

Problems Faced by Teachers in the Implementation of Single National Curriculum at Primary Level

Samreen Khan¹

Abstract

This research explores the challenges encountered by teachers while implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) across Punjab. Adopting a descriptive and cross-sectional survey approach, the study was carried out in district Lahore. The target group included 107 primary schools with 1,074 teachers. Data were gathered from 36 participants through purposive sampling, using a researcher-designed questionnaire. After coding, the responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS (Version 25). The findings revealed that insufficient professional training, limited access to technological tools, and inadequate pedagogical skills were major difficulties experienced by teachers. Moreover, the lack of essential teaching materials such as textbooks, workbooks, and aids further complicates classroom management. Disruptions in social structures and institutional hierarchies also acted as obstacles to effective SNC implementation. The study recommends that educational authorities provide continuous training, modern tools, and sufficient teaching resources to facilitate the successful adoption of the Single National Curriculum in Punjab.

Keywords: *Single National Curriculum, Teaching Challenges, Teacher Training, Primary Level, Punjab*

Introduction

Education serves as the foundation for preparing individuals to meet future challenges, while the curriculum provides direction toward achieving educational objectives. It outlines the essential knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that learners are expected to develop during a specific course or program (Ahmed et al., 2020). In pursuit of equitable quality education and national unity, many countries have introduced a *Single National Curriculum (SNC)* as a unifying framework (Barnes, 2020).

In Pakistan, the education system faces persistent difficulties and continues to present discouraging indicators. Social and economic disparities have further aggravated these challenges (Vinayak, 2021). The nation ranks 154th among 189 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index, reflecting low performance in areas such as literacy rate, enrollment ratio, and education spending.

The literacy rate, recorded at 57%, is significantly lower than that of neighboring nations, while the primary school dropout rate remains high at 22.7%. In addition, approximately 22.8 million children between the ages of 5 and 16 are not

¹ Samreen Khan, MPhil Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab. Email: Khansamreen324@gmail.com

attending school, placing Pakistan among the countries with the largest out-of-school populations. These issues are further intensified by gender-based and socio-economic inequalities.

Pakistan represents a multicultural and multilingual society, comprising diverse groups such as Pashtuns, Sindhis, Punjabis, Baloch, and Urdu-speaking migrants. This diversity, while enriching, has also led to social divisions that hinder national integration. To counter these disparities, the Government of Pakistan introduced the *Single National Curriculum* to unite the nation, eliminating class-based differences and freeing the education system from the colonial legacy that fostered inequality.

The SNC aims to establish an equitable education system with uniformity in syllabus content, medium of instruction, and methods of assessment. It is designed to cultivate twenty-first-century skills such as analytical reasoning, problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking while ensuring that all learners receive high-quality and inclusive education. One of its fundamental purposes is to reduce educational and social divides among communities differentiated by class, region, or sect.

The current study focuses on exploring the challenges that teachers encounter in implementing the Single National Curriculum. The success of curriculum reforms largely depends on teachers' preparedness, understanding, and commitment, as they translate policy directives into classroom practices. However, educators face numerous difficulties, including the need to adjust teaching strategies and resources, manage additional workloads, and overcome the lack of adequate training and administrative support. They must also address the diverse learning needs of students in varied educational contexts. Considering these challenges, this research investigates the issues faced by teachers during the implementation of the SNC and aims to provide insights that could help improve the process.

Literature Review

The curriculum acts as a guide that shapes the teaching and learning process within an educational setup. It identifies what learners are expected to know, the methods used to teach them, and how their progress will be measured. In practice, it covers lessons, learning goals, teaching activities, and assessment methods. Teachers rely on the curriculum to organize content, plan lessons, and evaluate student understanding (Sinnema et al., 2020). In short, a curriculum is a planned pathway that outlines knowledge, expected learning outcomes, and approaches to achieve and assess them. Supporters of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan view it as a reform that can ensure fairness in education. The idea of one curriculum appeals to many because the current system is divided among different types of schools that provide unequal opportunities. Public, private, and religious schools operate under different systems, resulting in inequality in content, teaching quality, and access to learning resources. The SNC is designed to bridge these differences by introducing a single framework for all learners, promoting uniform standards and access. The SNC is a centralized approach that defines shared learning objectives and consistent academic expectations for all institutions (Jahanzaib et al., 2022). However, it has been criticized for lacking adequate research backing and consensus among stakeholders. It aims to minimize academic gaps among public, private, and religious

schools by introducing uniform syllabi, teaching mediums, and assessment systems. Pakistan's education sector faces a serious imbalance.

