

Global Identity, Curricular Reform and Pakistan Studies Textbooks: Understanding Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs

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Abstract

Teachers play a significant role in the construction of global identity of students by providing them knowledge of the world and by cultivating positive attitude towards the global world. However, many aspects of curriculum reform related to global identity theme may be viewed and treated as a source of resistance by teachers working in a conservative context. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding global identity theme of Pakistan Studies curriculum policy and textbooks in order to develop and understanding of the ground level realities of curriculum changes in in the secondary schools in Punjab. For this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-seven Pakistan Studies teachers recruited from public and private schools in one district of Punjab province in Pakistan. Analysis of data revealed that in many ways curriculum policy by these Pakistan Studies teachers' beliefs and perceptions show compliance as well as resistance to various aspects of curriculum reform related to global identity curriculum policy.

Keywords: Textbook, curricular gatekeeping, global perspectives, national identity, cultural diversity

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Introduction

Teachers play a central role in any curriculum reform especially in the implementation phase and teachers' curriculum enactment is influenced by their beliefs and perceptions. Peck and Herriot (2014) argued that "beliefs are integral to every other aspect of their teaching, from their understanding of the subject matter, to planning and assessment, to interacting with students" (p. 388). They further argued that passions, pedagogies and practices of Social Studies teachers' are essentially influenced by their beliefs of three overlapping purposes of teaching Social Studies: Inculcation of good citizenship, construction of national identity and cultivation of the ability to co-exist or empathize with others. Indeed, Pakistan Studies teachers' enactment of a curriculum is also influenced by their beliefs and perceptions about varied pedagogies used in Social Studies instruction.

Global identity content is incorporated in Pakistan Studies to develop students' global identity. Global identity theme is considered to be the content of the revised Pakistan Studies curriculum/textbooks dealing with broadening "students' understanding of the world in the wake of the impacts of globalization" (Pike, 2015, p. 11). Moreover, this content is assumed to cultivate affinity and allegiance to "the worldwide community of human beings" (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 4) so that they could "care for the fate of all human beings" (Appiah, 2008, p. 87). Moreover, the subject of Social Studies is taught in schools from lower to the middle level whereas Pakistan Studies is a compulsory subject, taught in lieu of Social Studies, from secondary to Bachelor level. The curriculum of Pakistan Studies and Social Studies have been an amalgamation of the geography, history, and economy of Pakistan (Ali, 1992). Constructed within the theoretical framework of Islam, Social Studies and Pakistan Studies have been traditionally deployed to inculcate patriotism, good citizenship, and affinity with Ummah in students (Ahmad, 2008). However, many aspects of global identity content included in Social Studies/Pakistan Studies curriculum could be viewed and treated as controversial by some teachers working in a conservative context. Teacher beliefs about teaching global identity influence their implementation of a curriculum since global identity content usually demands teachers to apply teaching approaches appropriate for shedding light on a topic or issue through multiple perspectives.

This study aimed to investigate Pakistan Studies teachers' perceptions and beliefs related to the thematic area of global identity in relation to the Pakistan Studies curricular reform (2006) and the subsequently revised Pakistan Studies textbooks introduced in the secondary schools in Punjab in 2012. This article addresses a specific research question: What are the perceptions and beliefs of Pakistan Studies teachers regarding the global identity theme of revised Pakistan Studies textbooks that were introduced in the secondary schools in Punjab in 2012 as a result of curricular reform (2006)? It was assumed that analysis of perceptions and beliefs of Pakistan Studies

teachers would throw light upon the extent to which teachers were committed to the development of global identity of the secondary school students.

Conceptual Framework

Teaching of global identity can be considered as incorporation of controversial issues in content. Some teachers may consider teaching of controversial issues is necessary for the cultivation of democratic citizenship and clarified national identity (Banks et al., 2005; Camicia, 2008). Hess (2008) states that controversial issues help teachers to engage students “in learning about issues, analysing them, deliberating alternative solutions, and often taking and supporting a position on which solutions may be based” (p. 124). Other rationales to include controversial issues are cited as “developing an understanding and commitment to democratic values, increasing interest in engagement in public life, learning important content, improving critical thinking, and building more sophisticated interpersonal skills” (Hess, 2008, p. 124).

