CHAPTER 3: DRAWN INTO CURRICULUM IMAGES

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I came with my research problem of culturally disempowering nature of teacher education and research practice that gave rise to five themes of my inquiry. In Chapter 2, I discussed on first theme - Dictating and communicating leadership approaches, thereby giving rise to transforming leadership. Arriving at Chapter 3, I begin to focus on my second theme i.e., *narrowly conceived images of curriculum that give rise to a transformative aspect* (Chapter 3A & 3B) and envision a transformative curriculum as montage and currere (Chapter 3C).

With the research questions (in Chapter 3A, 3B, & 3C), my inquiry in this chapter aims: 1) to explore key facets of *teacher education curriculum as static document with a single colored image*[38] that restrict me (and other teacher educators) to accomplish some technical interest of education; 2) to explain reformative nature of curriculum as a means for embracing a practical interest of education; and 3) to develop an empowering nature of teacher education curriculum to accomplish an emancipatory interest of education in Pakistan.

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[38] The image of colored curriculum depicts as official curriculum that is written in the form of a book with a yellow color outwardly. In the school, it was very famous that 'yellow color book' to represent curriculum as a book with one single image. It was compulsory for everyone to follow the curriculum as yellow color book to teach accordingly.

CHAPTER 3A: JOURNEYING THROUGH POSSIBLY INFORMATIVE

CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I address the problems and issues of a confined image of

curriculum as informing/directing nature as my first theme of the inquiry. To this end, I

am addressing my research question, *'In what ways has the nature of informative*

curriculum been colonizing myself (and other teacher educators) in a narrowly conceived

| 'Curriculum is a social construction that results from a set of decisions; It is written and enacted and both facets undergo constant change as contexts evolve' (Porfilio et al., 2015, p.3) |

view of pedagogy and assessment?' In so doing,

my purpose is to focus on features of teacher

education curriculum as fixed document, and/or a

single colored image that restricts teacher educators to act in a creative and imaginative

way so as to promote active citizenry among aspiring teachers?

Setting the Scene: Experiencing as a Teacher Educator and Research

Supervisor

It may be a Monday morning of March 2008. The beautiful blossom season

created a unique attraction in its welcome gestures of TU campus. I could feel its beauty

at my arrival, and was very emotional that I was starting my new career (resigning an

INGO job) at the expense of pleasing my father for his wish to join a Public Job near

home town, and my own interest in working with student teachers as a teacher educator.

Arriving there, I came to know that the 'self' among roaming flocks of shining faces were

the newly admitted students, and/or promoted ones. My search continues rather gazing at

and sticking to on a single spot.

Moving few steps ahead I noticed some young professors discussing at tea tables sitting around the huts in a green belt (an open tea spot in front-side gardens), creating a sort of romantic environment within the campus situated at the confluence of two famous rivers flowing at the outskirts of a culturally diverse and highly polarized cosmopolitan city, historically known as home of 'Sath Maqsoo'- a city of seven cultural identities of the whole region. Meanwhile, with a visual skimming, my feelings of gloominess disappeared. Finding everything very interesting, I reached the long corridor of departments to find the office of Dean School of Education to see which subjects are assigned for me to teach.

Suddenly, I came across with a very familiar flowery face, a young student, who appeared in a very happy mood turning towards me with a mixed flavor of greetings and surprise. 'Hello sir you Is this really you? I mean what I am seeing'? It was really surprising to recall few moments of my early days of teaching in an English Medium School to a very sharp student (of grade VIII around some ten years back) among other shining faces. 'Oh! Ms Lily, how are you? You reached at university level! Wow! That's really something great, just amazing to see you here.' I expressed. I could not stop myself to explore more about her long way to reach at this stage, her area of interest, name of department and the university environment etc. With a gentle smile, she replied, 'I still remember the moments you left at my grade VIII around ten years back. And now I am in department of educational development at B.Ed. (Hons) in semester-I'.

'Wow! What a coincidence I am t/here in the same department now. Let's see our joint venture for learning.' I expressed my excitement to find her there. She asked, 'Sir by the way what you will teach us?' 'I don't know Ms Lily, it's up to our Dean, but I would

love to teach some computer related subjects', I replied. 'Yes, I can understand that you love computers since that time, I guess', she made a comment. 'Perhaps, you are right, and here would you mind guiding me to meet your Dean?' I requested. 'Oh, yes sir, his office is just next to this room where we are standing', she moved a few steps ahead leading me at the door of our Dean' office, and went to attend her class, expecting me to see her later.