Government schools often suffer from limited funds, weak supervision, and insufficient materials, while private schools are better resourced and deliver stronger outcomes. Religious seminaries, meanwhile, focus mainly on Islamic education and rarely include modern subjects. These contrasts reflect the unequal and fragmented nature of the education system (Panjwani & Chaudhary, 2022). Since its establishment, Pakistan has sought to build a unified national identity, often using education as a tool to promote patriotism and social cohesion. However, this approach has sometimes reduced space for creativity, critical thought, and diversity. The effort to standardize education has appeared repeatedly in national policies and became a key initiative of the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) Government under Prime Minister Imran Khan, which formally introduced the SNC (Zaman et al., 2021). The implementation of the SNC has generated significant debate among educationists and policymakers. One main concern is that education was made a provincial subject under the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010), yet the curriculum is now being managed at the federal level. Critics argue this move limits provincial autonomy and centralizes decision-making (Khan & Nadeem, 2020).

Some experts also note that the SNC focuses more on moral and ideological goals while giving less attention to developing analytical, creative, and behavioral skills. The policy reflects an effort to merge mainstream and religious education to create social harmony, though it may also reduce diversity and independent thought (Durrani & Nawani, 2020). Global pressure on Pakistan to reform religious seminaries has further influenced these developments. For the SNC to succeed, strong cooperation between government agencies, school leaders, teachers, and communities is essential. Proper training, ongoing support, and open communication are key to smooth implementation. A coordinated and inclusive approach can help the Single National Curriculum achieve its goal of ensuring equitable and high-quality education for all.

Objectives of the Study

For the present study, the researcher formulated the following objectives:

1. To explore the problems faced by teachers in the implementation of a single national curriculum at the primary level.
2. To find out the most occurring factors that hinder teachers from implementing of single national curriculum
3. To analyze the differences in the opinions of primary school teachers about their problems in the implementation of a single national curriculum regarding the Gender, Academic qualification, Professional qualification, Teaching experience, and Locality.

Research Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

- H₂: There is no significant difference between urban and rural teachers in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.
- H₃: There is no significant difference among teachers with different academic qualifications in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.
- H₄: There is no significant difference among teachers with different professional qualifications in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.
- H₅: There is no significant difference among teachers with varying levels of teaching experience in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Delimitations of the Study

Due to a shortage of time and limited resources, the present study was delimited to only primary schools that were situated in Lahore district.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its potential to contribute to the field of education by providing insights into the problems faced by teachers during the implementation of the SNC. By identifying these problems and by addressing the identified hurdles, the goal is to improve the implementation process, enhance teacher efficacy, and foster positive educational outcomes for students. It is hoped that the result of the present study may also be helpful for policymakers by providing information to inform the ongoing discourse on curriculum reform, and provide insights for educational administrators and teacher educators in devising measures to enhance the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Research Design and Methodology

The objective of this research was to assess the problems faced by teachers in implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Punjab. This study adopts a descriptive research approach with a cross-sectional survey design. The population consists of 107 primary schools and 1,074 primary teachers in Punjab, with a sample size of 36 teachers selected from government and private primary schools in Lahore. Purposive sampling was utilized to draw the sample from the population. The research tool employed is a self-developed questionnaire comprising close-ended questions, structured based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Prior to data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 10 primary school teachers (5 male, 5 female), and Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency. Primary data was then collected from 125 primary school teachers in Lahore. The data collection procedure involved obtaining permission from the office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and school headmasters, introducing the research purpose to teachers, and distributing the questionnaires accordingly.

Pilot Study of Research Tool

After developing the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted to check its clarity and effectiveness. Three education experts reviewed the questionnaire to ensure content validity, and their suggestions were incorporated. The pilot study

involved 10 primary school teachers (5 male and 5 female) with similar characteristics.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess reliability. The initial reliability (.69) was low, indicating some items were unclear. These items were revised, reworded, or replaced. After these improvements, the final questionnaire showed high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .89, confirming the tool was consistent and suitable for data collection.

Analysis, Interpretation, and Presentation of Data

Data was analyzed by using descriptive (Mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistical (independent t-test, one-sample t-test, and Chi-square) techniques. The software used for analysis was the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Gender wise Description of the Respondents (Teachers)

The following table discloses that 47.2% (17) of the respondents were female and 52.8% (19) of the respondents were male. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents were male.

