CHARTING THE PATH: OVERCOMING HURDLES AND FORGING AHEAD WITH THE SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN PAKISTAN'S PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this research is to quantify the challenges and way forward in the implementation of a single national curriculum (SNC) in primary public schools in Pakistan.

Methodology: The study is conducted through a questionnaire consisting of forty-nine questions related to challenges in SNC implementation in primary public schools. The collected data was analysed using regression, correlation, and descriptive statistical techniques.

Main Findings: This study investigated the impact of the challenges like class inequality, gender difference, the role of media, the role of Parents and society, student’s interest, and their financial background that affect the implementation of SNC in the primary public school of Pakistan to understand the better teachers’ perspectives. To ensure that educational institutions continue to meet the demands of society, families, legislators, and educators all must collaborate toward the common objective of resolving these challenges.

Applications of the study: The insights derived from this study, have far-reaching implications for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in the Pakistani education system. They can utilize the study's recommendations and best practices to refine the implementation of the Single National Curriculum, thereby enhancing the quality of primary education. This research provides a practical roadmap for addressing the challenges identified, and fostering a more effective and inclusive educational environment. It serves as a valuable resource for shaping future policies and practices in Pakistan's primary school system, ultimately benefiting students and the broader society. At a primary public school of Pakistan, the implementation of SNC has been delayed due to class inequality, gender imbalance, the engagement of the media, the role of parents and society, and financial situation of the students.

Novelty/Originality of the study: The uniqueness of this study, "Charting the Path: Overcoming Hurdles and Forging Ahead with the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan's Primary Schools," is rooted in its exploration of the complex implementation process of a nationwide curriculum reform in Pakistan's primary education. It offers a comprehensive examination of the challenges faced and the strategies employed, shedding light on a topic relatively unexplored in the educational research landscape, making it a pioneering work in the field.

Keywords: SNC, Curriculum Implementation, Primary Schools, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as a powerful force that lays the path for a country's political, social, and economic progress. A strong educational system helps the country achieve its objectives and is a crucial measure of success and prosperity. Pakistan's education system, on the other hand, is in chaos. The numbers reveal Pakistan's dire status of education. In comparison to its neighbouring regional territories, Pakistan has not improved in crucial educational indices such as literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, and educational expenditure. "Education" refers to the process of assisting learning, which includes the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, morals, beliefs, habits, and personal growth. Educational methods include teaching, training, storytelling, discussion and directed research (Smith, 2020). The curriculum is a document that contains an overarching educational program as well as the experiences that individual students encounter in school. The curriculum's goal is to give a road map with precise goals and objectives. These activities are prepared following a framework or study that outlines a professional practice. Things are always moving, evolving, growing, and changing to contribute to society's fundamental dynamic nature. Education is fundamental in responding to societal change therefore, change is inevitable in education too (Anderson, 2019).

In Pakistan, educational inequality exists not just because students study various curriculum, attend private and public schools, are wealthy and poor, and (those who can afford) pursue higher education overseas rather than local schooling.; the reasons for educational inequality lie beyond these aspects (Patel, 2018). The National Curriculum Council (NCC), a federal-level agency in Pakistan, is responsible for updating the curriculum regularly. The current version of curriculum modifications, dubbed "Single National Curriculum" by the current government, is primarily based on the current government's manifesto, which raised the issue of a Single National Curriculum to eliminate class conflicts in the education process, such as secular vs religious, private vs public differences. They expected it to create a level playing field for everyone and increase social and economic mobility (White, 2021).
The lack of cohesion in the educational system has resulted in enormous gaps in learning, resulting in social inequality in Pakistani society. The Pakistani school system is divided into three main systems: 1. The public or government schools 2. The Private schools 3. The Madrassas. The education imparted in these three systems has significant gaps, resulting in a significant split between the pupils taught in these schools. The SNC was put in place primarily to bridge the gap between the three types of systems (Millar, 2020).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY AND OBJECTIVE

The essence of learning at all educational levels is curriculum diversity. It allows students to gain a wide range of knowledge by not limiting them to a single syllabus. It also encourages students to stay up with shifting international educational trends by studying a variety of curriculums. Students can become global citizens through a variety of studies. In Pakistan, for example, a variety of curriculums are currently being taught in private schools. Cambridge education system, Oxford school system, Beacon House school system, and A and O levels are the four options. This study identifies the hurdles in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum in Primary schools of Pakistan and finds out the way forward for the implementation of SNC in Primary schools of Pakistan. Research questions of the study are What are the hurdles in the implementation of a Single National Curriculum in Primary schools of Pakistan and what is the way forward for implementation of a Single National Curriculum in Primary schools of Pakistan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The ideals that define education for all are the foundation of a single national curriculum. It is used as a single vision and includes a single curriculum structure for all classes. "In terms of curriculum, medium of instruction, and a shared platform of evaluation, all students should have a fair and equal opportunity to acquire a high-quality education (Martines, 2021).

