



RESEARCH PAPER

Influence of Religion on National Curriculum Design of Pakistan: An Analysis

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This paper investigates influence of religion on National Curriculum design of Pakistan which envelops various empirical and theoretical references reflecting the influence of religion. The purpose behind the perspective of this study is to analyze and determine the influence of religion in the text books of curriculum of Pakistan. Being positivist in epistemological stance, the quantitative approach is applied. For Data collection, the questionnaire has been used as tool to gather responses from different people. The responses are assessed and analyzed from sample size of 56 people. The findings gathered from responses suggest that national curriculum is manipulated to build the national identity of particular community, and it does not inculcate the sense of equity and equality coupled with tolerance in all the sections of society which ultimately results in developing religious biased attitude and intolerance against people of other belief. Thus attention of educational experts, curriculum designers and stakeholders is desperately needed to revisit the curriculum design and amend the same in the larger interest of education and society as a whole.

Introduction

In a school or college there is a prescribed course of study based different subjects called curriculum. An independent country or state imparts its ideology, culture, traditions, norms and values through national curriculum. By designing well articulated rich curriculum for students of all levels, a state makes her foundation stronger. In education, a curriculum is broadly defined as the totality of student experiences. The national curriculum is defined as legalized educational document. It includes a common programme of studies to be implemented by government in nationwide schools. State designs curriculum to develop society for uniformity, patriotism and to preserve cultural legacy (Muzaffar, et. al. 2018).

The prominent work on “conflicting concepts of curriculum” identified five important orientations towards curriculum such as ‘curriculum as technology’, ‘academic rationalism’, ‘development of cognitive processes’, ‘social reconstruction’ and ‘self actualization’ (Eisner, E., & Vallance, E.1974). Moreover, it has been explored that there are four important curriculum designs that are humanistic, technological, academic subject curriculum and social reconstruction (Saylor,1981).

Therefore, a number of states around the globe try to follow different models to develop curriculum keeping their base on culture (religions), traditions and national objectives. Likewise, in the development of national curriculum of Pakistan, the influence of religion is highly discussed phenomenon. Keeping in view the scholarly works of the prominent scholars, it comes to knowledge that curriculum has been designed to reflect religious orientation and national identity of specific community. Secondly, it has been assumed that the nexus between religion and national curriculum develops religious bias attitude against society members of other belief. Another opinion is that general moral values and lessons of civic sense must be included instead of particular religion to create harmony among all the people of other belief in society.

The curriculum assimilated with religion also matters in the context of teachers’ mindset. Teachers are the one who implement the curriculum. Having the ideology of particular religious mindset of teacher can proved to be a great harm for the students of different religious background. It must be seen that implementers of curricula must have the third standard awareness in NPSTS that is not to be ethical and be courteous in the classroom in terms of values and traditions of particular sect. It requires teachers to be neutral and welcoming. Those who are the extremist of religion will surely put that side on the place of teachings which can cause a great impact on the education of children. Fostering negative behaviors and controversy can be objected in teachings. The religion is considered as universal, and, therefore, it occupies important place in institution of societies. It is known as touchstone for the normative structure of society to stand on. It is known as the social institution which has got all about sacred things that remain further than our acquaintance and limits (Christensen,2009) (Muzaffar, et. al. 2017)

Literature Review

In this component of the study, over all general scenario of the world regarding influence of religion on National Curriculum in different countries has been explored. Moreover the review of literature does not only present background information to have illustration of related terms but also it proves to be instrumental to develop understanding of readers about the research problem in detail. The main focus of literature review is to study the rationale behind the influence of religion on National Curriculum of Pakistan.

The religion has exerted great influence on other institutions. It has been exercising huge impact upon Socio economic and political aspects of life. It has been said that man from the very beginning stands stone blind religious. Judaism,

Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto reflect examples of religions of the world. Religion stands for shared beliefs and practices people exercise in society. Majumdar and Madan has explained that the origin of word religion lies in the Latin word *Rel (I) igio* which stands for two root words. The first root consists of *Leg*, which means "together, count or observe". The second root consists of '*Lig*', which means 'to bind' (Majumdar & Madan,1961). However, it serves to be a unifying force ,and, therefore, it develops social cohesion and integration in many ways.

