

Assessing the Structural Alignment of the Single National Curriculum 2020

Misbah Malik^{*1}, Iram Naz², Muhammad Irfan³

^{1*}Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

²M Phil Scholar, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

³Deputy Director (ORIC), University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Corresponding author: misbah.ier@pu.edu.pk

Keywords: Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020, Curriculum Alignment, Curriculum Continuity, Stakeholder Engagement, Curriculum Governance, International Curriculum Benchmarks, Inclusive Education, Qualitative Research, Thematic Analysis, Elementary School Teachers

DOI No:

<https://doi.org/10.56976/jsom.v2i3.474>

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 was introduced in Pakistan to ensure uniformity of educational standards, equity and to enhance the quality of the education system in all educational institutions. The present study considered the structural alignment of the SNC 2020 from the point of view of elementary school teachers. Specifically, the study focused on vertical and horizontal curriculum continuity, stakeholder engagement, the clarity of the vision and learning goals of the curriculum, social acceptance, consistency of the curriculum standards, consistency of learning outcomes and instructional practices, international curriculum benchmarking and inclusive education. A qualitative research design phenomenological in nature, was used in the constructivist paradigm. The sample of the study consisted of 15 elementary school teachers who had experienced the implementation of SNC 2020 that was obtained by homogeneous purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure of thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The results bring about three key themes: Curriculum Coherence and Alignment, Curriculum Governance and Stakeholder Engagement, and International Benchmarks and Inclusive Education. The participants generally felt that the SNC is a well-structured curriculum, which supports the curriculum continuity, competence-based learning, common learning standards and equitable learning opportunities. They also highlighted issues with curriculum implementation, involvement of stakeholders, teacher professional development, teaching materials, alignment of assessment, and support for inclusive education. On the basis of the result of the study it is concluded that the SNC 2020 is a good framework for improving the quality of education and narrowing educational gaps between the various educational sectors, but this requires regular review of the curricula, collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders, training teachers, enhancing teaching materials, and strengthening the links between curriculum, teaching and assessment. The findings have implications for policymakers, curriculum developers and educational practitioners to improve curriculum implementation and improve the quality of education in Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Education is recognized as being one of the key pillars of sustainable development, economic growth and social change. It provides people with knowledge, skills, values and competencies to participate effectively in society and plays a key role in national prosperity by developing human capital (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2019). The curriculum is the central element of any educational system that encompasses all educational goals, experiences, teaching methods and testing. A curriculum does not just present content to be taught but rather guides content, direction, and the direction of the content in life through meaningful classroom experiences (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). As a result, curriculum reform has become a strategic focus of the governments concerned in their efforts to enhance the quality of education, adapt it to the changes in society and train students for the needs of the twenty first century.

Education has undergone a global transformation over the past few decades from content-oriented to competency-based curricula with focus on critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy and problem solving (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). This change comes as a result of the perception that education needs to train students less for academic success and more for lifelong learning and for active involvement in the rapidly changing social and economic environment. Hence, curriculum changes increasingly aim at coherence between the standards of learning, teaching methods, assessment systems and target learning, with the aim to ensure that curriculum goals are achieved in the classroom (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Although there is a lot of focus on curriculum reform, evidence indicates that many curriculum reforms do not achieve the desired outcomes because there are disconnects between curriculum goals, instructional content, classroom practices, teachers' preparation, and the assessment of learning (Fullan, 2016). Such incongruencies frequently leave a space between curriculum policy and its implementation, with learning experiences often being disjointed, and quality of education not being consistent. In recent years, curriculum researchers have come to pay greater attention to the importance of structural alignment, defined as the level of consistency between curriculum standards, learning outcomes, teaching methods, assessment methods, and instructional implementation. A structurally aligned curriculum allows all elements of the education system to work together in a way that meets shared education goals (Biggs, 1996; Porter, 2002).

Since the inception of Pakistan, the education system has undergone several changes in curriculum but the gap in standards of curriculum, quality of teaching and learning opportunities between public schools, private schools and Deeni Madaris has remained a problem. In many instances, these parallel systems have generated sub-textual experiences and outcomes for students and students which have resulted in disparities in educational outcomes and educational unity. In many cases, these parallel systems have created unequal educational experiences and outcomes for students and students, and thus concerns have been expressed about educational equity and national cohesion. Thus, it became clear to the policymakers that a single curriculum was needed to set the standards for learning for all students regardless of their school of origin. This need

eventually resulted into the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020, which is one of the most comprehensive curriculum reforms in Pakistan education sector.

To ensure equal education opportunities, the Single National Curriculum was introduced under the thrust of "One Nation One Curriculum", which mandates common minimum standards for all the streams of school education. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), competency-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, critical and creative thinking, values education and the development of twenty-first century skills are all emphasized in the curriculum. Additionally, the SNC was developed with input from consultants from the provincial governments, curriculum specialists, teachers, post-secondary institutions, and religious school representatives. Comparative study of curricula of Singapore, UK, and Malaysia were also conducted during the development process to ensure that the curriculum reflected the international best practices and would be sensitive towards the national priorities and values of Pakistan.