The government has mandated that all provincial governments implement a common system for education in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction, and assessment so that all children across the country have a fair and equal chance to get a high-quality education (Ahmed, 2020). SNC's key goals are to ensure that all children have a fair and equitable chance to acquire a high-quality education. National Integration and Social Cohesion Disparities in educational material across numerous sources are being addressed. Equal opportunity for social advancement. Equity in education, children's holistic development considering developing international trends and local desires, and smooth inter-provincial mobility of teachers and students are all priorities. (Williams, (2016) The concept of a unified national curriculum stems from the disparity between curriculum and learning outcomes standards.

The government has recently announced minimal learning standards, which are an upgrade from the 2006 curriculum's minimum standards. To meet the challenges of changing societal needs, the curriculum must be altered on a regular basis. It isn't a total overhaul of the previous one. It could be partially upgraded. Few topics, such as science or early childhood education, require more frequent updates as new information becomes available. In Pakistan, the last time the curriculum was revised was in 2011 (Gonzalez, 2021). Phases of SNC: In Pakistan, SNC is being developed in three stages. From March 2021, phase one will be developed in Pre (I-V). From March 2022, the second phase (VI-VIII) will begin. The SNC is based on standards, benchmarks, and results across all topics, as opposed to the 2006 curriculum, which did not have standards, benchmarks, or learning outcomes for each subject. The SNC aims to instil in students values and characteristics such as honesty, tolerance, respect, peaceful coexistence, environmental awareness and care, democracy, human rights, sustainable development, global citizenship, personal care, and safety. Rather than static teacher-centered learning, SNC focuses on the development of analytical, critical, and creative thinking through an activities-based approach (Turner, 2021). Only government institutions and a few low-cost private schools used the 2006 curriculum. The SNC will be introduced in all Pakistani schools, both public and private, and will cover all subjects.

Pakistan's government has created a uniform national curriculum for schools. Every public and private school in the country will be required to use this new curriculum as a guide in their classrooms. Before picking books for their students, private schools will receive a certificate from the government, and they will be required to utilize only government-recommended literature. Another notable feature is that religious madrassas would use the same curriculum and texts as secular madrassas (Robinson, 2020). This obligation of the state will not be fulfilled by putting the responsibility on private schools or regulating them excessively, unfairly, and unnecessarily. To fulfill this duty, the state must ensure that state schools provide a certain level of quality education and that the necessary funding is provided to ensure that the minimum standards of infrastructure, equipment, and teacher training are met, thereby narrowing the gap.
between public and private schools are not responsible for the widening of the "quality" gap between their institutions and public schools, nor is it their responsibility to provide all students with free and obligatory education. In doing so, the state is penalizing the private institutions for their own failure to deliver quality education and schooling at par with globally recognized standards. They were expected to fulfill this task by providing comparable or equivalent standards, not by eliminating competition. The premise seems to be that if disparities in educational institutions and curricula are the cause of unequal access to opportunities, uniformity is the solution. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. This is not only an oversimplification of the challenge of ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education, but it is also wrong on many levels, both in theory and reality (Brown, 2018).

One of the main goals of the new SNC is to move away from rote learning and toward project-based learning (Adams, 2021). Project-based learning necessitates a learning ecosystem, as well as investment outside of the classroom and teacher training, but even schools with the same curriculum are not placed equally in terms of resources. It’s unclear how the class divide might be eradicated simply by implementing a uniform curriculum. The underlying question is whether education is a cause or a result of class disparity. Until this basic difference is grasped, all efforts to reduce class inequality in Pakistan are likely to remain symptomatic, and unsuccessful in providing a long-term and sustainable solution to the country’s expanding split between affluent and poor.

