

Teacher's Perceptions About Single National Curriculum: An Enquiry Of Primary School Teachers In Lahore

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Abstract: Curriculum reforms are the building blocks of an education system and provide a detailed set of topics to be studied. This study intends to explore the perceptions of teachers about the Single National Curriculum and how teachers perceive their role in the development of the curriculum in Pakistan. To accomplish the goals of this study, a sample of 15 teachers is drawn from 4 schools in Raiwind Tehsil of Lahore. The findings of this study show that the change in the medium of instruction is the major milestone in the process of implementation. Teachers from the private sector believe that the current curriculum is not sufficient to compete internationally as compared to that of Oxford and Cambridge. This study recommends the stakeholders arrange training sessions for teachers to provide a clear understanding of the Single National Curriculum and conduct surveys on teachers about their involvement in the process of curriculum making as they perceive it as very minimal and important. The result of this study recommends policymakers and stakeholders know that introducing a new curriculum is not enough for progress in Pakistan. The curriculum itself needs a continuous up-gradation for better results and it requires a system and infrastructure to implement it. This study covers only a few aspects of the Single National Curriculum and there are many other aspects as well. So, it is recommended that further studies may be conducted to explore other aspects of the Single National Curriculum.

Keywords: Curriculum, Single National Curriculum, Teachers Perceptions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan being a developing country has faced many hardships since its origin. One of the major concerns is the education system of Pakistan, as we know the education system of Pakistan is divided into different mediums of education following the British colonialism in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. There are English medium schools, Urdu medium schools, and Deeni Madaris that have created disparity among learners and people of the country (Irfan, 2017, 2018, 2019). In order to improve the educational standards of Pakistan, educational curriculum reforms are introduced.

Curriculum reform is a dynamic and continuous process; that needs to be updated with the growing needs of the world as it is the primary source of instruction for teachers and learners.

Tyler (1957), Caswell & Campbell (1935), and Ragan (1960) defined curriculum as the planned activities a student performs under the supervision of the school. The curriculum is based on the aims and goals of the nation and can only be accomplished by following the national curriculum.

In Pakistan, the curriculum reforms started with the report in 1959 however the issues remained unaddressed and sustained through the following National Educational Policies of 1970, 1972, 1979, 1992, and 1998. Unfortunately, until now the last curriculum reform in Pakistan was in 2006. The 2006 reforms were implemented in public schools and low-cost private schools and provinces were given the authority to reject or accept the reforms (Jamil, 2009).

Since 2006, the Single National Curriculum is one of the advancements in the field of education by the new government of Pakistan. The purpose of the Single National Curriculum is to introduce a uniform education system all across the nation and eliminate social inequality. SNC aims to bring tolerance, responsible citizenship, conflict management, and equality to all institutes of Pakistan by introducing uniform content, assessment procedures, and medium of instruction. The process of implementation of a Single National Curriculum is divided into three phases;

- Phase I: Class 1 to 5 (**Pre I-V**) (March 2021)
- Phase II: Class 6 to 8 (**VI-VIII**) (March 2022)
- Phase III: Class 9 to 12 (**IX-XII**) (March 2023)

Currently, phase 1 is being implemented in all institutes of Pakistan and the people directly being affected by the reforms in the educational curriculum are students and teachers. Therefore, their views and opinions matter the most in this regard. Curriculum reforms should be made keeping in mind the primary beneficiaries that are the pupils, students. This study aims to highlight the importance of teachers' perceptions of the Single National Curriculum. (<http://www.mofep.gov.pk>)

As the term teacher's perception defines the views, beliefs, conceptions, attitudes, and feelings of teachers. Teachers play an integral role in the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers play a central and significant role in a country's progress and success. "The teaching profession requires a clear goal, a love for the profession, and obviously a more positive attitude towards the professions. The country needs well-trained and professionally sound teachers and a lot of responsibility fall on teacher training institutions (Hussain, 2004)."

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to;

1. Explore the perceptions of primary school teachers about the Single National Curriculum.

Research question

The research question of the study are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of primary school teachers about the Single National Curriculum?
2. How do teachers perceive their role in the process of SNC development?

