

Implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) at Primary Level: Teachers' Expectations and Concerns

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Abstract

The Pakistani government will introduce the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which was developed in 2020 and will be implemented in primary schools for the academic year 2020-21. Teachers' expectations and concerns about the adoption of a single national curriculum (SNC) at elementary level were the primary focus of the study. The study was carried out using a qualitative research approach. Interviews with ten teachers were conducted over the phone using an unstructured interview style. The call recorder's mobile app was used to record the interviews. Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the transcribed data in an Excel spreadsheet. Teachers believe that SNC will help Pakistan become a more united and strong nation in the future. It will help to advance the ideals of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal by ensuring that all children receive an equal education that is of the highest possible standard. It will help alleviate poverty in Pakistan, but only in the short term. Educators will benefit from a more fair system. It will improve national unity and reduce educational inequity. Worries over implementation of SNC in all education systems, barriers to children's "freedom of choice in education," lack of resources, instructors' incompetence, and teachers' and stakeholders' resistance are among the teachers' key concerns, according to statistics. There should be a greater awareness of SNC through print and electronic media, and more funds should be allocated to overcome the lack of resources in schools for its implementation; loan schemes for private sector schools that cannot implement SNC due to a lack of resourcing should be introduced; and refresher courses for in-service teachers are recommended based on findings.

Key Words: Expectations, Concerns, Public and Private Sector Teachers, Single National Curriculum (SNC)

Introduction

Since the year 1947, Pakistan has placed a high value on education. When the first National Education Conference (NEC) took place, it gave the vital importance to the education system. Since 1959 (National Education Commission), every educational policy has placed a high value on high-quality instruction. Under Pakistan's constitution, Article 25-A, the government is obligated to offer free and compulsory education from the ages of 5 to 16 to all children. In 2020, Pakistan's government implemented the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in order to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). SNC's primary goal is to create a uniform educational system for the entire nation. A goal of Pakistan's current government is to create a single educational system for everyone which includes a single curriculum and a single platform for assessing student progress. It is a system of winners and losers and diverse mindsets that has resulted in a fractured national mentality as a result of the disparity in education systems, curriculum, amenities in schools, and the achievements of teachers and pupils. For the SNC, "just systems and national cohesion" are its primary goals (SNC, 2020).

A high-quality education should be available for all pupils, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The SNC aims to establish a single medium of instruction and a widely accepted platform. SNC aims to instill social and national solidarity, reduce educational content gaps, ensure equitable opportunities for upward social mobility, and ensure educational equity (SNC, 2020).

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The SNC's primary priority areas are Islamic and societal values, inclusive education, human rights and child protection, cleanliness and sanitation, environmental issues such as climate change, and global citizenship and life skills. SNC aspires to unify the nation's educational system, develop a religiously-based national identity, and bring progressive elements, global citizenship, and 21st century skills into the classroom (SNC, 2020).

SNC's (2020) Development Process

Education in Pakistan was delegated to the provinces after the 18th constitutional amendment, including curriculum. It had a negative impact on educational quality and standards. To construct a united nation, it was imperative to develop a uniform curriculum. Since the revision, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 has remained a shared national document. Among the several duties delegated to the Inter Provincial Education Ministerial Conference (IPEMC) under the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2009 is monitoring and reviewing educational developments. At the IPEMC meeting on February 11, 2014, it was decided to create the National Curriculum Council (NCC) with the purpose of creating a basic curriculum that ensured Minimum National Standards in all subject areas and placed a strong emphasis on national ideology and social requirements. A reactivation of NCC was made possible in 2019 in order to aid in the progress of SNC development. All committees have provincial and regional representation to make sure that all stakeholders had a voice to be heard. Provincial and regional gatherings were held to address the SNC. For the purpose of debating SNC's merits and downsides, a national conference was held. Stakeholders such as the APS, private schools, STEP, and others were kept informed at every stage of developing the zero-draught of the curriculum. After consulting with experts, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training put this on their webpage to get their thoughts on it (www.mofept.gov.pk). After consulting with experts, the document of SNC was amended and completed.

Steps to implementing SNC (2020)

The Pakistani government plans to implement the Single National Curriculum (SNC) at the primary school level beginning in the school year 2021–2022. To teach English as a language with an emphasis on skills, the material from SNC, 2020 is incorporated. Grade 1 will mark the beginning of the introduction of Islamiyat as a separate academic discipline. SNC will offer religious education curricula for five religions. Patriotism and global citizenship are encouraged in Social Studies. Modern teaching methods will be used to teach math and science. SNC-based teacher training and assessment frameworks are being developed and will be used in the near future (SNC, 2020).