The current scenario throughout the whole world about religion is very sensitive and critical issue. Almost in all the developed countries of the world, they follow general values and ethics in their curriculum. In Pakistan, especially since its creation, religion has been given top priority in all institutions of society. Education sector is also one of them which designs its curriculum under the influence of same. It was especially during General Zia ul Haq's regime in 1979 when war and Jihad were glorified in text books of curriculum of Pakistan. National identity and religious orientation of single community (Muslims)throughout textbooks of National Curriculum isolates the community of other beliefs. Moreover, teacher and taught who go through text books of National curriculum develop religious biased attitude and sense of religious superiority against community of other belief. It is especially observed in text books of Social Studies, Islamiat, Urdu and English that there are many theoretical references which offend the feelings of minorities and exclude them from social cohesion and integration of society. This is the reason other countries connect this issue with cause and effect relationship of religion and curriculum. Resultantly, at present, Pakistan badly suffers from religious extremism which has resulted in disintegration of social cohesion and integration of society.

Influence of Religion in Curriculum

Critically and logically focusing on the influence of religion in curriculum, it is observed that it creates two aspects of thinking and learning. The one is optimistic and on the other is pessimistic point of view. While looking on the positive aspect, religion teaches and helps develop focus on the ethical and moral development of the human beings. It is the main reason of being a good human. On the other hand, the idea of involving religion in curriculum creates a limited thinking area that does not allow developing the critical thinking of students. Moreover, it further confines to follow the defined areas and parameters of religion. If anyone asks the question about sensitive issue, a person becomes guilty in the eyes of law and society (Abdelfattah, 2001). Considering religion as a personal matter in the context of extremism can exercise a negative and dangerous impact on the mind of children. The issue is not related to make religion part of curriculum but the controversial critical issues that can be a threat to collaborative culture in classroom. Human beings are social and emotional animals. The integration of religion in curriculum imparts great impact in societies where social, ethical, economical and philosophical gap is needed to be filled. Considering it from social perspective, religion has proved to be a non-deniable element of human ideology. A culture where religion is supposed to be a backbone of

ethical development cannot be seen as an individual part of society. Having a closer look on history, it shows that religion, Islam, contributed in the freedom of Pakistan. A place where one gets freedom due to a particular element cannot be neglected in their education to build spirit of being religious among students. On the other hand, a county where communities of different beliefs live together, dominance of one religion in curriculum can result in clash of cultures. Keeping in view that issue, curriculum developers must not add critical or controversial issues that results in the war. Extremism is also another issue while putting religion a part of curriculum. Pakistan cannot be seen as a non-extremism country. It is a great reason behind major issues in Pakistan. Dealing with this challenge especially in the area of curriculum, is no less than great threat for other sects and religions. It is seen and observed and discussed as well that the teachings of particular religion enhances and develops that particular ideology and have lack of space and margin for other school of thoughts (Dearden,1981).

The textbooks are seen to be the source of creating hatred feelings for other religions especially Hinduism. Such perilous and controversial writings clearly create negative thoughts in society. It is also seen in reports that due to the religious controversy, teachers have been murdered, and students are targeted such as Mashall who was brutally murdered due to views on religion. There are number of cases which reflect evidences of negative and life-taking impacts on the mind of some particular sects.

The critical views that require attention is that due to some orthodox religious minds, a number of the teachers and students are sick of the religions. Even, it is narrated that since a few decades, so many students have labeled themselves as non-religious and agnostics. The increasing ratio of agnostics among students requires that developers of national curriculum should take serious steps to modernize the influence of religion in the curriculum and improve it accordingly. On other hand the religions have also created undeniable positive behaviors towards the other religions (Tillson, 2011). Research also supports that religion and ethical education have changed the minds of number of students and have made them humble towards the other people of religions. However, most of the literature informs that inclusion of religion of any particular community can be a great hurdle in inviting all communities of other beliefs for social cohesion in society.

Material and Methods

In this study, a basic descriptive and positivist approach is used to examine the objective world of curriculum development. The study provides insight into a generalization about how religion influences curriculum design, and understanding about the perceptions of teachers at college level education in Naudero city of Sindh.

Research Design

This is based on descriptive research using quantitative research method in perspective towards generalization. The quantitative research method is applied to understand a general phenomenon. The survey on college curriculum workers

(lecturers/ Assistant Professors) is important in Degree College Naudero which plays important role in imparting education in this region. Data collection tool used in this research is questionnaire which has been filled by some of the college teachers at Government Degree College Naudero.

Quantitative Research

The present study is quantitative research design in its nature. It is a kind of research in which systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena is made using statistical or mathematical techniques. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ theories and models pertaining to phenomena and measure fundamental relationships. The data in quantitative research is in the numerical form and researcher analyzes this data with the help of statistical tools to generate an unbiased result which can be generalized to whole population of the research.

