

Role of Syllabus in Developing Cultural Equity in School A Comparative Study of Public & Private Sectors in Pakistan

Humera Jabbar, M.A., M.Phil. ELT Research Scholar
Habiba Hussain, M.A. English Literature, M.A. ELT, M.Phil. English Lit.

Abstract

Diversity is the key factor of 21st century. Due to Globalization, quite recently, radical changes are visible in all the spheres of our life including political, economic and social aspects. Byron (1988) views Language as always referring to something beyond itself: the cultural context. In view of the new opportunities, foreign language teaching acquires even greater significance but successful communication alone with being unaware of the multicultural diversity does not ensure success. Multicultural aspect has been neglected by educators since long.

The present paper is an attempt to assess the effects of cultural syllabus on English Language Teaching, ultimately effecting the culture of an educational institute by critically evaluating private and public sectors.

Research Question

What is the role of syllabi in developing cultural equity in a school?

Keywords: Cultural, Syllabus (CS), Culture, English Language Teaching, Public & Private Sector.

Culture

"A language is part of a culture and culture is part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." Douglas-Brown 1994

The word *culture* has many different meanings. Generally it is related to music, art literature and food. In anthropology, it refers to human behavior. Culture is constantly changing as it is an abstract phenomenon existing only in our minds which displays itself in all the man made things. Edward B Taylor (1871) views it as a combination of “knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

Culture is not developed by lone individuals. It is developed when people interact with each other. If there is no interaction, no culture would be evolved.

School Culture

School culture is all about how people behave in an organization. It is a set of values, beliefs, and attitudes. People may not be aware of its significant influence but they, all, show it in their actions and conversations. School culture plays the role of hidden curriculum. An organization’s success is dependent upon its culture. Peters and Waterman (1982) in “In Search of Excellence” found that best run companies possessed distinctive cultures.

Studies show that there are a number of cultural elements which can be enlisted as ingredients to support a productive school culture. From the work of Senge (1990), Fullan (1992), and Deal and Peterson (1990) and many other researches one can easily point to the importance of a shared vision and a few other like:

- An inspiring vision and mission
- Curriculum linked to the vision and mission
- Syllabus with clear modes of instruction, assessment and learning opportunities
- Sufficient time for instructors and earners to work well
- School-wide conversation about quality
- Healthy interaction (teacher to student, teacher to teacher, student to student)
- Leadership to encourage innovation
- Community participation

Difference between School Climate and School Culture

School climate includes the ethos and spirit of an institution. It represents the attitude of a school. The positive climate is the condition where happiness thrives. Happy teachers seem to be better teachers. For example, often, instructors and students come with low morale on Monday and talk about weekends. This way Monday's climate tends to be less positive.

School climate is all around us. It is based on perceptions but culture is based on beliefs and is a part of us. Whenever a group of people spend time together, they form a commonly accepted set of beliefs and expectation in order to transform information to younger generation present around. School culture is a limited way of thinking and is shaped through climate so if the leaders want to change the school culture, they must change the school climate first.

Syllabus

According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word syllabus was originated in English language in mid-17th century. Etymologically syllabus means a table of contents, course of study, program of study, educational program or course outline. It provides guideline for both teacher and learners about which goals to be attained.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987:80) define syllabus as follows: "At its simplest level a syllabus can be described as a statement of what is to be learnt."

In the past the focus has been on the structure of syllabus but it has been shifted in the recent past from structures to situation and function of the topic. Nunan (1988:52) says that with development of the situation "the traditional distinction between syllabus design and methodology has been blurred". It is considered to be a summary of what will be taught and not of what will be learnt.

The Purposes of Syllabi

There is a variety of purposes of a syllabus depending on the content but can be grouped into three major categories: 1. the syllabus as a contract, 2. the syllabus as a permanent record,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017

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and 3.the syllabus as a learning tool. Each role has implications about what a syllabus should consist of.

1. The Syllabus as a Contract

Many grievances arise due to unclear expectations like a written contract (Matejka and Kurke 1994). Viewing syllabus as a written contract leads to implications about the content consisting clear and accurate course calendar, grading policies, attendance policy, late assign policy, make-up exam policy, academic freedom policy, academic dishonesty policy and accommodation policy (McKeachie 1986).