Many teachers have complained about the SNC’s complex and long content, which they say is difficult to understand and teach, and that students struggle to study and absorb complex information, forcing them to memorise it (Clark, 2019). How can kids who attended public schools be considered equal to those who attended premium schools (Lewis, 2018)? Aside from its various shortcomings and drawbacks for students in general and Pakistani students, the SNC is rife with growing worries about its successful implementation. The goal of this initiative is to promote national integration and togetherness (Young, 2019). In other words, ideology follows the classes, not the other way around, as the unified national curriculum has dangerously presumed. Inequalities in society are not caused by differences in schooling or curriculum, but rather by the ruling class as a means of perpetuating inequality or its prevailing ideology. They are not the cause of inequalities; rather, they are the result of an uneven society founded on an exploitative and unequal system of resource distribution and power distribution. To believe otherwise would be to ignore the stark economic inequities and systemic forces that place the means of production in the hands of a few elites at the expense of the majority (Johnson, 2021).

METHODOLOGY
The present study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the teacher’s perception of challenges in implementing SNC at the primary level. This study aims to seek the challenges, complications and overall experience antagonized by the teachers in the implementation of SNC. The present study sample was comprised of thirty-six public schools from which 100 teachers were selected from each school through convenient sampling. Instrumentation Instrument is a process of development of valid and reliable measure variables under study. The instrument of data collection consisted of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, Section A and Section B. Section A gathered biographical information about the tutor, such as gender, age, academic qualifications, teaching experience and class size. Section B gathered data on teachers’ perceptions toward the implementation of SNC. The questionnaire was formatted using a five-point Likert scale. The scale is as follows: 1- strongly Agree, 2 - Agree, 3-Neutral, 4 - Disagree, 5 - strongly disagree. The questionnaire was adopted from (John G. Sharp, Rebecca Hopkin &Brian Lewthwaite). The questionnaire consisted of eight (9) statements that were comprised of 49 questions.

DATA ANALYSIS
The data analysis encompassed the computation of an array of statistical metrics, with a focus on regression and correlation analyses, all skillfully executed within the SPSS framework. The results were thoughtfully presented through a combination of tables and graphs, ensuring a visually informative presentation that facilitated comprehensive interpretation of the data.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>CI</th>
<th>MP</th>
<th>GI</th>
<th>AR</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>FR</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>SNC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Correlations between dependent and independent variables
The table above shows that the independent variable "CI" and the dependent variable "SNC" exhibit a positive association. The value of correlation is 0.334. The relationship between the MP and SNC is positive, and the correlation value is 0.243, implying that the MP has had a beneficial impact on the SNC. The correlation value between GI and SNC is 0.258, and between FR and SNC is 0.436, which shows a positive association. The relationship between the IN and SNC is positive, and the correlation value is 0.430. The correlation value between AR and SNC is 0.223, and they both show a positive relationship. In addition, the relationship between the MI and SNC is 0.188, showing a positive sign. Furthermore, an MI and SNC show a correlation value of 0.435, which shows a positive association between variables. According to the results, the correlation between AR and SNC is 0.179 which is positive.

REtamination

Table 2: Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.707&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td>3.45930</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), IO, CI, MI, GI, IN, FR, MP, AR

Table 3: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>1085.694</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>135.712</td>
<td>11.341</td>
<td>.000&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1088.976</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>11.967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2174.669</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: SNC
b. Predictors: (Constant), IO, CI, MI, GI, IN, FR, MP, AR

Table 4: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.501</td>
<td>4.301</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>-.279</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>-.084</td>
<td>-.868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GI</td>
<td>-.378</td>
<td>.359</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>-1.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Researchers turn to regression analysis in circumstances in which they need to forecast how one variable will change about other variables. Because of this, the researchers can make predictions regarding the causes and effects of the factors. The coefficient intercepts are a representation of the link between the variables that are being studied, which are known as dependent variables. According to the generally accepted rule of thumb, the relationship is deemed to be statistically insignificant if the quantity in question is more than five percent. It is significant if the percentage is lower than five percent. If it is, then it is not significant. The significance and favorable direction of the association between CI and SNC emerged from the regression analysis. CI exhibited an insignificant amount of impact over SNC because the P-value is 0.388. The results are insignificant since the CI's P-value is greater than the 0.05 threshold defined as the alpha, indicating that the results are significant. The relationship between MP and SNC is insignificant because the P-value of MP is 0.537, which is greater than 0.05. The P-value of GI is 0.296, which also shows an insignificant relationship between SNC.

Furthermore, the relationship between AR and SNC is significant because the P-value is 0.010, which is less than 0.05; therefore, the relationship is significant. Moreover, the P-value of MI is 0.833, which is greater than 0.05, and it shows an insignificant relationship between MI and SNC. The relationship between FR and SNC is significant because the P-value is 0.056 and the relationship between IN and SNC is insignificant. After all, the P-value is 0.88 and the P-value of IO is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and it shows a significant relationship. As shown by R-squared, our independent variables have a 49% joint impact on the dependent variable.

