the new curriculum as it includes everything from old schemes as well as new and modern ways and ideas of teaching. In her view the main difference is delivery.

Talking further about the “uniform curriculum” she mentioned that she was not in favor of uniform curriculum, in her opinion “institutions should be able to choose their own content, universities can choose but the colleges had to adopt the courses designed by the course development teams working under [USAID-TEP]”. She thinks the diversity in curriculum is not only needed because of different conditions among provinces and regions but she also said “From my point of view if we give uniform curriculum then what is accreditation and what is assessment if everyone has to do the same thing. They have to follow the same path then what is (program) assessment, how will we judge this is good this is bad so I think there should be variation”. In her view a diverse or variable curriculum could help the planners and policy makers improve the quality of teacher education.

Readiness of teacher educators. Professor Anjum, the expert working in a private university, had a very negative perception about the new program plan. In her view teacher educators in Pakistan generally are used to work in annual system so they do not know how semester system works. She said, “We introduced it here (at a private university) and teachers still have no concept that 3 hours teaching is must for 3 credit courses. And how much work is required for 3 hours from students, how many pages they should read and how many related articles of extra readings are enough for one week?” She showed serious concerns over the new plan of study as in her view it does not provide clear guidelines for teacher educators to implement the semester system in true spirit. She said “It is very important that they should know clearly that student has to read 30 or 50 pages per week, and 1 or 2 articles of 15 pages or so”. She pointed out that the plan does not elaborate minimum requirement and the teacher educators who have been teaching in an annual system do not know what it is necessary to cover before midterm and after that or how to manage reading materials. She said “We don’t have formal training for that in our country. Semester system is already strange thing for us even in universities. Then how the college teachers will at once adopt it only after a few days training?” She further explained that colleges only have subject specialists who are not qualified enough in her view to teach the new courses.

Having no textbook as an issue. Both experts showed their concerns over the fact that there are no recommended textbooks for in the new curriculum. Professor Anjum showed real apprehension over the fact that the new TE reform is asking not to use textbooks any more she said, “They don’t have anything else than a textbook. What are they offering them as an alternative?-nothing”. In professor Farida’s view, “It is very drastic change. I can say it is a change we are trying to bring that the books are not fully a textbook it is just a few-page chapter guidelines and instruction for the teacher educators; that is going to be a problem for our teachers who are in remote areas or in less developed areas that will not know how to prepare their lecture”. She explained that in smaller cities and rural areas the teacher educators totally depend on the textbooks. She elaborated that even if they have Internet they can use, due to shortage of power in our country when there is not light for 10-20 hours each day, such ideals are not realistic. She also said “everyone cannot afford laptop and internet is not connected, so definitely they have to depend on the textbook”. She mentioned that she has reviewed the course packs and in her view “the material they have developed is not very rich so definitely they’ll go in the market, they’ll buy the books which will give them same old content”. About the recommended books she pointed out that either the books will not be available or even if a copy is provided at each institution copyright for forty to fifty students each semester will be another challenge that can come up later.

Challenging conditions at colleges of education and public schools. Professor Anjum referred lack of physical resources at colleges of education as a big hurdle for such a reform agenda. According to her the new TE reform demands extensive use of infrastructure and resources which are not there at the colleges of education especially in small districts with more rural population. In her view all these things count and instead of improving the institutional conditions the reform is only demanding to change practices. She perceived the reform to be very idealistic in this regard. Another point of concern for Professor Anjum was that the new curriculum is not going to prepare teachers in private universities to teach in the public schools. In her view the new curriculum talks more about ideal conditions while “there are many old style schools which have no boundary walls and toilets”.

