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Evaluating the Implementation and Challenges of the Single National Curriculum at the Primary Level in District Jhelum

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Abstract

A salient policy move in Pakistan emerged with the conception and foundation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), to standardize the educational content and ensure educational equity in the country. This study aims to look at the implementation of the SNC at the primary level in District Jhelum, focusing on problems that have occurred during this time and the validity of the policy. It adopted a mixed-method study design that used questionnaires and interviews to gather quantitative and qualitative data on resource allocation, teacher training, curriculum acceptance, and involvement of stakeholders. Obstacles to the implementation of the SNC are shown to be resource inadequacy, lack of teacher training, and lack of commitment from stakeholders. The study draws a conclusion for policy change and further research.

Keywords: Single National Curriculum, Pakistan, Primary Education, Curriculum Implementation, Educational Policy, District Jhelum

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Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Significance of the Study](#)
- [Objectives of the Study](#)
- [Research Questions](#)
- [Literature Review](#)
- [Data and Methodology](#)
- [Results and Discussion](#)
- [Demographic Information](#)
- [Qualitative Findings](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Future Research Directions](#)
- [References](#)

Title**Evaluating the Implementation and Challenges of the Single National Curriculum at the Primary Level in District Jhelum****Abstract**

A salient policy move in Pakistan emerged with the conception and foundation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), to standardize the educational content and ensure educational equity in the country. This study aims to look at the implementation of the SNC at the primary level in District Jhelum, focusing on problems that have occurred during this time and the validity of the policy. It adopted a mixed-method study design that used questionnaires and interviews to gather quantitative and qualitative data on resource allocation, teacher training, curriculum acceptance, and involvement of stakeholders. Obstacles to the implementation of the SNC are shown to be resource inadequacy, lack of teacher training, and lack of commitment from stakeholders. The study draws a conclusion for policy change and further research.

Keywords: [Single National Curriculum](#), [Pakistan](#), [Primary Education](#), [Curriculum Implementation](#), [Educational Policy](#), [District Jhelum](#)

Introduction

Any nation's prosperity and advancement depend upon the quality of its education system. A nation that degrades its education standards will never be able to match the speed of advancement of the contemporary world. The founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in this regard, categorically warns the young nation about the importance of education by saying:

"Education is a matter of life and death to our nation. The world is moving at such a fast pace, and the only way to keep up with it is through education; otherwise, we will not only be left behind but be no more." As numerous people say, education is the gateway to developing a nation. Certain educational functions—the curriculum, syllabus, planning, policy, and standards—fall under the responsibilities of ensuring national unity, integration, and conservation of the state's ideological foundation. In 2020, the Pakistani

government introduced a single national curriculum as the biggest change in the academic realm for presenting students of the country with a single academic game plan. Standardization in curricula is the major objective of the SNC, ensuring that equal contents are for all children, located in any part of the country—with no social stratification or economic background playing a role—and receive a quality education. The said policy shift runs analogous to a global shift, which would affect curriculum standardization for bringing about improvement in education equity and national cohesion.

Earlier, the structure of the education system in Pakistan was inconsistent, and many different curricula were being implemented in different provinces and schools. Due to this fragmentation, there now exists a noticeable variance between the content and quality of the education that is accorded to pupils in different localities (Bhattacharya, 2013). The Single National Curriculum seeks to bridge such differences by encompassing one single set of academic standards and learning goals for the entirety of Pakistani primary school pupils.

The launching of the SNC is actually part of a wider movement for reforming Pakistan's education system that, for so many years, had to contend with problems and challenges brought about by inadequate investment, obsolescent pedagogical methods, and disparities in curriculum standards (Sahlberg, 2014). As such, the Single National Curriculum is an effort to right the wrongs of the past and provide impetus toward a fair and rewarding education system through the implementation of a unified curriculum.

Significance of the Study

There are a number of reasons which make this research important. Firstly, it presents an in-depth study of the Single National Curriculum at the elementary school level in District Jhelum, which consists of a mix of urban and rural learning environments. This will be a unique opportunity to probe into how the Single National Curriculum is being used in those contexts and to single out the specific challenges of schools in urban and rural areas.

The study contributes to filling a gap in the corpus of current literature that addresses the operational issues entailed in the implementation of a national curriculum in a developing country context. More scholarship exists on curricular reforms around the world. However, little

empirical research is available on the status of the implementation process of the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan. (Fullan, 2015b); Darling-Hammond, 2000). This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by informing on the effectiveness of the SNC and the challenges faced during its implementation.

The impacts of the findings from this research also cut across to have significant implications for the educators, the community at large, and the lawmakers. By pointing out issues of implementation, the research works out suggestions for curriculum reform which will not only have the curriculum meet the intended goal of achievement on both equity and standardization of education. .