Implementation of the SNC has been in stages—from Early Childhood Education to Grades I-V, Grades VI-VIII and then Grades IX-XII. The reform involved curriculum development and the creation of model textbooks, teacher training materials, assessment materials, and implementation guidance, to assist in the uniform delivery of the curriculum throughout the country. The curriculum also includes key concepts of inclusive education, life skills, environmental protection and green living, global citizenship and activity based learning in alignment with national priorities and international commitments under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

While the introduction of the SNC is a major achievement in the educational reform agenda of Pakistan, the success of any curriculum is highly dependent on how the components of the curriculum work together. A curriculum can have clear Learning Outcomes and detailed content standards, but if there is a lack of continuity in learning across grades, poor alignment between the curriculum and resources, lack of stakeholder involvement, or a disconnect between the curriculum and the assessment practices, it may not meet the desired learning outcomes. Thus, it is important to assess the structural congruity of the curriculum design to ensure that the design is implementable and that the students can learn meaningfully from the curriculum (Tyler, 1949; Biggs, 1996).

Most of the scholarship on the Single National Curriculum has been directed toward the content of the curriculum, analysis of the textbooks, the implementation of the curriculum at the subject level, and policy implications. In comparison, comparatively little has been paid attention to determining whether these studies show that the curriculum is coherent in its structure and major components such as curriculum continuity, participation of stakeholders, alignment of curriculum, benchmarking with international curriculum, and inclusive educational provision.

In this context, this study evaluates the structural congruence of the Single National Curriculum 2020 in Pakistan. It analyses how well the curriculum is coherent across grades, consistent within grades, involves stakeholders, publically accepted, has an educational vision and outcomes, is consistent across curriculum standards and instructional practices, corresponds to international

benchmarks and makes provision for inclusive education. The study seeks to reflect the evidence by evaluating these dimensions which can be used in future curriculum review, consolidate the curriculum implementation strategies and improve the school education quality and effectiveness in Pakistan.

The fundamental role of structural alignment in curriculum evaluation is its ability to measure how well the curriculum standards, learning outcomes, instruction, assessment practices and implementation mechanisms function as a unified system. Theoretical models of curriculum development place a focus on the need for the various parts of the curriculum to be integrated, and not stand alone. Tyler's objective model proposed that curriculum objectives, learning experiences, the organization of learning and assessment should be logically ordered, and Biggs' theory of constructive alignment further suggested that intended learning outcomes, learning experiences, and assessment should be aligned, providing for meaningful learning (Tyler, 1949; Biggs, 1996). Theoretical developments continue to form the conceptual framework for the assessment of the quality of the curriculum in the present educational context.

Inspired by these theory bases, the latest curriculum research also started from examining the relation between the content of curriculum to the relation between the structure of curriculum, that is, the relations between the components of a curriculum. Structural alignment is now seen as an indicator of the quality of the curriculum as it provides continuity of learning across grade levels, consistency of learning experiences within a grade, coherence between standards and classroom practice, and compatibility between curriculum expectations and assessment practice. Research has shown that curricula that are aligned are more effective, less redundant, better for fostering progress, and better for supporting students' learning success because they offer teachers clear direction about the learning that is expected and how it will be emphasized.

Structural alignment has also been reinforced by the adoption of curriculum standards. In the modern trends in curriculum, the common learning goals are intended and the curriculum standards are also to be incorporated into the textbooks, teaching methods and evaluation systems. But alignment among these parts is often lacking in curriculum reforms, which leads to implementation problems. Even with well-developed curriculum documents, there can be inconsistencies between the intention and the implementation, due to misalignment. However, even when the curriculum documents are well-developed, there is a risk of inconsistencies between intention and implementation due to misalignment of the curriculum. Recent research in Pakistan also indicates that coherence of the curriculum is not only a matter of curriculum design, but also of the consistency of its implementation in educational institutions and administration.

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 is a novel initiative in Pakistan to ensure educating the students in a common standard irrespective of the school sector. The curriculum has been designed to minimize disparities between public schools, private schools and Deeni Madaris through the uniformization of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), competency-based standards and pedagogical approaches. The reform also aimed to reduce curriculum development issues to SDG 4 which is about "Equitable and quality education" with also "Strengthening of national

cohesion and common educational standards”. Recent analyses show that the SNC offers a coherent framework for curriculum, which can help to narrow educational gaps, but this curriculum must be coherent and implemented in a coherent manner.

Empirical studies of the SNC have focused mainly on the content of curricula, analysis of textbooks and curriculum alignment with assessment. For instance, one study on matching of the SNC standards with the assessment by PEC revealed low to moderate agreement at the domain level. Some of the standards showed satisfactory alignment with assessment practices, but others were found lacking in terms of how knowledge was represented, depth of understanding required and balanced assessment of SLOs. The results revealed that the quality of a curriculum should not just be judged based on curriculum documents but also by systematically examining the way the curriculum standards are implemented in instructional practices and assessment.

