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A COMPREHENSIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CURRICULUM OF PAKISTAN AND CHINA

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Early Childhood Education, Curriculum Comparison, Educational Philosophy, Pakistan, China & Cross-Cultural Learning	The present study examines comparative analysis of Pakistani and Chinese curriculum of Early Childhood Education. It analyzes design, intellectual approach and link between for the child development. The research looks into official curriculum frameworks, policy documents & related literature from either country by using the qualitative methodology. The study lays focus on key learning areas, language, literacy, health, hygiene and safety, and social-emotional development, basic mathematical concepts, physical growths and creative arts. Findings directs that even the either country have the same goals and expected outcomes, there are still some prominent gaps that influence the results on larger scale. The difference in implementation, educational strategies, teaching and teachers training programs, classroom managing, infrastructure and evaluation methods shapes results for their work in both countries. Chinese curriculum employs an all-inclusive, child centered, play based approach that connects cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development, showing outcomes in the efficiency of language, mathematics, moral learning, and socially active beings. The study indicates that needs appropriate design and systematic support for early childhood development and equitable are vital for realizing potential benefits of early childhood education.
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INTRODUCTION

In rapidly evolving and ever-changing dynamic world, education systems are a challenge to keep up with the needs and requirements of growth and development. It is a basis of education is not only limited to the formal education now but it also includes the shaping of social, emotional and global competencies for every individual keeping in mind the need of one (Ali, Khan & Khan, 2024). The

curriculum has a vital role for delivering the educational goals in the meaningful learning, cultural reflecting and social and economic context. Variants in curriculum structure, training, content and assessment mirror opposing educational philosophies and policy prioritizing influences the student development and outcomes. The early childhood education is partially important as it is the core foundation for life lasting learning, growth and development. The program plays vital role in laying the cognitive, physical, emotional and social foundation for the lifelong learning and development (UNESCO, 2022). Curriculum, according to national association for education of young children, is a structures framework that describes learning objectives, procedures, techniques, methods, and learning environments.

The development that means to nurture the child according to the age, each one's unique needs and strengths, abilities, differing intelligence and the social cultural environment in which they live are the fundamentals of effective ECE curriculum. The ECE curriculum differs on larger scale between contexts and ideologies (Dong, Wang & Zhang, 2012). These include head start programs, family childcare providers, and preschool and daycare center, address various community needs, diverse educational philosophies found in curriculum methods (Haim, Hase, Schindler, Bachl & Domahidi, 2023). These provide child-centered learning while emphasizing all-inclusive child development, creativity, relationships and experiential learning. In Pakistan, policy interests in early Childhood Education keeps on changing on regular basis. Kachi were once a part of formal schooling, but their numbers started reducing since 1980. National education policies of 1992 and 1998-2010 stressed the reintroduction of Kachi as a formal part of primary education and extending primary education to six years. It was an important step towards the strong foundation of early learning and promoting holistic education.

Pakistan ECE landscape shows the ongoing efforts to institutionalize early learning through policy initiatives such as Single National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education ECCE, it outlines key learning outcomes and competencies for young learners (Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, 2023). Despite these reforms, important systemic barriers including disparities in the teacher training, resource availability and allocation, as well as curriculum implementation continues to challenge the delivery of what the policies talk about. (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025). Studies have underlined the existing gaps between written curriculum intentions and reality of classrooms enactment, suggesting that the implementation of curriculum is uneven and is greatly influenced by the structural and professional limitations within Pakistan's context (Nawaz, 2025). In this drive, research indicates that, the revision of the Chinese curriculum has facilitated more diversified and self-directed forms of the curriculum practices yet professional preparation as well as training of teachers is still a significant measure towards implementing any reform (Miao, 2024).

