



Navigating Educational Challenges and Innovations: A Critical Analysis of the Societal and Cultural Impacts of the Single National Curriculum

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Abstract

The impact of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) on Pakistani society and culture is examined in this study. This research examines three main points: new ideas in the SNC, how it influences culture, language, inclusivity and diversity and the range of responses to it in different places. Data were gathered using surveys as well as discussions with teachers and educational administrators. Results suggest that though the SNC tries to ensure equal education and foster national principles, it fails to consider the country's language and cultural variety. Participants pointed out that what is planned for education policies does not always happen in schools, mainly because teachers lack sufficient training, there is little localized material and minority voices are not fully included. Different responses to the SNC resulted from cultural and political concerns shared by people. The study points out that the SNC will succeed as a united educational reform if the curriculum is developed with the principles of inclusion, flexibility and participation. It advises making the curriculum more relevant in each location, using regional languages and encouraging all those involved to get involved. Due to these findings, policy-makers, teachers and education experts in Pakistan are urged to establish a balanced, just and culturally responsive education system.

Keywords: Single National Curriculum, Education Reform, Cultural Identity, Inclusivity, Diversity, Pakistan, Curriculum Policy, Language in Education

Introduction

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participation. It advises making the curriculum more relevant in each location, using regional languages and encouraging all those involved to get involved. Due to these findings, policy-makers, teachers and education experts in Pakistan are urged to establish a balanced, just and culturally responsive education system.

Problem Statement

The system of education in Pakistan has had a hard time ensuring that all children can study, that the quality is consistent and that diversity is fully respected. The reason for introducing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) was to fix these issues by unifying the education system and making it more open to students from both public and private schools. Nonetheless, many people are discussing the way the SNC handles societal and cultural matters, mainly concerning the topics of identity, different languages and equal treatment of ethnic and religious communities. Even with the SNC's innovative goals, many are uncertain as to how well it reflects the diversity in Pakistan or if it could also side-line smaller cultural communities and their speech. Moreover, there are differences in the way the SNC is accepted in various communities which has caused some to worry about the curriculum's usefulness and inclusivity. This study aims to look in depth at the challenging issues by examining the new features of the SNC and what they mean for society and culture. It aims to see how SNC is able to tackle Pakistan's educational issues and still maintain unity among its citizens while preserving cultural differences. Solving this issue is crucial for making educational policies that help everyone and are culturally sensitive in a multicultural society.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it examines a key moment in Pakistan's education reform with the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC). Looking at the innovative aspects found in the SNC, this study helps explain how using both standardization and inclusion can address chronic problems in education. The research also highlights the effect of a single curriculum on society and culture in Pakistan, where language, ethnic and religious backgrounds are very influential. Knowing what these implications involve is vital for policymakers, educators and stakeholders so that the curriculum supports inclusion and values cultural diversity.

Objectives of Study

1. To check what technical features of the Single National Curriculum help it deal with issues of standardization and inclusion.
2. Looking at the role of the Single National Curriculum in influencing society and culture by considering social groups, languages, diversity and inclusivity.

Literature Review

Historical Context of Educational Disparities in Pakistan

Education in Pakistan has passed through many different periods and some of them are in conflict. Experts such as Hoodbhoy (1998) and Rahman (2004) explain that historical legacies and constant political upheaval after independence resulted in the development of public, private and religious (madrassa) schools which all offer different study materials and methods. Some blame these differences on unequal opportunities and unsteady education policies (Saeed, 2007). As explained in UNESCO reports (2019), this led to students having large differences in school outcomes and additional problems with social and economic divisions.

Rationale and Objectives of the Single National Curriculum

The idea behind the SNC was to address educational inequality by making sure all schools used similar textbooks, learning outcomes and assessment approaches (Ministry of Federal Education

and Professional Training, 2020). The main purposes of the SNC are to make the curriculum the same for all, develop morals and good character in students, improve national unity and ensure equal opportunities for studying for all pupils. According to the government, fairness in education and stronger national integration will result from getting rid of differences based on class in schooling (GoP, 2020).

