



## Analyzing Puntland's 'National Curriculum'

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April 5, 2018

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to analyze 'Puntland National Curriculum Framework' (PNCF) in order to understand its meanings. The paper investigates the following areas of the document: curriculum documentation and origins, curriculum proper and recommendations.

It responds as well to several questions on the subject of curriculum concepts, such as scope and sequence, syllabus, content outline, standards, textbooks and planned experience. Curriculum in use, critiques and part two recommendations will be discussed in a separate part two section.



### Curriculum Documentation and Origins

This analysis was based on the PNCF document, which is the written or the official curriculum intended to give instructors sources for planning instructions and assessing learners. It was designed also for school administrators to effectively supervise instructors and hold them responsible for their practice and teaching outcomes. I could not find published items or other materials that describe the history of the document. I was not able as well to communicate with the people and institutions involved in the development stages of PNCF to understand about the planning process of the document. However, since the document contains learning objectives, philosophy statements and evaluation and teaching methods, it is a reliable source that can be used for analysis (Posner, 2004).

Even though PNCF developers used the phrase "National Curriculum", Puntland State principles are relevant to the document, i.e., Puntland is a northeastern Federal State of Somali Republic. Using such phrase can be ambiguous, yet at the same time reasonable since Puntland is one of the main sponsors for the ongoing discussion on the National Curriculum Development between

the Federal Government and the Federal Member States. The aspects of analysis that PNCF contains are all three stages of Posner’s curriculum analysis: curriculum documentations and origin, curriculum proper and curriculum in use. PNCF includes eleven section titles, which incorporate all three phases of this analysis. I have not been able to uncover the limitations of the curriculum.

## **Development of the Curriculum**

PNCF document was developed in 2015 under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Puntland Government of Somalia. The cast of characters involved in its development stages comprised European Union, UNICEF, Africa Educational Trust (AET) and “Puntland Society.” The document was officially published at the time Hon. Ali Haji Warsame was the Puntland Minister of Education. The respective roles of the foreign characters were not openly defined in the curriculum. However, the minister, without giving additional information, was grateful to their “technical and financial assistances for the development of this document.” Besides, PNCF developers did not clearly explain the roles of learners, teachers, subject matter, and milieu or the setting where education takes place. However, without additional description, they cited a participatory process involved a wide cross-section of the “society in Puntland.”

## **Planning Elements**

There are at least four types of planning elements that shaped and dominated PNCF’s development process. The first planning element was the purpose of the curriculum, which was delineated in seven separate goals developers termed ‘National Goals of Education’. These goals consisted of moral development goals, science and technology goals, environment conservation goals, health promotion goals, governance goals and global oriented goals. In the objective planning, the curriculum developers assumed the educational ends of the document represented by these seven goals. However, while these goals of the curriculum are relevant to the learners’ needs at large, they did not explain a) how the curriculum orders these goals based on learners’ needs, b) what educational experiences the document would provide that are likely to attain these specific goals, c) whether the curriculum designers studied the learners before they develop the program of study, and d) whether these goals are the desired educational objectives in Puntland. The second planning element shaped the curriculum was the content of the curriculum. PNCF included the different levels of education. They comprised early childhood education, primary education (lower and middle), secondary education, non-formal education, vocational education, and higher education. These education levels are the learning structure aimed for the expansion of Puntland education strategy. Each of these levels has certain objectives clearly outlined in the curriculum. For instance, at the end of the primary education, students will achieve the essential “cognitive, social and pre-vocational skills” that will enable them appreciate a safe, healthy and useful living and add to the growth of the local community and the nation at large.

The third planning element was the subject matter that would be taught in the classroom. The curriculum designers termed this as “Curriculum Structure” or learning areas and outcomes. The subject matter or the learning areas of the primary and secondary school education programs

included mathematics, science, business, agriculture, social studies, technology, arts and craft, physical education, languages and governance. These topics are the “core curricula areas.” There are other subordinate subjects that include in the curriculum structure such as peace and conflict studies, child and human right, environmental studies, health and nutrition, gender, global issues HIV-AIDS and TDs, drugs, and culture and heritage. There are extra curricula activities students will attain besides learning the core subjects including clubs, sports, and cultural activities. The fourth planning component of the curriculum is the sequences in which these levels of education and the subjects that are taught in the class would be carried out. The sequence of the levels of education was organized vertically, i.e., each grade level has a sequence of courses that prepares learners for the next grade level of education. The learning perspective behind the curriculum is a) to develop students’ understanding of the subject matter, b) to expand their necessary skills, and c) to increase their intellectual capacity as they move through these levels of education.

