

## **Analyzing Puntland’s ‘National Curriculum’**

### **Part II**

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#### **Curriculum in use**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to analyze ‘Puntland National Curriculum Framework’ (PNCF) to understand its meanings. The paper examines the following area of the document: curriculum in use, which includes curriculum implementation, evaluation, and recommendations. Part three analysis will discuss reexamination, critiques, and recommendations in a separate paper. [Part I analysis has been published.](#)

#### **Curriculum Implementation**

Achieving specific goals is an ongoing process. To ensure the curriculum is functional, PNCF developers recommended a pilot-test before the implementation for content and objectives improvement feedback. The findings of the pilot-testing, intended to detect errors and create a viable document, were not available. Periodic curriculum reviews to strengthen the teaching and the administrative roles in the curriculum were assigned to the Department of Quality Assurance and Standards by the curriculum developers. A review of the primary and the



secondary education was recommended every eight and four years respectively as part of the curriculum implementation. The schoolyear calendar was divided into two terms, each term was 19 weeks. The academic year was for the primary education 730 hours, for the intermediate 886 hours, and for the secondary education 1026 hours. The periods for lessons of primary, intermediate, and secondary education were 35 minutes, 40 minutes, and 45 minutes respectively.

The chosen class periods are reasonable because of the different number of courses in the curriculum. However, the complexity of the curriculum content for each grade level and the expectations for the students to understand the subject require teachers to have more time for teaching. This requires supporting students by meeting with them during class time and providing feedback to them by reviewing their class work and homework assignments. These temporal factors require comprehensive analysis for developing and implementing a curriculum. The time related factors affect the teacher's time to plan, teach, and evaluate students' learning progression. Some courses in the secondary education require laboratory and project works, the significance of these extra times for learning must be noted in the curriculum. PNCF developers need to consider temporal constraints – time related constraints - for the lessons of the secondary education.

Physical space is another frame factor where teachers and school administrators operate to administer the curriculum and educate students. A curriculum cannot properly function without a physical frame, i.e., the surrounding environment of the school and the classroom. Nature trails, built environments, and the instructional materials offered for teaching and learning purposes are all physical frame factors. School laboratories and playgrounds are examples of the built environments where modern technologies such as computers, e-learning tools, and graphing calculators are all parts of the instructional materials. PNCF developers overlooked to note the importance of the physical frame factors. The developers should state these factors to understand how they affect the function of the schools, the classrooms, and the curriculum. They could at minimum identify available physical requirements of the curriculum, e.g., the modern technologies teachers use to administer and revise the curriculum, evaluate students' learning progress, and report back to the school administrators.

Political and legal frames influence how schools operate and how a curriculum is developed and implemented. Local and federal governments fund schools and set conditions for a curriculum implementation. Governments also issue graduation certifications and school and teacher licenses. Governments administer a unified testing to measure school progress upon completion of the schoolyear curricula. In Somalia, a federal government-mandated testing has been in place for decades where the central government assumes the responsibility of the secondary school certificate examination. The purpose of this standardized testing is to hold schools and instructors accountable for what they teach to improve the quality of education. These federal and state government policies, not discussed in detail their roles, are part of the political frame factor that influence schools and curriculum functions. The document stated some government measures to improve the state's education sector. According to PNCF, Puntland state government took steps to increase its education budget from 2 percent in 1998 to 7 percent in 2014. The government also expanded the role of the state education department to improve the ailing state education system where the gross enrollment rate for primary education expanded from 11 percent in 1998 to 47 percent in 2014. Subsequently, the government made primary education free for the residents.

Another frame factor to understand before implementing any curriculum is the personal frame factors, i.e., personal characteristics of the instructors, administrators, students, and other key stakeholders such as parents. The characteristics of the schools' personnel effect the curriculum implementation. As the students are the deciding factor of the curriculum success, PNCF developers should examine the students' academic levels such as reading and writing skills, mathematics, and their technology proficiency, i.e., the students' computer and e-learning skills. The developers should also review the teachers' skills as they are another key factor that determines the failure or the success of the curriculum.