Likewise, research in individual content areas has found inconsistencies between SLOs and the activities in the textbooks. The English language and science curricula were analyzed and it was found that, while competency-based learning is central to the SNC, some learning activities and assessment tasks are not always tied to the curriculum's learning competencies and/or higher-order cognitive skills. Based on the above, it is suggested that the implementation of the curriculum should be strengthened to realize the purpose of competency education by improving curriculum standards – books – teaching – examination consistency.

Teacher perspectives also have contributed to the evidence on curriculum implementation. Research shows that the general consensus of teachers is that the goal of common education expectations is generally well received; however, issues regarding implementation, instructional support, assessment practices, and professional development are arising. Teachers also stress that the effectiveness of the curriculum is closely related to the provision of teaching support, well-designed textbooks, and the continual review of the curriculum to solve the problems arising in the implementation process. The results confirm that curriculum success can be determined by curriculum design and by stakeholder involvement and capacity to implement the curriculum.

Although many publications have appeared on the subject of the Single National Curriculum, they are still rather disjointed in nature. Most research focuses on specific parts of the curriculum such as textbook content, subject-specific implementation, teacher perceptions, or the relation of the standards and assessments. In comparison, there has been very little work conducted on the evaluation of the curriculum as a cohesive whole, which includes continuity across grade levels, consistency within grade levels, stakeholder involvement, clarity of educational vision, public acceptance, coherence between curriculum standards and instruction, international benchmarking, and inclusive education.

Thus, the more general structure of the SNC has not been sufficiently researched empirically. The present study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the structural congruence between the SNC 2020 with a complete package of structural indicators. The study does not just look at the content of the curriculum but also the coherence between the different aspects of the curriculum's

structure and the coherence between the structure and the overall educational outcomes. The results will be incorporated into the literature on curriculum evaluation and used as evidence to help inform decisions by policy makers, curriculum developers, and practitioners on how to enhance the implementation and ongoing development of the Single National Curriculum.

1.1 General Objective

To examine the structural alignment of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 in Pakistan with the critical elements of curriculum continuity, curriculum governance, curriculum standards, curriculum benchmarking and curriculum inclusion.

1.2 Specific Objectives

Following were the specific objectives of the study:

1. To explore the vertical curriculum continuity in the Single National Curriculum 2020.
2. To find out the horizontal continuity of the curriculum in the Single National Curriculum 2020.
3. To explore the role of the stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of the Single National Curriculum 2020.
4. To gain insight into the clarity of vision, mission and desired learning outcomes contained in the Single National Curriculum 2020.
5. To examine the level of social acceptance of SNC 2020 from within and beyond.
6. To read and analyze the coherence of curriculum standards, learning outcomes and instructional practices regarding Single National Curriculum 2020.
7. To explore the alignment of the Single National Curriculum 2020 with the internationally accepted curriculum indicators.
8. To discuss about inclusive education in the context of Single National Curriculum 2020.

1.3 Research Questions

Answers of the following research questions were sought through this study:

1. How does the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 ensure vertical curriculum continuity across different grade levels?
2. How does the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 ensure horizontal curriculum continuity across subjects and learning areas at the same grade level?
3. What role do stakeholders play in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020?
4. To what extent are the vision, mission, and desired learning outcomes of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 clearly articulated and understood?

5. What is the level of social acceptance of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 among stakeholders within and beyond the education system?
6. To what extent are the curriculum standards, learning outcomes, and instructional practices coherent and aligned within the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020?
7. To what extent is the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 aligned with internationally accepted curriculum standards and indicators?
8. To what extent does the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 reflect the principles and practices of inclusive education??