However, this approach to teaching Social Studies is rejected or resisted by some teachers who have the belief that discussing controversial issues “might negatively impact some students in their class” (Peck & Herriot, 2014, p. 394) or might generate controversy in the community (Hess, 2008; Peck & Herriot, 2014). Clearly, teachers working in a conservative context could view and treat many aspects of global identity included in Pakistan Studies curriculum as controversial (Muhammad & Brett, 2017).

In spite of teachers relatively limited role in determining the shape of the official curriculum (Ginsburg & Kamat, 2009), the formal curriculum is decided by the teachers (Marker & Mehlinger, 1996). This significance of teachers’ work is due to their responsibility for the organization of constructive and meaningful experiences for their students (Adalbjarnardottir, 2002). Social Studies teachers play a significant political role since they mediate the content of the textbooks (Marker & Mehlinger, 1996). The current study investigates the mediation of the content of the textbooks by the Pakistan Studies teachers—through eliciting their reported perceptions and beliefs.

There are certain contextual factors responsible for teachers acting as street-level bureaucrats to employ policy discretion in their day-to-day practice (Lipsky, 2010; Muhammad, 2015). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the country contexts where policies are usually made at federal, provincial or district level and then implemented at school level by the teachers. When teachers’ professional landscapes are dominated by such policies, they can also make decisions and apply discretion with respect to those policies. They “do not simply comply with or implement education policy. Rather, they actively make education policy” (Goldstein, 2008, p. 449).

Literature also suggested that teachers may resist a top down education policy aiming to limit and control their instructional practices “by setting curriculum standards, establishing accountability systems, and prescribing instructional methods” (Achinstein

& Ogawa, 2006, p. 31). A dominant explanation of teacher resistance considers it as a conservative act and even representative of personality flaws. Yet, another explanation of teacher resistance is based on what Achinstein and Ogawa (2006, p. 32) called “principled resistance” and “involves overt or covert acts that reject instructional policies, programs, or other efforts to control teachers’ work that undermine or contradict professional principles” (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006, p. 32) such as community-building, individuality and creativity and high expectations. It would prove interesting to explore whether Pakistan Studies teachers saw themselves in any ways as “resisters.”

In addition, Banks (2010) identified some other factors hindering teachers’ commitment to the pluralistic curriculum. He believed that the focus on high-stakes testing and accountability, the heavy reliance on textbooks for teaching and the teachers’ low level of knowledge about ethnic cultures were the main factors in slowing down the institutionalization of a curriculum, which acknowledges the perspectives of diverse population of a society. Political resistance is also shown by many teachers who believe that an all-inclusive perspective would challenge the existing power structure of a diverse society (Muhammad & Brett, 2019). However, ideological resistance, he believes, is a major factor that slows the implementation of such curriculum. It is the assimilationist ideology, which makes it difficult for policy makers and teachers to acquire a commitment to the pluralistic curriculum. Banks (2001) argued that the assimilationist (teacher) believes in an ideal society that does not exhibit ethnic identity. Moreover, he believes that ethnicity “promotes division, exhumes ethnic conflicts and leads to divisions within society. It also promotes group rights over the rights of the individual” (Banks, 2001, p. 8). Assimilationists believe that when all the ethnic groups in a society share only one national culture and are structurally included in the national civic community, people will abandon their different ethnic cultures (Banks, 2001; Spinner-Halev, 2000).

Pakistani Social Studies teachers do have agency or a capacity to make individual choices. There have been few studies in Pakistan of how Pakistani teachers have used their interpretational freedom related to Social Studies/Pakistan Studies curriculum. Their degree of discretion in the implementation of a centrally determined curricular reform in the area of global identity has received limited attention. This study opened up the possibility of exploring the overlap between Social Studies curricular reform and teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and practices.

Methods

The overall aim of understanding the beliefs and perceptions of Pakistan Studies teachers was addressed using qualitative case study design and interviewing purposively selected multiple cases (teachers) (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014), collecting and

analysing data from multiple cases to produce compelling findings and interpretations through cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2013).

To elicit teachers' beliefs and perceptions of global identity embedded in the revised Pakistan Studies textbooks, teachers were interviewed to comment on the various features of the officially produced Pakistan Studies curriculum content introduced in the Musharraf era (2006). Teachers were also asked to describe the frequently taught and discussed global topics in their classrooms. They were also asked to provide their thoughts on global topics that received the most or the least attention in the new Pakistan Studies textbooks. They were also asked to describe whether and how they compensated for the less discussed global ideas or concepts in the new Pakistan Studies' textbooks. Relevant amplificatory probing questions were asked to encourage the teachers to elaborate on their beliefs and perceptions and to help in obtaining in-depth understanding and full description of the beliefs and perceptions of the teachers (Kvale, 1996; Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003).

