

## Exploring Planning Criteria for Facilitating Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities in Public Sector Secondary Schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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### Abstract

This study explores the planning criteria for facilitating curricular and co-curricular activities in public sector secondary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, emphasizing their role in promoting students' academic achievement and holistic development. Using a qualitative exploratory case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews from 15 purposively selected administrative and management staff and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that while planning criteria for curricular activities are aligned with national and provincial educational objectives and include provisions for infrastructure, time management, and instructional support, they are constrained by traditional classroom designs, overcrowding, limited ECCE classrooms, and inadequate space for practical learning. Similarly, co-curricular activities are supported through multipurpose halls, play areas, open spaces, and financial provisions; however, their effective implementation largely depends on available resources and school-level management. Overall, the study highlights a gap between policy intentions and ground realities, indicating the need for more flexible, inclusive, and resource-sensitive planning approaches to ensure the effective integration of curricular and co-curricular activities for students' comprehensive development.

**Keywords:** Planning Criterion, Co-curricular Activities, Curricular Activities, Public Schools

### Introduction

The system of education is required to promote the academic achievements of students as well as their overall development through the proper integration of curricular and co-curricular activities (Siddiqui et al., 2023). Curricular activities are foundation of educational system that is aimed to provide knowledge and skills in the light of national educational objectives (Rahayu & Dong, 2023). Co-curricular activities are fostering the life skills of teamwork, leadership, communication and resilience (Saifi, 2023). The holistic integration of curricular and co-curricular activities is the triggering factor for the physical, psychological, social and emotional growth of children. The proper balance in the implementation of curricular and co-curricular activities is the key to promote students' engagement and their motivation. It is also helpful in the preparation of students for real-life challenges and making them impactful in real-life.

Planning is the essential component of education (Khalilov & Taghiyev, 2024). It helps in the proper integration of curricular and co-curricular activities through the provision of formal mechanism of instruction and guidelines. The management and organization of co-curricular activities are important for growth and development of students (Din & Hussain, 2026). They are directly associated with the

development of emotional intelligence of students as well as their physical and social development. The participation of students in curricular and co-curricular activities are the indicators behind completion rates of schoolings, their academic grades and transition into next and higher level of education (Din et al., 2026). The issue of unavailability of syllabus, lack of alignment with native languages, lack of professional development of teachers in EMI and lack of interest of students are the challenges faced by teachers (K. Khan, 2026) are also the causes lack of proper planning in schools. Curricular activities include all course related interventions within classroom such as conduction of assessments, course presentations, experiments in science labs and other related classroom activities. The aim of curricular activities is to develop students' intellectual growth and knowledge acquisition (Rahayu & Dong, 2023). While co-curricular activities are mainly related with sports events, debates and quiz competitions, cultural events, and different origin of fairs and festival within school or outside schools (Saifi, 2023). Co-curricular activities help in developing students' skills, leadership qualities, creativity, and physical well-being (Yeo et al., 2023). Together, curricular and co-curricular activities create a balanced learning environment that enhances students' academic performance as well as their personal and social development.

Planning criteria represents is the set of standardized guidelines formulated and regulated by educational administration for the facilitation of school's management in order to smoothly organize and efficiently utilize the resources, infrastructure and human resource for the achievement of educational objectives (Yasir & Salim, 2026). The planning criteria for the organization of curricular and co-curricular activities are revolving around students' enrollment, availability of physical infrastructure, allocation of teachers and time allocation. In the public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the traditional criteria for planning curricular and co-curricular in which annual schedule and traditional activities which causes imbalances in students' participation (Din & Hussain, 2026). This imbalance may also cause the reduction in the effectiveness of overall educational experiences.

In public sector secondary schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, effective planning is playing in important role in the proper inclusion and facilitation of both curricular and co-curricular dimensions. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the educational reforms are aimed to improve quality and access. But the geographical diversity and constraints of resources pose great challenges to school planning. The rural areas across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa face the issues of lack of infrastructure, trained teachers and financial resources which has hindered the implementation of both curricular and co-curricular programs (Torwali, 2020). The existing planning criteria are not fully account for the needs for the implementation of curricular and co-curricular activities. Therefore, the exploration of existing planning criteria is the need of hour for the identification of gaps and assessment of their alignment with contemporary educational goals.

This research is aimed at exploring the planning criteria used in public sector secondary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a specific focus on how they facilitate both curricular and co-curricular activities. By exploring the existing practices and policies, this research seeks to provide insights into the strengths and limitations of current planning approaches.

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To analyse the planning criteria for facilitating curricular and co-curricular activities in the public sector schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the planning criteria for facilitating curricular and co-curricular activities in the public sector schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and exploratory case study design of research is used for exploring planning criteria for the facilitation of curricular and co-curricular activities in public sector schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The population for this study is all the administrative and management staff working in elementary and secondary education department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Total of 15 administrative and management staff working in elementary and secondary education department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was purposively selected as sample. Data collection was made through semi-structured interviews and it was analyzed thematically.

## Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed thematically and two major themes were identified from the data.

