



## Snatching the Best Textbooks: How Corrupt System Reclaimed Textbook Governance in Punjab—A Real Threat to Pakistan (1877–2025)

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### ABSTRACT

*This research study investigates textbook governance in the region including Pakistan, with a focus on Punjab. It explores that though research-based studies since 1947 proposed introduction of Single Textbook System (STS) regulated under Government organization in Pakistan as substitute of Multiple Textbooks System (MTS) developed under the supervision of private publishers. This proposal was not given practical shape due to resentment of interest groups. However, West Pakistan Textbook Board was established under ordinance 1962 (Punjab Textbook Board -PTB as amended in 1971) as the result of survey conducted under the headship of General Nasir Ali Khan in the same year. PTB gradually and smoothly replaced MTS susceptible to corruption with STS. PTB got manuscripts developed on open competition and on commissioning authors in case of urgency or/ and where open competition was not responded. The manuscripts received through open competition were got assessed and rated chapter-wise. The chapters found best among the contesting manuscripts were combined to form the textbook that was published after editing, multi-tyred review and approval. However, interest groups kept efforts continued for revival of MTS and succeeded when Curriculum Wing of Federal Ministry of Education without mandatory approval of the Federal Cabinet notified and disseminated draft of “the National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy and Plan of Action, 2007 (NT & LMP)”. NT & LMP was adopted only by PTB, whereas; other provinces maintained previous practices. The official record of the Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board (PCTB) reveals further institutional decay: several duly notified curricula lapsed without ever being implemented, while, in contrast, approval for an excessive number of multiple textbooks were granted under the guise of NT & LMP facilitated the revival of MTS and resulted in the displacement of high-quality textbooks ensured under STS. Despite repeated legislative interventions, none proved effective because the dominant influence remained with deeply rooted impediments. Consequently, these practices intensified systemic impediments to educational development and compounded challenges to Pakistan’s national progress.*



### Introduction

Textbook is the most effective tool in education because it serves as the principal instrument for curriculum implementation. It provides teachers with essential guidance, structures student learning, and thus ensures coherence between the intended and taught curricula. Scholars widely acknowledge that in many contexts, textbook effectively becomes the curriculum itself, determining the content, pedagogy, and

assessment used in schools. Globally, two major models of textbook development dominate i.e., STS and the MTS.

The STS is often adopted in centralized systems, offering benefits like uniformity, affordability, and equity in access (Mahmood, 2011). However, limiting teacher autonomy, narrowing students' exposure to diverse perspectives, and entrenching rote learning practices are frequently criticized being the derivatives of STS (Oakes & Saunders, 2004). Conversely, MTS, practiced in countries such as Finland, Japan, and South Korea, encourages a plurality of perspectives, fosters critical thinking, and provides teachers with professional flexibility. The MTS, however, demands strong curricula, rigorous evaluation mechanisms, well-trained teachers, and equitable access to resources (Oates, 2014).

In Pakistan, textbooks ever attained a central role in classrooms as the backbone of instruction due to the limited availability of supplementary resources and underdeveloped teaching capacity (Pasha, 2022). However, the establishment of Textbook Boards in the 1960s replaced the MTS in practice since 1877, wherein; textbooks were developed under the control of private publisher. Subsequent reforms, including the NT & LMP was a transition from STS towards MTB by enhancing the role of private publishers in the textbook development responsibilities regulated by the governments (Rafiq & Chishti, 2011). However, though NT & LMP remained *non est* being a draft i.e., never approved by the Federal Cabinet, Government of Pakistan but implemented without legal justification. Moreover, 18th amendment strengthened provincial autonomy in education including PTB. Therefore, interest groups caused NT & LMP to continue holding the field even after merger of PTB and Punjab Curriculum Authority through PCTB Ordinance 2014 followed by PCTB Act, 2015 as measure to culminate corrupt practices. Nevertheless, the Board of PCTB recorded that instead of meaningful transformation from STS to MTS, NT & LMP shifted control of Board upon textbooks to the private publishers at the expanse of substandard textbooks hit by fake authorship, plagiarized contents, and the material not approved (First Meeting of PCTB, 2014).