Cross-case analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted to deepen understanding of the perspectives of the Pakistan Studies teachers on the content of the textbooks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2013). All the interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim. Then each transcribed interview transcript was read in detail for pre-coding, by "circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or colouring rich or significant participant quotes or passages" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 19). This helped to identify important topics related to the purpose of research from the material. Since the study was dealing with multiple participants, one participant's data were coded first, and then progressed to the second participant's data. Similarly, all data related to twenty-seven participants were coded. Clustering similar codes helped in identifying sub-categories from data. Comparing and contrasting various categories and sub-categories, several assertions were developed—and some quotes were identified as evidentiary warrant for the reporting of the findings.

Findings

Teachers' Perceptions of Global Identity Theme of the Textbooks

Most of the teachers—from public as well as private schools—perceived that the global issues were the least discussed theme in the Pakistan Studies textbooks. They argued, "Global covers all but the countries with which we have no relationships, trade, imports, or exports, are not covered or discussed" (Teacher-10PG). They believed that the textbook writers did not do justice to this theme of Pakistan Studies. They even perceived, "the textbook does not give a proper attention to the concept of foreign policy/relations of Pakistan as it should be" (Teacher-7PG).

Most of the teachers—from public as well as private schools—perceived that the textbooks emphasized national issues more as compared to global issues and the

range of the discussed topics was narrow. A majority of the teachers also perceived that there was description only of Pakistan's relations with neighbouring countries. They argued that the Pakistan Studies subject was meant to discuss what was within Pakistan and that global issues were somewhat irrelevant to this. Therefore, they perceived that the textbook paid more attention to national issues. However, they argued that if there were global topics they should only be related to Pakistan. They mostly identified topics such as the United Nation Organization and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries and Pakistan's role in them, the foreign policy of Pakistan and the relations of other countries with the world, Pakistan relations with neighbouring country—for example what kind of relation Pakistan has had with India and the wars with her.

Some teachers—mainly from the private schools—identified and appreciated the positive change in the global identity theme of the Pakistan Studies textbooks. They identified these changes in the area of the portrayal of India, incorporation of Human Rights awareness and ecological issues. A teacher stated, “All textbooks seek to portray India as our arch enemy—this curriculum as well as previous one. The previous curriculum was more open in this regard but now only facts are given” (Teacher-26M). Yet another appreciated the incorporation of environmental issues on the ground that this would help in preparing students for more environmental consciousness.

Contrary to the teachers who appreciated one or more aspects of the global content of the textbook, a few teachers—from public as well as private schools— were concerned about the inclusion/exclusion of certain aspects of the global content in the textbook. They were mainly concerned about the not very extensive discussion of global concepts such as international health issues, global warming and global village, less attention given to the Kashmir and Palestine issues, more attention to the relations with Europe, and non-coverage of international extremist activities and Pakistan's alleged involvement in them.

Teachers' suggestions to improve the global theme of the Pakistan Studies

Teachers' suggestions to improve the global theme of the Pakistan Studies textbooks were elicited by asking them to provide suggestions for the improvement of the global theme in the new Pakistan Studies. The aim here was to understand their beliefs and perceptions regarding global identity. They were specifically asked, “if you are asked to write the Pakistan Studies curriculum/textbooks, what would you emphasize: Cultural/provincial, national, or global issues?”

Most of the teachers—public as well as private—suggested that the content of any future Pakistan Studies curriculum/textbooks should be more based upon national issues, concerns and priorities than global and provincial. The core of their arguments was that paying more attention to national and international identifications in the curricular content would broaden the visions of students and make them better citizens.

However, they believed that adding more content related to national identity should be the priority, as they perceived, “If we give more emphasis to cultural issues, this will promote provincialism and provincial prejudice” (Teacher-2FG). They endorsed the idea of the addition of the cultural, national and global issues but frequently emphasized, “There is no need to balance these three. Nationalism and the problems of Pakistan should be given more focus” (Teacher-3PG). They even suggested percentages of the content for example, a teacher suggested, “This is Pakistan Studies, so national issues should be given more weighting: 70% Pakistani issues, 20% global issues, and 10% cultural issues” (Teacher-22Pri). A typical line of thinking and reasoning regarding the addition of the more on national issues than global and provincial is evident from the following quotation from a teacher.

