

DIALOGICAL EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM IN PAKISTAN: ISSUES AND PROSPECTSSyed Kamran Ali Shah¹, Muqaddas Butt², Irum Muzammil³, Mahroza Zafar Ali⁴

Original Article

1. PhD (Education) Scholar, Division of Education, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: ravian7985@gmail.com (**Corresponding Author**)
2. Assistant Professor, Division of Education, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan.
3. PhD (Education) Scholar, Division of Education, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan
4. MPhil (Education) Scholar, Division of Education, University of Education, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

In Pakistan, a center-periphery approach is followed in the process of curriculum development in which the curriculum developers stress following the guidelines and objectives formulated by the bureaucrats at the central/ provincial levels. In this way, the teachers play a little role in the process of curriculum development instead they are instructed to teach the books and complete the syllabus. Dialogical education allows to provides a positive and dynamic contribution to students in the building of collective knowledge. Here a form of dialogue is adopted and students get an opportunity to discuss and build shared knowledge. This study aims to explore dimensions of dialogical education and to investigate key issues in implementing dialogical education in the country. It recommends that the problems of society like poverty, law and order situation, illiteracy, impatience, and unstable democracy can be better understood if a system of dialogical education is followed.

Keywords: Dialogical education, Curriculum development, Dynamic contribution, Poverty, impatience.

INTRODUCTION

Dialogical education provides an opportunity for students to actively participate in a dialogue and to create new knowledge based on their ideas (Alexander, 2006). This type of education is not limited to classrooms. It is neither related to a specific issue nor a particular branch of knowledge. It is just a simple discussion that provides the participants a platform to listen to the ideas of one another and to develop shared knowledge (Bakhtin, 1988).

Several educationists, scholars, and philosophers like Mead, Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and Freire have contributed to the concept of dialogical education. Modern dialogical approaches involve the themes like philosophy for children, thinking together, and accountable talk.

This study explores different dimensions of dialogical education and then discusses issues and prospects of implementing dialogical education in Pakistan. The term dialogical education is being used in many educational settings, however; clarification of this concept is

still needed. This article states the meaning, history, and modern development of dialogical education. Later on, some approaches to dialogical education have also been discussed. After stating the key concepts of dialogical education, issues related to curriculum development in Pakistan are being illustrated. Finally, the prospects of implementing dialogical education in Pakistan are being highlighted and a few suggestions have been provided to support and implement the dialogical education in Pakistan.

The study aimed to explore the meaning, history, and modern development of dialogical education. Identification of issues involved in implementing dialogical education in Pakistan was also a research objective. Following were the research questions.

1. What is the meaning, history, and modern development of dialogical education?
2. What are the different approaches to dialogical education?
3. What are the issues and prospects involved in implementing dialogical education and curriculum in Pakistan?

Dialogical Education: Meaning, History and Modern Development

Dialogical education is a type of education that focuses upon the significance of dialogue for learning. It is very necessary to understand the meaning of dialogue and its usage in an educational setting. Commonly a dialogue is such a conversation in which if an answer does not create a new question, it is dropped from the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986). In dialogic education, the students remained to engage in such a dialogue that ultimately helps them to form up new knowledge which is based upon their ideas (Alexander, 2006). Dialogic education is neither limited to classrooms nor it is confined to studies, but it is a general discussion on any topic or any area of life

(Bakhtin, 1988). This education stresses to provide constructive and active participation of students and results in the construction of shared knowledge. The dialogic education adopts the form of a dialogue and provides space to the students to discuss and build shared knowledge.

Dialogical education is deep-rooted before the establishment of public education systems and literacy through modern schools. Its roots can be traced to Buddhism in India (Sen, 2005). The dialogic education is also claimed to be rooted in Jewish education (Schwarz & Baker, 2016), Confucian education (Li & Wegerif, 2014), and Islamic education (Makdisi, 1990). So it is deduced that the concept of dialogical education is not purely western although many of the latest concepts about dialogical education have been developed in Europe and the USA. In the following paragraphs, the modern development of dialogical education and the contribution of various scholars and educationists has been discussed.

The work of John Dewey in the field of education showed the influence of different forms of dialogic education. In his last book, he gave inspiration for transitive discussion, which is the alternative form of dialogue that is the core of dialogical education (Berkowitz, 1980).