### **Guiding Theories**

PNCF did not overtly mention its theoretical basis. Perhaps, the developers were not aware of the curriculum model that dominated their mission or they, on purpose, decided not to state any theory in the document. Philosophically, the document was expected to achieve the learning needs of the students to help them benefit from the next education levels. That is an elusive statement which did not clarify the theoretical position of the document. It seems PNCF developers have used several theories including Traditionalist, Experientialist and Constructivist Perspectives. Needless to say, these perceptions have opposing approaches to learning; however, having them in a curriculum can generate positive results: protecting the values and the morals of the community, while these values and ethics are subject to constant changes for better education outcomes. On one hand, the developers aimed to transmit the long-standing cultural and societal values of the local community to the children (offspring) through “curriculum values.” These values included personal values, family values, community values, and national values. Thus, the document was intended to pass on the “accumulated wisdom” of the parents to the children. As a result, the Traditional philosophy dominates to a certain extent the objectives and the learning outcomes of the curriculum, rather than the process of the learning activities. It is the traditional side of the curriculum, which was clearly planned to please the traditional heads and the religious groups. The values and the ethics of the local community were protected and their children were “elevated into the species.” That is a teacher-centered teaching approach as well.

On the other hand, the learning process, e.g., the contents, the teaching methods, and the assessment processes are all dominated by components from Experientialists and Constructivists’ perspectives, which address the needs and the interests of students as against the Traditionalists’ concept. In the Experientialists opinion, the curriculum encourages teachers to facilitate learning that promotes what students encounter in their daily lives, i.e., experiential learning (Posner, 2004). The document clearly stated that teachers should employ teaching and learning methods that promote experiential learning, i.e., learning through action, learning by doing, learning through experience, and learning through discovery (PNCF, 2015). PNCF included as well the bases of Constructivists perspective. It encourages teachers to facilitate teaching and learning that promote critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving.

That is a meaningful learning approach to understand “the abstract ideas” as opposed to rote memorization. These ideas are progressive education values. To be exact, they promote student-centered teaching and learning style intended for a comprehensive social reform through active learning, experiential learning, and skills development.

## **Curriculum Concepts**

Despite the differences in the definition of curriculum between educators as “expected ends of education” or “expected means of education”, PNCF developers’ outlook of curriculum seems linked to both definitions. The intended learning outcome and the instructional plans are stated in the document without siding with any of these descriptions. As a result, the developers included some of the seven common concepts of curriculum into the PNCF document. The first curriculum concept is the Scope and Sequence. The scope of a curriculum addresses what topics should be taught in the class, while the sequence responds to the question of when these subjects should be discharged (Ediger and Marlow, 1995). The scope and sequence is a plan describing the expected learning outcomes in every grade level of a school (Posner, 2004). It is a targeted subject matter as well as a predetermined order and timeline for its instruction (Toavs, 2017). It signifies the structure and the sequence of the curriculum. PNCF’s scope and sequence proposal is a plan which offered vague specifics of each curricular stages rather than each grade level within the education stages. For instance, the scope and sequence design of the Somali language courses in the secondary education (4 grade levels) were all joined in one learning outcome. To be precise, the learning outcome for the students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level and the students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level are the same. The curriculum should specifically define the scope and sequence for each grade level.