I will promote nationalism. I want to add global issues, but the priority is nation. I also want to add provincial issues, but the priority is nation. The integrity of the country comes before anything else. (Teacher-8PG)

Many teachers provided reasons for their paying more emphasis to national issues than global and provincial. First, some held the perception that nationalism was the only solution for all the problems in Pakistan. For example, a teacher argued, “If we are able to cultivate love for the country in our students, every problem of Pakistan would be solved—especially terrorism” (Teacher-8PG). Second, they thought that the subject of Pakistan Studies was meant to focus upon what was relevant to Pakistan: “When we have given a name to this subject as Pakistan Studies, the content would be more relevant if it has something to do with Pakistan. Global concepts can be Pakistan’s relations with countries, trades, sports, and games” (Teacher-10PG). Third, they believed that a national approach to Pakistan Studies was the most appropriate for this level of study and that a global approach should be added at the higher level: “For a 10th class student the global knowledge given in the textbook is sufficient. He may gain it at upper levels” and “at this level just national knowledge. Global knowledge can be added at 1st year (grade 11)” (Teacher-5PG). Fourth, they believed that global issues were changing with time and it was hard to change the textbooks every year and add whatever were the latest issues. Fifth, they argued that the students could get the global information from the media so there was no need for incorporating more content related to global content in textbook. Sixth, they also thought that adding more on provincial content would lead to provincial prejudices: “I want to make my students not Balochis, Sindhis, Pathans, or Punjabis but Pakistanis” (Teacher-18AF). Seventh, they held an apprehension in relation to the global community and global identity:

I will not tell my students that all is good with humanity. I will tell my students, do good with all human beings. But it is also important to tell students that a snake will bite so beware of them. If we say everyone is good, for this Islamic Studies is sufficient...In Pakistan Studies and Social Studies political matters are discussed. (Teacher-16AF)

Contrary to the above-mentioned teachers and their suggestions on the addition of more national than global and provincial focus, some teachers—from public schools—were totally opposed to adding global and provincial issues into the Pakistan Studies curriculum/textbooks. They expressed similar reasons as described above: “We should put more emphasis on our own people—our own country. I am against putting global issues in this. This is Pakistan Studies and more emphasis should be on Pakistan” (Teacher-16AF) and “more emphasis should be given to national issues because paying more attention to Punjabi identity would move students away from national identity” (Teacher-4PG).

Some teachers—from public as well as private schools—suggested that it would be good to add national and global content, but they were totally against adding provincial content. These teachers favoured a strong national approach to the teaching of Pakistan Studies. Nevertheless, they were willing to suggest the addition of content related to global theme but they were not willing to suggest addition of content related to provincial cultural diversity of Pakistan. For example, a teacher asserted:

Number one national, number two global but not provincial. I will promote only Pakistanism. Global issues will only be there if they are related to Pakistan...Global content should be given space but not too much...until your national integrity is intact you are surviving, otherwise no (Teacher-15AF).

However, they were not totally in favour of adding provincial identity content as they argued that emphasizing provincial identity would promote provincial prejudices.

I am against provincialism—prejudice, and intolerance. Nationalism is first. Pakistan is like a bouquet and provinces are its beauty. For me, Pakistan First—and then peace of the world. First, there should be peace in the home (Pakistan) and then world peace. (Teacher-14PG)

And,

The textbook should emphasize national and global issues. When you talk about national issues, provincial issues are automatically added to it. If we cannot demonstrate the contribution of provinces, we cannot develop national identity. All provinces should be equally represented. Things start going wrong where there is inequality. (Teacher-19AF)

A few teachers—from public as well as private schools—suggested a balanced approach to the addition of provincial, national and global content. They asserted that all aspects should be given equal emphasis. Nevertheless, they believed that the national content of the textbook could not be reduced because of its importance for the integrity of Pakistani society. Secondly, they believed that mere promotion of provincial units and their cultures would lead students to provincial prejudices. However, they suggested that a balanced approach to the addition of cultural, national and global content should be adopted.