It was suggested that the SNC be implemented incrementally from early childhood onwards by government teachers because it would be difficult to do so simultaneously for all grades. The present idea to make it mandatory for all grades at the same time was rejected. Using Urdu as a medium for instruction in disciplines like science was a source of concern for teachers in rural locations where their pupils' native language is not the language of instruction. SNC implementation in private schools has caused concerns among private school teachers, as their kids' comprehension levels are higher than the SNC anticipates. More research is needed in Pakistan to explore the relationship between the SNC and the Cambridge syllabus, which is based on a detailed understanding of students' skills (Shaukat, 2021).

Study of ESL SNC draught document critically examined for interpretation of objective of ESL SNC for successful implementation in country-wide. An in-depth look at SNC's novel features is conducted using content analysis, a qualitative research method. The main basis for curriculum is to infuse ethical, social and universal values in Pakistani learners with topics and subthemes such as peace and social cohesion, ideology, religious tolerance, respect, equity and conflict resolution. This justification is clearly argued. Students' ability to communicate in English as a second language (ESL) will likely be enhanced via the integration of technology into the ESL Single National Curriculum. The Guskey Model of Teacher Evaluation is meant to be used in the evaluation of ESL instructors' performance. For successful implementation of SNC in Pakistani schools, the study suggests the results of needs and situational analysis. With SNC, students and teachers of English as a second language (ESL) can enhance their creative thinking, self-reflection, and sense of agency (Irfan, 2021).

Teachers are in charge of putting SNC into action. Teachers play a critical role in the implementation of SNC. As a result, it's critical to learn about the hopes and fears that primary school teachers have for the rollout of SNC.

Statement of Purpose

The major goal of the study was to discover the hopes and fears that primary school teachers have about the adoption of the single national curriculum (SNC).

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the fears that primary school teachers have about the implementation of a single national curriculum.
2. To explore the expectations of teachers about implementation of single national curriculum in primary schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the teachers' main concerns regarding implementation of the SNC at primary level?
2. What are the teachers' expectations for the implementation of the SNC at primary level?

Procedures for Conducting Research

The primary goal of the study was to examine the hopes and fears associated with the adoption of SNC at the primary school level. Because of this, the researcher opted for a qualitative method and spoke with teachers from both public and private schools through telephone in an effort to gather data. A smart phone app called Call Recorder was used to capture the data, which was then entered into an excel spreadsheet. Analysis of the data was done using a theme analysis method. Finally, the data were coded to reveal the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis. Based on the data, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Data Administration

Telephonic interviews were conducted with three teachers from federal government schools (Cant/Garrison), two educators from government schools of Punjab, and five teachers from private schools. The main goal of the interview, as well as a few well-structured open-ended questions and requests, were communicated via WhatsApp, ensuring that the participants were aware of the interview's timing and willingness. Participants were informed that their responses would only be utilized for this study and not for any other reason. The security of the information was assured,

and the participants gave their consent to have their names revealed. The names of respondents were not included in the study to ensure the confidentiality of individuals. Interviews were then recorded and transcribed using a call recorder application. Thematic analysis was used to examine the transcribed data.

Results

Expectations of Teachers

Teachers in Pakistan's primary schools have high hopes for the implementation of SNC.

According to data, these are the most prominent themes.

Strengthening the Nation

According to public school teachers, the government's decision to implement SNC is an excellent strategy for building a strong nation in the years to come. "SNC will teach national ideas, unity, patriotism, and love for country if it is practiced in all educational institutions in its real spirit," said one respondent. Another respondent elaborated, saying, "Our educational systems will improve equally and mutually if the united educational system and one national curriculum are designed and utilized in all educational systems in Pakistan". By doing so, SNC will strengthen the country". Other respondents' expectations are "I think it is a wonderful initiative by the government of Pakistan", "It will be really beneficial in the future to develop a strong nation. Because we have seen that the government has only made one alteration to the curriculum since 2006. To develop a strong nation, the time has come to reform the curriculum. SNC will encourage unity and equity among learners". Private school teachers argued, "It's best to introduce things gradually since imposing them all at once is not healthy for anyone", "SNC is really essential to forming a one nation, and it will lead to a powerful nation in the future".

Based on the foregoing, it may be concluded that teachers expected that SNC will help Pakistan become a powerful and united nation in the future.