Another vital curriculum concept the document stated is the Syllabus or the plan for each course. The syllabus usually comprises of the intended goals of the courses, subjects covered, resources used, home-works or assignments offered, and the suggested assessment plans (Posner, 2004). At times, the syllabus has “learning objectives, learning activities, and study questions” (p, 6). PNCF concisely cited the syllabus in its last page giving broad concepts of how it would look like. PNCF did not offer a systematic process which schools should follow when creating syllabus for each course of study. Therefore, the developers need to give more recommendations of how the school syllabus would look like. The third vital element of the curriculum concept is content outline, i.e., content of the instruction. It is difficult to state in PNCF the content outline for each subject (e.g., math courses) let alone each course. It was reasonable to reference the learning outcomes of each subject rather than defining the content outline for each course. Still, PNCF could as a minimum provide guidelines of how the content outline would look like. The fourth significant curriculum concept is Standards, which usually describe what students would be able to perform after teaching and learning activities took place (Posner, 2004).

The purpose of school standards are many and can include almost all learning activities. For instance, school counseling programs may have standards that can help students achieve their educational goals (Mariani, 1998). To put it simply, the curriculum standards are prospects of

“expected means of education”, i.e., expected ends of education created by state’s learning institutions.

While PNCF did not explicitly define the standards, their replica can be gleaned from the curriculum structure section, or the learning areas and outcomes. The document should separately define the standards of the courses of each grade level (e.g., 12<sup>th</sup> grade) rather than merging the standards of the entire subject of a curricular stage, e.g., secondary education. The standards are the state expectations of what should be learned at the end of a school term; therefore, PNCF designers should clearly define them in the curriculum.



Textbooks are educational materials used as the guide for classroom teaching. They include traditional and contemporary instruction manuals. The latter are defined as instructional system, which comprise “teacher guides, student study guides ... and other supplementary instructional materials” (Posner, 2004, p. 11). PNCF elusively cited the educational materials necessary for state’s public education schools. The document came short on clearly explaining what type of instructional manuals necessary for state’s public school education. However, it provided suggestions on how to develop essential teaching and learning materials. It instructed State’s Ministry of Education to develop instructional materials that primarily depend on locally existing resources.

PNCF carefully delineated, under “curriculum structure”, the list of courses offered to students within each grade level. For instance, in the secondary education (grades 9 and 10), students will take languages (English, Arabic, and Somalia), mathematics, natural and social sciences, technology and Islamic education courses. The core curricula area of Puntland public schools were defined as mathematics, sciences, agriculture, social studies, languages and business. The document extensively outlined the course of study concept of Puntland public school curriculum; nearly half of PNCF explained the series of courses students should attain at the end of every school term. The last vital curriculum concept is planned experience. PNCF developers listed the planned experience, which are extra curriculum activities, under skills category. Their objectives can also be found under the non-formal education section, where students are offered different learning opportunities including adult literacy and community health education. The planned experiences are to a certain extent important like schools’ official curriculum (Posner, 2004). They consist of life skills, e.g., personal qualities and creativity; learning skills, e.g., problem solving and research; and work skills such as leadership and organizational.

Although the document did not consider these extra curriculum as planned experience, they can be listed as experiences that students may develop throughout the learning activities.

## **Curriculum Proper**

### **The Purpose and the Content**

The chief purpose of PNCF is to manage the school education to a degree where learners become capable to deal with the “21<sup>st</sup> challenges.” It was intended to address the curricular issues including “subjects, inclusiveness, localization, educational research, teacher education and overall educational management” (PNCF, 2015, p.5). Additionally, PNCF was planned to assess students, teachers, schools, and the curriculum. The document responded as well to the management of Puntland schools resolving curricula concerns, assessing learners, teachers, schools and the curriculum itself. In addition, the document was designed to offer guidance on the contents of the curriculum and how these contents are delivered in schools. As part of the overall education sector of the region, the document was prepared to “resolving socio-economic, political, cultural and spiritual challenges” which the region was experiencing. Besides, PNCF addresses social and administrative goals. In the Social goals, the document was proposed to improve the quality of lives among the community regarding social values, health promotion, employment opportunities, governance and environment. These goals are projected to moving Puntland forward socially, politically, ecologically, and economically in order the state develops and maintains financial, civil, and societal prosperity. In short, PNCF was envisioned to guide and manage the contents (scope) of Puntland National Curriculum and how these contents are delivered (sequence) in schools.