According to the teachers, the Single National Curriculum is going to make Pakistan a more united and powerful nation in the future. It would ensure that every child gets an education of equally good quality, thus carrying on the ideals of Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam more forward. It, though temporarily, will help alleviate poverty in Pakistan. A fair system will benefit the teachers. The educational gap will be decreased and national integration will be increased. According to data, the main concerns of teachers are the putting into effect of a Single National Curriculum in all educational systems, hurdling children's freedom of choice in education, shortage of means, inefficiency of instructors, and stakeholder and other teachers' opposition. There should be more awareness about the Single National Curriculum through print and electronic media, and funds for combating the reactive of resources in schools for its proper implementation; refresher courses for in-service teachers are recommended based on the findings of SNC to orient them properly about Single National Curriculum dynamics.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To Attempt to Assess the Success of Single National Curriculum Implementation: It tries to find out if a Single National Curriculum meets the objectives aimed at policy regarding standardization of education and enhancement of unity at a lower unit level in District Jhelum.
2. Challenges to the implementers: The significant challenges that the teachers, heads, and the implementers of this policy from a policy level have

been facing in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

3. To Probe Opinion of Stakeholders: It reviews the opinion of stakeholders like a parent, teachers, and the Education Officer about the Single National Curriculum however in relation also to their perception of the effectiveness of the Curriculum and the challenges faced by them.
4. To Make Recommendations: Plainly recommend practical steps toward stakeholder uses for enhancement for implementing the Single National Curriculum by leveling the challenges.

Research Questions

The research will be conducted under the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant challenges associated with the Single National Curriculum implementation in District Jhelum?
2. To what extent a single National Curriculum has been capable of fulfilling its targets at the primary level?
3. What are the beliefs of the parents, teachers, and heads about Single National Curriculum?
4. What are the recommendations that can be made for the proper working of a Single National Curriculum?

Literature Review

Global Perspectives on Curriculum Reforms

Internationally, changes in the curriculum usually stand as part of policy in education with the sole aim of minimizing inequality and improving the quality of education. Following Alexander [2010](#) supports that changes in the curricula can reap substantial gains in academic performance as long as they are prepared with adequate funding, good teacher training, and supportive policies. Similarly, (Sahlberg, 2014) contends that curriculum reform succeeds when a balance is achieved between local adaptation and standardization, mainly focusing on creating conducive environments for both teachers and learners.

Theoretical Frameworks of Curriculum Development

Curriculum development theoretical frameworks provide essential directions in the development and implementation

of educational courses. The intended effects that are to be planned in courses are emphasized by (R. W. Tyler, [2013](#)) in his Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction that the curriculum objectives are consistent with the school's educational goals and objective and student attainment assessment. This framework establishes the objectives of a standardized curriculum that satisfies the country's national needs.

Issues in National Curricula Implementation

The first challenge for the government is to appeal to more than 20 million out-of-school children, in order to attract them again to schools. It is a hard job for the government to offer equal opportunities to all kids in an environment where textbooks differ, publishers differ, teaching and learning methods and assessment approaches differ, student success criteria and learning resources differ, and most importantly, teachers' capacity varies greatly across education systems. In addition, there exists a one-room or even two-room primary school with only one or two teachers who are under-qualified. Conversely, some schools have adequate human and financial resources that will help in providing a conducive and learning-friendly atmosphere for the learners.

There are many difficulties in crafting a national curriculum which include poor financial support, resistance by the communities and teachers, and also difficulty in localizing curriculum. The author Darling-Hammond, 2000 makes it clear that curriculum reforms, without relevant and effective teacher preparation and professional development, are hard to put into implementation. Emeh and Osunde, [2015](#) further indicate that it is essential to reduce the challenges involved by providing teachers with continuing and targeted support in the form of various interventions.

SNC in Pakistan

More than three lac educational institutions are functional in Pakistan, wherein 62% are in the public sector while 38% are in the private sector, as per the last available data on Pakistan Education Statistics. Madrassas are also existent in the number of around 31,115. Around seven hundred thousand persons are involved in the educational system of Pakistan. The SNC is a good idea, for it can engender equality amongst Pakistani pupils. Even so, the PTI government has mostly failed to put the plan into action despite intensive planning, because of the folly resistance and that many private schools have not yet adopted the SNC, and there is no capacity or

resources in the public schools to teach the new syllabus. Hence, in my opinion, this is the actual problem with the current SNC policy, which is the most serious hurdle to implementing it immediately in Pakistan. A single national curriculum in Pakistan has an edge in that it provides social equity. One of the main features of SNC is reducing socioeconomic disparities. As per the Government of Pakistan, 2020, the development of the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan reflects a giant step toward unity in education. It seeks to even disparities in schools and regions and to also reach parity in the education content. The earlier reports and research, however, revealed how all these efforts taken by a single national curriculum were faced with a myriad of obstacles: resource constraints, underprepared teacher force, and mixed reactions from people. Government of Pakistan, [2020](#).

Data and Methodology

Research Design

This applied a mixed research design by adopting both qualitative and quantitative research schemes simultaneously to ensure a wide and thorough analysis of the Single National Curriculum in the context of District Jhelum. The quantitative approach was implemented through a structured interview guide and the qualitative approach through in-depth interviews.