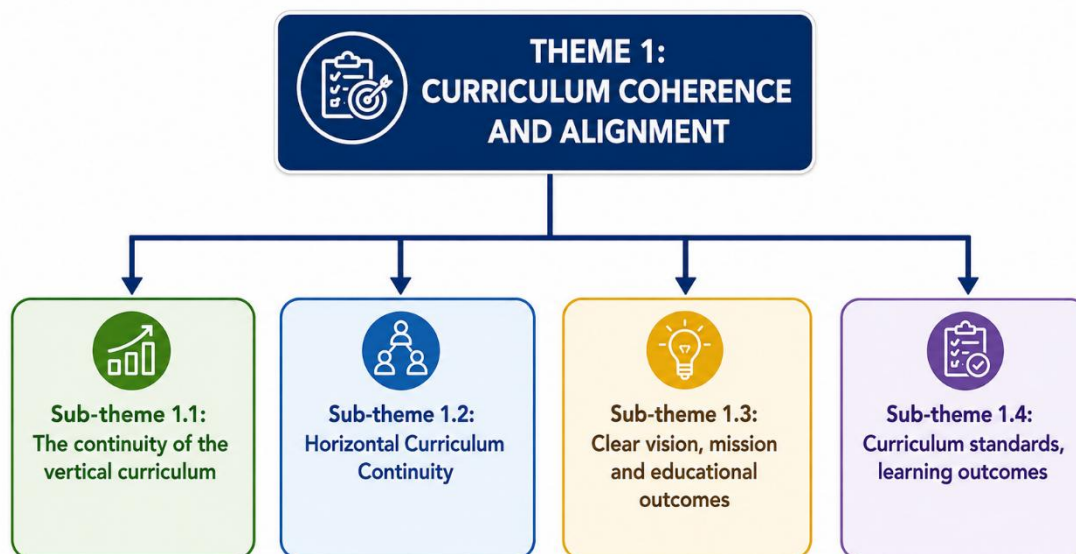
2. Methodology

The design of this study was qualitative, in the form of a phenomenological research, in order to find the structural alignment of SNC 2020 from the elementary school teachers' point of view. Using a phenomenological approach was deemed suitable as it aims at understanding and interpreting the participants' lived experiences and perceptions of a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was based on the constructivist paradigm that posits that knowledge is socially constructed as a result of the experiences of individuals in their environment. This paradigm assumes that there are multiple realities and context dependent; thus, the researcher develops an understanding of how the participants construct meanings concerning the structural alignment of the SNC 2020 (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants were 15 teachers of elementary schools who have experienced implementing Single National Curriculum 2020 in their schools. Homogeneous purposive sampling was used for selecting participants because they shared common professional traits and had the ability to provide in-depth and meaningful information regarding the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2015). With such a sampling method, in-depth insights were gained from participants who had first-hand experience of curriculum implementation. The data gathering method was semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants that they can share their experiences and perceptions in an open way with a proper focus on the study objectives. The interview protocol was designed to address the structural alignment indicators: vertical curriculum continuity, horizontal curriculum continuity, stakeholder involvement, theory-into-practice approach, social acceptance, curriculum standards, curriculum benchmarks, inclusion.

3. Analysis

The interview data was analyzed using the thematic analysis procedure suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) which entailed familiarization of data, initial coding, identification of themes, review of themes, defining and naming themes and reporting findings. In order to improve the credibility of the study, member checking was used, while dependability and confirmability was achieved by recording the process of the study, thus the audit trails. Ethical issues were also adhered to by all participants' informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

Theme 1: Curriculum Coherence and Alignment



This theme focuses on the perception of elementary school teachers on the coherence and alignment of the SNC 2020. It is about the teachers' perspective on the degree to which the curriculum is continuous across grade levels, consistent within each grade level, and aligned with the overall vision of the curriculum, learning outcomes and pedagogical strategies. The results show that the participants generally indicated that the SNC was a well-structured curriculum that offers continuity in learning and SLOs are well defined. Some participants noted however, that curriculum expectations, the textbook, instruction, and assessment must be better aligned. The theme consists of the following four sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1.1: The continuity of the vertical curriculum

This sub-theme focuses on teacher perceptions of the process of learning across the grades. The majority felt that the SNC shows logical progression gradually increasing in complexity of concepts and building on students' prior knowledge. But a few teachers reported some concepts are repeated unnecessarily or some concepts are introduced without the adequate prerequisite knowledge.

Teacher (T1) explained: The curriculum is organized by level and pupils build on simple ideas to the next level.

Teacher (T4) stated: In most subjects, there is a good continuity, but there is some repetition across the grades for a few topics.

Teacher (T9) commented: "Some ideas need to be better connected to the prior grades' work to better develop student understanding.

The overall opinion of the participants was that the SNC generally demonstrates vertical curriculum continuity, but there is need for improvement in its promotion in order to reinforce the progression between the levels of the school.

Sub-theme 1.2: Horizontal Curriculum Continuity

This sub-theme is exploring the uniformity of curriculum content, learning outcomes and instructional expectations in a grade level. The majority of teachers indicated that there are learning standards common to all subjects and schools that contributes to the consistency of the curriculum across subjects and schools. However, there were some differences noted in the quality of textbooks and classroom use of the textbooks.

Teacher (T2) explained: There is consistency of learning outcomes in all schools.

Teacher (T6) stated: The curriculum is the same, but there are times when textbooks present the content differently.

Teacher (T12) remarked: Implementation is "equal" in terms of standards and varies from school to school.

The results suggest that, overall, teachers viewed the SNC as fostering horizontal continuity in learning through shared learning outcomes but there are gaps regarding the use of teaching resources and implementation.

Sub Theme 1.3: Clear vision, mission and educational outcomes

This sub-theme examines teachers' perspectives on the clarity of the curriculum's vision, mission and learning outcomes. Participants admitted the SNC clearly put into focus competency-based learning, character building, critical thinking and values of the nation. But some educators felt there was a need for further direction on how to put these goals into action.

Teacher (T3) stated: What students are expected to learn at each grade level is clearly explained in the curriculum.

Teacher (T8) explained: The vision is to develop knowledge, skills, and values instead of memorization.