Survey

In the present study survey method was carried out. It is based on research widely used in social sciences whereby researcher used a questionnaire comprising list of questions aimed at extracting specific data from participants. Survey research can be conducted through post, by phone, via internet or face-to-face. In social research survey method has been used to assess behavior, thoughts, opinions and feelings. The whole purpose of the survey research is based on to generalize the findings from sample to the population.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire for data collection as a tool was administered. Around 10 statements were given in order to get responses on selected topic by the respondents. Questionnaire consists of series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from the respondents in the selected samples from research population. Questionnaires are cheap and usually do not require much efforts comparatively to interview and observation methods to compile data.

Sampling and Research Population

The research population of this research is college teaching staff of Government Degree College Naudero (Larkana District of Sindh). This college has teaching faculty of around 75 professors/lecturers. Out of that 56 college professors and lecturers were selected conveniently for conducting survey due to limited time constraints

Data Collection

The data for the present study was collected by questionnaire from the sample in the above mentioned college. The questionnaire comprised 10 questions and was presented on Likert Scale. The questionnaire was administered by hand to know the opinions of the teachers about the influence of religion in curriculum design.

Survey Questions Designed for Questionnaire:

The following questions after refinement through pilot test were included in the questionnaire. Five point Likert Scale was used to collect data on questionnaire. The scale comprised points such as Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree. The questions are described below:

1. Religious thoughts are dominant in National Curriculum.
2. National Curriculum under the influence of religious thoughts encourages introducing critical thinkers.
3. Students after going through National Curriculum develop non religious biased attitude.
4. National curriculum develops non religious biased attitude among students.
5. National Curriculum under the influence of religion does not develop a sense of self reliance and dignity of individual and non violence and oneness across the society for the strong basis of social relationship.
6. Influence of religion on National Curriculum fails to equip the learner with knowledge and skills for research into religion as well as relates and systematizes universal dimensions of religion.
7. National Curriculum of Pakistan develops a sense of compromising nature with other religions in society.
8. National Curriculum promotes adherence to any particular religion and it is quite discriminatory against other religions.
9. National Curriculum develops no any sense of superiority for his religion over other religions of society.
10. National Curriculum under the influence of religion has succeeded to develop sense of respect for other religions practiced in society.

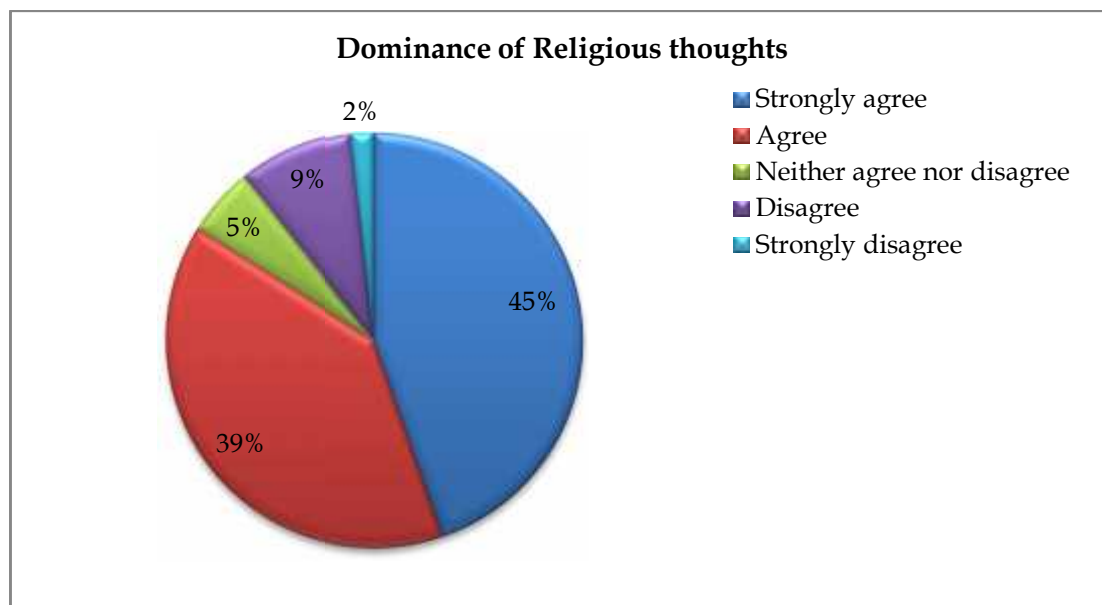
Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis used in this research is an attempt to comprehend the general phenomenon (perceptions) under observation, and to confirm relationship. This is a descriptive survey based study, using deductive approach involved online administered structured questionnaire using google forms and data is collected from 56 college teachers working at Government Degree College Naudero. The responses to the questionnaire are analyzed descriptively using MS-Excel software which led to discover some interesting outcomes. Data is analyzed using Liker-style scale to assess the opinions of college teachers (curriculum workers). The focus of this study is on describing the survey results and trying to confirm some hypotheses formed during review of the above literature and to create the new knowledge developed through this research project in relation with what is already known about this topic.