2. The Syllabus as a Permanent Record

Syllabus helps in faculty reviews. Instructors, departments, Colleges and whole universities are held accountable for their performance through processes such as annual reviews promotion or merit pay reviews, and tenure reviews for which syllabi are helpful. (Glassick, Huber and Maeroff 1997). To make a syllabus useful as a permanent record a syllabus must contain a number of small details regarding content and the assessment procedures, department, credit hours prerequisites and post requisites of the course materials and the experience that the course will involve.

3. The Syllabus as a Learning Tool

Syllabus can serve as a facilitator. It may enhance instructor's effectiveness. Students don't do all of the learning in classrooms, they learn more by reading, writing and discussions outside the classrooms. Direct interaction with the faculty members is rare outside the classrooms as the faculty can't be available everywhere but syllabus can. Syllabi may guide students about something that faculty may not fully consider (Woolcock 2000).

Difference between Syllabus and Curriculum

Curriculum is superset and syllabus is subset. Curriculum is a combination of factors which form an educational program to be used in an institution to cover politics, plans, teaching, learning items, materials, equipment, everything. but a syllabus is for a subject describing which topics to be included.

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Syllabus Design ---→ Multi-dimensional Syllabi

Before designing a syllabus, syllabus designer must face several questions regarding which type of syllabus is going to serve the combination of needs. Does he want a product or process oriented syllabus? What are the goals to be attained? Should the syllabus be learner led or instructor led? Traditionally, the grammar translated method has been mostly used in language classrooms in secondary education. On graduation, many students remained unable to communicate in reality. Such learners faced lack of confidence in productive skills. The fact drew attention to the communicative aspect of to satisfy the needs and desires of the learners.

Syllabus design depends on goals of the curriculum and needs of the learners. A complete syllabus includes all the aspects like structure, function, situation, topics and skills. The syllabi will focus on items based on which aspect is given priority. For a cultural syllabus, eclecticism should be the key factor.

White (1988:92) considers all the aspects: structure, function, situation, topic, skills of great significance. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) are of the view that several syllabuses should be operated at the same time with one of them as the principal organizing feature. This type of syllabus is called as multi-dimensional syllabus.

Cultural Syllabus (CS)

Multicultural classrooms are not only based on language diversity. They consist of religion, ethnicity, gender, customs, food, etc. Language is an integral part of a culture. The cultural syllabus has been created to fill in the gap created by negligence about diversity in multicultural classroom. The cultural syllabus facilitates new understanding about what and how to teach. What is not only about provision of information but also enhances inter-cultural awareness. Such information develops knowledge and skills to ensure success in multicultural atmosphere. So, Cultural Syllabus (CS) provides not only aims but methodology (How) to achieve the specific aims too. Regarding English Language Teaching, it is an account of how to integrate culture and teaching of language. It, not only, develops knowledge but also willingness

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to improve classroom behavior to change the direction of language education. It serves “to expand one’s own cultural awareness by learning about the cultural heritage of the English speaking people and by so doing to arrive at a livelier appreciation of both cultures” (Byram, 1997).

Culture and language are interwoven. Nowadays, to communicate to someone, persons may not know each other but knowing about cultural background behind one’s behaviour is important for successful interaction. One way of raising this kind of awareness, according to Pulverness (2003) , is through literary texts that more direct experiences of cultural engagement. Besides, an enhanced language syllabus that serves as a frame work taking in account all the cultural dimensions would be concerned with aspects of language. The course materials usually ignore culturally tinged aspects: connotation, idiom, the construction of style and tone, rhetorical structure, critical language awareness and translation, which hinders the direct exposure to culturally loaded experiences. Tavares and Cavalcanti (1996) are of the view that usually students don’t have the direct interaction with the native speakers. So to make them feel how the native speakers feel and communicate and why, a set of activities is mandatory which is liable to increase their curiosity about the target culture and make them compare the different cultures.