Teacher (T13) commented: While the objectives of education are well defined, teachers would require more training to ensure their effective implementation. In general, participants confirmed that the SNC has an educational vision and learning outcomes that is clearly outlined, but successful implementation requires adequate teacher support and professional development.

Sub-theme 1.4: Curriculum standards, learning outcomes

This sub-theme will explore teachers' understandings about alignment between standards, the SLOs, teaching, and assessment practices. The majority of the participants felt that the curriculum is well defined and has clear standards and learning outcomes that inform teaching.

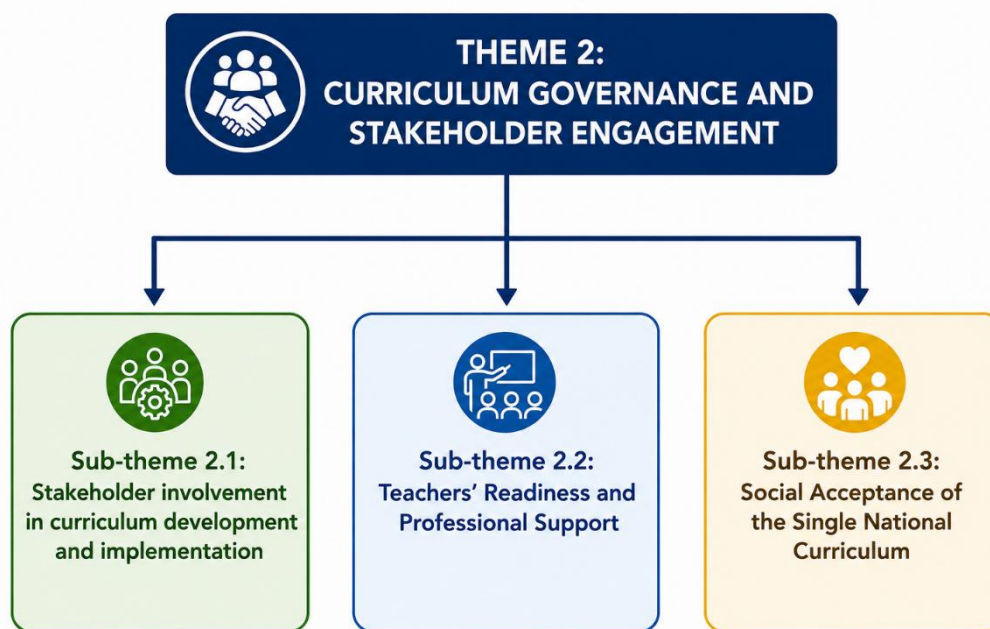
They also noted, however, that assessment practices and instructional resources are not always aligned with the intended curriculum.

Teacher (T5) explained: The learning outcomes give direction for planning classroom activities.

Teacher (T10) stated: “The focus of assessment is sometimes on memorization, rather than the abilities that are outlined in the curriculum.”

Teacher (T15) remarked: “The curriculum standards are suitable but teachers need to have better teaching materials to help them meet the standards effectively.”

The results indicate that overall the teachers had a positive view on the congruence of curriculum standards and learning outcomes. But there is a need for enhancement of instructional resources, instructional procedures, and assessment systems to allow for a complete implementation of the curriculum goals.



Theme 2. Curriculum Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

This theme focuses on teachers' perceptions of stakeholders' involvement and social acceptance of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020. It highlights teacher and stakeholder involvement in curriculum planning, implementation and review and acceptance of the curriculum by educational institutions, parents and the broader community. The results show that participants were satisfied with the purpose of developing a unified curriculum; however, they also expressed the need for a higher level of involvement from stakeholders, ongoing consultation and support from professionals to guarantee the successful implementation of the curriculum. The theme includes the following three sub-themes:

Sub-theme 2.1: Stakeholder involvement in curriculum development and implementation

This sub-theme focuses on teachers' perceptions of the engagement of various stakeholders in the planning, development, implementation and review of the Single National Curriculum. A majority of the respondents felt curriculum experts and education authorities had a significant role to play in the curriculum development. Yet many teachers were convinced that the practical teaching experience of teachers in the classroom should be better involved in curriculum planning and revising in order to better serve the curriculum.

Teacher (T2) explained: The SNC has been written by curriculum experts, however, consultation and discussion should be maintained with teachers as they are aware of classroom realities.

Teacher (T5) stated: Teachers are able to make useful recommendations for enhancing the implementation of the curriculum based on what they see every day.

Teacher (T11) commented: Teachers should provide regular feedback, which should be taken into consideration during curriculum review.

In general, participants felt that, if they could have more involvement in the curriculum, especially from teachers, then it would be more practical and effective.

Sub-theme 2.2: Teachers' Readiness and Professional Support

This sub-theme focuses on teacher attitudes towards the professional support received for implementing the SNC. Many participants identified a requirement for further professional development, teaching materials, and support throughout the implementation process, although the majority stated that they have received orientation/training about the curriculum.

Teacher (T4) explained: We received training sessions to assist us in grasping the curriculum but there is still need for more practical sessions.