Authority as Creating Hierarchies: A Culture of University Setting

Saying goodbye to my old/new student, I knocked at the open door of the Dean's office to let the insiders/outsiders know someone new is at the door. A man in his early 50s noticed my presence at the door and said, "Come in please"!

Instantly Mr Lalu recognized and welcomed me to the department. He introduced me to staff sitting in the office especially to the Dean who seemed a serious, bureaucratic and complex from his traces in the face. He ordered for tea and engaged me in discussing general matters before coming to the agenda of my being there. Soon after having a cup of tea with biscuits, Dean left the office advising the Assistant Dean to assign the subjects and arrange an orientation before taking classes.

By the way, Mr Lalu held the position of second line in command/leadership, the Assistant Dean, in the department. He sat next to the Dean's table in a medium sized room, where hardly six people including other staff with their desktops on small table seemed busy with computers in a suffocated environment.

After a brief chatting with each other, he picked up a Yellow Single Colored Book and shared the curriculum of the subject I was supposed to teach. He said, "Sadru, I know this is your first experience to teach in a public university, but I am sure you can

even better manage." "Oh, thank you sir for being confident in me. I will try my best", I replied. However, this expectation/trust developed a sense of dis/comfort about teaching in a university for the first time in my life. Trying to hide the feelings I show my interest to talk about what kind of subjects the university offered. However, soon after knowing about the subject 'ICT in Education' and 'Computer Literacy', I came to realize myself as being at ease, as if I was an author of these subjects and very familiar with. But in the meanwhile, I struck up with thinking of my teaching computer subjects to different groups of adult learners at High Mountains Computer Institute that I had established with one of my friends some eight years before for around three years only. 'That looks like a good deal, yep, if you get some more ideas about the environment', I put myself in comfortable position.

A Brief Orientation as Informing

Soon after having some discussions on subjects assigned, the curriculum, teaching and assessments, the Assistant Dean said, 'Sadru let's go for a general orientation to the facilities/resources at the department and in university'. Appreciating the idea I followed him and we started visiting relevant places and people. And knowing about the classes where we had to teach, the central library from where we could access resources, administrative section and social area, to mention but a few, I became somehow familiar with the system.

In the end, we reached at a snack bar in the center of Apple Gardens of the campus to have some refreshments, where I met some friends. Later on I went to library and remained busy around two hours with some books on computer literacy and ICT in

education, and returned to the department again to make sure everything was okay for the upcoming class to teach.

The Yellow Coloured Book as Complete Container

It may be any Tuesday of March 2008, one of our School of Education's fellow, Mr Aalam oriented me to the system. I was introduced to a 'Yellow Single colored Book' of teacher education curriculum. Mr Aalam who was giving orientation expressed his views, 'this book contains all subjects with a complete set of curriculum. So, don't worry about teaching because you will get everything in it, and it will help you a lot'. His words reminded me William Pinar' (2004, 2012) views that curriculum consists of everything that one generation would wish to pass on to the next.

Coming from an INGOs sector and working with teachers, teacher educators, principals of schools and a project for the protection of vulnerable people (did I really protect them?), my introduction to the book and the myth attached to it was strange! Specifically, I was accustomed to develop my own program and plan in INGO. This 'informative' skill was not seemingly helpful at that time. And with this impression of curriculum, I developed my perception of this *university's interest* in teacher education that seemed to be at somehow *technical level* by confining within the yellow single colored book. It was looking obvious, the document as a powerful doctrine, we (I and all other faculty at the school) had to follow strictly to teach different subjects within the field organized and *controlled* by a degree awarding newly established public university.

Let me tell my readers, what I perceived from that orientation and views of the colleagues at the school. The focus was on what exactly to teach with specific topics mentioned in the syllabus that was discussed later on. Perhaps, it seemed clear to me that

the view of teacher education and preferred way of teaching from the specific objectives

(without paying attention to learner diversity) to accomplish within a fixed time period.

Though I was not informed whether the school had a focus on creating a link among

elements of content, pedagogy and assessment, I was given few ideas on pattern of

assessment only. The obvious purpose of testing seemed to check either the student

teachers to turn down/failed or to promoted/passed into next level. On the other hand, it

was to check whether the teacher educator had taught and/or informed about the content

knowledge.