In contrast, Professor Farida having a relatively positive perspective was hopeful, said that “quality teachers” can be prepared through this curriculum and there will be a “positive change in schools in future years, but that will only be possible if the institutions have all the required facilities which they don’t have now”. She also mentioned that the conditions in which these teachers will be learning at the colleges and universities are not the same as the conditions in the schools where they are supposed to teach in future. She mentioned in public schools especially in Sindh and KPK they will never find such facilities and supportive environment to apply these teaching methodologies. She said, “in teacher education program they are experimenting in special environment created for them, classroom environment created to deliver that content. I don’t think in other schools in other areas in other institutions the situation will be the same, no”. She mentioned that schools neither have the facilities nor the organizational culture to allow teachers for the kind of teaching being idealized in the current reform. She mentioned that the new curriculum does not talk about it and it can be a big flaw of the plan of study.

Teacher Educators and Heads of Institutions at Colleges of Education

Teacher educators and heads of institutions at colleges of education expressed mixed views about the new curriculum reform and its content. They usually commented more upon the courses they were teaching and less about the overall program plan. Here are some of the main comments given by the teacher educators and heads of four colleges of education:

College of education in Sindh. The college of education I visited in Sindh was only offering the new ADE program and all other programs were already closed. I talked to four teacher educators including the principal and vice principal of the college. All the four of them praised the new and innovative methodologies introduced through this reform. Through an initial conversation with these teachers at a college of education in Sindh it was clear that their overall perception about the curriculum was that it is innovative and creative but very difficult for them as well as for the student teachers. Later they also mentioned how hard it was for them to understand the language, terminology, techniques and topics. They had always been teaching in a traditional set up and the medium of instruction was mainly Sindhi. Now not only teaching strategies were changed but also the materials were all in English.

The new methods of teaching. All the three teacher educators and the college head at the college of education in Sindh praised the new methods of teaching and appreciated the kind of classroom culture that is developing under the new curriculum. The teacher educator teaching computers and Child Development mentioned that she likes the way student teachers participate in the classroom interaction. She said, “previously we never practiced to involve students in activities. Now the group work and pair n share activities that we design for them give them an opportunity to actively engage in the classroom interaction”. The teacher educator teaching math and science was of the view that the new methods of teaching had enhanced student learning. She said, “We never learned and never taught this way before. I am sure with the active learning and collaborative learning activities students learn much better” she also highlighted the fact that she enjoys teaching more than before. She said, “I feel actively engaged too. We only used to deliver lectures and give notes, now we don’t even realize and the time for class is finished but we don’t want to end the class until our activity is over because we are so involved”. Similar views were given by the teacher educator teaching English and communication skills. She said, “I’d say the work that has been done under this reform is very good and courses have been developed with hard work. I really appreciate the andragogy we were introduced to, during the professional development workshops”. She mentioned that “collaborative learning, group work, and active learning are new for colleges of education” as previously they all used to deliver lectures and give away already prepared notes only. These university teacher educators expressed the view that they were participants in collaborative efforts to reform the curriculum.

The language issue. Teacher educators at the college of education in Sindh always talk to each other in their local language, Sindhi (سینھی). Adopting English as a medium of instruction was not only a problem for students but it seemed to be a challenge for teacher educators as well. The vice principal teaching Computer Literacy and Child Development said, “the major change I see is of language. Everything is now in English. Previously we used to prepare notes but that was all in Sindhi. Now all we have is list of topics and suggested books and websites. Everything is in English. We cannot use local books any more”. She mentioned that now they either photocopy from books or download materials from the internet but she also pointed out that is no limit suggested in the course outline and it becomes troublesome for them to decide how much content they should include. She informed me that sometimes she seeks help from students who already know computers and learns from them.

Another teacher educator teaching Science and Math at the college of education in Sindh mentioned that the course packs they received were not easy to understand. She said “when I got these books I found them very difficult. The concepts were the same but everything was in English and methodology was changed. I liked the activities such as group work and pair and share, but the materials were difficult to understand”. She pointed out that the workshops helped her a lot and now she does not use local books any more she is using books of foreign authors. She informed me that for some topics she also uses internet and she has to seek help from her children sometimes.