Teacher (T8) stated: CCD is necessary because teaching methods are constantly changing.

Teacher (T14) remarked: Need more instructional resources and support for teachers to successfully implement the curriculum.

Results revealed that teachers valued teacher support in the implementation process, but they felt that there should be continuous training to help them reach the goals of the curriculum, and there should be a lot of resources.

Sub-theme 2.3: Social Acceptance of the Single National Curriculum

This sub-theme focuses on the perception of participants on the SNC acceptance in schools, parents and community at large. The majority of teachers had positive attitudes towards the curriculum as it fosters equal educational opportunities and common learning standards among various educational institutions. Some participants thought that increasing awareness and

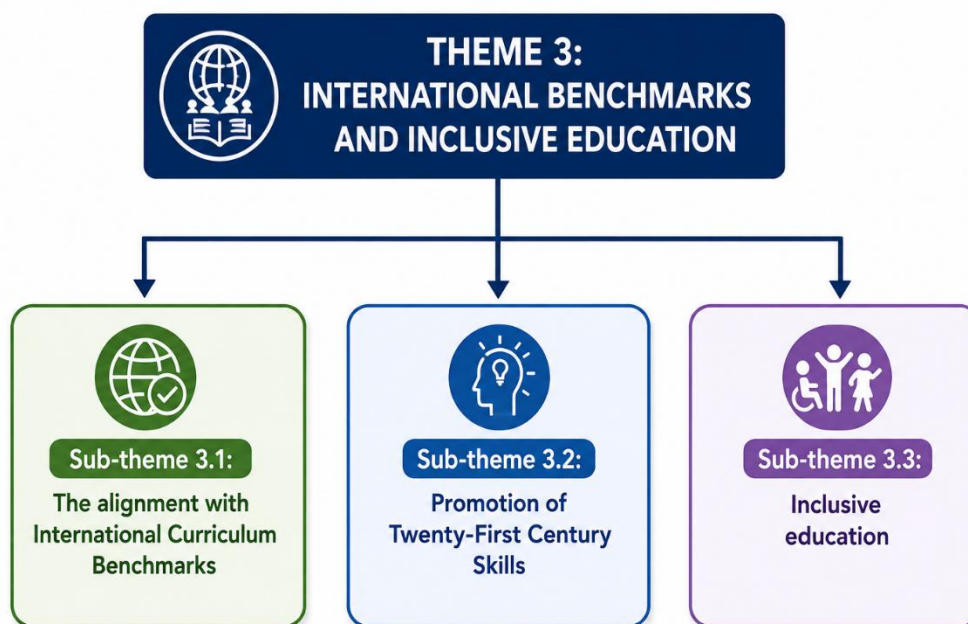
communication with parents and other stakeholders would make the public more confident with the curriculum.

Teacher (T3) stated: The concept of one curriculum for all students is well received and fosters equality.

Teacher (T9) explained: Parents have a positive attitude towards the curriculum overall, but they would like to be informed of what the curriculum is designed to teach.

Teacher (T15) commented: Continued collaboration between schools, parents and policymakers will be needed to boost public acceptance.

In general, the participants presented positive attitudes towards social acceptance of Single National Curriculum. However, they stressed the need for continued communication, collaboration among stakeholders and public awareness for successful implementation and sustainability of the curriculum.



Theme 3: International benchmarks and inclusive education

This theme focuses on how far teachers think that the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 is aligned with internationally recognized curriculum and/or how much it is inclusive, meaning that all learners are included. It is concerned with the curriculum's linkage to world educational programs, the acquisition of twenty-first century abilities, and the delivery of fair learning opportunities for students with diverse backgrounds. The results show that the participants had in general a positive perception of the SNC as being based on a number of international best practices and focusing on inclusive education. They also noted however, the need for better

resources, training of teachers and institutional support to achieve these goals. The theme has three sub-themes:

Sub-theme 3.1: The alignment with International Curriculum Benchmarks

This sub-theme will focus on teachers' thoughts on how much the SNC aligns with internationally accepted curriculum standards. The majority of the participants felt that the programme encourages competency-based learning, critical thinking, problem-solving and uses learner-based teaching, all of which align with the international approaches to education. Some participants, however, pointed to the need for constant review of the curriculum to be able to catch up with the developments that take place in the world.

Teacher (T1) explained: Principles of modern education are taught in the curriculum and are very similar to those taught in other countries of the world.

Teacher (T6) stated: Critical thinking and competency-based learning are emphasized, which is aligned with international standards for curriculum.

Teacher (T12) commented: Training program should be continually updated to stay current with ongoing education trends internationally.

In general, participants felt that the SNC was very congruent with international curriculum benchmarks and appreciated the need for the ongoing development of the SNC to meet the changing educational needs.

Sub-theme 3.2: Promotion of Twenty-First Century Skills covers the promotion of skills for the 21st century.

This sub theme looks at teachers' perceptions of the curriculum focus on the twenty-first century skills. The participants noted that the SNC fosters communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving in the following ways: activity based and learner centered. However, they said that sufficient classroom resources and teachers' readiness are essential for effective implementation.

