



AN ANALYSIS OF SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM OF PAKISTAN IN RELATION TO UN SDGS ON EDUCATION

Arifullah Khan

Ph.D Scholar

NUML

Islamabad – Pakistan

[*arifshangla@gmail.com*](mailto:arifshangla@gmail.com)

Dr. Khushbakht Hina

Head of Education Department

NUML

Islamabad – Pakistan

[*kbhina@numl.edu.pk*](mailto:kbhina@numl.edu.pk)

Nisar Ahmad

Ph.D Scholar

COMSATS

Abbottabad – Pakistan

[*nisarahmadcomsats@gmail.com*](mailto:nisarahmadcomsats@gmail.com)

Abstract

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) of Pakistan, introduced in 2020, represents a transformative initiative aimed at standardizing educational content and reducing disparities across public, private, and religious schools. This study examines the SNC's alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education. While the SNC aspires to provide equitable learning opportunities and foster a cohesive educational framework, its implementation has encountered significant challenges. These include navigating Pakistan's socio-cultural diversity, addressing infrastructure disparities, and equipping educators to deliver competency-based education effectively. Despite its potential to bridge educational inequities and enhance national identity, the SNC's reliance on rote learning and limited contextual adaptability hinders its alignment with global educational priorities such as critical thinking, creativity, and sustainability. This analysis highlights the need for reforms in teacher training, pedagogical practices, and assessment mechanisms to ensure the SNC fulfills its promise of equitable and quality education, contributing meaningfully to Pakistan's progress toward achieving SDG 4.

KEYWORDS: Education, SDGs, UN, Single National Curriculum, Inclusivity, Equity, literacy,



Introduction

Pakistan's Single National Curriculum (SNC), introduced in 2020, aims to standardize education across the country by providing equitable learning opportunities and reducing disparities between public, private, and religious schools (Malik et al., 2012)

Since gaining independence in 1947, Pakistan's education system has undergone multiple reforms and policy changes to define its curriculum. The development of curriculum in Pakistan has been shaped by socio-political, cultural, and economic factors, reflecting the nation's evolving priorities. (Noreen, 2014)

Early Years (1947-1970s) Pakistan inherited its education system from British India, which primarily served the elite class. The curriculum was fragmented, with disparities between public, private, and religious schools (madrasas). Shortly after independence, Pakistan convened its first education conference to lay the groundwork for a national education policy. The focus was on promoting literacy, national identity, and Islamic values. In 1959 Sharif Commission highlighted the need for a unified curriculum to address inequalities and integrate religious and secular education (Qurban, 2024). Afterward, under General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, the curriculum was heavily influenced by Islamization policies. Religious content was increased in textbooks, and Islamic ideology became a central theme across subjects. Madrasas were promoted as alternative education institutions, further widening the divide between mainstream and religious education (Park & Niyozov, 2008). In after Zia's Era focus shifted to modernizing the curriculum to align with global standards. Efforts were made to integrate science, technology, and critical thinking skills into the curriculum. Despite reforms, disparities between urban and rural education systems persisted, along with a lack of uniformity among public, private, and madrasa education streams (Qasim Zaman, 1999). The 21st Century Developments policies emphasized education for all, gender equality, and the inclusion of modern subjects (Benería et al., 2015). However, implementation challenges continued. Later on, after the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, provinces gained control over curriculum design, leading to regional variations in content and quality. Feelings the intensity of promotion of diverse culture and history by provincial governments, the then national government developed a curriculum through an all inclusive body called the National Curriculum Council. This curriculum was named Single National Curriculum (SNC). The SNC was introduced to create a unified curriculum across all schooling systems in Pakistan. It aims to standardize education, promote equity, and reduce disparities while integrating religious, moral, and modern subjects (Zaman 1 et al., 2021). Historically, the curriculum reforms are marred by the challenges of inequality (multiple tiers of education systems), the gaps in curriculum implementation (poor infrastructure, untrained teachers, lack of resources and under budgeting) and the cultural diversity in Pakistan (Butt et al., 2024).