Moreover, the creativity of strategies like Anji play presents the devotion of China to the child-driven learning platforms which inspire exploration and self-determination (Anji, 2025). In China, Early Childhood Education and Care ECEC has been growing rapidly over the last three decades, with support of national reforms like medium and long-term reforms and development plan (2010-2020), the goal was to aim near-universal ECEC access even with the significant improvements in

child development, access, issues like urban-rural difference, unequal funding delivery, growing privatization, lack of resources and services for children under age of three and a teacher storage that still is a major issue (Zhu & Xiong, 2021). In Contrast, Chinese ECE curriculum has undergone a lot of efforts and improvements over the years, that have strived toward the balancing of national educational goals with child-centered and play based educational policies that indicates both cultural values, modern educational philosophies. In China, educational policies have emphasis on systematic transition from early childhood care in primary schooling, with incremental adjustments that aims at enhancing curriculum anatomy, teacher role in curriculum design & implementations (Zhang, 2023).

The most notable aspect of comparative curriculum studies is that, these studies enable educators and policymakers to indicate nominal practices and comprehend the way system reacts to societal, technological change & how these forces tailor the curriculum to meet international requirements. By examining the diverse approaches to ECE, such studies support curriculum improvement, facilitate the development of educational system that promotes cross-cultural understanding and prepare children for life in a unified world. The SNC stresses an integrated curriculum, combining language, math, science, social studies and values within meaningful activities for young learners. This study hence examines ECE curriculum of Pakistan and China across multiple scopes, including educational philosophies, curriculum content & implementation strategies, with aim of identifying strengths and cavities that can inform future curriculum enhancements of cross-cultural learning's required for comprehending the situations. Such comparative investigations are not timely but are essential to connect the related differences and advancing reasonable early education practices in both the nations.

Objectives & Hypothesis

1. There is significant difference between curriculum of both countries that shapes educational base for kids differently (H_1)
2. The difference creates a clear gap of diverse skills, abilities and competencies between the kids of either country (H_2).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The need of learner-centered, context-responsive, and future-focused backgrounds that go further than memorization toward all-inclusive development has been highlighted more in the curriculum implementation, evaluation, assessment, design affect learning outcomes and educational quality in a variety of settings. (Sapawi & Yusoff, 2025). Identify global trends in curriculum development, nothing a significant shift toward learner-centered teaching strategies, integration of technology, and contextual reworking to local and international anxieties (digital literacy, & communicative competencies). The curriculum implementation is another critical area of contemporary research (Aslam, Mushtaq, Noor, Maqbool, Khan & Sarfraz, 2024). The report consistent implementation problems, such as the misalignment between curriculum intentions and classroom practices, due to weak teacher preparations, limited instructional resources, and lack of stakeholder support. the Artificial intelligence (AI) is seen as a key component of the 21st century curriculum design, and

academic research on technology addition in the curriculum building has elevated in addition to practical application.

According to research on AI-driven curriculum, teachers should unite AI technologies to stand-in interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and practical problem-solving skills that meet stresses of modern education. Research on Early Childhood Education ECE curriculum has progressively stressed how national curriculum design and implementation touch young children's development, informative practices & educational quality in numerous socio-cultural backgrounds. In Pakistan, the development and implementations of Single National Curriculum (SNC) for early childhood care and education (ECEC) have been the subject of the current scholarly attention. (Rubab, Shafi, Jameel & Awan, 2025) provide a subject matter analysis of SNC, highlight progress in curriculum materials and ongoing challenges such as insufficient classroom infrastructure and lack of learning resources necessary for effective ECE delivery (Shahzadi & Nawaz 2025) similarly identify gaps between written and enacted ECEC curriculum in Punjab, pointing to disparities in instructional materials, assessments, evaluation practices & teacher training programs that compel meaningful curriculum applications.

These results are related to existing body of literature on quality of ECE in Pakistan that identifies systematic obstacles, including poor quality of teaching support, ineffective infrastructure, and the lack of professional development opportunities that hinder curricular objectives (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025). Curriculum research in national backgrounds such as Pakistan has concentrated on the new trends and gaps that had existed in terms of curriculum development and evaluation. According to (Khidmat et al. 2023), skills-based learning and technologies usage acquire new importance, but the insufficiency of teacher training program and background-specific evaluation techniques is a barrier to active curriculum executing. Their discoveries top necessity to have advance assessment outline that reflect curriculum efficiency in a variety of the educational environments. The recent studies on the topic of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Pakistan indicate the advancement in the curriculum development as well as the significance of the challenges in implementation. One of the key priorities has been the SNC in the ECEC that tries to harmonize the learning objectives in various locations.