Teacher (T4) stated: The curriculum prompts students to think critically, not memorize information.

Teacher (T9) explained: Activity-based learning enables the learning of communication and problem-solving skills.

Teacher (T13) remarked: If teachers are suitably trained and equipped with good classroom materials, they will be able to teach students modern skills effectively.

The results show that the SNC was seen as enabling the development of twenty-first century skills, but some constant professional development and educational resources are needed for its successful implementation.

Sub-theme 3.3: Inclusive education

This sub-theme examines teachers' attitudes towards the inclusive education aspects of the curriculum. Most participants felt that the SNC creates equal learning opportunities as it sets common education standards for all students, irrespective of their background. But several teachers reported that there is a need to provide extra support for learners with different educational needs such as special teaching materials, teacher training and suitable classroom facilities to enable the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Teacher (T3) explained: The curriculum's purpose is to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils.

Teacher (T8) stated: To make inclusive education successful, teachers need proper training to cater for various learning needs.

Teacher (T15) commented: Additional resources and facilities are needed for schools to be able to implement inclusive education in full.

Overall, participants saw the SNC as being pro-inclusive education and educational equity. They pointed out, however, that good institutions, teacher training and proper learning resources are necessary to make the curriculum available to all learners equally.

4. Findings of the Study

This study is an exploratory study in order to know the structural alignment of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 of the elementary school teachers. The thematic analysis identified three broad themes: (1) Curriculum Coherence and Alignment, (2) Curriculum Governance and Stakeholder Engagement and (3) International Benchmarks and Inclusive Education. In general, the results showed that teachers' opinion of SNC was that it was a complete curriculum to set uniform education standards to enhance the quality of education in Pakistan. But at the same time, the participants noted a number of implementation problems that need to be consistently followed up with the curriculum review and institutional support.

In terms of curriculum coherence and curriculum alignment, the participants noted the SNC showed satisfactory vertical and horizontal coherence between the grade levels and had explicit Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Teachers valued the competency-based approach and the orientation towards learning. However, they stated that more consistency is needed between curriculum standards, textbooks, teaching methods and assessment systems to support the successful realization of the intended learning outcomes.

The findings also revealed that stakeholder involvement is important in the successful implementation of the SNC. Participants appreciated the curriculum expert and educational authorities work to develop the curriculum but felt that the teachers should be more actively involved in curriculum planning, implementation and review. They also emphasized the need for ongoing professional development, instructional materials, and partnerships between policy-makers, schools, and parents to enhance the implementation of the curriculum and promote greater acceptance of it by the public.

Lastly, the study revealed that teachers felt that the SNC was based on the internationally recognized educational practices as evidenced in the use of competency-based learning, critical thinking, creativity, communication and learner-centered teaching. Participants also considered that the curriculum was promoting inclusive education as giving equal learning opportunities to students with different backgrounds. But they said that it is important to provide more teacher training, special teaching tools and stronger institutional support for the effective implementation of inclusive education.

4.1 Discussion

The results of the present study suggest that teachers generally believed that the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 is a coherent curriculum in structural sense, it encourages continuity of curriculum across grade levels and it provides common standard in education. Participants thought that curriculum was logical in their learning, had clearly defined Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), and was competency based, which allowed for meaningful learning. The results corroborate the theoretical stance of constructive alignment that was proposed by Biggs (1996) which stated that standards, teaching and assessment should be considered as one in the same system in order to produce desired learning outcomes. In a similar manner Tyler (1949) stated that curriculum objectives, learning experiences, the organization of the curriculum, and evaluation should be closely linked together if curriculum is to be effective.

Participants also noted that the curriculum was good, but there was a need for greater congruence between curriculum standards, curriculum materials, classroom teaching, and evaluation. This discovery is consistent with the literature in this study which indicates that the curriculum standards are not aligned with the assessment, this can affect the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum (Naeem et al., 2022). Related literature also revealed inconsistencies among SLOs, the textbook, and assessment, which meant that to improve the quality of the curriculum, it needs to be well aligned with all curriculum components.

A second discovery which is significant is that of the stance of the stakeholders toward the implementation of the curriculum. Teachers found the goal of developing a common curriculum to be positive but felt that classroom teachers should be more involved in the planning, implementation, and review of the curriculum (Thomas et al., 2022). Participants also highlighted the need for ongoing professional learning, quality teaching tools and frequent engagement with teachers. This agrees with the literature reviewed in this study which has shown that while teachers are generally positive about the goals of the SNC, they see problems with implementation, instructional materials, assessment and teacher development.

The results of the previous studies also indicate the importance of the involvement of the stakeholders and the capacity for implementation of the curriculum in determining the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The findings also showed that teachers had positive attitude towards the Single National Curriculum in terms of social acceptance since it promotes equal educational opportunities through

common education standards. Participants, however, indicated that there was a need to improve communication between the curriculum, policymakers, school, parents and community to further build public confidence in the curriculum. The findings reflect the overall goal of the SNC, which was to solve the problems of disparities between public schools, private schools and Deeni Madaris by providing common minimum education standards for students of all schools.