Single National Curriculum of Pakistan

Both local and national curricula have their issues, challenges, and benefits in a given environment and context. We cannot generalize these issues and benefits to every country or society like other social issues. Copy-paste solutions cannot be implemented in a setting where



human beings are involved. However, with the rapid development of technology, globalization, climate change, global trade, trained workforce, feminism, human rights, and interdependence on each other, the comity of nations is trending towards the concept of 21st-century skills and international curriculum which in turn prompt them towards national curriculum in the first place. Most of the European countries follow a centralized curriculum model (Couby, 2000). Pakistan is also on the way to embracing these trends along with ensuring national integration through the adoption of a national curriculum. The history of the national curriculum in Pakistan has not been fruitful in the past while the history of the local curriculum remained very short i.e., from 2010 to 2021. The return to the nationally standardized curriculum in the form of SNC is expected to be different from the past. The SNC a competency-based curriculum framework is a departure from the traditionally followed models of the curriculum in Pakistan and has incorporated international standards, goals, and best practices (Razzaq, 2012). But still, many questions need to be answered. Like, how a centrally controlled curriculum could be different from the experience of the past. How does this curriculum ensure equity along with equality if it is meant for all strata of society? SNC has been developed through a top-down approach, therefore, possible challenges need to be explored from the viewpoints of curriculum developers and implementers. Having these questions in mind and no publicly available studies on these questions, this study has been designed.

The introduction of a nationally standardized curriculum in Pakistan represents a transformative shift in the country's educational landscape. This ambitious initiative, known as the Single National Curriculum (SNC), was implemented in recent years with the overarching goal of standardizing educational content and frameworks across all regions. This move is designed to address longstanding disparities in educational quality, creating a more uniform and equitable learning experience for students from diverse backgrounds (Fatima, 2024). The primary objective of the nationally standardized curriculum is to establish a common educational foundation for students across Pakistan, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic status. This standardized approach seeks to ensure that every child has access to the same educational opportunities and resources, mitigating historical inequalities that have persisted within the educational system. The vision extends beyond mere uniformity, aiming to enhance the overall quality of education by introducing standardized curricula, assessments, and teaching methodologies. The key features of the Single National Curriculum include a focus on core subjects such as language, mathematics, and science, forming the bedrock of the educational framework. In acknowledgment of Pakistan's cultural and religious diversity, the curriculum incorporates a component of religious education. This inclusion is intended not only to provide students with an understanding of religious values and traditions but also to foster tolerance and respect for diversity within the societal fabric. Flexibility is a hallmark of the nationally standardized curriculum, allowing for adaptation to regional or cultural nuances without compromising the essential integrity of the educational framework.

While the core curriculum remains consistent, this flexibility recognizes the diverse linguistic, cultural, and historical contexts that define different regions within Pakistan. It aims to strike a balance between a standardized national curriculum and the need for localized relevance. However, the implementation of a nationally standardized curriculum in Pakistan is not without



its challenges. One of the most significant hurdles lies in navigating the diverse regional contexts within the country. Pakistan is characterized by a rich tapestry of languages, cultures, and histories, and adapting a single curriculum to meet the nuanced needs of each region requires careful consideration and sensitivity.

The implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan represents a significant stride towards fostering educational standardization and equity across the nation. The journey towards a uniform curriculum, aiming to provide equal opportunities and a cohesive educational experience for students from diverse backgrounds, is undoubtedly a complex and ongoing process. As we conclude our exploration of the SNC, it is essential to acknowledge the potential transformative impact of this initiative on the educational landscape of Pakistan. However, it is equally imperative to underscore the multifaceted challenges and considerations inherent in such a comprehensive reform.

The SNC, introduced with the intention of creating a unified and inclusive educational system, has the potential to address disparities in educational quality and content. By setting common standards and learning objectives, it seeks to ensure that students across the country receive a comparable education, irrespective of their geographical location or socioeconomic background. This move towards standardization aligns with the global trend of establishing national curricula to enhance educational quality and promote a shared national identity (Alviar-Martin & Delva, 2020; Parkes & Heslop, 2019). Moreover, the emphasis on Urdu as the medium of instruction in the SNC reflects an effort to connect students with their cultural and linguistic roots, fostering a sense of identity and belonging (Rauf, 2021).