The research on SNC shows hints between the written curriculum and the classroom representation in the teaching strategies, instructional resources, and evaluation and assessment procedures, and outstanding deficiency in teacher training and resources availability (Shahzabi & Nawaz, 2025). Balancing the research highlight standard impediments that influence success of curriculums in community institutions. These are poor organization of classrooms, insufficient learning materials, poor administration, and absence of professional development, which, in their combination, hinder good teaching and learning experiences (Rafiq-uz-Zaman, 2025). The teacher mindset facilitates the curriculum dynamics, and teachers think that global competencies may be due to a lack of training, proper adjustment, and resource limitations (Ahmed Sindh Education foundation, 2024). The parental concept is another topic in the discourse of ECE curriculum because research in Punjab established that such aspects of organization as quality of teachers & parental background impact

alleged benefits of early education acquisition and its pursuit (Qayyum, Rafique, Shah, Agrumi & Haider, 2024).

The creation of research has started to identify change in curriculum development, encompassing the incorporation of computerized tools and artificial intelligence (AI), although such inclinations have encountered obstacles by gaps in organizations and neglect of teachers in the Pakistani ECE culture (Qayyum et al, 2025). The cultural sympathy of instructional materials is another issue with curriculum. There have been calls for the large-scale arrangements with local cultural values and traditions because of research on culturally approachable curriculum practices specifies that many early learning programs are still disconnected from cultural background and language of children they serve (Naz, Uddin, Bilal & Hashmi, 2025). Even still policy have been proceeding, differences carry on between public, private ECE provision in Pakistan, trained caregivers, learning materials, and leadership, leading to poor student performance. In difference, the private school offer better services, teaching educational results. The research stresses that both quality services and effective teaching policies and strategies are essential, particularly given the developmental understanding of early childhood.

The learning-through-play campaigns grounded in Jean Piaget's theory support activity-based learning as more effective for young children. (Bukhari, 2019). Normally, the literature things to see a need for constant asset in teacher training programs, resources division, and curriculum care system to fully increase in value the objectives of the SNC and enhance ECE quality in Pakistan. In opposing, continuous efforts are made to improve child-centered and self-directed, independent curriculum practices in China for ECE. The powers of child-centered instructions are renowned in (Miao, 2024) documentation of transformation processes that support expanded and regionally reformed curriculum progress. Still, it is also underscored that the need for better practice-oriented curriculum reform id the growth of Chinese early childhood educator's involvement in curriculum making decisions, it is seen as impact on other objectives, topic choice & teaching strategies (Chen, Chen & Chi, 2024). An active related of reform, modification, teacher involvement and continued changing curriculum practices is shown by contemporary research on the Chinese early childhood education curriculum.

China's curriculum reform has shifted to the more independent and child-centered models, using a various range of intellectual approaches those prioritize classroom practices and national policies goals (Miao, 2024). Regardless of the fact that the national reforms have efficiently encouraged independence in curriculum designed and implementation, teaching proficiency is still a barrier to professional tuition and successful classroom execution (Miao, 2024; Chen et al, 2024). The main subject in literature is central role of early childhood teachers in curriculum modification. Recent studies show that the Chinese teachers are progressively significant in choosing teaching methods-roles that reflect final from more centralized curriculum control towards delimited decision making (Chen et al, 2024). This shift lime light of standing of teacher activity in curriculum representation and suggests ongoing reform aimed efforts to lift teacher status and professional capability within the curriculum process. Research on organizational quality of education in China further highlights

a long-term obligation by government to strengthen ECE access and quality over policy focus and resource allocation.