I vividly remember, in the school we were nine faculty members (including few

recently joining members with me) altogether with the Dean too. And interestingly, the

book was only one in its existence (one copy of curriculum book). By the way, it was not

presumed, and/or managed with an alternative ways to keep copies. I guessed, if the book

is lost what would happen to this 'poor community' who mostly seemed dependent on it.

Un/fortunately, later on, as a coincident someone misplaced the book and the whole

community became helpless. Because everyone was highly dependent in terms of what to

teach, yet how to teach and why to teach in a particular way in such a socio-cultural

context, were the questions which seemed belong to no man's land to explore.

Curriculum as Single Colored Text

Perhaps, it was the impact of my observations of the practices, discussions and

interactions with people and exposure to an environment at the School of Education that

could drive me to presume that the *yellow single colored book* was a kind of precious

resource for the community (the faculty). I felt that even thinking to make some changes

in content was a kind of undesirable thinking and prohibited activity like committing a 'sin'.

Nonetheless, breaking the mythical and ontological underpinnings of the academia, perhaps I was going to be the first to commit such kind of sin who started thinking about to know more insights and rest of missing colors of the book except the outward 'yellow' color. Likewise, my little effort to search for other than this outward single color led me to find two more colors within this book – the 'black' and 'white'[39].

Arriving at this stage of my inquiry by reflecting on self/others in this cultural context I begin to develop a different perspective regarding the images of curriculum as a *single colored curriculum*. With this new perspective in mind, I came with a new image of curriculum that I could not share with these big guns for many reasons.

As this image of single colored curriculum could reflect that there are many other shades/colors as well, yet the interest of the academy seemed within one single color that was apparent outwardly. Reflecting on the interest of the academy, I came to realize that I was limited within the boundaries of yellow single colored image only. However, at a later stage, it gave me an idea of how to break the boundary and think beyond the single outward 'yellow color' and/or shades of curriculum within the context of this *'documented curriculum'*- a static book as a written curriculum and/or an official curriculum that gives a 'traditional metaphoric images of curriculum as subject matter,

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[39] Discovery other than outward color of the book there were two more colors – text written in black on white paper inside that book. So, these two colors were also part of the book and limiting to one single color was questionable. Meaning that using one fixed image leads to colonization of thinking. Whereas open view can lead us to explore multiple ways of seeing and envisioning possibilities.

cultural reproduction and discrete tasks and concepts' (Schubert, 1986; Luitel, 2009, p8). The impact of these images culturally gave rise to 'single colored image' of curriculum of ICT in Education that the school was following.

Thus, working within that confined, closed structural setting, I came with a list of topics and sub topics of ICT in Education from this written document by developing a syllabus as I was informed to do so. Probably, the purpose of making a list of topics and subtopics week-wise basis was: 1) to submit the document to Dean with timetable; 2) to distribute among students; and to keep record with teacher in order to teach within the structure so that assessment would be based on these topics and subtopics. This limited view of curriculum could not help me and my students to see other than the fixed image of the curriculum and restricted to reproduce whatever I came to know that in the written document only.

Survival as Being Helpless

Perhaps, breaking the boundary of 'yellow single colored book' of curriculum was one of the courageous steps that I took towards challenging existing notions of curriculum. However, I could not work on how to come with other ways to understand the curriculum shades for one or the other reasons within a controlled environmental setting. But I began to think about other shades/colors and/or in combination of many colors to frame our own image of a curriculum that could make a better sense for us to improve a written, taught and learnt forms of curriculum.

Arriving at this stage of reflective inquiry, I begin to recognize that the partial courage and/or a courage at thinking level only, not at action level, to some extent was a kind of first step towards challenging a limited view of curriculum as instrumental

arrangement of texts and ideas, and thinking about a broader view of *curriculum as life*

would provide more freedom to me, as a teacher educator, and to my student teachers.

This thinking towards such kind of view of education, eventually gave me space to

explore what other images of curriculum would be and should be that can better serve my

purpose of teaching pre service teachers. The purpose was to enable them with more

responsibility and autonomy towards better understanding based on their own judgment,

rather than focusing on the reproduction of fixed content knowledge. However, in

practice, I remained helpless to accomplish this objective instead of having an idea of

how other than this yellow single colored image can better serve us. I came to realize that

working on this idea at action level seemed too challenging in such a socio-cultural

setting.