Nevertheless, the successful implementation of the SNC requires meticulous attention to various challenges. The socio-cultural diversity of Pakistan, marked by distinct languages, ethnicities, and regional variations, poses a significant hurdle (Malik, 2021). The curriculum must navigate this diversity with sensitivity, ensuring that it resonates with the unique needs and identities of different communities. Additionally, the ongoing process of curriculum development and teacher training demands sustained efforts and resources to realize the full potential of the SNC (Farooq & Sultana, 2021). The temporal dimension of educational change underscores the importance of long-term monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness and adaptability of the curriculum over time (Memon, 2021). The role of educators is paramount in the success of the SNC. Adequate teacher training programs and professional development initiatives are indispensable for ensuring that educators are well-equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively (Shah & Shah, 2021). Teachers, as key stakeholders, play a pivotal role in translating the curriculum into meaningful and engaging learning experiences for students. Therefore, investing in the continuous development of teachers is crucial for the sustained success of the SNC.

Moreover, the implementation of the SNC necessitates a commitment to addressing infrastructure gaps and resource disparities among different educational institutions (Ali, 2020). Ensuring that all schools, regardless of their location or ownership, have access to the requisite facilities and materials is essential for preventing the exacerbation of existing educational inequalities. Additionally, a collaborative approach involving educational authorities, teachers, parents, and the broader community is vital for garnering support and fostering a sense of



ownership for the SNC (Aftab et al., 2020).

Educational infrastructure disparities pose another challenge to the effective implementation of the standardized curriculum. There are notable variations in the availability of resources and facilities across different regions, with some areas facing a shortage of qualified teachers, essential educational materials, or even basic technological resources. Addressing these disparities is essential to ensuring that the benefits of the standardized curriculum reach all corners of the country. Teacher preparedness emerges as a critical factor in the success of the nationally standardized curriculum. Implementing a new educational framework requires significant investment in training programs to equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively deliver standardized content. Teacher preparedness is not only about familiarity with the curriculum but also about embracing new teaching methodologies and approaches that align with the objectives of the standardized system.

Active community engagement is imperative for the successful implementation of the standardized curriculum. Understanding the unique needs and cultural sensitivities of local communities is vital for gaining their support. Resistance to change is a common phenomenon in educational reforms, and garnering community support helps overcome this resistance and ensures a more seamless transition to the new curriculum. Political sensitivities also add a layer of complexity to the introduction of a nationally standardized curriculum. Education, being a politically sensitive domain, is often subject to diverse political considerations. Balancing the interests of various political stakeholders while maintaining the integrity of the curriculum is a delicate task that requires strategic decision-making and effective communication. Despite these challenges, the potential impacts of a nationally standardized curriculum in Pakistan are substantial. Successful implementation has the power to significantly improve the overall quality of education, setting a common standard that raises educational outcomes across the country. Equitable access to quality education is a primary aspiration, with the standardized curriculum aiming to bridge the gap between different educational systems, whether public or private, urban or rural. Community engagement is another dimension of the school head's role in efficient curriculum implementation. School heads in Pakistan must actively involve parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders in the educational process. This engagement is crucial for garnering support for the curriculum, addressing concerns, and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the educational program (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012).

The inclusion of cultural and national elements in the curriculum holds the promise of fostering a stronger sense of national identity among students. This shared understanding of history, culture, and values contributes to national cohesion, promoting a sense of belonging and unity among diverse populations. The inclusion of cultural and national elements in the curriculum is a paramount consideration for educational systems worldwide, and it holds particular significance in the context of Pakistan's diverse socio-cultural landscape. The integration of cultural and national elements into the curriculum serves as a means to connect students with their heritage, instill a sense of national identity, and promote cultural literacy. This deliberate inclusion acknowledges the rich tapestry of Pakistan's history, traditions, and values, aiming to create a more holistic and meaningful educational experience for students (Collet, 2007).