II. Review of literature

As an educationist, Shaukat (2021) provided a critical assessment of the government's idea for a Single National Curriculum. She believes that understanding children's psychology is necessary since it is difficult to introduce new information to them without first providing them with the necessary scaffolding of past topic knowledge, which causes cognitive dissonance in the process of learning. After hearing this, she became interested in finding out what other professors felt on the subject of the Single National Curriculum in both public and private institutions. In accordance with the conclusions of this research, it is challenging for government instructors to introduce a Single National Curriculum across all classrooms at the same time; thus, they recommend introducing it in a phased approach starting with early childhood education. Teachers at private schools may believe that their pupils are far better known than those at public schools. As a result, there is a significant achievement gap between students at public and private schools.

The process of developing a curriculum is both dynamic and cyclical. The use of pilot testing prior to the implementation of a new curriculum is routine practice. They are then evaluated while in use, and suggestions for changes are made in preparation for the next stage of development. Given the importance of teachers in the educational system, any modifications to the curriculum must be pilot tested in actual classrooms before being implemented nationwide (Shaukat, 2021).

At this point, it seems that the government and advisory officials are not considering the advice of the teaching staff in policy decisions. However, the Single National Curriculum should establish the government professed aims, which support the concept of 'one country, one curriculum.' Additionally, the credibility of the SNC will be evaluated by later evaluation studies. With the implementation of the Single National Curriculum, an appropriate link between a national policy headed by the government and professional practice influenced by educators should be established and maintained. In order to attain this objective, the Single National Curriculum is working hard. During the dynamic process of curriculum creation, it should be expected that professional opinions from educators will have an impact on the formulation of government policies (Shaukat, 2021).

In 1989, the Leverhulme Primary Project team conducted a national questionnaire survey of 901 primary teachers, which was published in Research Papers in Education (Wragg et al., 1989). In 1992, Benette et al. conducted "A longitudinal study of primary teachers' perceived competence in, and concerns about the implementation of the National Curriculum," which was published in Research Papers in Education (1992). A follow-up study to the initial research was conducted in 1991, with 433 instructors from 131 schools participating. Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach the new National Curriculum was tested twice as a consequence of the 1988 Education Act. The results were published in the Journal of Educational Research. Regardless of school size, teacher age, gender, or age group under study, there was no significant variation in the rankings of

1989. Teachers took tremendous pride in their abilities to communicate and write in English as well as their ability to solve mathematical difficulties. They consider themselves competent in subjects of science and math while music, and technology all earned poor marks. Despite the fact that science had gone up from ninth to the third position, they still believed they were the best in English and math in 1991. Music and technology, on the other hand, were once again at the bottom of the rankings. Despite the fact that the majority of them say that English and mathematics are more difficult topics to teach, progress is more visible in the sciences and technology disciplines. When asked about their top objectives for future in-service training (INSET), the vast majority of teachers said that computers, information technology (IT), and the humanities were at the top of their lists. (Benette et al., 1992)

Teachers' impressions of recent curricular modifications and their implementation were studied by Park & Sung (2013). What can we learn from the instance of Korean primary teachers? Specifically, this research looks at how primary school teachers in Korea see recent curricular innovations, where those views come from, and what kind of support they need to actually put such reforms into practice. According to this survey, teachers had generally unfavorable and unconstructive views on curriculum change. As a result, their engagement and commitment to change are negatively impacted by these sentiments. When it comes to curriculum implementation, the study found that teachers aren't adequately supported; second, they don't have the opportunity to work through implementation issues and difficulties with their peers; and third, the implementation process is hindered by the context and cultural constraints. The outcomes of this study provide educators and curriculum creators with a variety of ideas.