Experiencing as Becoming Culurally Others

Hardly submerging within such an environment where people were engaged with

preparing new teachers for schools and colleges of future generation with such an image

of curriculum, I started thinking about my own life as a teacher educator and that of the

'Others' (e.g., the student teachers). And I guess, it was a kind of normal feelings in

human beings after switching from one organizational culture to another that provides

different pictures of life in different situations through observing, reflecting and coming

with new learning about lifeworld. Admittedly, this kind of thinking and reflection, at

times, could not help me to do something meaningful for my student teachers because I

became a member of that particular socio-cultural setting.

Perhaps, partially/outwardly immersing within such a cultural settings was a kind

of my compulsion that 'Others' might have felt the same while working in such a typical

public university in a developing country like Pakistan. As a junior (assistant professor) I had to operate within that socio-cultural context; otherwise it was not that much friendly like that of INGOs to argue with anyone and/or everyone in your field for what you believe is right and/or at least makes sense.

Dear readers, you can ask me, why I had developed such a feeling of an alienated and disempowered teacher educator? On what basis I was unable to even think beyond the 'yellow color image' of curriculum instead of getting an idea of how other shades may serve better purpose of education, and why it was not possible for me to take any initiative to do something different than what was going there.

Let me tell you honestly (perhaps), it was a matter of survival. I meant to say that among so many reasons of being unable to challenge that existing notion of curriculum, and to do something different was my probationary period for three years. My appointment was against permanent footings, as it was not so easy to get positions on permanent basis in that context. So, I was supposed to demonstrate within the norms of the existing policies and practices. And to critique at any policy/person, view and/or a practice was out of the question for the survival of fittest.

It is equally notable that I was also a product of such kind of schoolings till my graduation level, which I have talked on it somewhere in Chapter 1A. And perhaps, I was not someone who was with outstanding critical, creative and imaginative ideas in mind, nor did I have skills with unshaken iron will to challenge a system that was there for a long time. And my senior colleagues, on the other hand, who were facing more or less the same sort of situation, were exhibiting their sincere guidance on 'DOs & DON'Ts'. So, to do something against their advice by hurting them, and showing my efficiency was a kind

of ethical dilemma for me (Neil et al., 2006). In such a complex situation, how could I take an initiative (at action level, yes at thinking level I did it) at the expense of all of this, and possibly losing a job that was dearer to my father and that was a matter of social ego for me as well? Perhaps, with this in mind, I remained silent for a particular period of time waiting for a right time to speak.

At the same time when I reflect on my early days of teaching in a private school, it reminds me how limited view of curriculum image I had developed by considering course books as curriculum, list of contents as syllabus and so on. Arriving at this stage of reflective inquiry, however, I begin to realize that more or less similar situation I experienced during the early years of my experiences with teaching ICT in Education to student teachers at TU context. I guess that working in this kind of setting could not enable me to challenge my earlier views, in spite of realizing those limited views of curriculum, due to the organizational culture during my probationary period.

Learning as Exploring Institutional Culture

Arriving at this stage of my service at the university, I begin to realize that now I can work on my idea of challenging one fixed image of curriculum. It was the time when I had completed the first critical period and had entered successfully in the second year. I realized that how challenging the period was for me to demonstrate my identity as a right candidate for the organization, who with the passage of time could develop self/others (Barone, 2007; Bedi, 2015). I still remember whatever opportunities I got, during the first year of my service at TU, I tried to learn from them, and probably, that helped me gradually to challenge 'taken-for-granted' assumptions at multiple levels.

I remember the way I started working, on my idea of other images and/or shades of the single colored image, which helped me to progress on my way forward. Arriving at this stage, I start reflecting on, 'how construction of different images, shades, and/or colors as metaphors of the curriculum impact on shaping teaching/learning?' Perhaps, the idea that curriculum is a social and cultural construction seemed to be embedded in emotional, spiritual and other factors of socio-cultural context that enable to shape these images (Grundy, 1987).

Arriving at this stage, I come across another question of the kind, 'In what way could friendly interaction with my learners enable them to come out of the myth attached within the cultural settings (do not talk in front of elders) and establish a friendly environment for smooth conversations to initiate on our knowledge of self and the world around us.' Perhaps these were the questions which led me to engage with a series of discussions with Bal, my mentor (on Skype, messenger, phone, through emails and in face-to-face mode) to develop my understanding of curriculum images.