Pakistan, with its versatile cultural variety of ethnicities, languages, and historical influences, emphasizes the need for a curriculum that mirrors this diversity. The integration of cultural elements into the curriculum is not merely an educational choice but a strategic move towards national cohesion and identity formation (Rauf, 2021). It recognizes the importance of preserving and celebrating the various cultural threads that weave together the fabric of the nation. Cultural inclusivity in the curriculum is crucial for fostering a sense of pride in one's roots and ensuring that students understand and appreciate the plurality inherent in their society. The cultural and national elements in the curriculum act as a bridge between the formal education system and the rich heritage of Pakistan. This connection becomes particularly vital in a globalized world where the boundaries between cultures often blur, and preserving one's identity becomes a dynamic challenge. By incorporating elements of Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage, the curriculum can become a vehicle for transmitting values, traditions, and historical narratives from one generation to the next, contributing to the continuity of cultural knowledge and understanding (Iqbal & Abbas, 2024)

A key element of this inclusion is the emphasis on language as a carrier of culture. Pakistan is home to multiple languages, each with its own distinct cultural nuances. Recognizing the importance of linguistic diversity, the curriculum often includes the study and appreciation of various languages spoken in the country. This linguistic inclusivity is not only a nod to cultural richness but also a practical acknowledgment of the role language plays in shaping cultural identity (Rauf, 2021). The inclusion of regional languages alongside Urdu as mediums of instruction aligns with the commitment to preserving and promoting linguistic diversity within the country. Moreover, the national history curriculum plays a pivotal role in shaping students' understanding of their identity and the historical roots of the nation. It serves as a narrative that weaves together the diverse strands of Pakistan's past, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the events and personalities that have shaped the country. The narrative encompasses the struggle for independence, the contributions of key figures, and the challenges faced by the nation over time. This historical grounding is essential for nurturing a sense of national pride and fostering a shared understanding of Pakistan's collective journey (Shah, 2016).

The integration of cultural and national elements into the curriculum extends beyond historical narratives to encompass various art forms, literature, music, and traditions that characterize different regions of Pakistan. Cultural literacy is not only about knowing historical facts but also about appreciating the richness of cultural expressions. The inclusion of cultural elements in the curriculum provides students with exposure to the diverse artistic and cultural heritage of Pakistan, nurturing an appreciation for creativity and expressions of identity (Rauf, 2021). This exposure enhances students' ability to engage with and understand the cultural nuances embedded in different forms of artistic expression. However, the inclusion of cultural and national elements in the curriculum is not without its challenges. Striking the right balance between inclusivity and avoiding cultural bias can be a delicate task. The curriculum developers must navigate the diverse cultural and linguistic landscape of Pakistan with sensitivity, ensuring that all communities feel represented and valued. The challenge is to avoid perpetuating stereotypes or marginalizing certain cultural groups while still providing a comprehensive and authentic



representation of Pakistan's diverse heritage (Malik, 2021).

The implementation of a culturally inclusive curriculum requires adequately trained educators who can navigate the complexities of cultural sensitivity and impart this knowledge effectively to students. Professional development initiatives for teachers must include training on how to address diverse cultural perspectives, facilitate meaningful discussions on cultural identity, and create an inclusive classroom environment that celebrates diversity (Farooq & Sultana, 2021). It serves as a powerful tool for nurturing a sense of identity, fostering cultural literacy, and promoting national cohesion. By incorporating elements of Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage, linguistic richness, and historical narratives, the curriculum becomes a dynamic vehicle for transmitting values, traditions, and a shared understanding of the nation's collective journey. While challenges in striking the right balance and ensuring cultural sensitivity persist, the ongoing commitment to a culturally inclusive curriculum reflects a dedication to shaping a holistic educational experience that prepares students to navigate the complexities of a diverse and interconnected world (Zakir, 2015).

Moreover, the focus on global competitiveness within the standardized curriculum is crucial in preparing Pakistani students for the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world. By equipping them with relevant skills and knowledge, the curriculum aims to enhance Pakistan's position on the international stage, ensuring that its youth is well-prepared to engage with global opportunities and challenges. The Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan represents a comprehensive educational reform initiative with the aim of standardizing and unifying the educational landscape across the nation. Introduced in recent years, the SNC seeks to establish a cohesive and consistent curriculum from primary to higher secondary levels. Putting it simply, the concept of a Single National Curriculum is a significant attempt to address issues of equity, quality, and national identity within the education system. While the benefits are substantial, successful implementation requires navigating through a complex web of challenges. The experiences of countries that have undertaken similar initiatives offer valuable lessons for policymakers seeking to strike a balance between standardization and flexibility, uniformity and diversity. As the world continues to evolve, the pursuit of a Single National Curriculum remains an ongoing dialogue, shaped by the evolving needs of societies and the ever-changing landscape of education (Swargiary, 2024).