The net impact of new enactment carrying the same Human Resource at influential positions could not obstruct quality decline of curricula and textbooks. Nevertheless, Government of Punjab though removed NT & LMP from the field in 2016 leading to restore STP but the same remained in vogue with increasing flexibilities under the title "Scheme for Development of Textbooks and Supplementary Reading Material" from time to time since 2018 till 2021 defeating formal removal of a void alleged national policy i.e., NT & LMP. Though Government of Punjab proceeded against corruption, and moreover, current Chief Minister ([https://www.youtube.com/live/KvaGMC5XtCE?si=bc1UYx6yEK5\\_IKLv](https://www.youtube.com/live/KvaGMC5XtCE?si=bc1UYx6yEK5_IKLv) & <https://youtu.be/5-MfdG42cqk?si=jQWfBRonBNRTTyC>), Minister for Education Punjab (<https://www.youtube.com/live/cS8ee5itAQ?si=Qh8DPo3ZgmajqOuY>), and Auditor General of Pakistan (<https://youtu.be/oM1OebwAh6w?si=Ac7KWi4RyNCNGxtM>) surfaced mega corruption through media talks but the system exhibited indifferent response.

Despite PCTB, Quaid e Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED), and Punjab Education Commission (PEC) remained interconnected through statutory interventions but Government of Punjab had to merge them through enactment "Punjab Education, Curriculum, Training and Assessment Authority (PECTAA) Act, 2025" so as their tasks are done under the same roof as measure for enhanced efficacy.

## Literature Review

Textbooks are generally taken as standard, authoritative compilations of subject knowledge as source of classroom instruction (Warren, 1981; Hamilton, 1990). They serve dual functions i.e., acting as instructional tools and essential resources that provide teachers with structured lesson sequences and pedagogical ideas (Cunningsworth & Tomlinson, 1984). This centrality leads to textbooks being described as the "epicenter of educational activities" (Skierso, 1991) and the "heart of the school" (Oakes & Saunders, 2004). In practice, textbooks often effectively substitute for the curriculum itself, being perceived by teachers as synonymous with national standards (Valverde et al., 2010). Teachers' reliance is driven by practical constraints like limited preparation time, lack of alternative resources, and accountability pressures (Sheldon, 1988), with textbooks offering essential frameworks for both novice and experienced educators (Brown, 1995; O'Neill, 1982). Furthermore, they underpin formative and summative assessment, promoting consistency in evaluating student learning (Haycroft, 1998).

Despite their significance, textbooks have limitations leading to "deskill" teachers to mere content transmitters and stifling adaptive pedagogy. However, the quality of textbooks depends not only on curriculum design but on the competence of authors, editors, and reviewers who transform curricula into classroom resources. Authors shape the foundation by converting objectives into structured, age-appropriate content (Altbach, 2017; Chambliss & Calfee, 1998). Editors refine manuscripts for clarity, coherence, and academic rigor (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Reviewers safeguard credibility, validating content, ensuring curriculum alignment, and removing bias; impartial, professional review is vital (UNESCO, 2016;

Pingel, 2010). Where review systems are weak or politicized, textbooks risk being inaccurate or ideologically skewed.

Global evidence highlights a stark difference in textbook development capacity between developed and developing countries. In developed countries like Finland, Japan, South Korea, the process is highly professionalized, involving subject experts with pedagogical training, supported by rigorous, often blind, peer review. This leads to regularly updated, evidence-based, and pedagogically innovative textbooks (Oates, 2014). In many developing countries, production is constrained by weak institutional frameworks, insufficient author/ editor training, and a shortage of qualified reviewers (Mahmood, 2011). This generally results in error-prone, outdated, or poorly aligned textbooks, further complicated by political interference that allows ideological interests to shape content (Pingel, 2010).