### Theme 1: Planning Criteria for Curricular Activities

The collected data revealed that planning criteria used certain bottlenecks and standards while planning curricular in which classroom design and structure is included. As two respondents have shared that rectangular classroom designs are the prime structure for supporting curricular activities (P-1, P4).

Another set of five respondents have shared that planning criteria follow traditional models for classroom with 18<sup>th</sup> by 25<sup>th</sup> square feet area (P-2, P-11, P-13, P-14, P-15).

Another set of two respondents have shared that the current size of classroom *are small and overcrowded*, making it difficult to conduct activities effectively (P-3, P-12).

The collected data has revealed that only one classroom for ECE activities is included in each primary school in the planning criteria which is not enough to accommodate entire students of ECE grades. As one respondent has remarked:

*“Only one ECCE classroom is not enough for different learning activities of young children.”* (P-5)

In order to support classroom activities, flexibility in seating arrangement and provision of learning materials is the part of planning criteria. As two respondents have shared that seating arrangement is made in flexible manner for the support of curricular activities (P-6, P-10).

Another respondent has shared similar remarks in this manner:

*“Students sit in rows and those at the back cannot properly see or participate.”* (P-7)

In order to support the curricular activities, the installation of fans, ventilation and other facilities are the part of planning criteria. As one of the respondent has shared in this manner:

*“Electricity and electric equipment as well as ventilation and windows are installed in such a manner that supports the smooth conduction of curricular activities by keeping thermal condition in normal condition.”* (P-8)

The collected data revealed limited provision for practical and experiential learning spaces. As one of the respondent has remarked:

*“There is a proper provision of laboratories but space of the laboratory is not enough for the accommodation of entire overcrowded classroom. As a result, practical are conducted in groups by teachers at secondary and higher secondary school level.”* (P-9)

Data analysis has also revealed that the alignment of curricular activities with the national and provincial education objectives is taken as priority. The planning criteria have also given proper room for the provision of materials, teachers and infrastructure. The management of time, schedule, administrative support, supervision and continuous assessment are also the essential elements of planning criteria in the facilitation of curricular activities in the public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### Theme 2: Planning Criteria for Co-Curricular Activities

The collected data has revealed that there is a proper planning criterion for the conduction of co-curricular activities in the public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As one of the respondent has shared

that examination halls and multi-purpose hall are used for the conduction of co-curricular activities. AS he remarked:

*“Auditorium and multi-purpose halls are used for Bazm-E-Adab competitions, debate competitions and quiz competitions in public sector schools.” (P-4)*

A set of three respondents have shared that multi-purpose halls are established in public sectors schools for the conduction of examinations as well as co-curricular activities. (P-1, P-7, P-13)

Another set of four respondents have shared that play areas are installed in primary schools as part of planning for co-curricular activities as well as the establishment and functionality of sports grounds for high and higher secondary schools’ sports and co-curricular activities such as sports’ gala and cultural events. (P-2, P-8, P-9, P-11)

All the respondents were of the views that available and open spaces in publics are used by school’s management for the conduction of co-curricular activities and for that school-based planning is made by school’s management.

The collected data has also revealed that all the respondents were of the view that the provision and availability of financial resources for the conduction of co-curricular activities is also included in the criterion of planning.

## **Discussion**

The discussion of the findings indicates that the planning criteria for both curricular and co-curricular activities in public sector schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are structured but constrained by practical limitations. For curricular activities, the reliance on traditional classroom designs and standardized sizes reflects adherence to established norms; however, issues such as overcrowding, limited space, and insufficient ECCE classrooms hinder effective implementation of diverse teaching strategies. These findings are similar to the findings of Torwali, (2020) that highlighted similar scenarios in educational sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Although provisions like flexible seating, ventilation, and alignment with educational objectives demonstrate thoughtful planning, the lack of adequate space for laboratories and experiential learning restricts student engagement and active learning. Khan et al., (2024) have identified similar challenges in the public sector schools. Similarly, while co-curricular activities are supported through the availability of multipurpose halls, play areas, and open spaces, their effective execution largely depends on school-level management and available resources. The inclusion of financial planning for such activities is a positive aspect, yet disparities in infrastructure and space utilization suggest that policy intentions are not fully realized in practice.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study reveals that while the planning criteria for facilitating curricular and co-curricular activities in public sector schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are systematically designed and aligned with educational objectives, their practical implementation is constrained by infrastructural and resource limitations. Traditional classroom structures, overcrowding, insufficient specialized spaces, and limited facilities for experiential learning reduce the effectiveness of curricular activities despite the presence of supportive elements such as flexible seating, ventilation, and administrative planning. Similarly, although co-curricular activities are institutionally supported through multipurpose halls, play areas, and financial provisions, their execution largely depends on the availability of space and school-level management practices. These findings highlight a significant gap between policy intentions and ground realities, suggesting the need for more context-sensitive, flexible, and adequately resourced planning approaches to ensure the effective delivery of both curricular and co-curricular activities.

## Recommendation

School management and policymakers should adopt more flexible and context-responsive planning by ensuring effective utilization of available spaces, strengthening financial support, and providing regular monitoring and training to facilitate the smooth and inclusive implementation of both curricular and co-curricular activities.

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