UN SDGs on Education

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015)

Education is not static; it evolves with societal changes. An awareness of the forces that have shaped public education historically, together with an understanding of the multiple factors that influence education today, are needed to empower all stakeholders to continue to adapt and improve our educational systems (Mazor, 2024). The United Nations adopted SDGs in 2015, this represents the extensive global efforts to tackle key impediments to human civilization. The SDGs include the following broad areas: education, poverty, gender inequality, health, and environmental sustainability. There are 17 SDGs, of which the Goal 4 states: “To Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities



for All, is specifically dedicated to education”. By 2030 the fourth goal of the UN SDG aims to ensure the entire population, regardless of an individual's gender, their socioeconomic status, the place of origin of a person, or disability, They must have access to a quality education and educational opportunities (Unterhalter, 2019). In Addition to Goal 4, The Goal 5 aims: To Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls, this has great ramifications for the entire education sector. The fifth SDG is further fortifying the need for a more inclusive and equal education sector, ultimately leading to just and equitable society. (UN, 2015)

Key Targets of SDG 4 include focus on Ensuring all children have access to complete, equitable, free, and quality primary and secondary education which leads to effective learning outcomes. Providing access for all children to quality pre-primary education and early childhood development programs. Expanding the access to a more affordable and quality, vocational, technical and higher education, including but not limited to university education. Ensuring equal and equitable access to all rungs of the education ladder and training for vulnerable groups, including but not limited to the persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in at-risk situations (Sayed & Moriarty, 2020). **Fostering and nurturing, the skills, knowledge and the values for sustainable development, including promoting critical thinking, awareness of cultural diversity and global citizenship.** Building and upgradation of the education facilities which are disability, child, and gender-sensitive, that provide safe, inclusive, and effective learning atmosphere. The SDGs are modern and more holistic reincarnation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), SDGs expand the focus of the entire global education effort to promote equality, equity, and lifelong learning (Boren, 2019).

While the MDG emphasized on school enrollment, the SDG recognizes the importance of sustainable education systems, learning outcomes, and skills development. The SDGs put great stress on the equity by specifically aiming to address the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged peoples, including but not being limited to females, children with disabilities, and those present in conflict zones. SDG 4 puts considerable emphasis on the education for sustainable development, nurturing critical thinking, fostering environmental awareness, and promoting global citizenship. The SDGs aim to stimulate cooperation through procedures such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and UNESCO’s Education 2030 Framework for Action. (Boren, 2019)

Discussions

Historically, the focus of world institutions and third world states was on increasing the literacy rate and the access to education of underprivileged communities, But, this time the SDGs aims not only to increase the universal literacy and access to education but also a deep focus on learning outcomes. This is done by acknowledging the fact that the students lack foundational and numeracy skills, even after successful completion of primary education. This article restricts itself to only two key areas of SDG four they are

1. The equitable education leading to more effective learning outcomes
2. Promotion of knowledge, the skills, and values with critical thinking, global citizenship, and awareness of cultural diversity.

The focus on access to education has often been overshadowed by the importance of



learning outcomes, thus leading to the concerns about the quality of education. While Relating the SDGs, especially the emphasis on the quality of education (SDG 4), to Pakistan's Single National Curriculum (SNC) initiative it provides an important lens for analyzing the initiative's intent and challenges it faces.