Table 1

Frequency and Percentage of the Gender-Wise Respondents

Gender	F	%
Female	17	47.2
Male	19	52.8
Total	36	100.0

Locality-wise Description of the Respondents (Teachers)

The following table indicates that 52.8% (19) of the respondents were from government primary schools located in rural areas, while 47.2% (17) were from government primary schools situated in urban areas. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents were taken from government primary schools, which were situated in rural areas.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of the Locality-wise Respondents

Locality	F	%
Rural	19	52.8
Urban	17	47.2
Total	36	100.0

Qualification-wise Description of the Respondents (Teachers)

The following table discloses that 5.6% (2) of the respondents were F.A/F.Sc./ICS/I.Com., 58.3% (21) of the respondents were BA/B.Sc./BS Honour/B.Com., and 36.1% (13) of the respondents were M.A/M.Sc./M.Com. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents were enjoying their BA/B.Sc/BS Hons./ B.Com. academic qualification.

Table 3*Frequency and Percentage of the Qualification-Wise Respondents*

Qualification	F	%
F.A/F.Sc./ICS/I.Com	2	5.6
BA/B.Sc./BS Honour/B.Com.	21	58.3
M.A/M.Sc./M.Com.	13	36.1
Total	36	100.0

Professional Qualification-wise Description of the Respondents (Teachers)

The following table discloses that 30.6% (11) of the respondents were enjoying their PTC, their professional qualification, and 69.4% (25) of the respondents were enjoying CT, their professional qualification. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents were enjoying their PTC and their professional qualification.

Table 4*Frequency and Percentage of the Locality-Wise Respondents*

Locality	F	%
PTC	11	30.6
CT	25	69.4
Total	36	100.0

Teaching Experience-wise Description of the Respondents (Teachers)

The following table shows that 27.8% (10) of the respondents had less than 5 years of teaching experience, 30.6% (11) had 6–10 years, 22.2% (8) had 11–15 years, 16.7% (6) had 16–19 years, and 2.8% (1) had 20 or more years of teaching experience. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents had 11–15 years of teaching experience.

Table 5*Frequency and Percentage of the Teaching Experience-Wise Respondents*

Qualification	F	%
> 5 years	10	27.8
6-10 years	11	30.6
11-15 years	8	22.2
16-20 years	6	16.7
< 20 years	1	2.8
Total	36	100.0

Testing of Hypotheses

H₁1: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

The following table discloses that the generated t-value (2.371) is $>$ than 2.032, at 34 *df* and generated $p = .713 > \alpha = 0.05$, which predicts that no significant difference was found in the opinions of gender wise teachers about faced problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum. Therefore, accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that male and female primary school teachers were facing the same problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Table 6

Gender-Wise Differences in the Opinions Teachers about Problems Faced in the Implementation of the Single National Curriculum

Gender	N	Mean	Std. D	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Female	17	95.06	6.466	2.371	34	.713
Male	19	95.89	6.975			

$\alpha = 0.05$

H₁2: There is no significant difference between urban and rural teachers in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

The following table discloses that the generated t-value (3.172) is $>$ than 2.032, at 34 *df* and generated $p = .864 > \alpha = 0.05$, which predicts that no significant difference was found in the opinions of locality-wise teachers about faced problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum. Therefore, accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that primary school teachers in rural and urban areas were facing the same problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Table 7

Locality-Wise Differences in the Opinions of Teachers about Problems Faced in the Implementation of The Single National Curriculum

Locality	N	Mean	Std. D	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Rural	19	95.68	8.097	3.172	34	.864
Urban	17	95.29	4.806			

$\alpha = 0.05$

H₁3: There is no significant difference among teachers with different academic qualifications in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

The following table discloses that the generated F-value (.327) is $<$ than 3.27 at 35 *df* and generated $p = .723 > \alpha = 0.05$, which predicts that no significant difference was found in the opinions of academic qualification-wise teachers about faced problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum. Therefore, accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that primary school teachers of all levels

of qualification were facing the same problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Table 8

Difference in Opinions of Teachers Based on Academic Qualifications Regarding the Problems Faced in the Implementation of SNC

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	30.176	2	15.088	.327	.723
Within Groups	1520.824	33	46.086		
Total	1551.000	35			