Pakistan exemplifies these challenges. Historically, its textbook system has oscillated between the competition-driven MTS during 1947–1962, which lacked quality assurance, and the uniformity-focused STS during 1962–2007. Reforms like NT & LMP and the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010) aimed to decentralize and promote MTS by involving private publishers. However, the professional development of authors, editors, and reviewers remains limited, and evaluation committees often lack the necessary expertise or independence (Rafiq & Chishti, 2011). This institutional weakness means that Pakistan's textbooks frequently emphasize rote learning and lack the learner-centered approaches seen in stronger systems. The persistent policy–practice gap—where formally well-structured rules (e.g., Royalty Rules, 1994) fail to translate into effective implementation that leaves the system vulnerable to inefficiency and politicization. Comparative cases demonstrate that the benefits of MTS like pedagogical diversity thrive only where strong institutional oversight, teacher competence, and robust quality assurance mechanisms exist (Oates, 2014). Strengthening capacity building, professional ethics, and institutional autonomy for textbook developers is therefore a systemic necessity, particularly in Pakistan and similar contexts where textbooks remain the dominant teaching resource (UNESCO, 2016). Scholars advocate a phased or hybrid approach, introducing MTS gradually while building the prerequisite regulatory and professional capacity (Rafiq & Chishti, 2011; Mahmood, 2011).

### **Research Gap**

Despite decades of debate, several gaps, inter alia, the following persisted:

- i. *Evaluation Frameworks*: International work stresses systematic evaluation (Pingel, 2010), but Pakistan lacks enforceable frameworks.
- ii. *Comparative Adaptation*: Successful MTS models (Finland, Japan, Korea) remain underexplored for adaptation to Pakistan.
- iii. *Teacher Agency*: Teachers' role as active users or evaluators of textbooks is largely absent in Pakistan.
- iv. *Political Economy & Supply*: Governance failures and shortages (e.g., Punjab, Sindh, KP in 2023–25) remain under-researched.
- v. *Policy–Practice Gap*: While Royalty Rules 1994, NT & LMP, and TLM Scheme exist, their enforcement and use as evaluation tools are unexplored in scholarship.

### **Problem Statement**

The education system remained caught between the rigidity of STS and the unfulfilled promise of MTS. While STS secured quality, uniformity and affordability, it narrowed pedagogical horizons. Conversely, MTS offered diversity and inclusivity but is constrained by weak institutional capacity, inadequate teacher preparation, inequitable access, and systemic corruption. Official frameworks exist but have failed to provide enforceable evaluation criteria.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because:

- i. Textbooks remain the cornerstone of curriculum implementation in Pakistan.
- ii. International scholarship on STS–MTS is rich, but its application to low-resource contexts like Pakistan is underdeveloped.
- iii. Persistent shortages and governance failures undermine even the equity promise of STS.
- iv. By analyzing the Royalty Rules 1994, the National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy 2007, and the Scheme of Textbook and Learning Materials, this study examines existing evaluation mechanisms and contextual circumstances to explore which model STS, MTS, or a hybrid is more feasible and suitable for Pakistan.

## Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine Pakistan's historical and current textbook governance, including reforms and challenges.
- ii. To analyze Royalty Rules 1994, NTLMP 2007, and the Scheme of Textbook and Learning Materials with respect to their evaluation mechanisms.
- iii. To explore, on the basis of existing evaluation mechanisms and Pakistan's circumstances, which model STS, MTS, or hybrid appears more feasible and suitable.

## Research Questions

- i. What have been the historical trends, reforms, and challenges in Pakistan's textbook governance?
- ii. How do Pakistan's official frameworks (Royalty Rules 1994; NT & LMP, 2007, Scheme of TLM2018-2021) address evaluation mechanisms for textbooks?
- iii. Based on evaluation mechanisms and ground realities, which textbook provision model STS, MTS, or hybrid is most feasible for Pakistan?

## Methodology

This study employs an interpretive philosophy and a qualitative approach, focusing on meaning and context rather than numerical measurement. Recognizing that education policies and textbook practices are deeply shaped by history, culture, and governance, the study seeks to understand them within their specific operational circumstances, not merely through statistics. Instead of collecting new data, it analyzes existing literature to understand how textbooks are chosen, used, and evaluated in various systems, with the goal of drawing relevant lessons for Pakistan. Pakistan's Official Documents – Key policies and rules that shape textbook provision in Pakistan, including:

- i. Punjab Textbook Board Ordinance, 1962
- ii. The Federal Supervision of Curricula, Textbooks and Maintenance of Standards of Education Act, 1976
- iii. A Book at a Glance, 1983-1984
- iv. Royalty Rules (1994)
- v. Amendments in Royalty Rules, 1994
- vi. National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy and Plan of Action (2007)
- vii. Punjab Curriculum Authority Act, 2012
- viii. Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board Ordinance, 2014
- ix. Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board Act, 2015
- x. Punjab Education, Curriculum, Training and Assessment Authority Act, 2025
- xi. Scheme of Textbook and Learning Materials, 2018 to 2021

These provide the official record of how textbooks are supposed to be developed and managed in Punjab/ Pakistan. In Pakistan's STS, manuscripts were developed either through open competition or by commissioned authors. In open competition, manuscripts submitted in response to advertisements were first evaluated by three referees, each independently rating chapters with numerical values. The arithmetic mean of the three scores was assigned to each unit of a manuscript, and the best-rated chapters across the manuscripts were compiled to form a composite textbook. This manuscript was then edited by subject specialists to address issues of coherence, consistency of style, redundancy, and progression before being forwarded to local and national review committees for revision and approval.

By contrast, under the Multiple Textbook System (MTS), each publisher submitted a complete manuscript which, after internal editing, was placed directly before local and then national/final review committees. In this case, referees and reviewers assigned numerical values to the entire manuscript as a whole, rather than to individual units. The resulting mean score determined whether a textbook was approved and, if multiple were approved, which ranked highest for adoption.

This methodological difference had significant consequences. The unit-wise rating system in STS ensured that weaker chapters did not disproportionately lower the overall quality of the final product, since only the best-rated units were compiled. In contrast, the whole-manuscript rating system in MTS magnified the statistical drawback of the arithmetic mean: even a few poorly rated units could reduce the average score of the entire manuscript, overshadowing otherwise strong sections.

Statistical literature confirms that the arithmetic mean is highly sensitive to extreme values or outliers (Ieta, Silberberg, Kucеровsky, & Greason, 2005). Standard statistical texts also emphasize that datasets with the same mean can differ widely in distribution and variability, making the mean an incomplete or misleading summary when internal variation is high (Field, 2024; Moore et al., 2009). Applied to textbook evaluation, this means that manuscripts of uneven quality could receive distorted or misleading rankings under MTS.



In STS, however, the editorial process transformed unit-wise selections into a coherent whole, diffusing stylistic inconsistency, redundancy, and progression gaps. Reviewers then ensured further refinement, enabling STS to produce what was often the best possible textbook—uniform, polished, and pedagogically stable.

In MTS, because evaluation was manuscript-based, weaknesses within submissions persisted even after revisions. The system tended to reward safe, uniformly average manuscripts while penalizing innovative but uneven ones, resulting in mediocrity rather than pedagogical strength.

The effectiveness of MTS also depends on the availability of a sufficiently large pool of skilled textbook writers to sustain genuine competition. In countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Finland, MTS thrives because well-trained authors, strong teacher education, and rigorous review mechanisms ensure both diversity and quality (Sahlberg, 2021; Oates, 2014).

Pakistan's context is markedly different. The number of capable textbook writers is limited, and those with genuine academic ability are often engaged in legitimate scholarly and professional work, preferring not to enter processes perceived as opaque or politicized (Mahmood, 2011). As a result, competition under MTS is weakened, leading to submissions that prioritize expediency over rigor. Scholars warn that when authorial capacity is weak, textbook markets risk mediocrity, bias, and superficial content (Altbach, 2017; Pingel, 2010).

Hence, while STS turned the drawback of point-value sensitivity into an advantage through unit-level filtering and editorial harmonization, MTS in Pakistan failed to achieve its theoretical promise because the enabling conditions for genuine competition—skilled authorship, impartial review, and institutional capacity—were absent.

## **Findings**

The analysis of textbook governance in Pakistan yields the following key findings, drawn from historical practice, official records of the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB), and comparative evidence:

Several official curricula were let lapse without implementation. Notably, the National Curriculum 2006 for Higher Secondary classes, the National Curriculum 2009 for Computer Science (Secondary & Higher Secondary levels), and the National Curriculum 2009 for Statistics (Higher Secondary levels) never reached classrooms. Even the 2006 National Mathematics Curriculum was implemented inconsistently applied to grades I–III in 2008–2009 but delayed for grades IV–IX until 2013–2014.