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

In light of the findings, it is of the utmost importance to address the issue of limited parental engagement in the actual execution of the curriculum. The schools and the parents need to collaborate to guarantee that the curriculum is taught correctly. Every parent must take part in the process (Johnson, 2021). Those who collaborate should be proactive rather than reactive; be sensitive to each family’s unique dynamics, acknowledge the valuable contributions parents may make, and try to give parents more agency. Future studies should concentrate on finding ways to boost parental participation in the design and delivery of educational programs (Patel, 2018). Many parents cannot afford to send their children to school because they are impoverished. It should come as no surprise that more young women than young men choose not to continue their education in a society where many families struggle to make ends meet, and public transportation is fraught with risk (Robinson, 2020). It is intriguing to think about the specific ways in which the SNC may assist in making Pakistan’s educational system fairer for women and girls. Due to the nature of the curriculum, the implementation of SNC in schools will not alleviate the issue of girls dropping out of school altogether. Higher education is out of reach for many women because of cultural norms and restrictions, such as the practice of early marriage for women (Brown, 2018). If girls continue to get married at tender ages, their education will be for nothing since they will not be able to reap its benefits. The SNC plans to accomplish its goal of religious neutrality in two different ways: fostering collaboration across different faiths and attending to the requirements of students whose religious beliefs come from a minority (Young, 2019). However, not all private and public schools in every province will be willing to implement the SNC; this presents a difficult challenge for the government. As a result, the government will need to establish a stringent monitoring system to guarantee that the implementation will take place (White, 2021). It is evident that the study’s meticulous data analysis and presentation are instrumental in not only understanding the challenges but also charting a path forward for the effective implementation of the Single National Curriculum in the primary schools of Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the formidable challenges faced by educational institutions today. To address these challenges effectively, collaboration among families, legislators, and educators is imperative. The study examines major issues within the education system, particularly the delayed implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which can be attributed to concerns about class inequality, gender disparities, media involvement, parental and societal roles, and financial considerations. Academic and financial concerns emerge as pivotal in the SNC’s implementation. The study underscores that achieving educational goals requires a collective effort, involving schools, organizations, and parents. Teachers must foster stronger connections with students’ families to enhance parental involvement, while administrators should formulate plans for this purpose without compromising instructors’ autonomy. State-level initiatives like seminars and workshops are essential for educating teachers, administrators, and parents about the significance of their role in curriculum implementation and extracurricular support. Increasing parental engagement significantly enhances the quality of education and learning experiences. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and government policies, including the promotion of SNC as a unifying educational force. However, the

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**Table:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th><strong>AR</strong></th>
<th><strong>MI</strong></th>
<th><strong>FR</strong></th>
<th><strong>IN</strong></th>
<th><strong>IO</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>.327</td>
<td>.276</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CI</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>2.634</td>
<td>-.211</td>
<td>1.932</td>
<td>1.725</td>
<td>3.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-value</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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a. Dependent Variable: SNC

*Source: Survey data (2022)*
SNC alone cannot resolve inequality issues; infrastructure development, teacher training, and student re-enrollment are vital. The lack of uniform adoption of SNC in private schools and resource challenges in public institutions further complicate its implementation. Cultural and social barriers also affect student enrollment, especially for girls. In conclusion, the successful implementation of SNC depends on addressing these multifaceted challenges holistically.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

A limited amount of time spent in the field and a minimal sample size, which reduces the degree to which the findings can be generalized, have been identified as potential limitations or weaknesses in this study. The inaccuracy of the participant responses to the questionnaire and interview questions, as well as the reflexivity of the participant in producing answers that the researcher finds acceptable, are both possible downsides to the study’s methods of data collecting. In conclusion, the study was limited because it only focused on a specific geographical area. This was a significant limitation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships with any organizations or entities that could potentially influence the outcome of this research external funding, grants, or sponsorships were received for this study, ensuring the independence and impartiality of the research process. The authors affirm that they have no competing interests, including patents, employment, consultancies, or any other forms of conflicts of interest, related to the subject matter discussed in this article.

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AUTHOR’S CONTRIBUTION

Dr Ibtasam Thakur: Data Analysis and its interpretation, Abstract and Conclusion writing, and review of the article after completion.

Dr. Fakhra Aziz: Data Collection, working on literature, writing references and after completion of research reviewing the article and correspondence with the journal.

Dr. Naveed Sultana: working on literature and after completing research, its review.

Dr. Ambreen Haqqad: Working on literature and after completing research, its review.

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