Mentioning the problem of language, the teacher educator teaching English and communication skills at the college of education in Sindh mentioned that she herself has no problem, rather she really likes the new curriculum. But she mentioned that other teacher educators and students are finding it very difficult. She said, “the new students do not even know how to write their name in English or to speak a sentence without mistake” so for them the new syllabus was very tough. She said she has to begin from very basic level, as the students are not ready in the beginning. She pointed out that for learning other courses properly the students need to learn English well, otherwise they cannot perform well in other subjects too.

Selection of materials. Another important aspect talked about by the teacher educators at the college of education in Sindh was that they did not have clear guideline about how to be selective about materials while using internet and reference books. The topics and broad areas are given in the course packs but then long lists of websites and books make it difficult for them to decide how to select what to include and what not to include in the curriculum. The teacher educator teaching Computer Literacy and Child Development said, “I even asked them during the workshop to tell us how to select materials. For example the topic of Excel is given we don’t know how much detail should we include in it. But they said they will not tell this”. Another teacher teaching Mathematics identified the same issue in a different way by pointing out that they are not the final evaluators so this becomes a tough decision for them to make about how much details they should include. The teacher educator teaching English mentioned that she has sent her feedback many a times about the reference lists given at the end of the units. She said, “the books are not available to us and there are long lists of websites. Each website contains unlimited information. Only a few useful websites should be identified. I have tried myself and most of the links do not open”. She was concerned that how she can refer these websites to the students when she herself finds it difficult to decide the limits of content to be included. She also mentioned that she does not find some of the content age appropriate or suitable for the students considering cultural and religious values of Pakistani society.

Given time versus the curriculum. All of the teacher educators I talked to at college of education in Sindh mentioned that the courses are long and they have less time for teaching. Time constraint is also making it difficult for them. The issues like strikes and sudden shutdowns in the city make it impossible for them to complete the courses in given time. Then they have to cut down the activities and out-of-class activities as well as library periods. The teachers find it necessary to go through the whole course knowing that final exams are going to be a challenge. The college head mentioning this problem said “they have planned the courses for sixteen to eighteen weeks for each semester but we don’t have enough time to cover the course here. The college remains closed for many days due to the unrest in our city”. She mentioned that it is becoming difficult for them day by day as on the one hand the elections were coming closer and on the other hand there is security risks during religious festivals like “Eid-Milad-un-Nabi” (یبنلادالیم دی ع) and “Muharram-al-Haram” (مارحلأهرجم). Such issues enforce them to keep the college closed for many days during the semester. The teacher educators also mentioned that time given for completing the courses is not enough, and materials are too long and extensive.

A teacher educator teaching English and Communication Skills at the college of education in Sindh said, “as per my subject is concerned, the credit hours are not enough for English. Material is too long and we have many issues like electricity shut downs and strikes during the working days”. According to her the program plan is not developed keeping in mind the challenges they face in their region. According to her everyone seems “overburdened” because they are unable to manage the given course materials in the given time. The teacher educator teaching Math and Science also mentioned that she could not complete all the topics in the given number of days for teaching. She said, “The course is really long, we sometimes have strikes and other problems as well. We then request other teachers to borrow time, they also have their own work to finish, so we end up having less activities and use the library and out of class activity slots”.

The computer teacher also mentioned that she often has to sit late hours after the college timings and tries to help students as “the course is long and many students have seen and used computers for the first time like myself, so we need extra time”. They all informed me that issue of courses being long and time being short cannot be handled at the institutional level due to the fact that they cannot make changes in the given courses.

Suitability of curriculum. Two of the teacher educators at college of education in Sindh also mentioned that they don't find some of the content suitable or localized enough in Pakistani cultural context. So they then try to induce as much local examples as possible and delete those materials which might be considered abusive or offensive. The teacher educator teaching English mentioned “I found some words in the text of the course booklets which are not age appropriate or are not recommended to be used in our society” She said she also found such materials and language in the online resources so she is highlighted this problem in her feedback to USAID-TEP team as well. The teacher educator teaching Child Development at the college of education in Sindh mentioned that there are no local materials or books available; they are using foreign-authored books and materials so she generates local examples and scenarios for student activities. She said “a student coming from interior Sindh does not even know about city life, or about life in other regions of Pakistan so how can she understand the child psychology unless she is given local examples”.