Result and Discussions

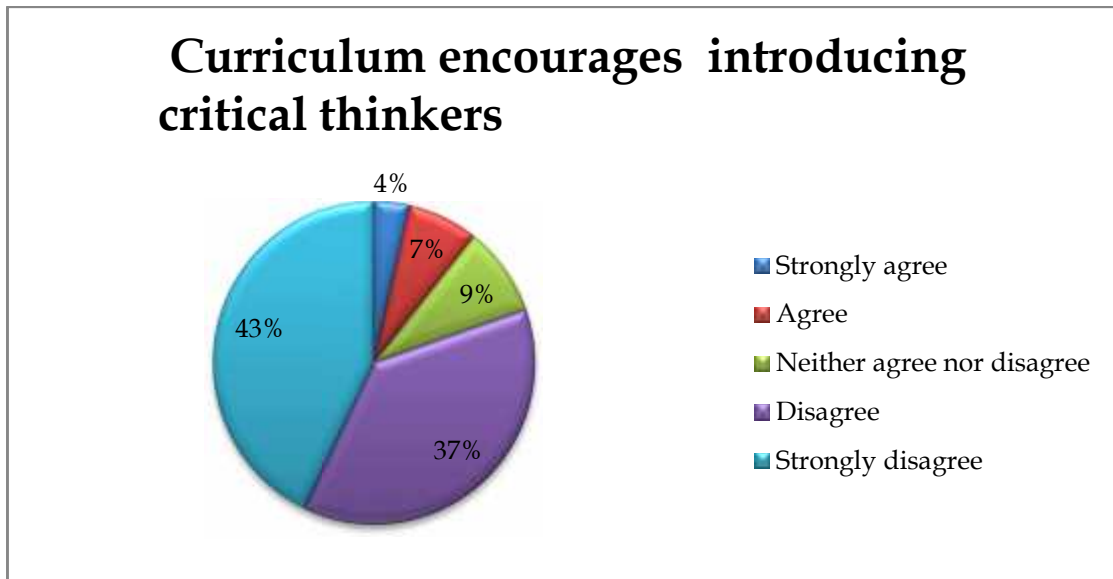
In this section researcher has presented the actual questions that were answered by the subject of this survey. The analysis of questionnaire responses is presented below along with researcher's insight.

Religious thoughts are dominant in National Curriculum



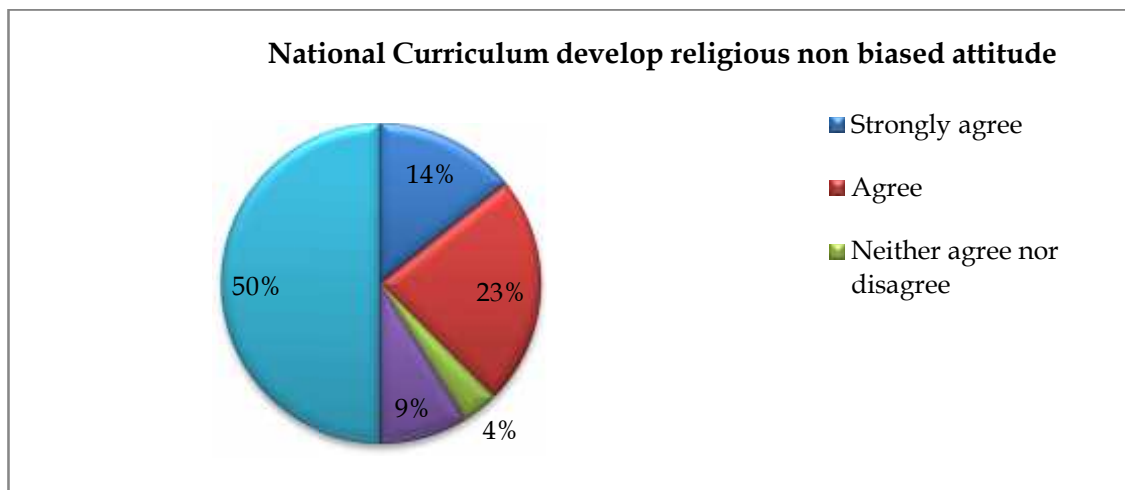
The questionnaire was distributed amongst the Lecturers, Assistant professors and Associate professors of Govt. Degree College Naudero to find out the facts regarding statement that religious thoughts are dominant in national curriculum. Fifty six teachers participated to show whether they agree or disagree to the mentioned statement. However, according to responses by the participants, forty five percent strongly agreed that religious thoughts are really dominant on the national curriculum. Moreover, thirty nine percent participants just agreed to the statement, five percent responded neither agreed nor disagreed and five percent disagreed whereas, two percent strongly disagreed. Furthermore, it is undoubtedly a fact that religious thoughts are very dominant in the national curriculum. Majority of population sees eye to eye with one another that it is true, and that can easily be found if we go through our text books with a critical thinking. It has been found that in almost all the subjects, we can find chapters, units, and lessons on religious personalities, stories and different and various schools of thoughts. Even we can also find the problem of sectarianism in our texts. Adding to it, we can see that our science books are full of religious verses. On one page, we find the arguments in the favor of the theory of evaluation, and, on the very other page, we find arguments in the favor of the theory of creation. To sum up, according to the majority of participants, the religious thoughts are, without a question, dominant on national curriculum.