Certain textbooks remained in use for decades without revision. Primary and middle-level Mathematics textbooks were enforced for long periods with minimal changes. Similarly, English readers at the primary level published in the 1990s were used for over 15 years, despite shifts in international pedagogy toward communicative methods.

In contrast to inertia, abrupt disruptions also occurred. The foremost Grade VI Computer Education textbook, approved for a three-year cycle, was withdrawn after one year. PCTB's own records documented that corruption influenced textbook approval and selection. In addition, rollout of science textbooks aligned with the 2006 curriculum was delayed until 2013–2014 for grades IV–IX, reflecting inconsistencies and governance weaknesses.

STS employed unit-wise evaluation by referees, where each chapter was rated independently, and the best units were compiled into a textbook. This system allowed editorial harmonization to create coherent, consistent texts offering best textbooks. In contrast, MTS evaluated entire manuscripts holistically. This amplified the statistical drawback of the arithmetic mean, where even a few weak units could lower a manuscript's average score, penalizing stronger texts. Without effective editorial harmonization, weaknesses persisted in approved textbooks. Therefore, STS offering best textbooks in Pakistani context was smoothly replaced with poorer HTS.

The effectiveness of MTS depends on the availability of capable authors. In Pakistan, the pool of skilled textbook writers has remained limited. Many with genuine scholarly capacity have been engaged in fair academic or professional work and avoided participation in processes perceived as opaque or politicized. This scarcity weakened competition, reducing the promise of MTS and enabling mediocrity. Although frameworks such as the Royalty Rules (1994), the National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy (2007), and the Scheme of Textbook and Learning Materials (2017–2021) sought to regulate production and encourage competition, their implementation was weak. Review committees often lacked independence and expertise, and enforcement mechanisms failed to prevent bias, corruption, or politicization.

Although multiple textbooks of the same discipline and grade were formally approved under the Hybrid Textbook System (HTS), PTB, PCTB, and PECTAA consistently failed to operationalize genuine

choice. In practice, only the textbooks selected for use in public schools were published and distributed. This effectively reduced HTS to a variant of the STS, while simultaneously entrenching a shift control of statutory organization to the private publishers. Thus, rather than fostering competition and diversity, HTS reinforced centralization and allowed vested commercial interests to dominate the field through corrupt practices. Moreover, private publishers typically expressed interest only in developing textbooks with sufficiently high circulation to guarantee profits, leaving subjects or grades with lower enrollments neglected. As a result, HTS functioned less as a genuine MTS arrangement and more as a variant of STS, coupled with a monopoly of private publishers in the field of textbook development. Instead of fostering competition and diversity, HTS reinforced centralization, profit-driven selectivity, and the capture of textbook governance by vested commercial interests.

## Discussion

In this region, the state gradually began treating textbook development as a trade, abolishing its direct control while outsourcing publication contracts to the private publishers through the Punjab Textbook Committee, which was later redesignated as the Advisory Board for Textbooks in 1937. Moreover, the chaotic state of the textbook trade that followed attracted sharp criticism from a Committee of Inquiry in 1938, which observed that unrestricted competition in this sector was leading to confusion and poor-quality materials. The Committee recommended limiting the number of approved textbooks to about a dozen sets per discipline in order to balance diversity with quality control (Government of Punjab, 1983–1984).

Concerns about the shortcomings of private publishers were also raised nationally. Mr. Fazal ur Rahman, Pakistan's first Federal Minister for Education, warned that private publishers prioritized commercial gain over academic value. His apprehensions were echoed in the Sharif Commission's recommendations, which emphasized the need for a public institution to supervise and regulate textbook development (Government of Pakistan, 1947; 1959). However, these proposals were not immediately implemented.

A major structural reform finally occurred in 1962 with the establishment of the West Pakistan Textbook Board through an ordinance, following the findings of an investigative survey led by General Nasir Ali Khan. This marked the introduction of the Single Textbook System (STS)—a model grounded in research and supported by transparent mechanisms such as open competition, commissioned authorship, referee-based scoring, editorial harmonization, and multilayered review processes. Despite its rigidity, STS provided a research-based and organized response to the earlier chaotic trade, ensuring consistency and pedagogical coherence.