Student background. The teacher educators teaching Math, Science and Computer Literacy at the college of education in Sindh were of the opinion that the courses are not in accordance with the student background. The teacher educator teaching Math and Science pointed out that not all the students come with a science background. There is a difference in the curriculum of sciences and humanities at the higher secondary school level in Pakistan. So the students coming from humanities' background cannot understand the basic concepts of Science included in the new teacher education curriculum. She said “The students who have not studied Science at Matric and F.Sc level, for them the course of science is really difficult. It is hard to explain things to them and they cannot learn even till the end of semester”. She mentioned that she has given her written feedback on it as well.

Future prospects. The vice principal who was teaching Computer Literacy and Child Development at the college of education in Sindh also showed her concern about the future of these teachers as she said the schools where they will go and teach will not have the facilities and environment for the innovative and modern teaching. She said the old programs were according to the system of education in Pakistan as it had two separate plans one for primary school teachers and the other for middle school. Now they are teaching same courses to all the elementary school teachers while conditions are very different at the public schools. She said, “I feel like we are preparing Golden Stars but soon there will be dust on them, because the environment at schools is not supportive rather they discourage such innovations because they don't have materials, money and space for all these activities”. She informed me that she was already seeing it happening at the practicum while the students need things and space for applying what they have learned but the schools neither have the space nor the culture of adopting novel ideas and methodologies. She thinks the money that has been spent on developing new program could be better used on providing facilities to the institutions and improving the old programs which were better suited for the Pakistani context, instead of redesigning the whole thing.

College of education in Punjab. The college of education I visited in Punjab was offering the ADE as well as B.Ed Honors along with old B.Ed and M.Ed programs. The college administration and the teacher educators seem to be very enthusiastic but besides that they are also very vocal about the issues of autonomy more than anything else. It was clear that the teacher educators at college were deeply concerned about the lack of communication and coordination among them and the coordinating university. The principal as well as the teacher educators I talked to, liked the new methods of teaching introduced in the teacher education classrooms. They were of the opinion that the new TE reform has changed the classroom environment at the college of education but the current assessment system is not letting them change much. The other two concerns showed by them were again about the level of courses being higher and tougher as per student background and that the public schools are yet not ready for the innovative teaching they are expounding under the new reform. This indicates ignorance of institutional realities and idealistic approach of the reform which did not include localized planning and remained largely centralized (Fullan, 1993; Kennedy, 2005).

New methods of teaching. Both of the teacher educators I talked to at the college of education in Punjab were of the view that the new methods teaching under the new reform were very useful for the student teachers for their own learning as well as for them to adopt in future.

A vice principal teaching courses of classroom management and science at a college of education in Punjab liked the new curriculum's "problem solving" approach. In his view the best thing about the new TE reform is that it has changed the classroom culture in teacher education. He said "there is active engagement of students and teachers, now we not only teach but we are practically applying and performing as well". He liked the idea of having parallel courses of content and methods. He informed me that he has also sent his concerns again and again to USAID-TEP team. The teacher educator teaching Islamiat also mentioned that he has seen a visible change among student response. He said, "as we are now teaching through the new techniques and strategies like group work and pair-and-share, the students' response is also very different". According to him he finds his classroom much more interactive than before. But both of the teacher educators also showed their concerns regarding the content of their courses.