George Herbert Mead wrote about how the students learn to reason. It included that the individual is responsible for his thoughts by the standards of good reasoning within a community. This concept is partially influenced by the idea of Accountable Talk used in dialogical education (Resnick, Michaels, & O'Connor, 2010).

Bakhtin differentiated between the inside and outside space of the dialogues. He characterized the essential dialogical education by making the difference between an authoritative word and a persuasive word. The authoritative word has no internal impact upon the mind of the learners as it has not the ability

to enter into the minds. On the other hand, the persuasive word has the power to enter into someone's mind and may become an essential part of the thinking of the learners. He thought that the authoritative words stop critical thinking among the students and so do not have a deeper impact on their minds. While the persuasive words allow them to learn on their own and provide the opportunity for a deep understanding of different concepts. Hence they become able to understand the world from a different perspective (Bakhtin, 1981).

Vygotsky put forward the idea of cognitive development. This idea encouraged the dialogical understanding of thinking and indicated the process of students learning to think. His concept of the zone of proximal development gave a clear idea about the dialogical relations in the classroom. According to this concept, the teachers are to connect with the views of the students, and similarly, the students are to connect, too (Wegerif, 2011).

Paulo Freire was a great supporter of dialogical education. He argued that traditional education stops critical thinking as it deals with knowledge as a material thing that is to be injected into the minds of the learners. This education propagates ideas of certain people to whom he named oppressors. These oppressors inculcate the knowledge of their benefit into the minds of the oppressed people so that they can rule over them. Such education does not allow the oppressed to speak and express their ideas. He believed that this is the dialogical education that helps the oppressors to share their ideas. They get the ability to think critically and to analyze the real-life problems and the hidden interests of the oppressor class of people. According to him, dialogical education focuses upon the personal experience of the learners, allows them to speak freely, and develops a relationship of respect and honor between the teacher and the learner (Freire 2000). Now some dialogical education has been mentioned in the following paragraphs.

Philosophy for children

Professor Matthew Lipman (2003) is known to be the developer of Philosophy for Children (P4C). It promotes the idea of Bakhtin about dialogue. The major strategy adopted here is based on children and is facilitated by the teacher. Teacher provides his theoretical suggestion to students and invites them to discuss about it. Creative, critical, caring, and collaborative thinking skills are included in P4C courses in the United Kingdom (Sutcliffe, 2016).

- Listening to others and valuing their opinions is included in Caring.
- Replying and helping others is meant for being Collaborative.
- Critical means to ask about a certain phenomenon, finding its reasons and finally making judgements.
- Creative means to provide unusual rationalization about certain facts.

Thinking Together

It is based on the views of Vygotsky and promotes dialogue in the explicit shape of Exploratory Talk. Here the participants share their thoughts and views. They all then think collectively to build new awareness and knowledge (Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

The wilfulness of all participants to follow some basic behavior pattern plays a vital role in the generation of the Exploratory Talk. This pattern may include values or norms, which may be termed as ground rules and can be developed with the consent of the students (Edwards & Mercer, 2013). Such rules are mentioned below:

- Information be mentioned openly
- Encouragement to every member to participate
- Listening to others carefully
- Equal importance to every suggestion
- Logical reasoning be provided by the member for ideas and opinions
- Acceptance of constructive challenges

- Discussion about all possibilities before a decision is taken
- Teamwork with the focus on reaching an agreement
- The responsibility for decisions made lays on the group (Dawes, Mercer & Wegerif, 2004.)

Accountable Talk

It is similar to the concept of Thinking Together. This approach having three dimensions: Accountability to the knowledge society, Accountability to precise information, and Accountability to exact judgment was initially formulated in the USA (Resnick, O'Connor & Michaels, 2008).

Accountability to the knowledge society is regarding the discussion of students with each other in which they learn from their class fellows and may agree or disagree with one other. Accountability to precise information refers to the material which the students undertake during their discussion. They should be able to make claims and try to be as precise as possible. So, this is all about obtaining the accuracy of the facts as much as possible. Accountability to exact judgment is concerned with the development of a rational and consistent line of argument. Here the students are required to adopt solid logic, as well as support, to back up their arguments.