Innovative Aspects of the SNC

The SNC attempts to combine moral teaching, citizenship and current knowledge into a single framework. Topics such as critical thinking, environmental protection and being inclusive form part of the curriculum. Education technology is also being introduced, along with training for teachers, to help make its implementation easier (Akram & Zafar, 2021). There are researchers who value this update. According to Abbas and Raza (2021), a common curriculum might help students from all classes by making educational results more uniform and lowering the influence of schools associated with upper class families. According to them, new approaches for delivering learning materials, along with an emphasis on fairness, could lead to better school unity. Even so, a number of people are skeptical. SDPI (2021) noted in its studies that even though education systems are similar, the resources available to students are far from equal which limits how useful innovation can be. There are also those who point out that the changes should be wider and look at teaching techniques, schools' structures and cultural values.

Societal and Cultural Implications

Because Pakistan is very diverse, the cultural aspect matters a lot in its education system reforms. Authors such as Rahman (2006) and Ali (2012) explain that Pakistan is made up of numerous ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, all with unique identities. For this reason, it may be difficult for a single curriculum to properly reflect such a wide range of backgrounds. This is a topic where language itself becomes very controversial. Even though Urdu is promoted for teaching under the SNC, little attention is given to Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto and Punjabi. As Rahman (2020) points out such policies might exclude students who do not speak Urdu and influence how well they learn. Concerns about inclusion in culture have been voiced by researchers in relation to the SNC. Khan (2021) found through his study of SNC textbooks that while they claim to respect diversity and tolerance, they mostly highlight majoritarian groups and do not give full representation to minorities. This leads people to ask if the curriculum actually creates a sense of unity or encourages one type of culture.

Identity Formation and Inclusivity

Learning along with your peers is special as it allows you to see your place in society. According to Apple (2004), curricula do more than hand out information—they represent certain ideals. The SNC's strong emphasis on both Islamic values and national identity has been viewed as possibly separating non-Muslim students from the school and encouraging a one-way worldview. According to Noreen and Alam (2021), inclusive education needs to be more than just including some people in the education system. It is important for it to honor several identities and set up learning environments that are open to all kinds of experiences. Current studies show that the SNC may not always provide genuine and full space for those with marginalized identities.

Regional Reception and Resistance

Pakistanis have differed a lot in their opinions about the military's role in politics. Provincial governments in Pakistan have claimed that, because of the 18th Amendment, education departments are under the control of the provinces and should not be included in the national curriculum. A study conducted by Shah (2022) indicates that regional stakeholders regularly feel like they are not a part of the curriculum development process which results in distrust and their refusal to comply. Moreover, many teachers and school administrators are worried because there

was not much consultation, not enough training and limited resources provided for the SNC. According to the Pakistan Teachers' Forum (2021), many teachers do not have the necessary skills to implement the new curriculum, mainly because they lack access to modern teaching materials in rural areas.

Gaps in Existing Literature

While numerous studies have explored the structural and pedagogical implications of the SNC, fewer have examined its societal and cultural impacts through a critical and empirical lens. Most existing literature either focuses on the theoretical potential of curriculum reform or critiques it based on content analysis. There is a lack of comprehensive studies that incorporate stakeholder perspective particularly from students, parents, and teachers across different regions and social groups. Moreover, limited attention has been paid to how the SNC influences identity construction, intergroup relations, and perceptions of inclusivity in actual classroom settings. These gaps underscore the need for research that bridges educational innovation with social realities, examining not only what is taught but also how it is received and experienced.

Conceptual Framework

The research is based on a sociocultural lens and refers to theories of curriculum politics, identity development and inclusive practice. Michael Apple (2004) and James Banks (2007) have pointed out that curriculum acts as a cultural and political instrument. Through examining how the SNC deals with unifying the nation and respecting cultural diversity, this framework lets me look into the overall influence of the curriculum in the society.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The style of this study is called mixed-method because it employs Quantitative and some Qualitative methods. The qualitative aspect allows for in-depth exploration of personal experiences, opinions, and interpretations of the SNC, while the quantitative component helps in collecting structured responses to identify patterns across a wider population.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study includes teachers and school administrators from schools across north districts in Punjab, particularly from culturally diverse division. A multistage sampling method is used to ensure a wide representation of views from different educational backgrounds, regions, and cultural identities. Approximately: will be selected for interviews or surveys from at least 3 districts.