Irfan (2021) shares her thoughts on the Subject: Incorporation of the English as Second Language (ESL) in Single National Curriculum into Pakistani School. English as a Second Language is the focus of the Single National Curriculum. To determine SNC's long-term ambitions, the investigation focused on the draft text. Qualitative research methods such as content analysis were utilized to collect the data. The curriculum focuses on peace and social harmony, religious tolerance and respect for each other, equal treatment for all persons, and conflict resolution. As a whole, the English as Second Language (ESL) Single National Curriculum intends to leverage technology to help students improve their proficiency in English. Teacher performance will presumably be assessed based on many evaluation models, one of which is the Guskey Model of Teacher Evaluation (GMTE). According to this study's recommendations, needs and situational analysis results are important for the effective implementation of a Single National Curriculum in Pakistani schools. A Single National Curriculum may be used to synthesize daily activities and materials to promote English as Second Language (ESL) learners' creativity, introspection, and self-awareness. In order to properly execute the Single National Curriculum, experts from various provinces should be contacted for evaluating the Single National Curriculum and providing training to instructors of English as Second Language (ESL).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was intended to analyze the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding a single national curriculum. The research design was qualitative in nature and a phenomenological approach was used in this research. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews from a selected sample. Qualitative research focuses on the how's and why's of the phenomena taking place which is why it is often defined as subjective. It is a more in-depth analysis of events taking place in a naturalistic environment with no intervention in the data from the researcher (Creswell, 2018; Mills & Gay, 2019; Yin, 2018).

Participants

The population consisted of 165 Government schools and 374 Private schools in the Raiwind Tehsil of Lahore. This study targeted 5 schools, 5 school teachers, teaching at a primary level, 2 teachers of Government schools, and 3 teachers of Private schools from 4 different schools in Raiwind Tehsil of Lahore were approached. The rationale behind focusing on the schools of Raiwind Tehsil is that it is not possible for the researcher to cover the whole city.

The sample of this study is composed of teachers that were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is when the researcher selects the participant based on their knowledge of the objectives of the study. It is often called judgmental or selective sampling and snowball sampling is when the researcher selects a participant with the required characteristics for study, and he or she refers other candidates with the required characteristics to the researcher. It is often known as chain referral or network sampling (Neuman, 2007).

The demographic information of the participants

Participants	Codes	Gender	Academic qualification	Teaching experience
1	T1	Female	B.A Hons Linguistics	3 years
2	T2	Female	MBA	7.5 years
3	T3	Male	MPhil IR	7 years
4	T4	Female	MPhil Management Sciences	3 years
5	T5	Female	MPhil Zoology	4 years

Data collection

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach to conduct this study and collected data by using semi-structured interviews following the interview protocol soliciting demographic information at first, then 10 open-ended questions related to various dimensions of the Single National Curriculum. The data was collected till saturation. Saturation in qualitative research is a

point where there is very small or no new addition of information to the previous data collected (Marshall et al., 2013; Guest et al., 2006).

The instrument of the study was selected in the light of related literature. The most suitable instrument that was selected for the study was the interview schedule. The researcher used semi-structured interviews for data collection. It is an unorganized set of guidelines set to conduct interviews. During the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer and interviewee develop a connection about a specific topic in response to the interviewer asking broad open-ended questions. There is no set answer to the questions and the interviewer follows the direction of the participant's responses (Ryan et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews are flexible within a predetermined scheme and allow the interviewer to develop any theme that arises during the interview. There are four ways to conduct interviews;

1. Face to face interviews
2. Online interviews
3. Telephone interviews
4. Interview by email

In this research, face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect unbiased data. Face-to-face interviews are the best way to collect data as a special bond is formed using body language. During the face-to-face interviews, taking notes can be difficult and transcription can be time taking but data is not lost as it is collected in recordings or videos (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews following the interview protocol till saturation. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed and translated into the English language from the local Urdu language. Each participant was given a code to maintain their anonymity. By collecting data through interviews, themes have been identified that helped in data analysis. After that, the data was interpreted by means of the manual thematic analysis by the researcher.

As Braun and Clarke (2006) state, writing is a major part of thematic analysis as it involves merging the data of participants into a narrative persuasive story and linking it to the existing literature. The in-depth description of interview findings with a presentation of themes with direct quotations may provide the readers with information about the perceptions of primary school teachers about the Single National Curriculum.

IV. Findings

This paper is concerned with five cases of primary school teachers teaching the new Single National Curriculum. Each case has been discussed in detail followed by a brief exposition.