In terms of international curriculum benchmarks, participants thought that the SNC embodies today's trends in education such as competency-based learning, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and learner-centered instruction. These perceptions are in line with the literature as curriculum was designed after analyzing the models used internationally and it was in accordance with the global trends in education and was developed in response to the national priorities as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4).

Finally, the study revealed that teachers viewed the SNC as providing opportunities for inclusive education in the promotion of equal learning opportunities for students from different backgrounds. However, the participants stressed the need for special teaching materials, regular teacher training and strengthening of institutional supports for inclusive education to be implemented successfully. The findings are in line with the literature reviewed in this study which emphasizes the need for coherent implementation mechanisms, instructional support and ongoing curriculum development besides curriculum content for the successful implementation of the curriculum.

In conclusion, the results indicated that the SNG 2020 has solid structural background and has implemented some important principles of curriculum coherence, involvement of various stakeholders, international benchmarking, and inclusive education. Implementing the curriculum's educational outcomes, however, will take on-going curriculum review, effective implementation strategies, ongoing professional development for teachers, better instructional tools, and better alignment of curriculum standards, classroom instruction and practices of assessment.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the structural match of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 as viewed by elementary teachers. The results show that teachers overall saw the curriculum as coherent in terms of its structure and ability to meet common standards in education throughout the various educational institutions. Participants acknowledged the strengths of the curriculum in promoting curriculum continuity, competency-based learning, clear defined SLOs, collaboration with stakeholders, international educational standards and inclusive education.

Nevertheless, teachers reported on various challenges that could be encountered during implementation, such as improving the connection between the curriculum standards, instructional methods, textbooks, and assessment systems. The participants also highlighted the need for ongoing teacher training, enhancing teaching resources, involving more stakeholders in the process, and periodic curriculum review. The overall finding of the study is that despite having a solid framework for enhancing education quality and equity in Pakistan, the SNC 2020 would

require effective implementation, regular monitoring and institutional support to achieve its desired objectives in the long run.

5.1 Recommendations

According to the results of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. To maintain the on-going consistency of curriculum with the development of new educational needs and international standards, curriculum developers should periodically review the Single National Curriculum.
2. Ensure the involvement of elementary school teachers in curriculum planning, implementation and revision processes.
3. Continuous training/education programs must be provided to enhance teacher competence to competency-based instruction, assessment, and learner-centered teaching.
4. The instructional materials and curriculum standards should better match to enhance the implementation of the curriculum.
5. Classrooms should be suitable for effective use of instruction and adequate resources should be available to support the delivery of the curriculum.
6. Policymakers need to further strengthen communication and collaboration between schools, parents, curriculum experts and educational authorities, so as to better promote public awareness and acceptance of curriculum.
7. Specialized teacher training and learning materials and supplies of suitable teaching facilities for various learners should be made available to support inclusive education.
8. Future curriculum assessments should further examine the work of the SNC for any issues and for ongoing improvements to the quality of education.

6. References

- Bhatti, N., & Chaudhary, A. G. (2023). Teachers' perception about alignment of components of National Curriculum of Islamiyat Grade I to VIII in Pakistan. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*.
- Biggs, J. (1996). *Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment*. *Higher Education*, 32(3), 347–364.
- Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (4th ed.). Open University Press.
- Fullan, M. (2016). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Mushtaq, M., & Shah, S. K. (2023). An analytical study of student learning outcomes and their alignment with the activities of writing skill at primary level in Pakistan. *Linguistic Forum – A Journal of Linguistics* 4(2), 125–144.

- Naeem, S., Ali, Z., & Ahmed, N. (2022). Evaluation of the Causes of Interest Decline in the Subject of Chemistry amongst Secondary and Higher Secondary School Students in Karachi Pakistan. *International Journal of Social Science & Entrepreneurship*, 2(2), 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.58661/ijssse.v2i2.48>
- OECD. (2019). *OECD Learning Compass 2030*. OECD Publishing.
- Ornstein, A. C., & Hunkins, F. P. (2018). *Curriculum: Foundations, principles, and issues* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Porter, A. C. (2002). Measuring the content of instruction: Uses in research and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 31(7), 3–14.
- Tareen, P., & Samreen. (2022). Importance of Single National Primary Level Science Curriculum (2021) in the development of students' 21st-century skills by using Bloom's taxonomy: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Humanities Research*.
- Thomas, M., Khan, A. H., & Ahmad, N. (2022). Way forward for post pandemic online teaching: A case of higher education in Pakistan. *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)*, 3(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.jhsms/3.1.1>
- Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. University of Chicago Press.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO.
- Waheed, S. A., Gilani, N., & Rabia. (2022). A content analysis study of Grade Five science curriculum in Single National Curriculum 2020 and National Curriculum 2006. *Academy of Education and Social Sciences Review*, 2(2), 75–85.