By contrast, the Hybrid Textbook System (HTS) was introduced decades later without any comparable research-based rationale or contrary empirical findings to justify replacing STS, particularly with rise in corruption & corrupt practices. While presented as a reform to promote diversity and competition, HTS replicated the weaknesses of the earlier trade-driven model. It reinforced publisher monopolies, profit-based selectivity, and opaque governance mechanisms. This transition represents a profound policy–practice gap: whereas STS was introduced after careful inquiries, HTS emerged primarily from political expediency, without evidence of its potential to ensure quality or equity in textbook provision.

The analysis of Pakistan's textbook governance further reveals that curriculum–textbook cycles have been less a vehicle for educational reform than a mechanism of recurring disruption. Official records of the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) show that curriculum approval rarely guaranteed implementation and that textbook development and selection became susceptible to capture by vested interests.

Curricular reform in Pakistan has frequently served bureaucratic or political objectives rather than strict pedagogical research-based needs. Though academicians were given free hand for revisions but research-based academic practices remained ignored while the development of curricula and textbooks. Several national curricula—such as the 2006 Higher Secondary Curricula, the 2009 Secondary Computer Science Curricula, and the 2009 Higher Secondary Statistics Curricula—lapsed without ever reaching classrooms. Even the 2006 National Mathematics Curricula were implemented unevenly, reaching Grades I–III in 2008–2009 and extending to Grades IV–IX only by 2013–2014. These examples demonstrate that curricular revision depended not on academic necessity but on the will of influential groups.

Textbook practice has been equally unbalanced. Certain textbooks remained in use for decades without meaningful revision. For example, Mathematics textbooks at the primary and middle levels changed little until after 2006, sustaining rote learning rather than conceptual understanding. The Pakistan Studies textbook at the secondary level, first published in the 1980s, continued for over twenty years with minimal updates despite factual inaccuracies and ideological bias. Similarly, English readers from the 1990s remained in classrooms for more than 15 years even as communicative language teaching became the global standard.

Conversely, disruption occurred when vested interests orchestrated premature textbook replacements. The Grade VI Computer Education textbook, originally approved for a three-year period, was withdrawn after only one session—a decision officially recorded as linked to corruption in textbook selection. Similarly, Science textbooks aligned with the 2006 national curriculum were delayed and inconsistently implemented. This alternating pattern of prolonged inertia followed by abrupt disruption undermined teacher preparation, fractured student learning continuity, and eroded institutional trust.

At the primary level, frequent curriculum revisions appeared to function less as pedagogical improvements and more as mechanisms to create opportunities for vested interests in textbook production. Hayat and Butt (2023) noted that the recurring changes in units related to Numbers and Algebraic Operations in primary Mathematics textbooks since 2000 were largely cosmetic, offering no substantive enhancement of content or pedagogy. Likewise, Hayat (2025), in his doctoral research, found that all primary-level Mathematics curricula since 2000 have revolved around the same five fundamental themes: Numbers, Algebraic Operations, Geometry, Measurement, and Data Handling suggesting that repeated textbook revisions often served administrative or commercial purposes rather than academic need.

A crucial comparative insight emerges from the evaluation mechanisms under STS and MTS. Under STS, unit-wise referee rating allowed the extraction of the strongest content, later harmonized by editors and refined through multi-tiered review. Although the arithmetic mean is statistically sensitive to outliers, in STS this sensitivity operated advantageously filtering weak material and compiling the best possible textbook (Ieta et al., 2005; Field, 2024; Moore et al., 2009). In contrast, MTS relied on whole-manuscript scoring, where a few weak sections could disproportionately reduce average scores, penalizing strong manuscripts. Without adequate editorial harmonization, weaknesses persisted, producing mediocrity rather than innovation.