Data Collection Method

Quantitative Data Collection

Table 1

Demographics of Participants	Number of Participants	Percentage
Teachers	150	75%
Administrators	30	15%
Education Officers	20	10%
Urban Schools	100	50%
Rural Schools	100	50%
Total	200	100%

Quantitative Findings

Resource Availability

Table 2

Resource Availability	Adequate	Inadequate
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A structured questionnaire was conducted from 200 respondents comprising 150 teachers, 30 administrators, and 20 officers. Survey areas included resource availability, teacher training, and curriculum acceptability.

Qualitative Data Collection

Fifteen respondents 10 teachers and 5 administrators were interviewed using a semi-formal interview protocol. The participants were asked to share their experiences of the Single National Curriculum in regard to what difficulties they had in implementing it and how they overcame those challenges.

Descriptive statistics were used to give a general overview of responses to identify patterns and trends. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify the recurrent themes and issues raised in regard to the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Results and Discussion

Education in Pakistan has historically been fragmented, with disparities between public and private schools as well as regional differences. This study evaluates the implementation and challenges of the single national curriculum (SNC) at the prime level in District Jhelum.

Demographic Information

Two hundred respondents participated in the survey. They were equally divided between urban and rural schools and consisted of 150 teachers, 30 administrators, and 20 education officers.

Survey findings indicated that 60% of the individuals stated that resources were inadequate; on the other hand, urban schools had better resources than rural schools.

Urban Schools	50%	50%
Rural Schools	25%	75%

Figure 1: Resource Availability in Urban vs. Rural Schools

Teachers' Training

Fifty-five percent of the teachers stated that the training programs of the Single National Curriculum were not enough.

The training was too theoretical and hence was not applied in life reality.

Table 3

Teacher Training Satisfaction	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Urban Schools	45%	55%
Rural Schools	30%	70%

Figure 2 shows the satisfaction levels with the teacher training programs for the SNC.

Qualitative Findings

Identified Challenges

Major issues arose from the interview responses such as lack of community involvement, poor training, and lack of adequate resources. Teachers expressed their unhappiness due to insufficient useful resources and support, and the administrators expressed the challenges of striking a balance between curricular standards and regional needs.

The findings brought to the relationship are crucial: the success of the Single National Curriculum is a question that has to do with either its own content or the effective implementation. Questions of, for example, scarcity of resources and appropriate training programs, slow down the curriculum, whereby objectives cannot be achieved. These results are also supported by research in other parts of the world, which show that for any curriculum reform to succeed, all the practical difficulties must be dealt with, and adequate resources, as well as training, need to be provided to bring about the reform (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Emeh & Osunde, 2015).

Stakeholder Perceptions

Stakeholders' perceptions toward the Single National Curriculum were mixed. There was consensus on the single curriculum, but the manner in which it was going to be implemented was treating. What was highly emphasized by the parents and teachers was the call for more resources as well as relevant training programs.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

From the study's findings, a number of recommendations can be postulated to enhance the implementation of the Single National Curriculum:

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This report describes the in-depth study on the primary-level implementation of a Single National Curriculum in District Jhelum. From the study, it has been ascertained that the Single National Curriculum is a good policy initiative aimed at standardizing education, though, in its course of implementation, several challenges have been noted. Some of the highlighted problems include an imbalance in the resource distribution between the urban and rural schools, inadequate teacher training, and conflicting interests of at least three primary stakeholders in education.

1. Resource Allocation Improvement: The training curricula of Single National Curriculum should be revisited and updated towards more practical training and opportunities, which thereafter enhance professional development. The success of a Single National Curriculum relies on the provision of correct abilities and materials to teachers in a way that the goals of the curriculum are accomplished.
2. Revised Teacher Training Programs: The training curricula of the Single National Curriculum need to be revised to make it more activity-based with scope for further professional development. The goals of the Single National Curriculum are to be implemented

through empowering the teachers with the power and resources for the implementation of the curriculum.

3. Curriculum Revision To ensure that the Single National Curriculum reflects the educational and cultural concerns of regions; it must be periodically evaluated and revised. The involvement of educators, careers, and people from the community must occur on a regular basis to guarantee the relevance and currency of the curriculum.
4. Empowered Community Participation: Securing the commitment of the Single National Curriculum requires building closer connections between the community and schools. Parents and community members need to be drawn closer to the cause of education through enlightenment meetings, workshops, and constant updating.
5. Infrastructural development: Good learning conditions call for infrastructural upgrading of schools, especially in the rural setting. Good learning conditions, classroom infrastructure, and the general scene for schools will make the Single National Curriculum be implemented a success.

Future Research Directions

This study aims to create uniform educational standards across the country while initial evaluations provide insight into its implementations and challenges. Here's the researcher given some suggested future research directions. Future research should also address long-term effectiveness and impacts on other student outcomes. Longitudinal studies of student cohorts over time are necessary for an examination of the Single National Curriculum in terms of effectiveness toward contributing to students' academic and personal development. Comparative studies designed within other provinces and districts potentially bring invaluable information on the challenges and successes of the Single National Curriculum in educational contexts.

It might also be helpful to look into creative ways for parental and community involvement. The study may be extended to find means of engaging stakeholders within the schooling process for ways of using such observation for bringing change in the national curricula implementation.

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