Promoting Equality and Equity among Learners

"SNC would foster equity among the learners who belong to different socio-economic backgrounds" said a respondent. Other respondents added, "If the same curriculum and the same syllabus are executed in the real spirit, then it will generate equity among learners. With the slogan "One Nation, One Curriculum," it will serve as a guide to simplifying all sorts of curriculum and syllabuses, not just academic ones. That way, all children will be able to benefit from an excellent education. Due of SNC's ability to give equal access to instruction for all students, it will help foster a culture of equality among its users. Since all students have equal opportunities to study in accordance with their abilities and moods (Mazaj), it will foster equity among learners".

A private school principal said, "We can say yes, but the government must appoint better faculty members, particularly in government schools, so that pupils may be content intellectually because the teachers in government schools are unable to teach effectively." "It's a fantastic decision since this curriculum emphasizes equity because Islam always emphasizes equity" another private school teacher said. Teachers in other private schools concur that SNC will help students achieve equity.

As a result, we may say that teachers believed that SNC will promote equity among students and give them equal access to learning opportunities regardless of where they attend school or what is their socioeconomic position.

Building One Nation

The respondents of government schools explained, "*The nation would be united due to a single national curriculum. One nation can be built when all educational systems adhere to a unified national curriculum. If all educational systems adhere to it in its truest form, it will produce a single nation. SNC is a great step in building a united country*". "*Unifying and equalizing systems and learning a single national curriculum will assist develop one nation,*" said another respondent. It is SNC's major mission to unite the peoples of the world. It will help unite the country if carried out with sincerity.

A private school teacher said, "Definitely SNC would change society and create a single nation". Other private school teachers agree that SNC will aid in the unification of the country.

According to the teachers' arguments, SNC is expected to help unite Pakistan as one nation.

Poverty Alleviation

Teachers in the government said that "*equal opportunities for work will be provided for everyone when all kids learn from a unified national curriculum.*" Another teacher chimed in, saying, "*SNC isn't directly good to alleviating poverty, but it is indirectly beneficial.*" *It's not just a matter of providing money to those in need, but also educating people on the importance of education in alleviating poverty.*" Another respondent added, "*All learners have equal opportunity for employment when they learn equally under a unified national curriculum. As a result, poverty will be reduced or even eradicated*".

Interestingly a private teacher responded, "*We're teaching the same curriculum to the village schools, which means that poverty will raise in some way*". Admission to colleges and universities is a level playing field for all pupils. Other private sector school respondents are similarly in favor of the premise that SNC will be beneficial in Pakistan's efforts to alleviate poverty.

It may be concluded that teachers believed that SNC will have a limited impact on poverty reduction, but not a significant one.

Propagation of the Vision of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal

Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal's goal of one nation and a strong education system for all is what teachers expect SNC to promote and instill in them.

It was agreed upon by teachers in government schools that "*Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal's vision is central to SNC. Students would be exposed to the visions of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal.*" Teachers in private schools asserted, "*Definitely, this is the idea of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqba.*". They said, "*Yes, SNC will promote the philosophy of Quaid e Azam and Allama Iqbal because both leaders' purpose was to make a nation strong and unified*". SNC's attempts to teach the concepts of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal to the next generation are supported by other private school educators.

Improvement in Educational Standards

Teachers have faith in SNC's ability to improve educational standards. According to the government teachers, According to private teachers, "*SNC implementation is not a single means to improve quality education; further actions are required to promote quality education, such as capacity building of teachers and the availability of resources.*" "*In order to promote quality education, additional actions such as capacity building of teachers and resources must be taken,*" said private teachers. Teachers and principals in private schools agreed, saying, "*Yes, if*

properly done, this can be beneficial." SNC needs to be adopted in order for the government to support quality education.

Same Education for All

"SNC is committed to ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.," was how most public school teachers saw it. "It will assist promote the same education for everybody," private school teachers said as well. Teachers in both public and private schools anticipate the same level of education from the Single National Curriculum (SNC).

Systematic Approach to Education

SNC has the support of both public and private school teachers. They said, "The SNC's major objective is to eliminate the gap and assure a just system in education, therefore it will build a just system in education and it is a systematic approach to approach".

Harmonization of the Nation as a Whole

Public and private sector teachers feel that SNC will help foster national unity and coordination. There's little doubt that the same curriculum will lead to greater national harmony, as well as a greater sense of cooperation between students.

Teachers' Concerns/Fears

Teachers in Pakistan are concerned about the implementation of SNC at the primary level.