Data Collection Methods

A structured questionnaire consisting of both closed and Likert-scale questions will be used to gather data. In-depth interviews with teachers and school administrators will provide insights into curriculum implementation, resistance, adaptation strategies, and cultural sensitivity in classroom practices. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage test and correlation) through software like SPSS.

Qualitative data from interviews will be analyzed thematically using manual coding, focusing on recurring themes such as inclusivity, sociocultural, and innovation.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size may not fully represent all cultural groups across Pakistan.

Responses may be influenced by personal biases or political views regarding the SNC.

Access to marginalized areas may be limited due to logistical constraints.

Delimitations

The study is limited to selected districts and does not include province.

Only stakeholders from school-level education (Grade 1–5) are included.

Focus is on the first phase of SNC implementation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Findings

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statics of Item

Sr.#	Statement	SDA	DA	UD	A	SA	M	SD
1.	Single National curriculum enhance to participation in social affair.	7	10	15	50	22	4.41	0.493
2.	Single National curriculum enhance to participation in social affair.	2	10	17	40	35	4.07	1.03
3.	Does this Curriculum understand able for our learner in indigenous institutions?	3	10	20	43	28	4.20	1.09
4.	Does it upgrade indigenous societies for better living?	2	9	21	38	34	4.19	1.08
5.	The integration of technology in the education system was presented clearly?	5	9	18	42	30	4.11	1.03
6.	Are these efforts to make curriculum uniform across schools or regions?	7	7	16	44	30	4.17	1.07
7.	Does it Focus on integrating students of different abilities learning needs?	5	11	15	46	27	4.24	1.10
8.	Is the curriculum connects with students' real-life experiences future needs.	1	10	18	42	33	4.07	0.982

The descriptive statistics table presents respondents' perceptions of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) across eight key areas. Overall, the data reflects a highly positive response, with mean scores ranging from 4.07 to 4.41 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating strong agreement with all statements. The highest mean (4.41) was for the statement that the SNC

enhances participation in social affairs, suggesting widespread approval of its social impact. Other high-rated items include its inclusivity for students with different learning needs ($M = 4.24$) and its understandability for learners in indigenous institutions ($M = 4.20$). The curriculum's role in upgrading indigenous societies and its clarity in integrating technology also received favorable responses, with means above 4.00. The lowest-rated, though still positively viewed, were items related to real-life relevance and uniformity, each scoring 4.07. Standard deviation values (ranging from 0.493 to 1.10) show moderate variability, indicating that most respondents shared similar views. Overall, the findings highlight strong support for the SNC's innovative and sociocultural aspects.

Table 4.2 Inferential Statics Independent T-Test Sociocultural Impacts

S. No	Statements	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	Sig.(2-tailed)	P-value
1	Single National curriculum enhance to participation in social affair.	4.10	4.80	1.69	0.04	0.05
2	Single National curriculum enhance to participation in social affair.	3.86	4.40	2.96	0.003	0.05
3	Does these Curriculum understand able for our learner in indigenous institutions	4.02	3.92	1.58	0.25	0.05
4	Does it upgrade indigenous societies for better living?	4.17	3.98	0.86	0.38	0.05

Gender differences are significant for statements on social participation, with females showing more positive perceptions. No significant gender-based difference was found regarding understandability and benefit to indigenous societies. These findings suggest gendered perceptions exist in certain sociocultural areas of the SNC, warranting further investigation.

Table 4.3 Inferential Statics Independent T-test Innovative Features

S. #	Statements	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	Sig.(2-tailed)	P-value
1	The integration of technology in the education system was presented clearly?	4.10	4.80	1.69	0.04	0.05
2	Are these efforts to make curriculum uniform across schools or regions?	3.86	4.00	2.96	0.003	0.05
3	Does it Focus on integrating students of different abilities learning needs?	4.02	3.90	1.58	0.25	0.05
4	Is the curriculum connects with students' real-life experiences future needs.	3.97	3.98	0.86	0.38	0.05

Significant gender differences were observed in perceptions of technology integration and curriculum uniformity, with females reporting more favorable views. No significant differences emerged for inclusivity or real-life relevance. These results highlight that perceived innovation in SNC may be influenced by gender, particularly in areas involving technological clarity and standardization.