Dialogical Teaching and Curriculum

Dialogical teaching increases pupils' capability to talk to encourage their thinking and improve wisdom (Alexander, 2010). Dialogical teaching is not merely a different way of communication; it is a principled approach to pedagogy. (Sylvia Wolfe, 2008). In the dialogical teaching process, social relations are transformed in the class room and critical thinking about society is enhanced among the students. It is a way to reproduce information and it provides the opportunity of learning to both, the teacher and the learner. It rejects the traditional way of teaching in which the students

remain passive and keep on listening to what a teacher says. It involves the role of a teacher as a researcher, a political activist, and an artist (Shor and Freire, 1987).

According to Alexander (2010) dialogical teaching/ curriculum involve the following;

- It provides the opportunity for learning and development to students
- It involves the process of inter-personal learning.
- It may be teacher-facilitated within the classroom and self-directed outside the classroom.
- It enhances inquiry skills among students.
- It appreciates the active involvement of all students in the teaching-learning process.
- It improves the questioning skills of students.
- It allows teachers to observe student self-learning.

The dialogical curriculum involves the following principles:

- Different people have different understandings about things in different times and places.
- New information is created when these different perspectives are involved in a dialogue.
- Respecting differences in opinions creates a learning environment.
- The learners construct their meanings which enhance their learning.
- Such dialogues improve critical thinking among students.

Process of Curriculum Development in Pakistan

There was not any permanent curriculum development institution by 1972 and this activity of curriculum development was accomplished through committees. In 1972, the National Bureau of Curriculum in Islamabad

along with four parallel Bureaus of Curriculum and Extension Wings at the provincial level was established, to revise the school curriculum (Memon, 1989).

At present, curriculum developers focus to obtain the objectives formulated by the bureaucrats at the central/ provincial levels. This is a center-periphery approach. At the provincial level, different committees are formed which involve teachers, principals, subject experts, and curriculum experts, who work on the proposals. These committees prepare an initial draft and after suitable changes, this draft is presented to the national curriculum committee. Sometimes, specific amendments are also done up to cope with the requirements of different international donor agencies. In simple words, one can say that the curriculum is dependent upon the views of the so-called experts or carries the recommendations suggested by funding organizations. The teachers are not given any effective role in the process of curriculum development instead they are instructed to teach the books and complete the syllabus, designed and issued by the authorities. Hence we may conclude that the teachers, the students, and the parents have no role in the formulation of curricula.

Issues in implementing Dialogical Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the process of curriculum development is poor as we borrow the ideas from western and developed countries and include those into our curriculum without focusing on the prevailing ground realities of our country. In this way, the policies are not implemented properly and these remained on paper (Ghafoor 1979). Moreover, the involvement of bureaucracy in curriculum development causes severe issues regarding the content, methodology, and learning experiences. Teachers may play a very active and efficient role in curriculum development. They have the first-hand experience of teaching students and dealing with different classes of

different levels. They possess a strong grip upon content and have the observation of the learning experiences of students. There is no alternative to teacher involvement in the process of curriculum development. The process of curriculum development mainly depends upon the involvement and professionalism of teachers (Tanner & Tanner, 1980).

Furthermore, the committees constituted for curriculum development have a major representation from college and university faculty members, and school teachers have a very low proportion. No doubt, school teachers are directly involved with school students and the teaching-learning process and the responsibility of implementation of curriculum rests on their shoulders. But they are never given due presentation/ involvement in the process of curriculum development (Sheikh, 1970).

In the dialogical curriculum framework, both the teacher and the student play a vital role. Students learn critical thinking and apply it to understand society. They contribute to creating new knowledge. Teacher act as a facilitator and involves and guides them towards a certain specific field of knowledge. In Pakistan, this approach is very difficult to adopt. The following issues are expected to arise in case of implementation;

Our curriculum developers and bureaucracy would create hurdles and try to fail such a system in which their role and authority may become less important.

- The educational policies of our country are not favorable in this regard.
- Politicians, economists, and other stakeholders would never permit to implement this approach.
- Due to a lack of professionalism, a large number of teachers do not have the required capability which is necessary for the implementation of this approach.

- Funding and donor agencies will react upon it as it goes against their hidden motives.
- Our society, as a whole, will not be favoring it on account of its less rate of literacy and other social constraints.
- The status quo is a big hurdle as it challenges every sort of change.
- This approach will take a long time for its implementation and as a nation, we lack patience, so this is a potential issue.