The SNC wants to address the inequalities in education by providing a unified curriculum across all schools, private or public or religious seminaries. This aligns with the SDG 4's goal of making certain of the equal access to quality education. But, much like global critiques of SDG 4 implementation, the SNC has been under heavy flak for trying to prioritizing access and uniformity over the learning outcomes (Irfan, 2021). While the curriculum tries to standardize the content, yet challenges remain in making certain of the fact that students achieve meaningful educational outcomes, such as critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. Within the context of Pakistan the Single National Curriculum (SNC) and its alignment with the SDG 4, this issue between the access and learning outcome is an important and complex facet that requires an in-depth analysis. The SNC is very ambitious whose goal is to reduce the disparities in access to education, its effectiveness in increasing the quality of education and achieving purposeful learning outcomes. (Haider, 2022)

The access to education has historically been an elemental goal of international educational institutions and bodies, and it is essential to SDG 4, it calls for a universal access to quality education to all rungs of society. Access, in this setting, is not just about enrollment in schools but is about eliminating all barriers and impediments to education such as gender inequality, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and disability that limit participation in education. In Pakistan the SNC was introduced with the central objective of trying to remove these disparities by creating a unified, national curriculum for all educating bodies be it a public school, private school or madrasa (Tahir, 2022). This standardization wants all students, irrespective of their school type or geographic location, to have the same educational opportunities. Theoretically, the SNC's extensive approach tends to support the global goal of SDG 4 to ensure that every child has access to the same quality education, thereby working toward greater educational equity. Nonetheless, the access in the context of the SNC, while fundamentally important, must be seen with a broader lens. Thus, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to attend school is just one of the components of SDG 4. Similarly important is the idea that the access must be complemented by meaningful learning. This is where the difference between access and learning outcomes becomes apparent (Malik & et al., 2023)

While the SNC has made great strides in trying to ensure access to education through the implementation of a standardized syllabus, it has faced serious obstacles when it comes to trying to ensure a quality education and, by extension, the learning outcomes. The SDGs—especially SDG 4 clarifies that the educational access alone is insufficient and inadequate. Quality education is not just defined by the number of students enrolled in school, but by the skills, knowledge, and competencies they learn through the education (Hameed & et al., 2024).

The SNC, as it stands today, is often under fire for its over-reliance on cram learning, parroting and standardised testing. While these methods might be effective in ensuring that students meet minimum requirements, they do little to promote analytical thinking, problem-



solving skills, or nurturing creativity—These central attributes which are increasingly becoming more important in today's globalized, and dynamic economies. SDG 4 plainly emphasizes on the importance of learning which equips students with modern skills beyond the basic literacy and numeracy, including but not limited to global citizenship, sustainability, and the ability to maneuver in an increasingly complex world. The SNC's current focus on uniformity, rather than developing these important cognitive skills, risks the failure of equipping the youth for the modern economy that SDG 4 aspires to avoid (Qamar & Khalil, 2024).

The SNC works toward to bring forth universal curriculum, a strategy which overlooks the variegated needs of educational requirements for Pakistan's diversified natives. It is noted that SNC embraces a compact perspective for education without considering the diversity in Pakistan's culture, which may lead to different educational consequences (Ali & Ahmed, 2020). The SDG 4 demands global education which reshape the requirement of divergent learners ensuring no one is cast aside, especially those ones who belongs to underprivileged population for example minorities, disable children and people living in rural areas (United Nations, 2015). The SNC on the other hand, without ample modification of contents for the different cultural contexts, may unable to live up to different needs of the students which may hinder learning for lasting growth (Rahman et al., 2021). SDG 4 put stress on education as a way for inculcating everlasting development and global citizenship. SNC has also merged aspects of Islamic values and civic sense into its curriculum, which is in alignment with the Pakistan's ideological and cultural precedence. Moreover, SDG 4's broader aims such as bringing environmental awareness, global perspectives and gender equality, might not be greatly stressed on and hence limiting the curriculum's calibration with the international measures (Khan, 2022).

The main purpose of SNC is to bridge up the gap between Pakistan's heterogeneous education systems emphasizing SDG 4's core strength which is its inclusiveness. However, execution of curriculum may invite challenges such as attending diverse population language barrier and cultural differences, reflects problems in making sure about uniformity in implementation of educational policies for varied learners (Malik, 2021). Children from underprivileged communities might not entirely be blessed with benefits / gains of the SNC unless learning outcomes and pedagogical skills are tailored to the specific contexts (UNESCO, 2020).