National Curriculum under the influence of religious thoughts encourages introducing critical thinkers.



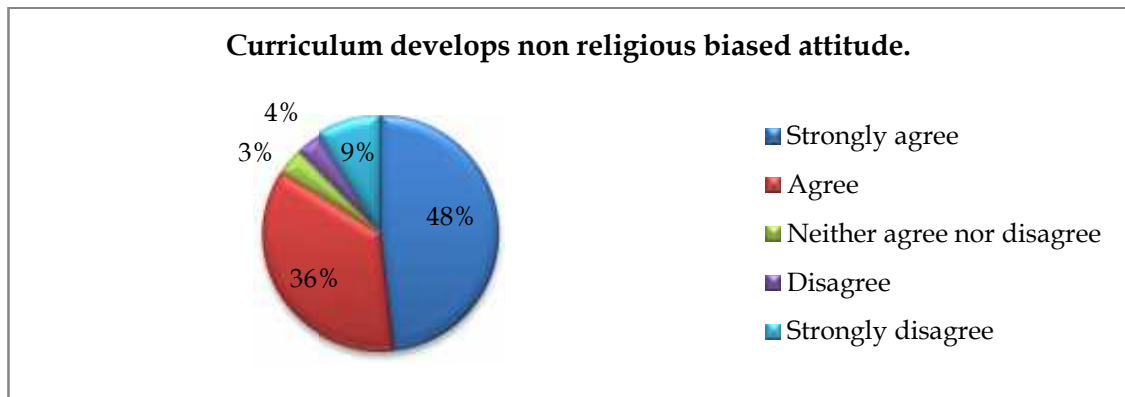
The questionnaire was distributed amongst the respondents to get the facts in respect with the statements, "National curriculum under the influence of religious thoughts has failed to introduce critical thinking." Out of the total participants, four percent strongly agreed, seven percent just agreed, nine percent neither agreed nor disagreed, thirty seven percent disagreed and forty three percent strongly disagreed. However, we found in a responses that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. They do not think that our national curriculum under the influence of religious thoughts encourages introducing critical thinking. They think that religious thought discourages the people to question whereas question is the foundation of critical thinking.

Students after going through National Curriculum develop non religious biased attitude.



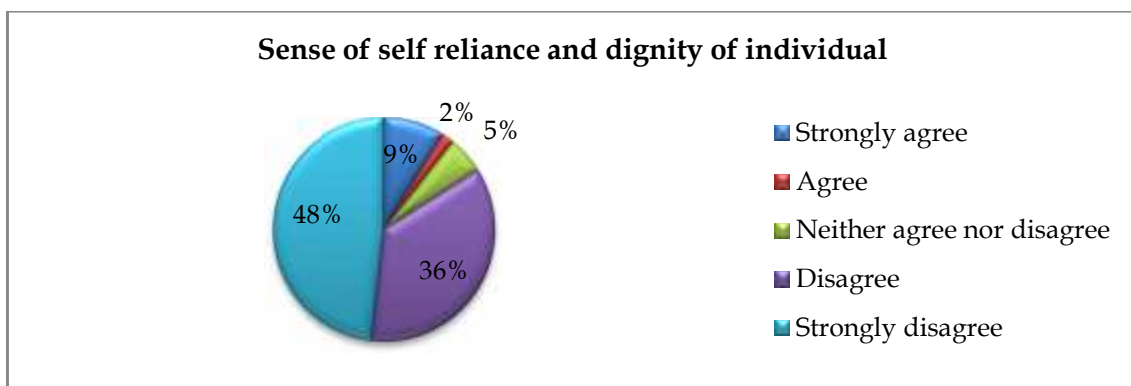
A statement regarding student after going through national curriculum develop non religious bias, was answered by 56 participants to provide a general response towards the above mentioned idea. However, according to the responses, fourteen percent respondents strongly agreed, twenty three percent just agreed, four percent neither agreed nor disagreed, nine percent disagreed and fifty percent strongly disagreed. According to the view of the majority of the respondents, students do not develop non religious biased attitude after going through the national curriculum.