Participant 1

She is a primary school teacher with an academic qualification of B.A Hons Linguistics with a teaching experience of 3 years. She opines that Single national curriculum is a good step but not all institutions are following it. She states that only Urdu and Islamiat should be converted in Urdu language not all subjects as converting the medium of instruction from English to Urdu will lack the knowledge of scientific terms in Sciences and in future there will be implications. In her understanding, the purpose of SNC is to make our nation understand the importance and value of the Urdu language. They should be comfortable using their national language. She further perceives that Teacher plays a central role in curriculum development and teachers should be involved in curriculum development as they know what's best in children's interest. For now, the students are not comfortable with the Single National Curriculum. So far, the SNC does not seem to be the best advancement in education in 21st century but in the future maybe as it will take time to overcome the issues present. She further explains that SNC aims to bring equality and uniformity but it will take time. The policy makers should reconsider certain points and design accordingly for better results in the future. She believes that the major difference in both curricula is the Urdu language. According to her, it is not a good idea to teach many subjects in Urdu because our business and economy are linked with other countries and it's a need of time to follow the English language.

Commentary

She appears to be moderately knowledgeable person about Single National Curriculum, its content and objectives. It is evident from her experience that the shift of medium of instruction is a main hurdle while implementing the SNC. She firmly believes the teachers are pivotal in curriculum development process so they should be involved. She is hopeful that SNC will bring uniformity in Pakistan's education system but it will take time as students are getting familiar with the content. She has faith that in the future SNC will take education to a next level.

Participant 2

She is a primary school teacher with an academic qualification of MBA with a teaching experience of 7.5 years. She believes that SNC is taking Pakistan's education system a step backward. The stakeholders could have made the Urdu curriculum stronger instead of switching Science, Social studies, Islamiat to Urdu medium. Professional science studies like medicine or engineering still hold the English medium of instruction. By doing this the students will lack the knowledge of scientific terms in English which would be required in F.Sc or at the university level. We should have increased the horizon of our kids as far as the knowledge about Urdu. We should have switched to advanced Urdu. She views the involvement of teacher teaching the SNC is much needed in developing SNC. She opines that Students are adaptable it is we who know better the repercussions of Urdu medium or change your professional acumen i.e; the medium to pursue your careers. SNC should be designed again as Urdu medium books have no usage in a practical professional career as such. She firmly states that Learning of Science, Social studies and Islamiat

will be at a halt in these growing years as they would be unleashing all the terms of science in Urdu medium before they will opt for professional careers.

Commentary

She has a very different perspective of Single National Curriculum; she believes that SNC will take the education system to the downfall. The main reason of the downfall is the change in the language of content of subjects other than Urdu and Islamiat. She emphasized the role of teacher in the development of curriculum, she thinks students are adaptable but they do not know the pros and cons of the new curriculum.

Participant 3

He is a primary school teacher with an academic qualification of MPhil IR with a teaching experience of 7 years. According to his perception or understanding, the SNC supports and puts our country's language on the upper level. But the conversion of the medium of subjects like science and Social studies in Urdu is not good as still, our professional degrees are still in English language. The understanding of students at the school level and professional level is difficult as students from previous classes recognized the terminologies in English now it is difficult for them to understand them in Urdu. He perceives that the main purpose of Single National Curriculum is for getting all the community on one platform, and extinguishing all the discrimination between the middle and high class. He views teacher involvement in curriculum development as pivotal as they are the center and directly linked with students and the content being taught. Because of previous teachings in English, not only students but even parents are not comfortable with it. As the students of English medium do not know the scientific terms in Urdu so that when they learn in Urdu they feel difficulty now and in professional life as well.

Commentary

He is very optimistic about Single National Curriculum as he believes that it will lead the nation to progress but the conversion of content language for subjects like Social Sciences and also state that teaching these subjects in Urdu will not be beneficial in Pakistan's favor as many terminologies and content explained in the Urdu language will lose their meaning. He has a very clear knowledge about the purpose and objectives of SNC. He also believes that teachers are essential and are a central bridge between student and content and for that they should be included in the process of curriculum making.

Participant 4

She is a primary school teacher with an academic qualification of MPhil Management Sciences with a teaching experience of 3 years. In her point of view SNC is great to up-grade Urdu language and we should make the Urdu material stronger instead of changing General knowledge and Social studies in Urdu from the English language. She shares that initially she got difficulty with Urdu typing but after some practice, she had a command on it. She does not have a vast knowledge of

content of SNC but she is optimistic that she will get better in the future. She opines that it is good to promote Urdu but it would be better if SNC improves reading skills and motivate students to achieve their right roles. She believes that SNC is not as very difficult for her as compared to the student mind so there are some difficulties to implement this method at once but gradually it will be successful. SNC is sufficient and helpful if it must be activity-based and up to date. Teachers ideas and knowledge also make SNC more sufficient. Although, the students are not fully comfortable with the SNC gradually they will become comfortable and will understand. She does not see SNC as the best advancement in education in 21st century. She believes we must upgrade our educational material and infrastructure to fulfill the needs of the 21st century. Yes, no doubt the SNC can bring uniformity to Pakistan. The previous curriculum especially in private sectors is based on stories, not reality specifically for Social studies, it is now sufficient for primary classes.