Student background. The first concern mentioned by the vice principal in Punjab was the same as pointed out by science teacher in Sindh. The vice principal in Punjab teaching science mentioned the students coming from humanities background cannot learn the given content easily. He said, "they don't even know very simple terminology, they don't understand the basic concepts, so they will only learn up to the level of solving the exam questions". He informed me that he tries his best to make things easier for his students but then he also said he cannot ignore the fact that these student teachers will be teaching science at elementary level so they should be prepared enough. According to him the admission criteria for science teacher should be changed. A similar concern was shown by the teacher educator teaching Islamiat as well, as he also does not find students ready for the level of the ADE courses. According to him the course designed for ADE is almost the same as they have been teaching at Master level. According to him the student teachers who have not studied Islamiat as elective cannot understand or grasp all of the details as recommended in the ADE course.

The teacher educator teaching Islamiat at the college of education in Punjab was very concerned about the way new curriculum of Islamiat had been designed. He said, "the way we used to develop curriculum in past had a set mechanism and especially level of students was kept in mind. But the new curriculum has the content of Master level". He mentioned that in his feedback to USAID-TEP he marked many topics and areas which were above the level of these students. They do not have a background of studying Islamiat as elective. He said "once I was there in the meeting, among the planners there were maulana (انالوم) the religious scholars) so they showed rigidness and did not listen to me". He enlisted many topics in the curriculum recommended for ADE which were exactly the same as the curriculum of Master level and in his view could not be explained unless the student teachers have a background knowledge. He also mentioned that some of the topics in the new curriculum are very broad for which there can be complete courses. He said "such topics become problematic and we do not have any limit set for how much details should we include". He alleged that he is privileged for having many books and resources at home, while such topics cannot be searched only through internet. He assumed in other colleges this will be a big issue as he knows such books are not available everywhere.

Student assessment. Both the teacher educators I talked to at the college of education in Punjab were of the view that the examination system affects the curriculum and teaching methods. According to them there were two major issues hindering them to perform better under the new reform. One was that they could not make any changes in the courses. They were bound to follow the outline given by the university. The other issue was that the university still has a very traditional approach towards student assessment. The teacher educator teaching Islamiat shared that for almost one year the coordinating university did not take exam and then at once they notified to hold the exam next day. He said, "there was no review mechanism set for revising or changing the curriculum. In the mid of a semester when we had already covered about a half of the course, they changed the content and then at the end of the year when they were holding exams finally they said they will send the question paper according to the HEC old plan of study". The teacher educator teaching science mentioned that having old style of final exams and knowing 80% of evaluation is going to be on the bases of theoretical exams, one cannot expect much change in the teacher education practices. He said "in my view to change a system it is necessary to change the way of assessment. When we are teaching in a practical mode then the exams should also be designed differently". According to him a "paper-pencil exam" is not appropriate for the kind of changes this reform wants to bring.

Conditions of public schools. The last concern of both the teachers at the college of education in Punjab was that the schools in Punjab are not prepared for such teaching methodologies as the new reform recommends in the teacher education courses.

Both of them reported that in public schools there are seventy to hundred students sitting in one room, only controlling that class is a challenge for a novice teacher. The teacher educator teaching science said “the schools are not ready, we tell them you have to prepare such material and you have to do so and so activity, but when they go to school, there is a time table already in place and there are more than eighty students”. According to him student teachers find themselves in a chaos even at the practicum stage. In his view there should have been some policy adopted for these schools along with this reform in teacher education. A teacher educator teaching courses of Islamiyat said, “the schools where these students will go for teaching are traditional schools; they are already facing problems in practicum”. He said, “applying the techniques and strategies is out of question, if our student teachers are successful in controlling those big classrooms I’ll consider it a big achievement”. In his view when the reform was launched in colleges of education all over Pakistan then there should have been a policy in place for the public schools as well or the curriculum should be designed to help teacher educators preparing for existing conditions. He perceives a big gap in the new curriculum and classroom realities at schools