National curriculum develops non religious biased attitude among students.



In response of the statement, 'national curriculum supports non religious biased attitude', out of 56, forty eight percent strongly agreed, thirty six percent just agreed, three percent neither agreed nor disagreed, while four percent disagree and nine percent strongly disagree. According to the majority of the respondents, our national curriculum is not free from religious biased attitude.

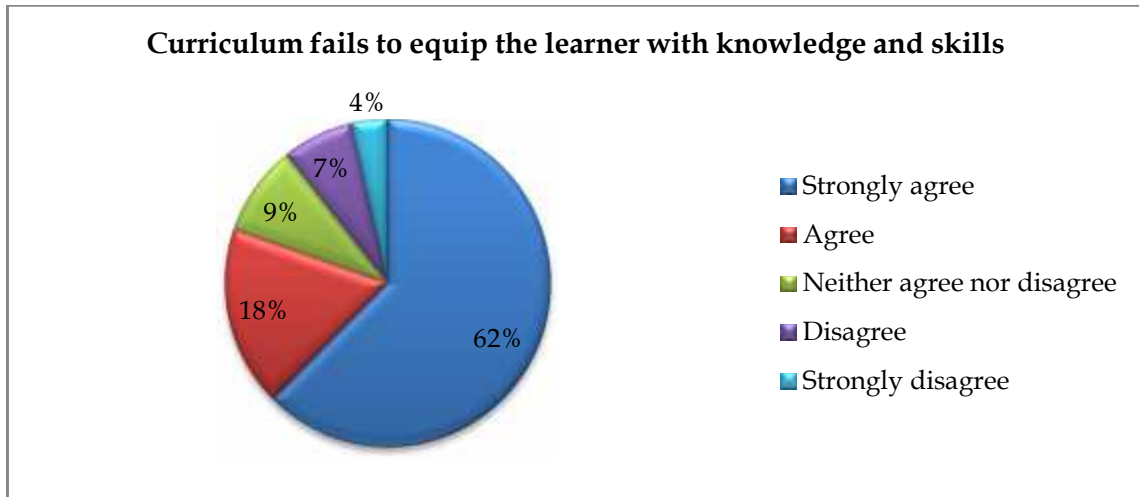
National Curriculum under the influence of religion develops a sense of self reliance and dignity of individual and non violence and oneness across the society for the strong basis of social relationship.



In the response of the above mentioned statement out of the fifty six participants. Nine percent strongly agreed, two percent just agreed, five percent neither agreed nor disagreed, thirty six percent disagree and forty eight percent

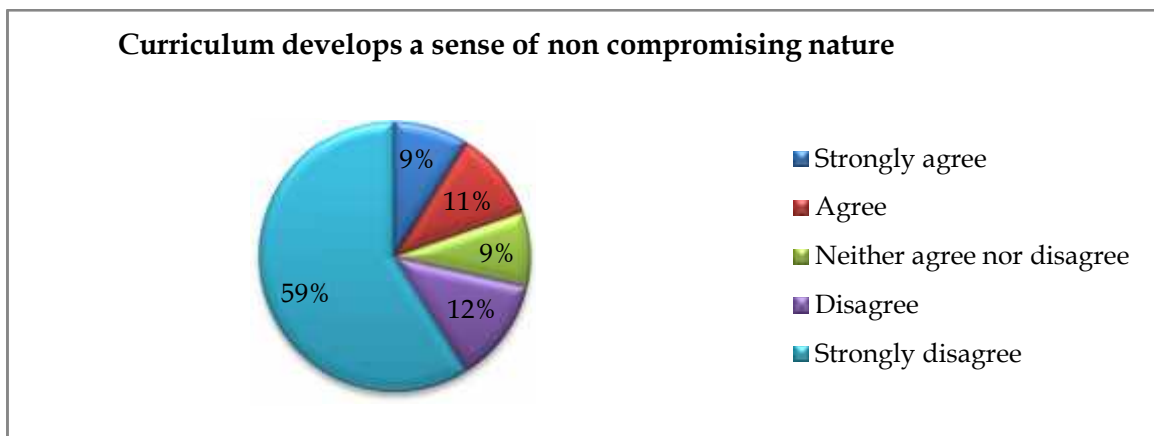
strongly disagree. Majority think that national curriculum under the influence of religion does not develop a sense of self reliance and dignity of individual and non-violence and oneness across the society for the basis of social thinking.

Influence of religion on National Curriculum fails to equip the learner with knowledge and skills for research into religion as well as relates and systematizes universal dimensions of religion.