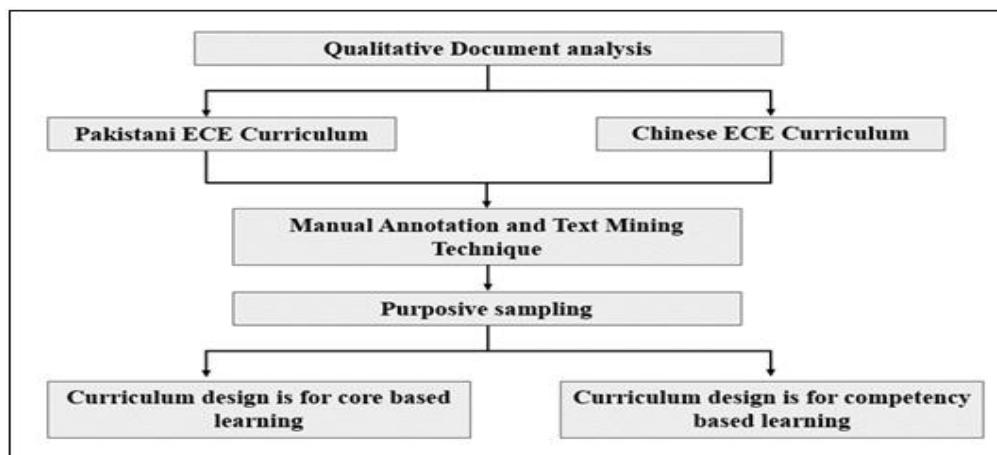
Since 2010, national policy efforts have reliably aimed to expand preschool education groundwork & improve standards, backing to curriculum development that supports developmental outcomes (Chen & Yang, 2024; Chen & Yang, 2024). Play based learning, curriculum content integration figures obviously in China ECE curriculum discussions (Chen, Mamat, & Seah, 2024). Moreover, recent studies have inspected the incorporation of technology in delivery of ECE curricula. A study on Chinese kindergarten teacher's ICT specialized learning discovered that although technology is increasing unified into school curricula, its effective implementation relies on targeted professional learning chances to improve teacher's ICT skills (Yang et al., 2025). General, research from 2020 to 2025 indicates that China's early Childhood Education ECE curriculum has changed toward more teacher self-sufficiency, and play-based pedagogy, reinforced by ongoing policy attention and structural quality expansion. Still, execution issues, especially portraying to teacher professional development and classroom application, continue to be important topics for additional study and legislative action.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The curriculum of either country, Pakistan and China, for early childhood education are examined in this study using a qualitative comparative research design, that allowed a thorough examination of similarities and differences while taking sociocultural & policy factors into description (Bowen, 2009; Miao, 2024). In order to ensure rich content in line with research aims, nationally recognized and updated curricular document, policy agendas, and international reports from the organizations like World Bank and UNICEF, UNESCO were chosen for meaningful sampling (Zhang et al, 2023). Data collection largely involved systematic document analysis, amplified by manual annotation using highlights and notes, digital organization using platforms such as Google drive and Microsoft SharePoint, and text mining and natural language processing tools to detect frequent themes and patterns. Mutual approach gave ensured chance to wide-ranging & demanding program analysis to find out the key leaning areas, skills, competencies and instructional strategies (Miao, 2024; Yang et al, 2025).

The data analysis in study of comparison follows a structured qualitative content analysis outline, opening with corrections through repetitive reading of documents, which followed by coding key themes as language and literacy, early mathematics basic concepts, social-emotional learning, and creative arts/ play-based learning, physical development. These codes are then gathered into the categories for cross country comparison, with differences and similarities taken in light of cultural, policy, and instructive backgrounds, in due course leading to produced insights on best practices and curriculum gaps (Bowen, 2009). In this linking, the study implements data triangulation across multiple sources, peer view by the experts, and transparent documentation of analysis decisions, in order to make sure the validity and reliability. Ethical considerations are being taken care of by proper citation of sources, obedience to copyright regulations, and culturally sensitive clarification to avoid falsification.

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework



FINDINGS OF STUDY

The comparative study links the early childhood education curriculum of the China and Pakistan, highlighting their different approaches, while underlining the shared goals and aims of building a strong foundation for child development. Chinese national curriculum uses a holistic, play-based approach that mixes physical, emotional, and cognitive growth, temporarily Pakistan SNC focuses on central educational skills & fostering independence. To shows these gaps, successful practices, methods, techniques and approaches that maximum support attainment of anticipated learning outcomes, the study also looks at the significant learning areas, teaching strategies, and policies in both the curriculums.

