

**Article****FACTORS INVOLVED IN SCHOOL BASED VOCATIONAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT****Rashid Mehmood\***

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**Keywords:** Secondary school education, curriculum development, school based vocational curriculum

**Abstract:** *This study was undertaken with an aim to discover different measures that heads and principals of secondary schools may take to develop an effective school-based vocational curriculum (SBVC) for their schools in the Swat district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The study bears significance to the field as it suggests measures that heads and principals of the secondary schools may take for the development of SBVC, which may be used by the heads and principals of secondary schools of other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to develop their own vocational curriculum. A five days training was arranged for forty-eight secondary school heads (focused group) in Swat district. An open resource questionnaire was used as a research instrument for the collection of data. The findings of this study showed SBVC as strongly encouraged by the heads and principals of for the schools. The study bears significance as it suggests measures that heads of the secondary schools may take for the development of SBVC, which may be used by the heads of secondary schools of other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in their endeavours to develop their own vocational curriculum.*

**Received:** 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2022**Accepted:** 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2022**Published:** 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2022**INTRODUCTION**

Vocational education is the training for a specific vocation in industry, agriculture or trade (Matthews, 2011). It produces high level technicians through specific training. They are highly skilled workers and such trainings can only be given by vocational institutions (Warnapala, 2007). Vocational education is perceived as one of the crucial elements in enhancing economic productivity (Min, 1995). Bilateral aid agencies, the World Bank and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported vocational education to reduce poverty, promote financial growth and increase effectiveness (Comyn & Barnaart, 2010). In Pakistan, technical education refers to post-secondary courses of study and practical training aimed at preparing technicians to work as supervisory staff members in different fields of work. Vocational training, on the other hand, refers to the lower-level education and training to prepare skilled and semi-skilled workers in various trade. This however, does not enhance their level of general education. Vocational education is one of the streamlines comprised of three (3) years of education after matriculation / 10th standard and vocational training certificate courses of 6, 12 and 18 months duration after 8th standard or 10th standard. Students are offered with these diplomas in all technologies. In a developing country like Pakistan, majority of young people are not taking education from the formal schools which

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means that relevant policy makers in the country require to thoroughly incorporate a non-formal learning methodology and literacy programs in national education system (UNESCO, 2009). School-based curriculum (SBC) is one of the many aspects of the new curriculum reform. School-based curriculum (SBC), emerged with a modern rather than traditional thinking. It does not impose schools and teachers to follow a central curriculum designed by the Education Bureau but it brings a new perception in which schools and teachers are encouraged to adapt and modify curriculum according to their needs and interest (CDC, 2001). The advantages of SBC are that it realizes students benefits (Wong, 2007) and enhances the effectiveness of teaching and learning through providing for students' interests and needs (CDC, 2001).

The concept of School-based Vocational Curriculum (SBVC) is completely new in Pakistan but the years 1970's give us an impressive example of Australian model of introducing bottom-up approach of School based Vocational Curriculum (SBVC) development at secondary level and later in 1980's, the Chinese, African and Hong Kong models astoundingly convinced the education experts on effectiveness of the same concept. The concept of SBVC in Pakistan is totally new. Around two third of Pakistan population lives in the rural areas and mostly relies on agriculture. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the only vocation related subject is taught at secondary school level that is agriculture which is elective for only those students who take humanities group of studies.

More quality based vocational qualifications are needed to be designed to extend benefits, better education, training, bright career and entrepreneurial prospects (Wolf, 2011). In view of this, this study is designed as part of the SBVC development training project of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, keeping in view the following key objectives:

- a. To explore different measures that heads and principals of secondary schools may take for the development of SBVC in their schools;
- b. To identify the common local professions near the schools under study;
- c. To investigate the perceptions of heads/principals and teachers of secondary schools about the scope of SBVC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan;
- d. To suggest measures for heads and principals of secondary schools that may help them in development of SBVC at secondary school level.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study utilized content analysis approach which comes under the qualitative research (Mayring, 2000). The population selected is the rural secondary schools' heads/principals of Swat district of the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to EMIS (2017-18), there exists about 124 secondary schools in the Swat district. Out of 124, there are 82 boys and 42 girls secondary schools. To achieve the objectives of this study, 48 heads/principals, one from each school were selected. The sample was selected using Krejcie and Morgan table.