The situation was compounded by Pakistan's limited professional capacity for textbook development. Although the Secretary, School Education Department, identified this as a pressing issue in 2015, and the PCTB Board resolved to initiate capacity-building measures, implementation was superficial. Only two Subject Specialists including one officer who retired immediately after a foreign visit, an Assistant Subject Specialist, and the Chief Executive Officer of PCTB participated in the initiative (PCTB, 2015). This limited engagement failed to generate meaningful reform, maintaining the same institutional inertia that had long hindered textbook improvement.

Earlier efforts were equally ineffective. In 1999, the Punjab Textbook Board (PTB) nominated thirteen officers for training in textbook editing and related functions, but the group largely comprised Assistant Subject Specialists unauthorized for editing and deputationists nearing the end of their three years tenure (PTB, 1999). Similarly, international training opportunities were monopolized by executives rather than technical experts, and the few specialists who did travel abroad were unable to translate their learning into institutional reform. Representation of training and assessment institutions such as the Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) and the Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) in the PCTB Board of Governors, the highest departmental forum of PCTB, remained nominal. Their failure to influence governance contributed to the eventual merger of these bodies, consolidating institutional inefficiency instead of enhancing capacity.

These persistent professional deficiencies created fertile ground for corruption to reclaim control of textbook governance in Punjab. In the absence of qualified editors, independent reviewers, and credible accountability mechanisms, textbook approval and selection became centralized within a narrow circle of administrative and politically connected actors. As a result, decisions were increasingly driven by patronage and profit rather than academic merit.

Taken together, these findings show that Pakistan's textbook crisis is rooted not merely in technical limitations but in structural governance failure. Capacity deficits, weak ethics, and systemic corruption have allowed vested interests to dominate curriculum and textbook policy. The way forward lies not in recurring curricular overhauls but in ensuring curricular stability at the foundational levels, while institutionalizing periodic, evidence-based revision of textbooks as instruments of continuous improvement. Only such balance between stability and reform can protect educational coherence and restore public confidence in Pakistan's textbook governance system.

## **Synthesis**

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Pakistan's textbook crisis stems less from technical incapacity than from systemic governance failure. Over successive decades, vested interests have manipulated curriculum revisions, textbook approvals, and policy reforms as instruments of influence and control rather than of educational improvement. Institutional capacity-building efforts—such as the limited and ineffective training initiatives of 1999 and 2015 remained symbolic, failing to develop a sustainable

cadre of qualified textbook authors, editors, and reviewers. Weak professionalism, combined with the absence of accountability and transparent evaluation, created the institutional vacuum through which corruption steadily reclaimed textbook governance.

The result has been a cycle of inertia punctuated by politically motivated disruption: curricula revised but not implemented, textbooks retained for decades without meaningful updating, and others abruptly replaced under questionable circumstances. Punjab's dominance in curriculum and textbook policy amplified these distortions nationwide, allowing the provincial governance crisis to cascade through Pakistan's education system.

The way forward lies not in another wave of curricular overhauls but in restoring the balance between curriculum stability and textbook adaptability. Curriculum frameworks at the primary and middle levels should remain stable to preserve continuity in teaching and assessment, while textbooks should undergo periodic, accountable, and evidence-based revision to ensure relevance, inclusivity, and pedagogical integrity. Strengthening institutional ethics, transparency, and professional competence in textbook development is essential to rebuild credibility.

Only by re-establishing merit-based systems, insulating textbook processes from political interference, and enforcing genuine accountability can Pakistan escape the entrenched cycle of policy capture and educational disruption and move toward a coherent, credible, and equitable system of learning.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that Punjab's textbook governance, once anchored in the relatively strong evaluative procedures of the STS, has been steadily captured by corruption through the transition to MTS and hybrid systems. The STS, though centralized and rigid, safeguarded quality by integrating referee scoring at the unit level, rigorous editorial oversight, and multilayered reviews.

By contrast, MTS and hybrid approaches removed these safeguards, replacing them with whole-manuscript ratings and opaque committee evaluations vulnerable to manipulation. Evidence from the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board highlights the scale of this problem: key national curricula expired without implementation, some approved textbooks were arbitrarily withdrawn, and corruption in approval and selection processes became systemic.