Commentary

She considers SNC is to upgrade Urdu language and there is nothing wrong in promoting our national language but at the cost of losing the understanding of students learned terminologies in subjects like sciences is not in the benefit of Pakistan. She seems to be confident that with time she will be able to present the content more briefly. She does not see SNC as the best advancement in 21st century. She believes we must upgrade our educational material and infrastructure to fulfill the needs of the 21st century. She believes that there is a vast difference in the content of new curriculum and the previous one being taught in private sector.

Participant 5

She is a primary school teacher with an academic qualification of MPhil Zoology with a teaching experience of 4 years. She views the Single National Curriculum as the curriculum that aims to bring the education system of Pakistan onto a single platform. To minimize the gap in the public and private sectors. Obviously, there are a lot of challenges as it is a new system for both the public and private sectors. More challenges for the government sector as the syllabus was very mainstream and now it requires changes in the system. She is aware of the main purpose of the Single National Curriculum to eliminate educational disparity and introduce a uniform system for all students. She firmly believes that teachers should be included in the process of curriculum development as he/she is the one that acts as a bridge between students and the curriculum. From her experience she shares that students are not comfortable. They feel burdened with extensive content. In her opinion, it is not the best way because we are not in a place to adopt limitations we have to continuously work on it and keep on introducing new techniques and strategies to upgrade Pakistan's education system. she is hopeful that SNC will bring uniformity to Pakistan. But it will take time as it is a new process. She thinks that the level of difficulty is increased in the new curriculum but hopefully everything will smooth out with time.

Commentary

She has an adequate knowledge of the purpose and objectives of Single National Curriculum. She believes that the public sector is facing more problems regarding content of the new curriculum as the previous curriculum was very simple and mainstream. The students are not comfortable with SNC they feel burdened with extensive content. She opines that Pakistan is not in the place to adopt limitations the policy makers and curriculum makers need to continuously upgrade the content for better results. She is hopeful that SNC will bring uniformity in Pakistan in the coming era.

V. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of primary school teachers about the Single National Curriculum. In the final analysis, the results of the current study shed light on the perceptions of primary school teachers about the Single National Curriculum. To conduct this study, it was very important that teachers know about the SNC and are implementing it personally. Firstly, the result shows the basic understanding of teachers about the Single National Curriculum and how they can improve it. Teachers were clear about the main objective of the SNC. The results will help teachers to incorporate SNC effectively in their classrooms. Secondly, teachers presented a list of challenges they faced during the implementation of SNC that made it difficult for teachers and students to use SNC. The results show that the change in the medium of instruction is the major milestone in the process of implementation. Teachers from the private sector believe that the current curriculum is not sufficient to compete internationally as compared to that of Oxford and Cambridge. The results may help policymakers and stakeholders know the current status of the SNC implementation process and how they can make changes to improve it.

Thirdly, teachers firmly believed that they should be involved in the process of curriculum development. The policymakers can conduct surveys and involve teachers in the process of curriculum making. It will boost the interest of teachers and they will feel more confident while teaching it. The results showed that students are not very comfortable with the SNC yet but they are getting used to it. They are showing progress and hopefully, the results will be able to bring uniformity to the education system.

At last, the findings showed that SNC will lead to advancement in the 21st century and it possesses the skills and strategies but it requires time to make changes on a large scale. Many teachers believe that SNC alone cannot be enough for advancement and improvement in the education system of Pakistan there are more aspects. They highlighted the major difference between the new and previous curricula was content and medium of instruction. SNC presents extensive content with good material and assessment methods. This result may help policymakers and stakeholders know that introducing a new curriculum is not enough for progress in Pakistan. The curriculum itself needs a continuous up-gradation for better results and it requires a system and infrastructure to implement it.

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