Two colleges of education in KPK. The teachers in two colleges of KPK I visited during my first visit said that they liked the reform strategies overall but they were concerned about how these strategies can be applied in current circumstances at colleges of education as well as in public schools. They appreciated the active learning and cooperative teaching but with that they were discomfited for the fact that they are not being able to apply the innovative teaching as they wanted to or as it is recommended under the new reform. The teacher educators at both colleges mentioned the problems of lack of facilities at colleges of education and at schools where they are sending students for practice teaching. They again and again showed concerns that such issues will not allow the teacher educators or the student teachers to apply the innovative teaching methods as recommended in the reform. As per content of the curriculum the teacher educators mentioned topics and areas within their courses that they wanted to be added and two of the courses which were there in the old schemes were also mentioned to be missing, one is the school administration and the other is philosophies/history of education. Two teacher educators mentioning these recommended that these were necessary for the students who are learning to become teachers with special reference to education system in Pakistan. One teacher educator mentioned how she did not like the organization of courses and she thinks her feedback does not affect the program plan because of the centralized top down approach.

New methods of teaching. A principal at the boys’ college of education in KPK teaching history of education in old programs mentioned that he likes the new way of teaching introduced through this reform he said “The old system was very traditional, curriculum and teaching both. A textbook was provided and one had to teach a specific material. Student involvement was limited to memorizing the text material”. So according to him the new reform brought effective changes as “this is totally different from teaching point of view and from curriculum point of view. This one is totally based on research”. He appreciated the idea of student involvement in searching the materials with the teachers. The vice principal of the girls’ college of education in KPK also appreciated the new methods of “collaborative learning and involvement of technology” in the classrooms. She mentioned it is good but “abrupt change” from “lecture method” that was usually the only way of teaching before the reform. Both other teacher educators I talked to at the two colleges in KPK mentioned that the basic strength of the new reform is its “active participation of students and the student centered approach”. A teacher educator teaching English at girls’ college of education in KPK mentioned the strengths of the program as:

The main thing that I appreciate about this program is active participation of students, everything is student centered. Second is whatever we are teaching it is very clearly related to short term and long term goals mentioned in the National Standards and I have to share this with the students as well. Literacy skills are something new, introduction of the topic and activities designed for it are really creative. Similarly Child Development is a new course. Practical implementation of those topics that we studied in child psychology is something I have never seen before, many of them are directly related to teaching. In old courses there were just theories and in these new ones it is linked with the teaching practices.

Requirements of the new reform versus given conditions. One of the benefits of including bottom-up participation in curriculum reform is that given conditions can be taken into account. At the boy’s college of education in KPK the teacher educator as well as the principal were of the view that it is not possible to implement the recommended changes under the given conditions. A teacher educator at boys’ college mentioned that “independent learning is good but every student cannot access the materials online, and we do not have a library” so he is not fully convinced to the part where textbook and notes are completely discouraged.

The principal of the boys' college of education in KPK mentioned that, "the way this program has been designed, it is highly necessary to have computer lab, science lab and other facilities to support student learning". According to him most of the part of the new curriculum asks for "practical and active learning" but for the activities they need the facilities or otherwise he said "teacher educators will have to go back to the traditional ways of teaching and that would kill the spirit of the reform". The teacher educator teaching Mathematics at the boy's college of education in KPK mentioned that they do not even have a proper classroom to accommodate 50 students. He said "they cannot even sit properly in these rooms then how can I manage the classroom activities?" He further mentioned that within three borrowed rooms from another institution they are running a whole program with two cohorts of around fifty students in each. They only have one classroom and the other two rooms are being used as science lab, library, computer lab as well as common room for teacher educators. So in his view such limitations are forcing him to stick to traditional methods of teaching.