Amongst 56 respondents on the statement mentioned above, Sixty two percent strongly agreed, eighteen percent just agreed, nine percent neither agreed nor disagreed, seven percent disagree and four percent strongly disagree. Majority of the selected participants describe that the influence of religion on curriculum fails to develop the knowledge and skills for the religious research in religions to promote harmony and peace in the world..

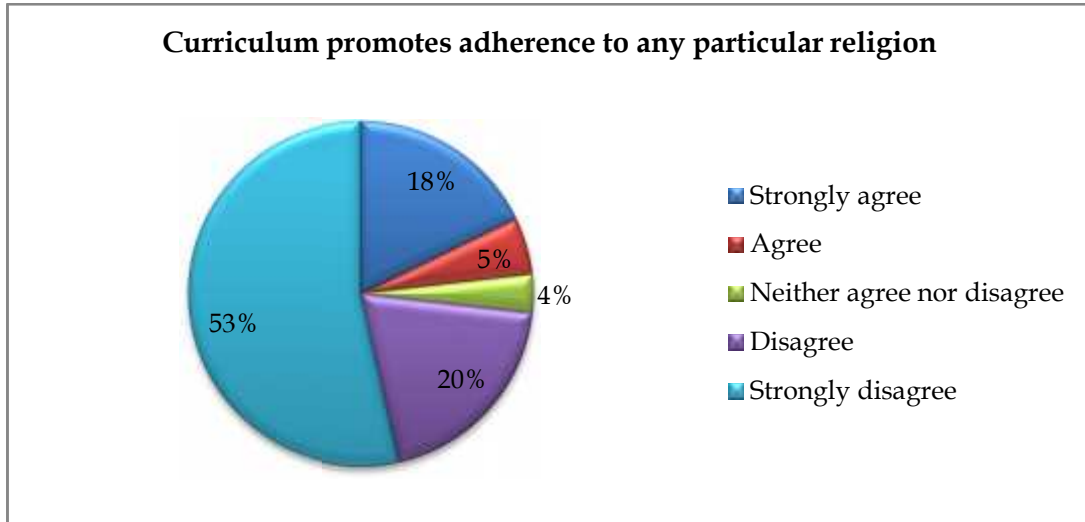
National Curriculum of Pakistan develops a sense of compromising nature with other religions in society.



The fifty six respondents were handed over with the questionnaire, and out of the total number, Nine percent strongly agreed, eleven percent just agreed, nine

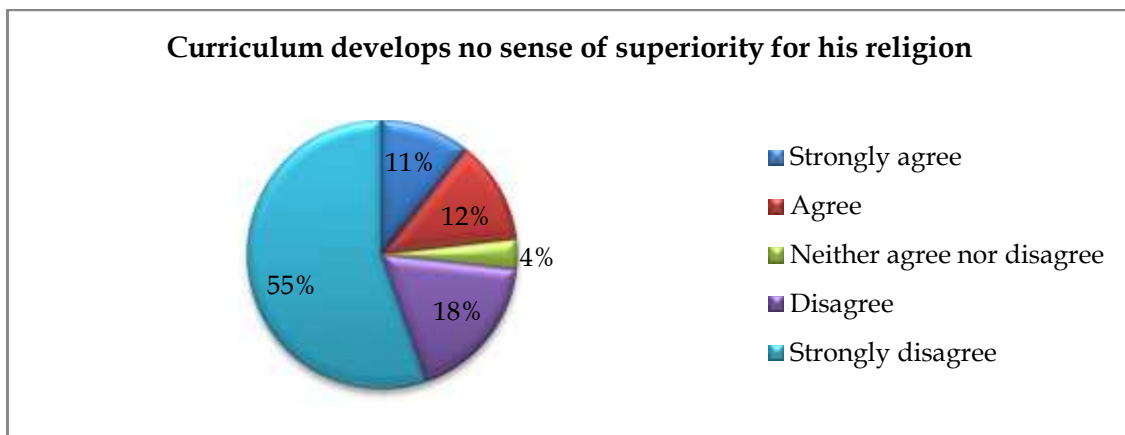
percent neither agreed nor disagreed, twelve percent disagreed and fifty nine percent strongly disagreed on the point that National Curriculum of Pakistan develops a sense of compromising nature with other religions in society.

National Curriculum promotes adherence to any particular religion and it is not quite discriminatory against other religions.



The respondents on the statement described above responded that eighteen percent strongly agreed, five percent just agreed, four percent neither agreed nor disagreed, twenty percent disagree and fifty three percent strongly disagree. Out of fifty six participants, majority strongly disagreed to the statement because they are of the view that our national curriculum promotes adherence and it cultivates discriminatory attitude against beliefs of other communities.