SDG-4 focuses on the execution of the foundational literacy and enrollment of quality learning. The SNC has been scrutinized whether it sufficiently enhances the instructions quality. It is also argued upon that whether textbooks and conventional teaching methods may not establish high order thinking skills which are needed for achieving SDG-4 targets (Ali & Ahmed, 2020). The one potential barrier in achieving SDG-4 target, especially with reference to Pakistan is the learning capacity of the teachers (Ali & Ahmed, 2020). The SNC has pointed out short falls in teachers training which mimics global concern that without investing in teachers training, the learning outcomes will be compromised, the SNC will only commemorate rote learning rather than promoting skills, professional development and improved pedagogical methods which are emphasized by the SDG-4. In order to become a success, SNC should emphasize on quality curriculum, teachers quality and teaching practices, unfortunately SNC is far from all these perspectives and does not address this issue proficiently (UNESCO, 2020). The curriculum may



sanction certain content but without providing proper training for teachers which is necessary for engaging students actively in the learning process the quality of education will remain substantial. The SDG's stresses quality education requires able and well trained teachers who can provide students with conducive environment for creativity and critical thinking (United Nations, 2015).

Both SDG and SLC lacks in terms of sturdy appliance of tools to access the learning outcomes successfully. SNC focuses less on how students learning can be checked other than conventional methods, Which usually employs memorization, further SNC's assessment largely entails summative testing (e.g. annual exams) which only measures how well an information can be retrieved when needed. This system does not cater for deeper understanding and problem solving skills (UNESCO, 2020). SDG-4 promotes the assessment which measures the learning in terms of development of practical skills and to apply the knowledge in everyday life. Pakistan's dependency on rote learning is opposite to the goals suggested bySDG-4 which ultimately limits students ability to develop skills for future success (Khan, 2022).

World wide critiques of SDG 4 implementation relies on the disconnection between access to education and leaning goals/ targets. Which has resulted in "education crisis". Endured many countries Pakistan's SNC should be evaluated through the same lens. Although uniformity and standardization were given priority in SNC but that too without showing commitment to improve educational quality, risks to carry on same drawbacks which SDG-4 tries to resolve. The recognition of these gaps has led to emphasis on transformative education systems which aims to not only make students knowledgeable but also equip them with skills, competencies and values mandatory for development. This view reflected in SDG-4 put quality learning at the heart of educational policies across the world (Ali & Ahmed, 2020).

Conclusion:

Pakistan's curriculum has made progress over the decades which is a reflection of nations socio-political contexts, challenges and expectations. However, keeping a balance between the aspects of quality and uniformity still calls for attention and it still remains a intricate complex challenge.

Pakistan's single National Curriculum is a courageous endeavor to view inequities in the education system and fulfill commitments to international standards, the SNC is a well aligned with core objection o SDG's by focusing on universal access quality and inclusive education. But the success of curriculum depends on the implementation, allocation of resources and adaptability in its true essence and spirits. The SNC can align move with SDG-4 when it balances the need for access with equally important need for good learning results. Holistic development of students is needed for Pakistan to align more closely with the objectives of SDG-4 and it is necessary that SNC should extend its focus beyond standardize contexts and show more importance to critical thinking.

In order to obtain these goals SNC must look for pedagogical reforms which encourage inquiry-based learning, devote more in teachers training to develop necessary skills for inculcating high order thinking and problem solving skills. Revise assessment procedures, develop diverse educational measures for the underprivileged population.



In a nutshell, Pakistan's single National Curriculum must know that getting access to education is a first step in fulfilling SDG-4. For great success, this access must coexist with quality education which authorizes students to become citizens capable of providing an unending development in this demanding world (Rahman et al., 2021).