### **Instrument**

A five days training about school based vocational curriculum development was given to the heads/principals and teachers of the government secondary schools of district Swat under the HEC project of Thematic Research Grant. At the end of this training, an open-ended questionnaire was administered to collect pertinent information from the participants.

## RESULTS

To achieve objectives of this study, the data was analyzed thematically. Results reflected that the heads/principals of schools under this study, identified some measures which they would want to do for the development of SBVC in their schools. Following are those measures:

### **Measure 1: Situational Analysis**

One out of six participants expressed his/her views on the effective use of situational analysis through which they may look at different professions/skills/practices in their surrounding and develop or tailor curriculum for their schools accordingly. While in view of one of the participants, situational analysis is essential for staff members of the school to observe the surrounding first before designing curriculum for their schools. Four participants were of the opinion that situation analysis, study of the surrounding community, environment study and the study of the society are all vital to prepare effective SBVC. Irrespective of these responses, none of the participants explained how they will be doing the situational analysis. Sub categories of the situational analysis are detail as under:

**a. Ground Realities**

In this study, four participants reflected on ground realities in different ways. One of the participants expressed her view that as a good manager, a headmistress can prepare the most suitable SBVC in her own school in light of the ground realities. She did not mention that how these ground realities will be assessed and what will be the aspects that will be focused while looking at them. Whereas, the other three participants were of the view that they will identify the problems, needs and interests of the community and society both in order to develop SBVC as they according to them, they are able to prepare a SBVC in their schools since they have qualified teachers and those who understand the interests and needs of the community.

**b. Local Needs and Interest**

Four of the participants were of the view that they will require to identify the local needs and interests of their locality to develop SBVC in their schools. Whereas the second participant explained the importance of local needs and interests of the community and emphasized on the pivotal role of this understanding in order to effectively develop SBVC. In his view, taking local demands of community into consideration is vital. The third participant also emphasized on the importance of local needs and interest and reflected upon an example of a farmer. He was of the view that, if subjects related to the field of farming are introduced and incorporated in the curriculum, it will enable schools to prepare well trained future farmers who will eventually contribute to their communities. The fourth participant highlighted an advantage of SBVC in a way in which it may help people to find jobs and reduce unemployment rate in the country. Irrespective of these views, none of the participants explained how they will be analyzing local needs and interests of their communities in order to develop SBVC.

**c. Local Survey**

One of the participants was of view that in order to develop SBVC, he will be conducting a survey of the local trades. He commented as “to prepare a SBVC, a survey of the local trade may be conducted in a particular locality and the feasibility of survey of the particular trades may be conducted”. Another participant stated that he will use “local survey” to gather the required information.

**d. Economic Survey**

Two of the participants stated that in order to prepare SBVC, a survey of economic status of the concerned locality should be conducted. They however, did not mention the ways, aspects and limitations of the proposed survey.

**e. Educational Survey**

One of the participants was of the view that a survey may be conducted to assess the educational level of the concerned community prior to developing SBVC as according to him, without taking this measure, a suitable SBVC cannot be developed.

**f. Assessment of Socio-Economic Conditions of Students**

One of the participants suggested to first assess the socio-economic condition of the students. According to him, SBVC developers must look for socio-economic condition of the students to ascertain different aspects of imparting content which may stem out from the socio-economic conditions of the learners. They however, did not explain the possible dimensions regarding socio-economic condition of the learner.

**g. Assessment of School Ethos**

Three of the participants opined that in order to develop SBVC, school ethos which the school environment must be taken into consideration. They however, did not explain that what they will be studying in school environment. Another participant stated that if he will be developing SBVC, he will first assess local professions, local masses and economic activities, as according to him, this will enable him to examine the ethos through a detail survey of the community within the radius of 1 km around the concerned school's premises.