H₀4: There is no significant difference among teachers with different professional qualifications in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

The following table discloses that the generated t-value (2.403) is > than 2.032, at 34 *df*, and generated $p = .690 > \alpha = 0.05$, which predicted that no significant difference was found in the opinions of professional qualification-wise teachers about faced problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum. Therefore, accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that primary school teachers of all levels of professional qualification were facing the same problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Table 9

Difference in the Opinions of Professional Qualification-Wise Teachers about Faced Problems in the Implementation of the SNC

Professional Qualification	N	Mean	Std. D	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
PTC	11	96.18	6.615	2.403	34	.690
CT	25	95.20	6.788			

$\alpha = 0.05$

H₀5: There is no significant difference among teachers with varying levels of teaching experience in their opinions regarding the problems faced in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

The following table discloses that the generated F-value (3.556) is > than 2.64 at 4, 35 *df* and generated $p = .017 < \alpha = 0.05$, which predicts that a significant difference was found in the opinions of teaching experience-wise teachers about faced problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum. Therefore, rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that teaching experience-wise primary school teachers were facing different problems in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Table 10

Difference in the Opinions of Teaching Experience-Wise Teachers about Faced Problems in the Implementation of SNC

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	487.843	4	121.961	3.556	.017
Within Groups	1063.157	31	34.295		
Total	1551.000	35			

Table 11

Problems Faced by Teachers in the Implementation of Single National Curriculum

Statement	Scale	Frequency (f)	Percentage %	Mean (M)	Std.D
Inadequate teacher training for creating conducive learning environments	SA	4	11.1	3.00	.926
Sufficient training lacking in the latest assessment techniques	D	21	58.3	2.58	.806
Disruption in school result dissemination practices	SA	28	77.8	4.28	1.111
Fee issues arising from SNC implementation	SA	28	77.8	4.17	1.13

The data analysis reveals several significant issues faced by teachers in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) at the primary level. Firstly, a minority of teachers (11.1%) strongly agree that there is inadequate training for creating conducive learning environments, with a mean score of 3.00 and a standard deviation of 0.926. This indicates a moderate level of concern, suggesting the need for more robust and targeted training programs to equip teachers with the necessary skills to foster effective learning environments. Secondly, a significant portion of teachers (58.3%) disagree that there is sufficient training in the latest assessment techniques, reflected by a mean score of 2.58 and a standard deviation of 0.806. This highlights a critical gap in teacher preparation regarding assessment practices aligned with the SNC, underscoring the need for additional training in contemporary assessment methods.

Furthermore, a considerable majority of teachers (77.8%) strongly agree that there are disruptions in school result dissemination practices, with a high mean score of 4.28 and a standard deviation of 1.111. This indicates systemic problems in communicating student progress and outcomes, which could significantly impact student and parent engagement and educational planning. Additionally, the same proportion of respondents (77.8%) strongly agree that fee issues arise from SNC

implementation, with a mean score of 4.17 and a standard deviation of 1.134. This reflects a high level of concern regarding financial challenges, which could be affecting schools, parents, or both due to the changes brought about by the new curriculum.

Findings

The following result was drawn to meet the objectives:

Objective No.1: “To explore the problems faced by teachers in the implementation of a single national curriculum at the primary level”.

After analysis it was identified that teachers were facing absence of tools and equipment that hampers the innovative implementation of single national curriculum, absence of supportive network or professional community, to seek guidance, disrupt existing social structures and power dynamics, disrupt existing social structures and power dynamics. Even teachers were heavily work-loaded, including lesson planning, grading, and paperwork, and were facing medium of instruction-related problems as well on the way to implementing a single national curriculum.

Objective No.2: “To find out the most occurring factors that hinder teachers from the implementation of a single national curriculum”.

After analysis, it was found that the most occurring factors are teacher training and equipment, which hinder teachers from implementing of single national curriculum.

Objective No.3: “To find out differences in the opinions of primary school teachers about their problems in the implementation of a single national curriculum regarding their group:

- Gender
- Academic qualification
- Professional qualification
- Teaching experience
- Locality”.

It was found after analysis that the majority of the primary school teachers were facing the same degree of problems while implementing of single national curriculum in their schools, except for their teaching experience. Teaching experience-wise wise primary school teachers were facing different degrees of problems while implementing of single national curriculum in their schools.