This smooth but deliberate reclamation of textbook governance by corruption represents more than a provincial governance failure—it is a national threat. Punjab has historically been Pakistan's most populous province and a key driver of curriculum and textbook policy, meaning distortions at this level cascade into the entire education system. If left unchecked, the corruption of textbook governance will continue to disrupt curriculum alignment, weaken teacher practice, and undermine Pakistan's broader social and developmental stability, resulting in the erosion of continuity, coherence, and trust in the educational system. Sustainable reform requires restoring transparency to textbook development, insulating committees from political capture, and reestablishing professional standards for authoring, editing, and reviewing. Without such interventions, Pakistan risks sacrificing the intellectual foundation of its next generations to entrenched vested interests.

### **Recommendations**

- At the primary and elementary levels, curricula should remain stable. Instead of frequent rewrites, systematic and periodic revision of the same textbooks should be institutionalized, focusing on correcting errors, improving pedagogy, and updating examples.
- All manuscripts should undergo independent review by qualified referees and professional editors. Review committees must operate under transparent procedures, free from political or commercial interference.
- Capacity-building programs should be introduced to train prospective authors in pedagogy and textbook writing. Fair incentives and transparent recognition mechanisms can encourage genuine scholars to participate in textbook development.
- Adopt a Hybrid Evaluation Model. This model should integrate the strengths of STS (unit-wise, best-content selection) with the diversity of MTS (competition and plurality) by instituting two-stage review and mandatory editorial harmonization. This hybrid model would allow the selection of the best content while fostering innovation through competition.
- Mechanisms of accountability must be strengthened. The Government of Punjab has already acknowledged corruption in textbook approval; independent audit and monitoring systems should be made mandatory to restore credibility.
- Drawing lessons from systems such as Finland, Japan, and South Korea, Pakistan should aim for curriculum stability, rigorous review mechanisms, and incremental textbook improvement.



## Future Research Directions

- i. Comparative Policy Studies: Cross-national analysis of textbook governance in South Asia versus high-performing systems (e.g., Finland, Japan, South Korea) to identify transferable lessons for Pakistan.
- ii. Authorial Capacity and Training: Empirical studies on the qualifications, motivations, and constraints of textbook writers in Pakistan, exploring how academic engagement can be strengthened.
- iii. Impact of Review Mechanisms: Systematic evaluation of how referee scoring and review committee processes affect textbook quality and innovation, with recommendations for balanced evaluation rubrics.
- iv. Digital Transition: Examination of how digital textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OER) might bypass entrenched vested interests while raising new challenges of access, equity, and data privacy.
- v. Teacher Agency in Textbook Use: Field research on how teachers adapt, supplement, or resist state-mandated textbooks, and how textbook diversity affects classroom practice.
- vi. Governance and Capture: Longitudinal analysis of how political and commercial interests shape textbook board decisions, with a focus on regulatory capture and accountability mechanisms.
- vii. Hybrid Models Feasibility: Pilot studies testing phased hybrid systems in well-resourced districts to determine whether MTS can be sustainably introduced alongside STS in Pakistan.

## Practical Implications

- i. Establish long-term governance frameworks for textbook development to prevent repeated oscillation between STS, MTS, and hybrid models.
- ii. Introduce mandatory audit trails of textbook selection, scoring, and approval.
- iii. Require annual public reports from Textbook Boards on evaluation processes, reviewer performance, and reasons for adoption/rejection.
- iv. Enforce penalties for political or commercial interference in evaluation committees.
- v. Reconstitute review committees with independent academics and subject specialists.
- vi. Introduce transparent recruitment and rotation of reviewers to reduce capture.
- vii. Invest in writer training programs, incentivize academic participation, and establish competitive fellowships for textbook authorship.
- viii. Replace sole reliance on arithmetic mean with multi-criteria rubrics (content accuracy, pedagogy, inclusivity, alignment with curriculum).
- ix. Ensure both referees and reviewers are trained in standardized evaluation protocols.
- x. Pilot MTS selectively in high-capacity contexts, while maintaining STS where authorial and review weaknesses persist.
- xi. Institutionalize professional editorial review to ensure consistency, logical progression, and elimination of redundancy.
- xii. Deploy digital and open educational resources (OERs) with accountability for data privacy, equitable access, and local contextualization.

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