**h. Performing SWOT Analysis**

One of the participants was of the view that he will be doing Strength-Weaknesses-Opportunity-Threat (SWOT) analysis prior to development of SBVC but he did not mention how he will be performing SWOT analysis and its significance as a prerequisite of development SBVC.

**i. Research**

One of the participants was stated that a research study may be conducted to explore the causes and possible solutions of the skills gap and related problems in society. Two participants supported his views and added that data must be thoroughly collected and analyzed to report results that may help them in proposing possible solutions.

**Measure 2: Teacher**

Another major theme of this study is 'Teacher'. The study revealed some interesting measures about them. These measures involve 'Teacher Involvement' and 'Skills Utilization', as detailed below:

**a. Teacher Involvement**

Six participants mentioned teacher involvement as an important measure to consider while developing SBVC. One of them was of the view that both, students and teachers should be actively engaged in developing SBVC at school level while the second participant emphasized on the need to discuss importance of teacher involvement to develop SBVC and need to do their counselling in order to implement required actions in class according to interest of students. The third participant informed that he with my staff, with limited resources assigned responsibilities to his team in such a way that they may be able to prepare groups of students to learn things of their own interests such as gardening, stitching, knitting, cooking, pickle making etc. The fourth participant suggested that teacher may be given liberty to develop skills based short courses for students to learn quickly. The fifth participant stated that he will like to discuss the matter of developing SBVC in teams while sixth participant emphasized the importance on selection of right teachers for the job of preparing SBVC.

**b. Skills Utilization**

One of the participants expressed a measure "teacher skills utilization" which means that he will involve the skilled teachers in development of SBVC to utilize his/her skills.

**Measure 3: Experts**

'Experts' is another major theme in this study. Nine participants were of the view that they will involve field specialists who possess expertise in development of SBVC. However, they did not mention the importance of experts' involvement in the process of SBVC development.

**Measure 4: Student**

This is another key theme under this study. Its sub-themes are given below:

**a. Student Interest**

Six participants emphasized on students' interest as a measure however, none of them explained the importance and method that they will be using for examining the interests of students.

**b. Student Involvement**

One of the participants was of the view that students should also be involved in the process of developing SBVC. In this case too, neither did he explain the importance of students' involvement nor stated reasons for such involvement.

**c. Categorizing Students**

Three participants proposed to categorize students, as a measure. All the three participants were of the view that in order to develop SBVC, students may be categorized according to their interests. One of the two participants suggested the two categories namely, science and arts. The third participant suggested to conduct interviews of student to assess their tendencies and interests.

**d. Mental Level of Students**

Three of the participants were of the view that SBVC must be developed keeping in view the mental and cognitive level of the students. They insisted that when curriculum is prepared according to the mental and cognitive level of students, it has more potency to produce effective results.

**Measure 5: Resources**

Availability and provision of resources is another important theme of this study. Two of the participants were of the view that extra efforts will be required for allocation of time and physical resources in order to undertake the exercise of developing SBVC. The other sub-themes of the major theme 'Resources' are given below:

**a. Time**

Four of the participants highlight allocation of "time resources" as an important measure. In their opinion, additional time is required to not only prepare SBVC but also to conduct additional classes. One participant stated that he will require a separate two learning sessions in a week for the very purpose while another participant suggested that different days in a week may be dedicated to impart skills based or vocational education.

### b. Physical Resources

One of the participants was of the view that she will be sparing a separate room for the vocational training as she mentioned “we will try to engage teachers and students in SBVC development at school level with more zeal and zest and that now I have planned to arrange a separate working and classroom for this purpose”.

### Measure 6: Curriculum

Study revealed some measures that they would be doing for the development of school based vocational curriculum in their schools. ‘Curriculum’ is a main theme of the study. Its sub-themes are given below:

#### a. Content Development

Some of the participants talked about another measure, that is content development. In their view, while developing content of the curriculum, the following aspects should be kept in view:

- **Religious, Cultural and Social Aspects**  
One of the participants was of the opinion that for the developing SBVC, content must be made keeping in view the religious, cultural and social norms of the society in a way that the content does not hit these norms.
- **Consideration of Geographic Differences**  
One of the participants highlighted the importance of consideration of different economic interests i.e., agriculture, industries, dairy etc., based on geographic. He was of the view that it is pivotal to incorporate content in SBVC that is relevant to the concerned geography to effectively achieve the objective of the very exercise.
- **Consideration of Different Dimensions of the Society**  
One of the participants was of the view that adequate content must be incorporated considering the philosophical, sociological and economical dimensions of the concerned society. He expressed this as “school-based curriculum means the methods including all associated activities which are directly related to the school and surrounding socio-economic needs and that could be entertained within the locally available resources. Therefore, it is necessary that it should reflect philosophic, social and economic dimensions of the society”.