Table 1 Literacy & Language

Pakistan	China
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CNC fosters the young children's language development by promoting speaking, listening, & communication skills over interactive activities such as conversations, storytelling, songs, rhymes, and peer-teacher discussions, while supporting vocabulary, pronunciation, and clear expression. It develops early literacy skills by teaching children to recognize letters, words, and reading directions in Urdu and English, handle books properly, understand that words and pictures carry meaning, and practice writing letters and their own names. The SNC places a significance effort to polish the speaking skills of young children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CNC promotes confident communication in young children, encouraging expression of ideas, attentive listening, turn-taking, situationally appropriate language use, and basic Mandarin for ethnic minority children. It supports early literacy, fine motor development over reading picture books, recognizing written symbols, writing names, describing images, and engaging in activities that enhance hand-eye coordination and proper posture. The Chinese National Curriculum, on the other hand give its children freedom to show willingness to express needs & ideas and use gestures to support the communication.

Table 2 Health, Hygiene & Safety

Pakistan	China
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focuses on personal care, safety, and overall development of young children. Builds a sense of safety, security. Teaches children to avoid strangers, refuse unsafe food, & not leave home or school without trusted adults. Encourages seeking help when facing unsafe or forced situations. Promotes healthy and hygienic daily habits such as brushing teeth, bathing, and keeping clothes clean. Fosters positive relationships with peers and the surrounding environment. Encourages physical activity over outdoor games and mental sharpness through indoor games. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes children's physical, mental, and social well-being and adaptability. Creates warm, kind environment that nurtures emotional stability and a positive attitude toward life. Supports children's adjustment towards new social settings, like transitioning to a new kindergarten class. Encourages physical activities. Develop healthy daily routines, including regular sleep, meals, and nutritious eating habits. Supports the development of self-care skills such as brushing teeth, dressing, and personal hygiene. Provides varied outdoor play equipment to support active physical engagement. |
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Table 3 Self-Help skills

Pakistan	China
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The children are not made enough self-sufficient, & are dependent on their parents and care givers for small and simple tasks. However, some of the practices have started to make a change. Efforts have been started to enable children to do their own daily tasks and not depend on anyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This aspect lays an emphasis on, to develop skills in children those are helpful for one's own self. These includes to master very simple yet vital tasks, for example to pour a glass of water, how to use chopsticks. Keeping their things at proper places, for example clothes in closet, toys in basket or books in shelf or on the table. Able to sort out belongings according to specific categories such as socks.

Table 4 Basic Mathematical Concepts

Pakistan	China
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds a strong foundation for numeracy through practical activities and use of basic mathematical language. Develops number sense by counting objects up to nine, understanding number order, combining or subtracting simple sets. Enhances kind of shapes, size, measurement by knowing, comparing, grouping, and reproducing object arrangements. Presents everyday mathematics over recognition of Pakistani currency and informal concepts of time. Encourages awareness of time and change by sequencing events, anticipating outcomes, and observing seasonal patterns and time-marking tools like clocks and calendars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes early mathematical understanding through real-life experiences, helping children recognize shapes, quantities, weight, thickness, position, and spatial relationships. Develops number sense by counting up to 20, comparing quantities, understanding number relationships & using numbers to describe objects and actions. Inspires problem-solving by using mathematics to daily life situations, including basic addition and subtraction. Introduces practical mathematics over supervised use of currency and real-world activities such as supermarket visits to understand money concepts.

Table 5 Creative Arts

Pakistan	China
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on developing children's imagination and creative expression of ideas, feelings, remarks, and experiences. Encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving through creative activities. Foster enjoyment, confidence, and pride in art and craft work. Enable use of different techniques and materials to create artwork. Develop fine motor skills over safe and effective use of drawing tools, scissors, & pasting materials. Promote performance skills over songs, rhymes, poems, movements, and actions. Encourage role-play & re-enactment of stories, poems, and folk tales individually and in groups. Support critical thinking through games and activities such as puzzles and jigsaws. Encourage imitation of observed actions and movements from people, animals, and modes of transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses arts as a medium for the children to express emotions, understanding, and attitudes toward the world. Encourages appreciation of beauty and sharing discoveries of aesthetically pleasing objects. Develops auditory awareness by enjoying and distinguishing variations in sound, pitch, duration, and intensity. Supports expressive responses to art through facial expressions, gestures, and verbal communication. Encourages frequent participation in singing, dancing, rhythmic movement, and performances. Supports creative expression through drawing, collage, and imaginative representation. Provides diverse art materials & safe chances for independent creative exploration. Integrates indoor & outdoor activities to promote artistic expression, motor skills, problem-solving, and social-emotional development.