The central piece of PNCF’s content of the curriculum is the core curricula areas making the conceptions of the subject matter and the forms of their representations unclear. PNCF listed the core curricula areas giving emphasis to the learning outcomes rather than the conceptions of each subject matter, which differentiate courses from each other. For instance, the language curriculum that conceives of language as those skills in which learners should master to write a good essay might stress choosing relevant topics, brainstorming ideas, and forming good sentences and paragraphs. Same concepts applies to other subject matter including mathematics and science. Therefore, PNCF should identify the conception of each subject matter in order the learner to easily comprehend the theme and the emphasis of the subject. The aspects of the curriculum content intended for educational context are described in the core curricula areas. They include mathematics, science, language, business, agriculture, social studies, technology, art and craft, physical education development, and government and policies. Furthermore, the document sanctioned a syllabus for each subject matter without giving clear direction of how the syllabus would look like. PNCF should provide a regular procedure which schools must follow when creating a syllabus for each subject. That is, guiding teachers how to develop course goals, learning objectives and other educational activities.

PNCF outlined its National Goals of Education as health promotion, governance, moral development, science and technology, environment conservation and occupational goals. These goals were intended to be achieved through a better-quality education process. In light of these goals, PNCF defined the types of learning objectives for each of its six educational levels.

For instance, the objectives for “Early Childhood Education” would concentrate on Qur’anic knowledge, good character and behavior, good social responsibility, physical and mental development, literacy and numeric skills. Even though the document defined the types of the learning objectives for the six educational levels (early childhood, primary, secondary, non-formal education, vocational education and higher education), it was limited to describe only the learning areas of the primary and secondary education as briefly aforesaid under the planning elements section of this paper. The contents of the Puntland curriculum have also a positive outlook on multicultural education, where it would safeguard and consider the undefined students’ origin and statuses.

The document did not clearly state the standards. However, their sample can be found from the document’s assessment and the learning areas and outcomes. Moreover, the document did not clearly reference how it would be determined if students have met the schools’ standards and the consequence for students, teachers and school administrations if the standards are not met. This is an important area of the curriculum proper where PNCF developers should fully and clearly describe in a separate section of the document in order to make clear what learners should be able to do and what process they should go through to achieve the clearly stated PNCF learning outcomes. Additionally, technology will impact on the content of Puntland curriculum. It plays an essential role in curriculum organization, particularly in online courses, where almost the entire study materials are on the web and online. Technology in curriculum organization may increase the role of students and teachers in education, giving them “instant feedback” about a subject matter (SRI, 2013). It is as well an indispensable component to prepare students with the inclusive knowledge and the basic learning in technology for the benefit of their future (Soobik, 2014). Therefore, the primary and the secondary education levels are expected to offer courses on technology resources including hardware devices and software applications (PNCF, 2015). These technology tools will help students to better master the subject matter and to accurately use them for basic operations, productivity and communication purposes, problem-solving and other extracurricular activities such as collecting new information from different sources.

## **Recommendations**

1. While the PNCF goals are relevant to the learners’ needs, the document should explain:
  - a. how the curriculum orders these goals based on the students’ needs
  - b. what experiences PNCF would provide that are likely to attain these specific goals
  - c. whether these goals are the desired educational objectives
2. PNCF should clearly outline the roles of the learners, the teachers, the subject matter, and the milieu where instruction takes place.
3. The curriculum should clearly state its educational philosophy.
4. The curriculum should specifically define the scope and sequence for each grade level rather than offering vague specifics of each curricular stage.

5. It is imperative to provide more recommendations of how the school syllabus would look like. Therefore, PNCF should provide a regular procedure which schools must follow when creating a syllabus for each subject.
6. PNCF should delineate in a separate section the curriculum standards of the courses of each grade level rather than combining the standards of the entire subject of a curricular stage.
7. PNCF should define the consequence for students, teachers and school administrations if the curriculum standards are not successfully achieved.
8. PNCF should identify the conception of each subject matter in order the learner to easily comprehend the theme and the emphasis of the subject.
9. PNCF should describe the types of the learning objectives for all of the six educational levels.

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