Prospects and Recommendations

Implementing a dialogical curriculum in Pakistan has its significance. In the following paragraphs, we shall now discuss it.

Dialogical teaching and curriculum create critical thinking among students. In the prevailing political and socioeconomic conditions, it becomes very significant to create critical thinking among students. This will help them to understand the role of different powers which serve as the foundation of our present problems. These problems include poverty, law and order situation, illiteracy, impatience, and unstable democracy. All of these problems are due to some hidden local and international powers. To resolve these, first, it is necessary to understand the hidden motives of the forces, which are responsible for their creation.

Dialogical curriculum plays an important role in the creation of new knowledge. This helps the students to improve their skills and understanding of the present knowledge. In Pakistan, this will help a lot to increase the literacy rate and interest of students in their studies.

This curriculum changes the traditional role of teachers. The teachers have to adopt a student-oriented approach and keep the individual differences of students, into consideration. In this way, the students may get a better opportunity for their growth and to enhance their capabilities. This will ultimately

help them to become responsible and well aware youth. This youth will be able to meet the challenges of a new era. All of these efforts will result in a progressive and prosperous Pakistan.

It is necessary to develop a strong professional base of the teachers before implementing a dialogical curriculum framework in Pakistan. Teachers' training is very significant in this regard. Teacher education programs and degrees should be equipped with an introduction, skills required and execution of dialogical curriculum framework. The role of curriculum developers is also very important as they can provide necessary guidance to teachers regarding the implementation of this framework.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, R.J. (2017) *Towards Dialogic Teaching: re-thinking classroom talk*, (5th edition), York, Dialogos.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). Discourse in the novel, in M. M. Bakhtin (ed.), *The dialogic Imagination. Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Austin: University of Texas Press...
- Berkowitz, M. W. (1980). *The Role of Transactive Discussion in Moral Development: The History of a Six-Year Program of Research, Part I [and]*. ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Clarke, S. N., Resnick, L. B., Penstein Rosé, C., Corno, L., & Anderman, E. M. (2016). Dialogic instruction: a new frontier. *Handbook of educational psychology*. 3rd ed. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 278-388.
- Dawes, L. (2010). *Creating a Speaking and Listening Classroom: Integrating Talk for Learning at Key Stage 2*. London: Routledge
- Dawes, L., Mercer, N. and Wegerif, R. (2004, Second Edition). 'Thinking Together': A programme of activities for developing speaking, listening and thinking skills for

- children aged 8–11. Birmingham: Imaginative Minds Ltd.
- Edwards, D., and Mercer, N. (1987/2013) *Common Knowledge: The Development of Understanding in the Classroom*. London: Methuen/Routledge.
- Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., & See, B. H. (2017). Can 'Philosophy for children' improve primary school attainment?. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 51(1), 5-22.
- Harré, R. (1999). Positioning theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*.
- Hennessy, S., Mercer, N., & Warwick, P. (2011). A Dialogic Inquiry Approach to Working with Teachers in Developing Classroom Dialogue. *Teachers college record*, 113(9), 1906-1959.
- Howe, C. (2010). *Peer groups and children's development*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kazak, S., Wegerif, R., & Fujita, T. (2015). Combining scaffolding for content and scaffolding for dialogue to support conceptual breakthroughs in understanding probability. *ZDM*, 47(7), 1269-1283.
- Kazak, S., Wegerif, R., & Fujita, T. (2015). The importance of dialogic processes to conceptual development in mathematics. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 90(2), 105-120.
- Kennedy, D. (2014). Neoteny, dialogic education and an emergent psychoculture: Notes on theory and practice. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 48(1), 100-117.
- Kumpulainen, K., & Rajala, A. (2017). Dialogic teaching and students' discursive identity negotiation in the learning of science. *Learning and Instruction*, 48, 23-31.
- Lambirth, A. (2006). Challenging the laws of talk: ground rules, social reproduction and the curriculum. *The Curriculum Journal*, 17(1), 59-71.
- Lambirth, A. (2006). Challenging the laws of talk; ground rules, social reproduction and the curriculum. *The Curriculum Journal*, 17, 1, 59-71.
- Lambirth, A. (2009). Ground rules for talk: the acceptable face of prescription. *The Curriculum Journal*, 20(4), 423-435.
- Lefstein, A., & Snell, J. (2013). *Better than best practice: Developing teaching and learning through dialogue*. Routledge.
- Li, L., and Wegerif, R. What does it mean to teach thinking in China? Challenging and developing notions of 'Confucian education'. *Thinking skills and creativity* 11 (2014): 22-32.
- Ligorio, M. B. (2010). Dialogical relationship between identity and learning. *Culture & Psychology*, 16(1), 93-107.
- Linell, P. (2009). *Rethinking language, mind and world dialogically: Interactional and contextual theories of human sense-making*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Littleton, K., & Mercer, N. (2013). *Interthinking: Putting talk to work*. Routledge.
- Matusov, E. (2009). *Journey into dialogic pedagogy*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Publishers.
- Matusov, E., & Miyazaki, K. (2014). Dialogue on dialogic pedagogy. *Dialogic Pedagogy*, 2.
- Matusov, E., & Wegerif, R. (2014). Dialogue on 'dialogic education': Has Rupert gone over to 'the dark side'? *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 2.
- Michaels, S., O'Connor, C., & Resnick, L. B. (2008). Deliberative discourse idealized and realized: Accountable talk in the classroom and in civic life. *Studies in philosophy and education*, 27(4), 283-297.
- Oakeshott, M. (1989). *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education* (T. Fuller, ed.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Phillipson, N., & Wegerif, R. (2016). *Dialogic Education: Mastering Core Concepts Through Thinking Together*. Taylor & Francis.
- Resnick, L. B., & Schantz, F. (2015). Re-thinking Intelligence: schools that build the mind. *European Journal of Education*, 50(3), 340-349.
- Resnick, L. B., Michaels, S., & O'Connor, C.