Table 4.4 Correlation of Sociocultural Impacts And Innovative Features

	Innovative Features	Sociocultural Impacts
Innovative Features	1	.733
		0.000
N	104	104
Sociocultural Impacts	.733	1
	0.000	
N	104	104

The significant positive relationship suggests that enhancing innovative elements (e.g., technology use, inclusivity, and real-life relevance) can positively influence the curriculum's sociocultural effectiveness.

Thematic Findings on the Single National Curriculum (SNC)

Theme 1: Innovative Aspects of the SNC

Teachers generally recognized the SNC's efforts to introduce values education and ensure standardization across different types of schools. The initiative to align public and private school content was seen as a significant step forward. However, a common concern was the lack of adequate teacher training and the absence of supporting teaching materials, which hindered effective implementation.

Theme 2: Cultural and Linguistic Representation

Educators voiced concerns about the limited representation of regional languages and cultures within the curriculum. The dominance of a single language made it difficult for some students to relate to the content. Additionally, teachers highlighted the lack of inclusion of female historical figures and the minimal acknowledgment of contributions made by minority communities in social studies materials.

Theme 3: Inclusivity and Identity Formation

The curriculum's emphasis on national identity received mixed reactions. While a few people thought the focus on unity was good, others were concerned that it might cause people to forget about their own cultures. Many minority teachers emphasized that they noticed religious bias and fewer non-Muslim students involved in the curriculum and argued for equal representation and balanced identity building.

Conclusion

On the whole, the findings support that participants were in agreement about how SNC operates effectively by promoting social inclusion, supporting indigenous learners, embracing technology, supporting inclusivity and giving context to what is learned. Females generally thought the sociocultural impacts and new features of the SNC were more important than males did,

especially for social engagement, modern technology and having a common curriculum. Even so, gender differences in understanding did not show up among indigenous learners or for improving indigenous groups, inclusion or understanding in real life. To emphasize, the strong link between inventive features and positive changes in society reveals that progress in technology and inclusivity straightway adds benefit to the community. All in all, the findings stress how crucial innovation is for introducing valuable sociocultural improvements to education.

Discussion

Most participants in this study see the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in a positive light, noting its good impact on social participation, support for indigenous learners, technology use, and inclusion of all individuals and connecting learning to activities outside of school. The high average ratings for each theme show that most people think the curriculum can cause significant changes in education. Perceiving differences between genders played a significant part in the results. Many more females gave the SNC high marks for its effects on society, interesting features and inclusive approach compared to males. It seems from these results that female respondents are more positive or aware of how the curriculum aims to help in these areas. Because there are not large gaps by gender in these areas, it suggests that both men and women recognize the same fundamental values in education. Innovative curriculum elements often have strong effects on sociocultural impacts, showing how elements must be considered together during planning. Therefore, improved integration of technology and inclusion can increase how well accepted and relevant the curriculum is. Therefore, making the curriculum more innovative is expected to help the curriculum in many ways.

Recommendations

1. Professional growth opportunities should be introduced that teach innovative ways to teach, how to use technology and how to be culturally aware in the classroom. Support and access to teaching resources help teachers get ready to teach effectively.
2. Experts should update the curriculum to make it more inclusive of many spoken languages, cultures and religions. Adding content on regional tongues, stories of minorities and varied cultural perspectives supports a classroom that respects and supports all students equally.
3. Investing more in technology and using the same curricula in different areas may help the curriculum remain relevant to many cultures and useful. Creating pilot programs and using feedback allows changes in innovation to be adjusted and monitored right away.

Future Implications of the Study

Professional growth opportunities should be introduced that teach innovative ways to teach, how to use technology and how to be culturally aware in the classroom. Support and access to teaching resources help teachers get ready to teach effectively.

Experts should update the curriculum to make it more inclusive of many spoken languages, cultures and religions. Adding content on regional tongues, stories of minorities and varied cultural perspectives supports a classroom that respects and supports all students equally.

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