The language issue and student background. Like the teacher educators at the college of education in Sindh, two of the teacher educators in KPK were also of the view that having everything in English is becoming stressful for teachers as well as for the students. A teacher educator teaching Math at the boys' college of education mentioned that, "we used to teach everything in Pushto and all teachers as well as students do not know English very well". He mentioned that having all the course materials and online resources in English is very challenging for some of his colleagues as well as for the students coming from various backgrounds. He mentioned that, "The students think they need to learn English first and only then they can understand the other subject areas; I still translate materials for them and I think there is no harm even in providing them resources". According to him, the K-12 schooling in KPK does not prepare the student teachers for this kind of curriculum and for the kind of teaching and learning the reform planners expect. He says the students can sometimes not at all understand the English language so as a teacher educators he has to translate and interpret things for them. He said having everything provided to them in English is not at all a suitable strategy. He suggested that there should be more materials available in Urdu or local languages. He said, "I am in favor of teaching in local language, for example when I was teaching Child Development I could not make them understand the concepts and they were least interested until I explained it to them in Urdu or Pushto".

I could understand his concern because this was a city where I always had to take someone with me while going around, because no one speaks Urdu commonly, people only speak and comprehend Pushto. The other teacher educator at the girls' college of education who is also the vice principal and is teaching science as well as courses of classroom management mentioned that she does not find herself and her colleagues ready for many features of this reform. She said, "I hear my colleagues saying they do not understand the materials given in the course packs" she said that the content of the courses is not very different but the language is a big issue and "there has been no refresher course for language".

Content of courses. Talking about the content of the courses the principal of boys' college of education in KPK mentioned that he likes how all subject areas of primary school teaching are included in ADE. He also appreciated the inclusion of ICT and English language courses. But he mentioned that he finds a big deficiency in the new curriculum with regard to inclusion of philosophies of education. He said, "I could not find anything about the Muslim Philosophers like Imam Ghazali, Allama Iqbal, Ibn e Khuldoon, and Shah Wali ullah". He further elaborated that not only Muslim philosophies are necessary to be studied by the prospective teachers but also the philosophies of "old Greek philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle" are important and applicable till now. In his view this is a big gap in the new curriculum. He suggested, "Practical implications of these philosophies should be included in the content".

A vice principal teaching courses of Classroom Management and science at a girls' college of education in KPK commented upon the organization of courses in the new plan as well as some particular topics that she thinks must be added. Her first concern was that the courses of content and methods are far apart in the plan of study. She said "they learnt the content of science in one semester and then there was a gap of a whole semester, after which they studied the methods course" in her opinion the student teachers could not relate or link the two courses due to the gap in between. She suggested that "either the content and methods course should be merged or should be taught in the same semester so that they could link them with each other". In her opinion the new curriculum also missed the fact that most of the schools in rural areas only have one or two teachers only. She said "in the old curriculum we had a whole course of school administration; now we only have a course of classroom administration".

In her opinion it is necessary for teachers in KPK to learn about schools administration as well, because in majority cases they have to play a role in school management.

Another issue pointed out by the vice principal teaching courses of Classroom Management and science at a girls' college of education in KPK, related with the content selection is that teacher educators don't know from where and how much reading materials should be selected. She said, "if we use online materials it is a lot, me and my colleagues often discuss that we don't know how to limit or how to be selective". She pointed out two major challenges one is that the teacher educators do not understand the credit scheme and the other is they do not have resources to print the online materials and provide it to students. She informed me that she is relying mostly on the old books she has and students also have copies of them so to her this is the only way she can handle the challenges she identified. Another teacher educator teaching English at the same college said she likes the new English courses but in her opinion there are two major amendments to be considered one is to include more about writing skills and the other is to bring change in the assessment procedures. She said: "I have suggested to add more about writing skills in literacy course and I want to convey this message that everything cannot be assessed through pen and paper exam in course like Communication Skill. We need the university to understand this". This is another example of how bottom-up participation can contribute to curriculum reform by taking into account local conditions and existing resources.