Like the personal frame factor, the economic frame factor influences the development of the curriculum and its changes during the implementation and the revision processes. PNCF developers should study not only the cost of the curriculum development but also the cost of its future changes and who will fund and supervise these changes – local, state, and federal level, or outside support as seen in the development phase of the curriculum.

PNCF developers reviewed one of the two different cultural aspects that normally influence the curriculum implementation. i.e., the culture of the community. They studied the values of the local community, and to some extent avoided controversy between the values in the curriculum and the values of the local community. The developers considered the community values such as personal, family, community, and national values by incorporating some traditional philosophy elements in the objectives and in the learning outcomes of the curriculum. However, they did not investigate the other existing culture within the school system, i.e., acknowledging students' academic achievements, safe environments, mutual relationships among staff members, and parental involvement in teaching and learning activities. Like the culture of the community, the culture within the school system influences the curriculum. Therefore, PNCF developers should study what kind of values and standards are dominant regarding the people's conduct within the school system in all grade levels.

While PNCF addressed how Puntland faced an inadequate capacity necessary to improve the delivery of an effective curriculum, it never discussed the possible cost and benefits associated with its changes, and how the frame factors will affect these changes. Changes in curriculum not only require resources and changing in subject matters but also require studying the impacts of the aforesaid frame factors. Studying teachers' continuously changing interests and expertise may help curriculum developers to properly focus on and initiate the new changes to the curriculum. These changes to curriculum include curriculum standards. As stated in the first part of this analysis, PNCF did not clearly outline the standards. However, their replica was noted in the curriculum structure section, or the learning areas and the outcomes. PNCF must clearly describe the curriculum standards of the courses of each grade level rather than integrating the standards of the entire subject of a curricular stage, e.g., secondary education level. Once PNCF defines the standards it must ensure how perfect the curriculum is aligned to these standards as they outline the content to be learned.

Another important element is the education technology component. Without detailing the types of technologies available for the curriculum implementation, PNCF described how the subject of technology empowers learners to communicate “in words, pictures, and sound”. The document detailed the outcome of each grade level regarding the technology courses. Primary education learners will be able to master the basic use of computers and other technology resources for learning activities. In the secondary education level, students will be able to effectively use the different types of computer applications and other multimedia resources for learning purposes. While the document was clear about the importance of using technology for teaching and learning activities, it never addressed the essential topics regarding incorporating modern technologies into education. The curriculum did not prioritize the effective use of e-learning tools and the possibility of integrating online resources into the already existing technology in the traditional classroom. As the scope of delivery modes is increasing with the advance of the modern technologies, PNCF developers need to establish methods of instructional delivery before implementing the curriculum.

The curriculum developers paid close attention to students’ cultural and social backgrounds. They noted how Puntland’s Ministry of Education and Higher Education was committed to promoting the provision of inclusive education in schools “by providing support and service to all learners in [the state] regardless of their abilities, gender, age, and socioeconomic status”. Despite this, the developers must be careful in applying imported multicultural views applied to schools in foreign countries. It would be a big mistake to compare schools in increasingly diverse societies like the United Kingdom or United States to schools in Puntland where residents are extremely homogenous. In that case, it is meaningless to adopt a curriculum for the needs of imaginary groups, such as minority groups. While students in Puntland may vary in economic backgrounds, they more likely have similar social and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, Puntland State curriculum must be uniform and consistent.

### **PNCF From an Evaluation Point of View**

It is necessary to identify what is to be assessed before constructing an assessment instrument. The success of any evaluation requires a careful account of what to evaluate as it does on the qualities of the evaluation techniques to use. i.e., identifying the characteristics to be measured should precede the selection of the evaluation processes. To our knowledge, there are no written evaluation data that PNCF developers provided to justify the development of their evaluation methods except describing the general situation of the state’s education sector. The PNCF developers did not state the decision they took to improve and unify the various existing curriculum systems in Puntland, e.g., they did not carry out formative and summative assessments on the already existing education systems to develop the state’s new official curriculum.