DISCUSSION

This research study led a comparative analysis of early Childhood Education ECE curriculum of Pakistan and China, see-through the significant differences in the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum design and implementation, findings indicate that the China's curriculum is advanced, delivering stronger outcomes across multiple areas, including language and literacy development, early mathematical basic ideas, physical education, moral as well as the ethical learning, and social cognition (Chen et al, 2024; Miao, 2024). Both the countries share alike core learning areas and expected proficiencies, like social emotional development, literacy, numeracy, health and safety, physical growth, and creative arts (Ministry of federal education and professional training 2023; state council of people republic of China, 2010). Examines of kindergarten play curriculum history shows a continued emphasis on play as a crucial component of all-inclusive child development, concerning language, socio emotional, and cognitive growth with the structured and unstructured play activities.

A common idea in recent literature is the evaluation of curriculum design toward more flexible, competency-based, and interdisciplinary approaches. Still, differences in educational outcomes be largely qualified to universal factors, including infrastructure, classroom discipline, management practices, teacher quality, school hours, assessment methods, and overall standards of education (Shahzadi & Nawaz, 2025; Zaman, 2025). In Pakistan, the public sector is the primary source of education and it faces specific challenges as maintaining quality, although the enterprises by the government and support from private organizations aim to improve access and effectiveness whole-

person development strategies, be used to bring Pakistan closer to international standards ([Sindh Education Foundation, 2024](#)). The research examines that encountering these gaps of system is not very crucial for aims but signifies development of generations of learners capable of contributing to nationwide progress, suggesting improvements in teacher training programs, resource allocation, and recognized support.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the comparative analysis depicts that Pakistan and China converge and diverge in the educational content, delivery and philosophy. Although both nations have some of the common areas in learning like social-emotional development, language and literacy, early mathematical concepts, physical development, health hygiene and safety and creative arts, the way both nations are pedagogically structured, the infrastructure support and the quality of the enactments vary widely. Chinese ECE curriculum show an inclusive, child-centered and play-based approach that is very much integrated in terms of cognitive, emotional, physical and social development. These all have been nurtured by the well-trained teachers, manageable classrooms, management and good evaluation strategies. This leads to the more productive upshot in the major development spheres, the cultivation of independence in children, their creativity, problem-solving skills and future learning preparation. Pakistan upon the contrary has SNC with a standardize frame work that has clearly defined capabilities, yet implementation is highly challenged, particularly in institutes of the public sector.

Infrastructure, teacher training, classroom management, school hours, evaluation techniques and methods, availability of resources limits contributes to imbalanced educational results, mainly in rural setting. Nonetheless, continuous campaigns by government & non-government organizations are directed at reforming the curriculum and offer fair learning opportunities to every child. The research points out that the alteration and regular enhancement of the Early Childhood Education ECE in Pakistan does not only demand the consequences but also demands the robust systematic variables, teacher professional growth, development, classroom setting, evaluation mechanisms, and establishment of resources as well as distribution of resources. Engagement in other effective ideologies used in China, including learning through play, multi-lingualism. But sooner or later, the augmentation of Early Childhood Education has a dynamic effect in developing the talented, well-rounded people and creating a base to national education and socio-economic development, bridging gaps amid course of action and the exercise, and children growing up as a result of defense attain their potentials.

Recommendations

1. To boost language, literacy, fundamental math abilities, Pakistan's ECE has to be improved through better teacher preparation, better resources, and use of child-centered, play-based approaches, especially in rural and multilingual settings.
2. Pakistan's SNC places a strong emphasis on national identification and standardization but depends heavily on rote learning, which leads to inconsistent quality therefore affecting the education in undesirable manner.

3. Although its flexibility may make it difficult to execute consistently across varied groups, China's curriculum fosters creativity and exploration by combining play-based learning with basic skills under the guidance of qualified instructors.

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