Though I was not aware of all images at that time, yet it engaged me with a yellow single color image (with many questions in my mind). However, during my doctoral project, my discussions with my mentor, other faculty members and literature review helped me in understanding all conventional and contemporary images of curriculum, for example, curriculum as content or subject matter, set of discrete tasks and concepts, intended learning outcomes, cultural reproduction, planned activities, social reconstruction, experience and currere (Schubert, 1986).

The concept of content or subject matter focuses on topics to be covered within a given period of time that was what I thought with my informative curriculum. It does not

seem to care about other aspects of learning that a learner experiences. As in my case, what I experienced as a learner during my school, college and university time as well as my own experience as a teacher using a conventional approach to cover content from course books is an example of such kind of image. Yet, I was not aware of the names of these images at that time. Likewise, the image of planned activities gave rise to *'smart/er'* objectives to accomplish through lesson planning that depicts curriculum as a written document and a plan of action. Arriving at this point, my experience reminds me that such image of curriculum comparatively can work better than curriculum as content or subject matter. The possible reason for this is that such practices can at least help teacher to come with some planned activities.

Likewise, I experienced yet another image, where learning outcomes seemed focusing on *means-end* (here students' learning become ends and teaching as means to accomplish those ends) dilemma which does not make it clear that how an intended learning outcome can be equally helpful for every students even in a single class. Thus, my experience with reforms in teacher education, which I am going to discuss

Teachers' intentions are to teach me
They look for intended learning outcomes
Teachers use SMART objectives and
Planning lessons with different activities

in the next chapter, by developing a centralized curriculum to accomplish intended learning outcomes with *'smart/er'* objectives seemed, to some extent, a humanistic (though not complete) view of curriculum. Arriving at this point of my inquiry, I begin to understand curriculum as a set of discrete tasks and concepts that focuses on how to develop learners' mastery skills and knowledge of a particular concept and/or a task. This image does not seem to develop a comprehensive understanding of a learner's view of

life, as reflecting on lived experiences is equally a notable way of understanding complex lifeworlds.

Similarly, pondering on other image of curriculum as cultural reproduction also appears to be focusing on how to transfer cultural heritage to the next generation. Of course, transferring cultural heritage is necessary, yet it is not sufficient to rely on such limited view of curriculum without any critical reflection on the past. Arriving at this stage of inquiry, it led me to study John Dewey' concept of *curriculum as experience*, which challenges the idea of means-ends, and advocates that both means and ends cannot be separated from each other as they are part of a process that give an experience to the learners in terms of his active involvement in the whole process of meaning making. This view of curriculum gives importance to engage learners in construction of knowledge through their active involvement with learning activities.

Likewise, the concept of curriculum for social reconstruction (Porfilio et al., 2015; Schubert, 1986) can be helpful to bring a radical change through values embedded social justice. Such a meaningful change can enable learners to challenge taken for granted views and the practices that create social marginalization in the society. Coming at this point of my exploration of curriculum images enabled me to reflect on the notion of personal reconceptualization through autobiography, yet another approach of curriculum as currere (Pinar, 2012). This image seems to empower learners through writing their own biography and sharing with others to experience their learning of self, others and the world that a learner comes to realize.

I begin to think about the concept that Pinar and Grumet (1976) came with regarding curriculum as currere that seems to generate different opportunities for learners

to develop their self-consciousness. This image can lead learners to become aware of self and others (the world around). Perhaps, this notion of curriculum seems very powerful in terms of advocating social transformation through self-transformation. The question, how to enable learner to transform led me to reflect on Pinar' (2004) notion of curriculum as currere, where he discusses four steps (regression, progression, analytical and synthetical' that I have explained somewhere in this thesis (see Chapter 1B).

Closure and my Way Forward

I came to know that the informing nature of curriculum seems restricting teacher educators within complex dualities of content versus pedagogy and teaching versus learning situations. My experience with this image of curriculum did not enable me to develop a space for my students to think beyond the content informed within a single colored image of curriculum as a yellow colored book.

I begin to recognize that understanding multiple images of curriculum and their implication can lead me to reflect on what type of teacher education we intend to offer to our new generation. With this view of curriculum images, I am looking at possibilities of reformative curriculum in the next chapter (Chapter 3B).