Formative test and assessment are used to monitor learning process while summative test and assessment is used to examine students’ performance level at the end of instruction. Primarily, the formative test and assessment, such as quizzes, practice test, and unit test, is employed at the end of a chapter or a segment of instruction to assess the students’ learning process.

It is also used to assess problems with the instruction to improve instructional outcomes. In contrast, summative test and assessment is used to measure the achievement of students at the end of the instruction to determine the degree to which the instructional goals have been achieved. Therefore, there are no reasonable findings based on the general data in the PNCF document. However, as stated above, the developers noted that Puntland government increased education budget by 5 percent. The gross enrollment rate of the primary education also increased nearly four times from 1998 to 2014. However, these are not written evaluation data to validate the development of the document's evaluation methods.

PNCF delineated the challenges Puntland faced regarding "the delivery of quality education" in all the regions of the state. These challenges include "equity-related" problems cited in the document without giving specific details what equity difficulties existed in Puntland's education sector. Moreover, the document disclosed the existence of ununified curriculum systems including differences in examination delivery which negatively impacted on the quality of the states' education sector. The ununified curriculum, according to PNCF, created learners with different values and ideologies which may negatively influence the unity of Puntland residents.

PNCF developers suggested a mixed method assessment regarding the two known contrasting evaluation methods. On one hand they instructed to use a measurement-based evaluation method, where the learning activities are justified by their results and that these results can be measured. On the other hand, they promoted the integrated evaluation method by giving students a leading role to control over their environment through decision-making responsibility, i.e., giving students choices of what to evaluate and how to conduct the evaluation process. PNCF did not explicitly instruct what standardized tests relevant to the curriculum to understand whether the content of the curriculum was successfully transmitted. In addition, without giving specific details about how the curriculum must be aligned with the assessment tests, i.e., standardized tests, the document developers recommended a "national measuring learning achievement" once every two years to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The developers acknowledged the role of Puntland National Examination Board (PNEB) in three assessment processes: Students' self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment. In upper elementary and secondary education levels, learners are encouraged to evaluate their learning progress. Learners are also empowered to assess the learning progress of one another, i.e., peer assessment. Teachers will play a facilitator role conducting formative and summative assessments. Through PNEB, Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education administers general examinations for a certification purpose at the end of each grade level. However, the curriculum, without precisely stating evaluation instruments, e.g., scales, provided the aforesaid assessment criteria to examine the schools' teaching and learning processes. These evaluation methods, endorsed by the curriculum developers, are mainly suggestions and not instruments or evaluation data such as test scores. These suggestions, however, are equally fair for all learners in the State of Puntland.

## Recommendations

1. While PNCF's chosen class time for a lesson in a course was reasonable, additional time for the laboratory, project works, and the other extracurricular activities of the courses must be considered. The significance of such additional time must be noted in the curriculum.
2. A curriculum cannot accurately function without surrounding environment of the school and the classroom. Therefore, PNCF developers need to acknowledge the significance of nature trails, built environments, and the instructional materials for the curriculum implementation.
3. PNCF developers need to study the students' academic capacity, such as reading and writing skills, mathematics, and their technology proficiency.
4. PNCF developers need to examine the cost of the curriculum's future changes and who will fund and supervise these changes.
5. PNCF must clearly describe the curriculum standards of the courses of each grade level rather than integrating the standards of the entire subject of a curricular stage.
6. PNCF developers need to establish methods of instructional delivery, i.e., instructional technologies, before implementing the curriculum.
7. To understand whether the content of the curriculum was successfully transmitted, PNCF should explicitly direct what standardized tests relevant to the curriculum.
8. PNCF must clearly state the evaluation instruments schools require to collect the evaluation data.

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