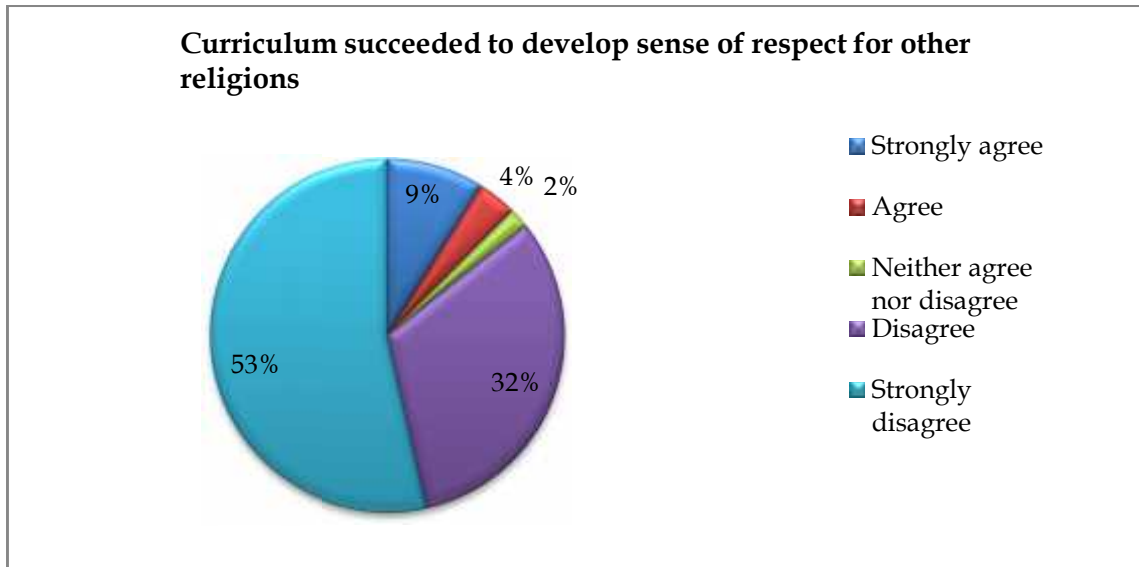
National Curriculum develop no any sense of superiority for his religion over other religions of society



Eleven percent strongly agreed, twelve percent just agreed, four percent neither agreed nor disagreed, eighteen percent disagree and fifty five percent strongly

disagree. It proves that our National curriculum develops a sense of superiority for his religion over other religions of society.

National Curriculum under the influence of religion has succeeded to develop sense of respect for other religions practiced in society.



Nine percent strongly agreed, four percent just agreed, two percent neither agreed nor disagreed, thirty two percent disagree and fifty three percent strongly disagree. According to the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed to the statement. But majority is of the view that our curriculum has failed in bringing the sense of respect and care amongst the students for other religions being practiced in our society.

Discussion on Findings

The notion at the back of study was to analyze and determine the influence of religion in the text books of curriculum of Pakistan. By using the quantitative approach data was collected by 56 respondents. The main findings gathered from responses put forward that national curriculum is manipulated to develop the national characteristics of particular community. It discourages the sense of equity, equality and tolerance in all the sections of society. Resultantly, it develops religious biased feelings and prejudice against people of belonging to other religions. Secondly the national curriculum of Pakistan is highly influenced set of documents so it should not reflect biased attitude against members of other beliefs. Curriculum influenced by religion fails to promote the moral values, lessons of civic sense, harmony, and above all social cohesion among communities of other beliefs. Literature also supports that National curriculum should support the general ethics instead of particular religion to cultivate social cohesion among communities of other beliefs for the overall sustainability of harmony in society.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the above discussion on findings, the summary of the important observations deducted from the testing and analysis of the questionnaire formed in this research and an overall conclusion on the basis of the results obtained is defined as below:

- It was confirmed that curriculum should not be designed to reflect religious orientation and national identity of specific Community.
- It came to knowledge nexus between religion and national curriculum develops religious biased attitude against society members of other belief.
- Pupils should learn technology because they will become autonomous and creative problem-solvers and it can be very helpful for pupils to intervene and improve their quality of life.
- It came to observation that general moral values and lessons of civic sense should be included instead of particular religion to create harmony among all the people of other belief in society.

Recommendations

There are two major recommendations of the study:

- Curriculum should be designed in such a way which may encompass general moral values and ethics for developing social cohesion as whole in society. There should not be religious orientation of any single community.
- All the experts concerned, curriculum designers, and stake holders should redesign the National Curriculum on International standard, and focus on creativity and critical thinking based activities to be included in the Curriculum.

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