Methodology

Except for the literature studies, our research is based on document analysis. The document analysis frame work was adapted from the website of University-San Marcos. The logic behind selecting this multicultural curriculum transformation (MCT) instrument is the course components are mentioned by goal level and level of change. The questionnaire (prepared by the researcher) includes open ended and close ended questions.

Class V syllabus was assessed to compare the syllabus and its effects on school culture.

The questionnaire was used to collect data. The participants were asked questions about their observation and ideas on the role of syllabus in developing school culture. The questions

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were asked about: 1) effect of syllabus on school culture 2) role of syllabus to promote multicultural equity.

Participants

The research study was carried out in two schools, keeping in view two streamed education in Pakistan. The schools include a public and a private school. Twenty teachers in total were selected including ten participants from each school.

- Govt. Elementary School, Chungi Amer Sidhu, Lahore Cantt.
- Cathedral Higher Secondary School, Lahore Cantt.

Research ethics were strictly observed. Findings were kept highly confidential as it was ensured to the teachers before the study that the findings are not to be used anywhere else except for the research purpose. The teachers participated voluntarily in the research.

Research Barriers

The researcher planned to interview the participants but most of the selected teachers were reluctant to be interviewed and the management also seemed interested to be present in the interview. So the researcher has to change the tool. The planned interview questions had to be molded to develop a questionnaire to fulfill the same purpose.

The research duration prolonged due to reluctance of the schools management to allow to conduct research. They tend to excuse by stating the prevailing security threats. The researcher has to ensure them to observe research ethics of keeping the findings confidential and teachers reservations were eliminated by making it optional to show their identity while filling in the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis (Private School)

Sr.#	STATEMENT		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
01	Do the learning styles favored by the syllabus reflect the learning styles of the students?	Always	4	40%
		often	4	40%
		Sometimes	2	20%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
02	Does the syllabus influences school's policy about involvement of parents from diverse ethnic and cultural groups in school activities ?	Always	8	80%
		often	1	10%
		Sometimes	1	10%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
03	Is the teaching style of teachers affected by the syllabus?	Always	6	60%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	2	20%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
04	Does bilingualism (if supported by syllabus) help students of language minority to be more expressive ?	Always	8	80%
		often	1	10%
		Sometimes	1	10%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
05	Does the multi culturally sensitive syllabus affects the selection of student body?	Always	4	40%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	4	40%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
06	Should the syllabus be supported by	Always	8	80%

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	a mandatory multicultural staff development programmes?	often	1	10%
		Sometimes	0	0
		Seldom	1	10%
		Never	0	0
07	Do school assemblies and holidays reflect the multicultural aspects, if they are reinforced in the syllabus?	Always	6	60%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	2	20%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
08	Do the bulletin boards and other displays in the school reflect ethnic and cultural aspects to the same extent as in the syllabus?	Always	8	80%
		often	1	10%
		Sometimes	1	10%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
09	Can syllabus help the students' emotional development?	Always	6	60%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	2	20%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
10	Does syllabus change teacher's behaviour toward minorities too?	Always	2	20%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	2	20%
		Seldom	4	40%
		Never	0	0
11	Does information about other religions' holidays make students more calm about religious minorities around ?	Always	8	80%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	0	0
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0

12	While discussing about other religions festivals (like Christmas),do students focus on similarities to their own religious festivals.	Always	0	0
		often	4	40%
		Sometimes	6	60%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0

Q 13: All the teachers support including chapters about religions in syllabus other than Islam as they agree that it makes students calmer and open minded. Their prejudice about other cultures reduces as they do focus on similarities among different communities.

Data Analysis (Public Sector)

Sr.#	STATEMENT		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
01	Do the learning styles favored by the syllabus reflect the learning styles of the students?	Always	8	80%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	0	0
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
02	Does the syllabus influences school's policy about involvement of parents from diverse ethnic and cultural groups in school activities ?	Always	2	20%
		often	6	60%
		Sometimes	2	20%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
03	Is the teaching style of teachers affected by the syllabus?	Always	8	80%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	0	0
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
04	Does bilingualism (if supported by syllabus) help students of language	Always	2	20%
		often	2	20%