I think these aspects must be balanced... we must cultivate nationalism, but we should also touch upon globalization. It is of utmost importance to give them updated knowledge of global issues. Our country cannot remain isolated: What is happening here in Pakistan also influences other country. What is happening in other countries also influences Pakistan. But global topics only related to Pakistan should be included. But there is no need to add a totally isolated topic related to any other country. (Teacher-12PG)

There were also three outlier cases challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding teachers' perspectives on national identity, cultural diversity and global identity. First teacher argued for the importance of adding only global perspectives as compared to national and provincial. Second teacher argued for the importance of provincial identity as compared to global and national identities. Third teacher emphasized the importance of cultivation of students' affinity with Muslim Ummah.

Emphasizing the importance of adding only global perspectives as compared to national and provincial, the first (elite school) teacher argued:

I think the way globalization is increasing, it is better to put more emphasis on making students better human beings instead of focusing on regionalism or nationalism. If we put more emphasis on regionalism, it will divide humanity. These are regional identities and are merely for our identifications and we do not need to emphasize them. I believe that the global identities should be given more attention in the curriculum. (Teacher-20E.Pri)

Comparing the importance of the cultivation of global identity with the cultivation of global identity, he further argued:

If a student remains in nationalism, he would become an enemy of humanity. If he has inculcated nationalism, he would talk about India and Pakistan enmity but if he thinks like a global citizen then he would not talk about the differences. (Teacher-20E.Pri)

In contrast to this view, a public-school teacher asserted the need for the cultivation of provincial or cultural identity in the students first.

More emphasis should be on Punjabism. It does not mean that I want to promote provincial prejudice or tell my students that they are superior. I just want to connect them to their culture. If a person who is not attached to his culture, he is not rooted—he loses his identity. (Teacher-11PG)

There was only one teacher (from public school) who not only equated global with Muslim Ummah but also emphasized the need to cultivate the students' affinity towards Muslim Ummah:

We have a glorious past of Muslim Ummah...I want to tell them (students) about the glorious past (of Ummah) so that we could move towards renaissance... All Muslims are like one nation (Jammah), therefore, it is necessary to tell them that wherever there are Muslims they are one nation (Jammah). This country is the only country, which came into existence

based on Islamic ideology... I correlate Pakistan with Ummah. Pakistan is the only ray of light for the Muslim Ummah. (Teacher-1FG)

Yet, he expressed no apprehensions regarding the global community other than Muslim Ummah.

Conclusion

The findings of interview data related to the global identity theme of the Pakistan Studies textbooks revealed that most of the teachers—public as well as private—identified global issues, as the least discussed theme in these textbooks and the range of the discussed topics were narrow. Nevertheless, these teachers were least concerned about the narrowness of the representation and world beyond the borders of Pakistan and seemed content with what was provided in the textbooks. Only a few teachers from private schools showed their concerns regarding the limited representation of a non-Muslim international community, the lack of discussion on global warming, ecological issues or non-coverage of international extremism. Most of the teachers—public as well as private—suggested that the content of any future Pakistan Studies curriculum/textbooks should be more on national issues than global and provincial. Interestingly, the importance of cultivating global identity was underscored by only two teachers. One elite private school teacher emphasized the need to cultivate more of an affinity with humanity than with the Pakistani nation because he believed that nationalism divides humanity into nations and creates an atmosphere of enmity. The second teacher was from a public school who emphatically underscored the need for nurturing students' affinity towards Muslim Ummah. There is a need to introduce teachers to the complexities of teaching about national identity, ethnic and religious diversity and global perspectives through professional development courses. Teachers should be introduced not only to theoretical nuances related to these concepts through the coursework but also through practice during pre-service and in-service training. The teachers were more inclined toward cultivating Pakistani national identity in students and they were least concerned with developing students' affinity with broader global community. Besides, Joshi (2010) claimed that textbooks' emphasis on Muslim Ummah is an "effort to craft a 'regionality' distinct from India's appropriation of the grand narrative of the natural geographical unity of the subcontinent" (Joshi, 2010, p. 368). Lall (2008) has argued that educating students with nationalistic, exclusive and religiously inspired discourses can badly influence the world peace; especially when on both sides of the border Pakistani and Indian children are being taught conflicting histories. This is particularly problematic in the era of heightened globalization where "nationalism and national identity cannot exist independently without relating to other cultures, peoples, and lands" (Dattoo, 2009, p. 107). There is a need of creative response "to the globalizing world and for this school curriculum needs to strike a balance

between the students' need to maintain a distinctive local identity as well as their search to be coherent with the global" (Dattoo, 2009, p. 220). However, this is not to suggest that the students' cultural and national identities should be neglected at the expense of global identities.

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