- (2010). How (well-structured) talk builds the mind. In R. J. Sternberg & D. D. Preiss (Eds.) *Innovations in educational psychology: Perspectives on learning, teaching and human development* (pp. 163-194). New York: Springer Publishing.
- Resnick, L., O'Connor, C., and Michaels, S. (2007). Classroom Discourse, Mathematical Rigor, and Student Reasoning: An Accountable Talk Literature Review.
- Schwarz, B. B., & Baker, M. J. (2016). *Dialogue, argumentation and education: History, theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, M. K. (2002). Paulo Freire and informal education. *The encyclopaedia of informal education*. [www.infed.org/thinkers/et-freir.html]
- Sutcliffe, R. (2016). The evolution of Philosophy for Children in the UK *Philosophy for Children: Theories and Praxis in Teacher Education*, 1.
- Topping, K. J., & Trickey, S. (2007). Collaborative philosophical enquiry for school children: Cognitive effects at 10–12 years. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77(2), 271-288.
- Voloshinov, V. N. (1986). *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Harvard University Press.
- Webb, P., Whitlow, J. W., & Venter, D. (2016). From Exploratory Talk to Abstract Reasoning: a Case for Far Transfer?. *Educational Psychology Review*, 1-17.
- Wegerif, R. (2007). *Dialogic, Education and Technology: Expanding the Space of Learning*. New York and Berlin: Springer.
- Wegerif, R. (2011). Towards a dialogic theory of how children learn to think. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 6(3), 179-190.
- Wegerif, R. (2012). Learning to think as becoming dialogue: an ontologic-dialogic account of learning and teaching thinking in primary classrooms. In Ligorio, B and Cesar, M. (Eds.) *The interplays between dialogical learning and dialogical self*. IAP – Information Age Publishing (Book Series – Advances in Cultural Psychology, edited by JannValsiner
- Wegerif, R. (2013). *Dialogic: Education for the Internet age*. Routledge.
- Wegerif, R., Doney, J. and Jamison, I (in press) Exploring the ontological dimension of dialogic education through an evaluation of the impact of Internet mediated dialogue across cultural difference. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*.
- Wegerif, R., Linares, J. P., Rojas- Drummond, S., Mercer, N., & Velez, M. (2005). Thinking together in the UK and Mexico: Transfer of an educational innovation. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 40-48.
- Wegerif, R., Mercer, N., & Dawes, L. (1999). From social interaction to individual reasoning: an empirical investigation of a possible socio-cultural model of cognitive development. *Learning and instruction*, 9(6), 493-516.
- Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Towards a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yang, Y. (2016). Lessons learnt from contextualising a UK teaching thinking program in a conventional Chinese classroom. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 19, 198-209.