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	minority to be more expressive ?	Sometimes	4	40%
		Seldom	2	20%
		Never	0	0
05	Does multi-culturally sensitive syllabus affects the selection of student body?	Always	0	0
		often	4	40%
		Sometimes	4	40%
		Seldom	2	20%
		Never	0	0
06	Should the syllabus be supported by a mandatory multicultural staff development programmes?	Always	8	80%
		often	1	10%
		Sometimes	0	0
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	1	10%
07	Do school assemblies and holidays reflect the multicultural aspects, if they are reinforced in the syllabus?	Always	4	40%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	1	10%
		Seldom	3	30%
		Never	0	0
08	Do the bulletin boards and other displays in the school reflect ethnic and cultural aspects to the same extent as in the syllabus?	Always	2	20%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	5	50%
		Seldom	1	10%
		Never	0	0
09	Can syllabus help the students' emotional development?	Always	10	100%
		often	0	0
		Sometimes	0	0
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	0	0
10	Does syllabus change teacher's	Always	1	10%

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	behaviour toward minorities too?	often	4	40%
		Sometimes	4	40%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	1	10%
11	Does information about other religions' holidays make students more calm about religious minorities around ?	Always	2	20%
		often	4	40%
		Sometimes	3	30%
		Seldom	1	10%
		Never	0	0
12	While discussing about other religions festivals (like Christmas),do students focus on similarities to their own religious festivals.	Always	1	10%
		often	2	20%
		Sometimes	4	40%
		Seldom	0	0
		Never	2	20%

Results and Discussion

The results, based on the data collected through questionnaire and document analysis of the syllabi of both public and private sectors, lead to the discussion of findings. Syllabus is the key to develop multi-cultural awareness and achieve the goals of a nation with a complex cultural map and to meet the requirements of recent globalization. School and its basic unit classroom is the ideal place to make the learners experience interaction with a variety of communities. Syllabus plays a vital role in effecting students' learning styles. If it suggests healthy interaction of young learners during classroom activities, the students definitely learn tolerance and develop multicultural competence because a multiculturally sensitive syllabus bounds the teachers to make peers from different communities. Especially group work serves as a key component of such a class where students have to work in collaboration with members of communities whom they, usually, tend to bracket during social interactions, which is, in reality, a basic form of education called as informal education.

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The research conformed the finding from literature studies which supported bilingual medium to encourage purposeful oral and written expression of the language minority students. Most of the educators agreed that bilingualism infuses confidence in students belonging to language minority. Teachers' ways of teaching do reflect the syllabus priorities. If bilingualism is not supported by the syllabus, instructors have to follow monolingual medium which makes students with language minorities feel alienated.

Even the student body selection and parents' involvement from different communities is affected by the syllabus to some extent, though it is more affected by the priorities of school policy. Bulletin boards, assembly presentations and holidays have a great show of what is reinforced in the curriculum and especially syllabus. If Syllabus focuses upon majority only, the holidays and special occasions put the same show on the whole school culture including bulletin boards.

Teachers' role is multidimensional. They are not only the facilitators of learning but their learning is multi-faceted too. If syllabus includes information about minority communities and recommends multicultural competence, while channelising students' learning the right way, teachers' own behaviour toward their students from different communities transforms from biased to empathic. They, too, focus on similarities and become calmer to cultural differences. Almost 80% of the teachers strongly agree that a multicultural syllabus should be supported by a comprehensive teachers' training programme as we all know that training programmes not only polish their traditional skills but also make them upgrade their knowledge with discussion about theories of child development, cognition and pedagogy. Developing multicultural awareness in institutional training workshops would definitely develop cultural competency in educational institutes.

Comparison of the Elements of Syllabi

The syllabi show a visible difference in all the elements of assessment of syllabi. The private sector school syllabi, which is basically a missionary school, includes a few statements

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about cultural diversity as class discussion will be done to compare celebration of festivals in different cultures. In public sector syllabi, no statement about cultural diversity is stated.

The same difference is witnessed regarding course objectives. In public sector syllabi, no stated multicultural course objectives are included but in private sector school objectives are stated about students' cognitive ability to understand the influence of cultural differences on human development.