#### b. Activity Based

One of the participants was of the view that while developing SBVC, he will incorporate activity-based contents which means that he will use practical learning approach. However, he did not explain the importance of using this approach in developing SBVC.

### Measure 7: Selection of Suitable Professions

Selection of professions as relevant to the concerned community is also an important theme of this study. Three of the participants were of the view that they will select some high demanded professions relevant to the concerned community and develop the curriculum according to the needs of those professions.

## FINDINGS

The data was collected from 48 heads/principals of secondary schools of district Swat. The respondents responded in terminologies as steps or measures that they want to take in order to develop SBVC. This section provides summary of their responses.

Six participants showed their interest and willingness to conduct situational analysis before developing SBVC. Four participants were inclined towards identifying needs of the concerned community and their specific interests prior to developing SBVC. Four participants showed their preference to first observe the ground realities before development of vocational curriculum for their schools. Only two participants showed their interest in conducting a local survey of trades. Two participants wanted to investigate economic status of that locality for the development of SBVC. One participant was motivated to check the educational level of the society for the development of SBVC. One participant was interested to study the socio-economic condition of the student whereas three participants wanted to investigate the school ethos for the development of SBVC. Only one participant was inclined to conduct SWOT analysis and one was to conduct market research. Six participants were motivated to involve teachers in the process of the very exercise. Only one participant suggested to consider the interest of teachers and one wanted to utilize expertise of qualified teachers in the process of development of school based vocational curriculum. Nine participants were inclined to involve outside experts in order to develop the curriculum whereas six participants

suggested to assess the interests of students prior to undertake the very exercise. One participant showed interest to involve students in the process of development of SBVC. Two participants intended to categorize students according to their interests and three suggested that SBVC must be developed after considering the mental and cognitive state of the students. Only one participant was motivated in assigning students to find the professions of their own interest and contribute with their teachers in an attempt to develop vocational curriculum for their schools. Two participants were interested to start paper documentary work for the provision of necessary resources from the concerned authorities for the development of SBVC. Four participants were inclined towards providing separate time and one was willing to allocate separate rooms for developing and implementing of SBVC. Two participants suggested to use low-cost material(s) in the development of SBVC whereas four participants suggested to utilize resources that are already available in their schools in order to develop SBVC. One participant suggested that SBVC must be developed in the light of the religious, social and cultural norms of the society whereas one participant suggested to consider community interests based on geographical differences prior to developing SBVC. One participant was motivated to develop SBVC in light of the philosophic, social and economic dimensions of the society. One participant was inclined to develop activity-based curriculum. Three participants were motivated to conduct survey for the selection of professions from the society according to which in their opinion, SBVC must be developed. One participant was interested to measure the quantity that would be necessary to add as course content in terms of developing SBVC while only one participant showed interest in doing paper work for the development of SBVC.

### CONCLUSION

All the participants were able to develop SBVC if further guidance is provided to them. In order to develop SBVC, situational analysis including the study of ground realities of the concerned locality is considered by most of the participants as the most important step keeping in view the need and interest of the community in their specific trades. Majority of the participants were interested in investigating economic status, educational level, socio-economic condition of the students and school environment prior to develop an effective SBVC. All measures detailed in this study as proposed by heads/principals of schools on the basis of their experience and exposure to their field of work may have potency to develop an effective SBVC. This study used a qualitative approach and undertaken in only one district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Researchers may consider to assess relevance and utility of the same measures in other districts, preferably in mainland cities of the country. More measures may also be explored in the very attempt.

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