SNC Implementation in All Educational Systems is Difficult

The most pressing issue that emerged from the data is the adoption of SNC at all educational institutions in its entirety. "It may not be adopted in all education systems as like top schools are unwilling to accept SNC," said several public school teachers. They have their own publications which are superior than the texts recommended by the SNC, said a private school head teacher. "In my perspective, the implementation process of SNC would be challenging," said another private school teacher.

A roadblock in the way of children's fundamental right to "Freedom of Education Option"

Students' fundamental freedom to "Freedom of Education Choice" is not threatened by SNC, according to public school teachers. Those who stated, "Deeni Madrasas, private, public, or any other type of educational institution, all students have the right to choose their own educational path". Students are able to pursue any academic discipline they like". However, only a private school teacher is of the opinion that "it will be a barrier since it will not clear the kids' vision" Contrary to public school teachers. Other private school teachers, on the other hand, said: "They don't believe so, but every kid has the right to a high-quality education and the opportunity to compete with the best. According to this conclusion, most teachers are worried about students' fundamental right to "freedom of education choice".

A Scarcity of Assets

Teachers are particularly concerned about the lack of physical and human resources in government and certain private schools when it comes to SNC implementation. SNC implementation may be hindered by the lack of resources in both public and private schools, according to educators from both types of institutions.

Teachers' Poor Capabilities and Competencies

Teachers in both public and private schools are also concerned about the development of school administrators and teachers. Teachers and principals agreed that "*capacity building is essential to implement SNC in its entirety*". Teaching capability, expertise and abilities are among the reasons why some teachers are reluctant to use SNC. Teachers' ability, competence, and skills can only be improved with appropriate teacher training. "Six days of teacher training is not sufficient" Some teachers argued.

Resistance of Teachers and Stakeholders

Resistance from educators and stakeholders, such as parents and private school chains, has also been identified as a cause for concern in the data. Some educators and stakeholders, like as parents and the proprietors of private school chains, are opposed to SNC's implementation. Educators are resistant because of a lack of resources. There are several high-end school chains whose owners are resisting this change because they worry it would harm their business.

Obstacles to a Quality Education Promotion

"*Quality education is being hindered by certain private and public school instructors' concerns about SNC. Because certain private sector educational institutions are promoting quality education, the SNC may constitute a barrier for the promotion of quality education,*" they said. The promotion of high-quality education may be hampered if they are forced to use SNC. The fight between public and private institutions to promote high-quality education may have come to an end. A few teachers, on the other hand, maintained that the SNC was in fact a high-quality curriculum that would help improve education in general.

Conclusion

The study's initial goal was to examine teachers' expectations for the implementation of the SNC at elementary level. Teachers believe that SNC will help Pakistan become a unified and strong nation in the future, according to a study. It will help to advance the ideals of Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal by ensuring that all children receive an equal education that is of the highest possible standard. It will aid in Pakistan's fight against poverty. Educators will benefit from a more fair system. It will improve national unity and reduce educational inequity.

Teachers' worries about implementing a single national curriculum at primary school level were the second purpose of the study. It is difficult to adopt SNC in all education systems because to a lack of resources, lack of capacity and competence among teachers, resistance from teachers and stakeholders and barriers to excellent education.

Research's last focus was on comparing public and private school teachers' expectations of a single national basic curriculum. Teachers in private and public schools have similar expectations, according to the data. There is, however, a little variation in the phrasing used by private school and public school educators. Public school instructors' expectations are slightly higher than those of private school teachers.

Concerns among teachers in public and private schools about the introduction of a common national curriculum at the primary school level were compared. At terms of worries over SNC implementation at the elementary level, instructors in public and private schools hold similar perspectives, according to the findings.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been put forth:

1. Before and after the implementation of SNC, refresher courses for teachers' capacity building should be offered to enable instructors deal with the challenges they would experience and to overcome their resistance to SNC.
2. Print and electronic media should be used to spread the word about the importance of SNC.
3. There should be more funding supplied to solve the dearth of resources in schools so that SNC can be effectively implemented.
4. Teachers and students should be rewarded and recognized for their efforts in order to foster a sense of camaraderie and enthusiasm for SNC implementation at the primary school level.
5. The SNC should be fully implemented in all education systems to provide quality education, according to this recommendation.
6. In order to address the issue of "Education for all," more actions must be taken, such as providing financial assistance to students from low-income households in the form of scholarships, and recognizing and rewarding students who have exceptional aptitude.
7. Loans should be made available to private sector schools that are unable to implement SNC due to a lack of funding.
8. There are just ten people who participated in this study. The high number of respondents might potentially be used for additional research.

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