Course content, of public sector does not support to analyze different perspectives which is, on the contrary, visible in missionary school's syllabi. Public sector reinforces traditional views and falls to level one as it includes only 30 % of the content, approximately, only showing a bird's eye view of diversity of cultures which are prominently about ethnic variety only but missionary school' course includes almost 60% of multicultural content to analyze aspects other than ethnicity too.

Both the syllabi include variety of instructional strategies. Both include classroom activities and discussion to involve students in learning by doing. Both do not promote traditional ways like rote learning as the prime method of instruction. Though private school's instructional strategies clearly state to ensure cultural equity during classroom activities and make students experience working with different communities through groups and peer formation.

Assessment of students' knowledge shows wide range of contrast. Public sector syllabus is, purely, result oriented. It prepares students for term wise exam only, including multiple choice exam or subjective questions about explaining the concept but private sector syllabi assess students learning through multiple methods and alternatives to standard exam and papers. Private sector methods accommodate students' strategies for expression of acquired knowledge and skills. They maintain portfolios to keep record of creative work produced by students like book reviews or movie reviews etcetera, to be utilized for further improvement. Syllabi recommends to maintain speaking and listening logs to mark students' individual progress during activities

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and step ahead positively to evolve through motivational strategies. Their assignments and activities, as mentioned in the syllabi, demonstrate accomplishment of multicultural objectives but public sector syllabi uses no instrument to do so. Public Sector Syllabi promotes conscientiousness about standard exam with traditional ways of grading ultimately demoting multidimensional methods of learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Language learners must also be effective culture learners. They must learn how to read the context of any communication. The syllabus should not be devised for language classrooms only rather it should facilitate learners in the field too. Objectives should include statements about identifying variables that affect individuals' development. The examination should not only be written examination rather verbal interaction and behavior in a multicultural setting must also be considered to be graded. Language instructors are responsible to provide opportunities to gain and practice skills in multicultural context. The best way is to expose them to communities different or contrasting to theirs. Unfortunately, a formal language classroom provides a setting which is just a theorizing about language. It is very formal and structured setting, far away from the real world dealing. It can only be addressed through devising an effective syllabus which ultimately transforms other variables too.

In a Pakistan-like society, where majority is Muslim, with a very complex cultural map, learners usually have a very different setting than studying abroad. They usually have no interaction with native speakers and majority takes the advantage to dominate whenever it comes to language, cast, ethnicity, norms or religion. Educators must feel the responsibility to review the curriculum and syllabus. Syllabus should ensure multicultural equity. Multicultural content percentage should be risen at least to 60 percent which may include information about other communities' holidays and celebration rituals to make students compare it with theirs and explore similarities. Activities and assignments must be provoking to collaborative work of learners from different cultural background and focus on exploring similarities should be emphasized. Another way to expose students to develop multicultural awareness is assembly

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presentations and holidays celebration. In assembly presentations, mostly majority culture is presented which should be balanced through giving a due share to minorities as well.

Assessment, stated in the syllabus, should be embedded with research to gain the objective of multicultural awareness in learners.

But all the toil on devising a multicultural syllabus is liable to drain if the instructors have no multicultural awareness before being exposed to students. The syllabus must be supported by a comprehensive teacher training programme to achieve the stated or unstated multicultural goals. The term Multidimensional Culture Learning is not yet well known by the teachers. Moreover teachers do not feel adequately prepared to devise tests to assess students' behaviour in a multidimensional cultural setting. They are used to devise traditional type of assessments which may also be improved through training programmes on the topic. Teachers should be well equipped with the skills to maintain portfolios, self-reports of progress; journaling of culture learning; simulations, role-plays and other experiential techniques; critical incidents and case studies; culture immersions; and new, more conceptually sophisticated paper and pencil instruments.

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Humera Jabbar, M.A., M.Phil. ELT Research Scholar
Kinnaird College For Women,
93, Jail Road
Lahore 54000
Pakistan
humashahid16@yahoo.com

Habiba Hussain, M.A. English Literature, M.A. ELT, M.Phil. English Literature
Kinnaird College For Women
93, Jail Road
Lahore 54000
Pakistan
habibahhrizvi@gmail.com

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