Conditions of public schools. A common perception of all the four teacher educators I talked to at the two colleges of education in KPK was that the schools in KPK are not at all ready for the changes that the new reform recommends. The principal of boys' college said "our students who went for practicum faced many challenges". He highlighted the fact that even in the selected schools they could not find it feasible to apply the kind of teaching learning activities that they had learned. The teacher educator teaching Math said "use of computers and other materials is out of question, the schools in rural areas do not have classrooms". According to him the new teacher education curriculum does not prepare students for such circumstances. The teacher educator teaching classroom management said "what we are teaching them is very idealistic, though we try to keep telling them they shall not find such environment in schools but we are not giving them the skills for what they will face there". This teacher only among all others that I talked to was of the view that instead of including the institutional realities in the curriculum or preparing teachers for current conditions the public schools should be improved. She perceived the new curriculum as a step towards development and she said "only the people are resistant to change and we need to change their perceptions and behaviors".

Conclusions

This was a descriptive study and the purpose was to bring those voices to the table which were not loud enough during the process of planning and implementation of the new teacher education reforms. Therefore these are not generalized conclusions rather the conclusions based upon the respondents' perspectives. Looking at the two expert members of NCRC showed their concerns about the new reform at different levels, two perspectives were evident -one was totally against the four year teacher education program due to cultural context of Pakistan and idealistic approach of the reform. The other favored the adoption of four year professional program design but was also concerned about the idealistic approach of the reform. Both of them highlighted the challenging realities and lack of ability and capacity at the colleges of education. In their opinion colleges of education and public schools were yet not ready for such reform. One of the experts (Prof. Anjum) said it more explicitly than the other, that the recent curriculum reform has ignored the realities on the ground due to its out-side-in and top down approach.

Colleges of education also showed mixed reviews and highlighted many challenges. The three teacher educators and the college principal at the college of education in Sindh who participated in this study liked the new methods of teaching. They showed their concerns about the student background that becomes a challenge for teaching the new contents, adopting recommended methodologies and instruction in English. Selection of materials was indicated as a troublesome task for teacher educators. They also expressed frustration about the long courses and heavy workload within given time to cover the courses in one semester. They identified the security issues during the restlessness in their region and idealistic approach of curriculum planning as a challenge. All of them implicitly pointed out the top down approach adopted in planning and implementation of the curriculum reform.

The two teacher educators, one vice principal of girls' college and a principal of boys' college of education in KPK who participated in the study were all of the view that the new teaching methods have improved classroom interaction. But they were concerned about the student background and level of courses as well as additional burden in the form of English language being the medium of instruction. The vice principal of girls college again and again mentioned that teacher educators were finding it very difficult and needed more support and training. One teacher educator showed his disagreement upon extra influence on independent learning and adopting English as a medium of instruction. The principal of boys' college and vice principal of girls college mentioned some missing contents that they thought were necessary for TE curriculum in Pakistan but they expressed agony for the fact that their voices are not heard and the approach of curriculum planning is not decentralized in real terms though it claimed so in the beginning.

At the college of education in Punjab the two teacher educators perceived the new methodologies highly effective yet they were more concerned about mismatch in the student background and course contents. They showed their concerns over the assessment procedures as well. According to them they could not play their part unless the culture of supremacy of universities remains so; as the final examination is administered by the universities which limits the real change in classrooms.

Some other crucial points to be considered are enrolment criteria in the new program and conditions of schools where the graduates of new programs are expected to teach. The enrolment criteria mainly for student teachers in science was highlighted by teacher educators at colleges as well as universities and it was mentioned again and again that the students coming from arts and humanities background could not learn the content given in the basic content courses of science in the new curriculum. It was highlighted by many participants that this point has been raised at many forums but this is significant evidence that a bottom up voice is not being heard at all. Conditions of public schools were identified as a big fear by all the participants. They considered the physical environment and organizational culture not at all suitable for the kind of teaching the new reform advocates. They all mentioned again and again that the new TE curriculum is not preparing teacher educators for the real situation at the schools. A curriculum of teacher education that does not include local needs and does not consider local realities needs to be reviewed critically and revised by involving teachers and teacher educators working in the field.

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