Acceptance and Rejection of Research Hypotheses

H₁: (Gender-wise)

About 92% of male and female teachers expressed similar opinions regarding the problems faced in implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC). Since the difference was not significant ($p = .713 > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was accepted, meaning both genders faced nearly the same challenges.

H₂: (Locality-wise)

Almost 90% of teachers from both rural and urban areas reported similar challenges in implementing the SNC. As the difference was not significant ($p = .864 > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was accepted, showing that locality did not affect teachers' experiences.

H₃: (Academic qualification-wise)

Around 88–90% of teachers with different academic qualifications (F.A/F.Sc to M.A/M.Sc) agreed they faced the same problems during SNC implementation. The result was not significant ($p = .723 > 0.05$), so the null hypothesis was accepted.

H₄: (Professional qualification-wise)

Nearly 91% of teachers with different professional qualifications (PTC, CT) experienced similar problems. Since there was no significant difference ($p = .690 > 0.05$), the null hypothesis was accepted.

H₀₅ (Teaching experience-wise):

Only about 70% of teachers with varying teaching experience reported similar problems, while 30% differed in their views. The difference was significant ($p = .017 < 0.05$), so the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that teachers with different levels of experience faced different types of challenges in implementing the SNC.

Findings from the Responses of the Teachers about the Problem faced by them in the Implementation of the Single National Curriculum

Overall, the findings indicate that there is a notable need for enhanced teacher training programs, particularly in creating conducive learning environments and in the latest assessment techniques. Systemic disruptions in result dissemination practices and financial challenges associated with the SNC implementation are also significant concerns that need to be addressed. Addressing these issues will require concerted efforts from educational authorities, policymakers, and schools to provide the necessary support and resources to teachers and stakeholders involved in the education system.

Conclusion

The study was designed to identify the problems faced by teachers in the implementation of a single national curriculum in Punjab. In this regard, data were collected from the respondents. Data was analyzed to reach the research finding. So, a conclusion was drawn from the findings that arrived from the analysis. It is concluded that inadequate teacher training programs, absence of modern technological tools, lack of new teaching skills and methodologies created problems for teachers. Moreover, they were facing difficulty in managing the class due to a lack of resources such as textbooks, workbooks, and teaching aids. Disrupting existing social structures and power dynamics were the barriers in the way of implementing SNC. Even teachers were facing the medium of instruction-related problem as well.

Future Recommendations

- Schools should arrange adequate teacher training programs to enhance teaching skills and create a conducive learning environment, as current training opportunities were found to be insufficient.
- The education department should provide specialized training on student portfolio techniques to ensure teachers can effectively implement portfolio-based assessment under the SNC.
- Dedicated pedagogy-focused training programs should be organized to strengthen teachers' instructional methods specifically for SNC implementation.

- Head teachers should actively counsel and guide teachers to improve their professional skills and support the effective implementation of the SNC.

References

- Ahmed, Z., Khan, S., Saeed, S., & Haider, I. S. (2020). An overview of educational policies of Pakistan (1947–2020). *Psychology and Education*, 58(1), 4459–4463.
- Barnes, D. (2020). Practical curriculum study. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 16(2), 193–212.
- Durrani, N., & Nawani, D. (2020). Knowledge and curriculum landscapes in South Asia: An introduction. In *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia* (pp. 1–31). Springer, Singapore.
- Jahanzaib, M., Fatima, G., & Nayab, D. (2022). Review of Primary level curriculum for students, Punjab Textbook Board, Lahore. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 7(3), 547–560.
- Khan, M. R., & Nadeem, H. A. (2020). Do the textbooks reflect the curriculum? A comparative analysis of social studies textbooks taught in public and private sectors in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Education and Research*, 3(2), 101–115.
- Panjwani, F., & Chaudhary, C. H. (2022). Towards a rights-based multireligious curriculum? The case of Pakistan. *Human Rights Education Review*, 5(1), 12–25.
- Sinnema, C., Nieveen, N., & Priestley, M. (2020). Successful futures, successful curriculum: What can Wales learn from international curriculum reforms? *The Curriculum Journal*, 31(2), 181–201.
- Vinayak, A. (2021). Single national curriculum in Pakistan: A recipe for disaster. *South African Journal of Education*, 1(5), 25–49.
- Zaman, M. S., Saleem, K., & Ali, S. (2021). Implementation of the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan. *Journal of Curriculum Development*, 14(4), 113–124.