References

- Ali, F., & Ahmed, S. (2020). Educational challenges in Pakistan: A critique of the Single National Curriculum. *Journal of Education and Policy Studies*, 8(2), 45–62.
- Banks, J. A. (2008). Diversity, Group Identity, and Citizenship Education in a Global Age. *Educational Researcher*, 37(3), 129–139. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08317501>
- Benería, L., Berik, G., & Floro, M. S. (2015). *Gender, Development, and Globalization*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203107935>
- Boeren, E. (2019). Understanding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on “quality education” from micro, meso and macro perspectives. *International review of education*, 65, 277–294.
- Butt, K. M. A., Khan, D. M. F., & Khan, M. A. (2024). Comparative Analysis of Educational Policies of China and Pakistan: A Systematic Literature Review. *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences*, 12(2), <https://doi.org/10.21015/vtess.v12i2.1851>
- Collet, B. A. (2007). Islam, national identity and public secondary education: Perspectives from the Somali diaspora in Toronto, Canada. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(2), 131–153. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320701330668>
- Epstein, T. (2010). *Interpreting national history: Race, identity, and pedagogy in classrooms and communities*. Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203890967/interpreting-national-history-terrie-epstein>
- Ghosh, R., & Galczynski, M. (2014). *Redefining multicultural education: Inclusion and the right to be different*. Canadian Scholars' Press. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=aLlBAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=The+inclusion+of+cultural+and+national+elements+in+the+curriculum+holds+the+promise+of+fostering+a+stronger+sense+of+national+identity+among+students.+&ots=Jl4Md_K-EJ&sig=tx1ET7Fj-SJT1Bgz91w1-PzU99E
- Haider, K. (2022). Perceptions on implementing single national curriculum in Pakistan. *Spry Contemporary Educational Practices*, 1(2).
- Hameed, B., Ishaque, B., Paul, I. A., & Mahmood, M. A. (2024). Development of the Single National Curriculum; Opportunities at Primary Level. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(9), 34-49.
- Iqbal, K., & Abbas, T. (2024). *Ethnicity, Religion, and Muslim Education in a Changing World: Navigating Contemporary Perspectives on Multicultural Schooling in the UK*. Taylor & Francis.
- Irfan, H. (2021). Insightful perspectives about effective implementation of ESL single national curriculum (SNC) in Pakistani schools. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 5(1), 975-986.
- Khan, R. (2022). Global citizenship education and the challenges of curriculum standardization in Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 36(3), 78–91.
- Malik, S. (2021). Bridging educational divides: The potential and pitfalls of the Single National



- Curriculum in Pakistan. *Asian Education Review*, 15(4), 112–128.
- Malik, S. A., Ch, M. S., Batool, Z., & Mahmood, S. (2023). Challenges and opportunities in implementation of single national curriculum: A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of ISOSS*, 9(1), 85-98.
- Mazor, K. (2024, November 8). *Education for our Times*. The Human Journey. <https://humanjourney.us/health/education-for-a-changing-world/education-in-the-modern-world-solving-for-the-future/>
- Noreen, S. (2014) *DYNAMICS OF SECONDARY CURRICULUM ORGANISATION IN PAKISTAN: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM 1947 TO 1970*.
- Park, J., & Niyozov, S. (2008). Madrasa education in South Asia and Southeast Asia: Current issues and debates. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(4), 323–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790802475372>
- Qamar, Z., & Khalil, I. (2024). Educational Reforms: Perception of Primary School Teachers towards Online Training Program for Single National Curriculum (SNC). *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 8(2), 345-359.
- Qasim Zaman, M. (1999). Religious Education and the Rhetoric of Reform: The Madrasa in British India and Pakistan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41(02). <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417599002091>
- Qurban, S. (2024). *Education Policy and the Construction of Neo-Liberal Citizenship in Pakistan: Revisiting the Musharraf Era, 1999-2008*. Taylor & Francis.
- Rahman, T., Iqbal, M., & Hussain, Z. (2021). Diversity and standardization in education: Lessons from the implementation of Pakistan's Single National Curriculum. *South Asian Journal of Educational Policy and Planning*, 13(1), 21–39.
- Razzaq, J. (2012). *The management of educational change in Pakistani educational institutions* [PhD, University of Glasgow]. <https://eleanor.lib.gla.ac.uk/record=b2920284>
- SWARGIARY, K. (2024). *Navigating Knowledge: The Quest for Education in Today's World*. LAP. *Understanding Policy Enactment in Diverse Institutional Contexts: An Exploration of the Implementation of the Single National Curriculum Policy in Pakistan - ProQuest*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2025, from <https://www.proquest.com/openview/203f1cadac2b1cf307779ab911c145f/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Tahir, I. (2022). Decolonizing madrasa reform in Pakistan. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 24(1).
- UN. (2015). *Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all - SDG indicators*. United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/Goal-04/>
- UN. (2015). *Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - SDG indicators*. United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2017/Goal-05/>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2020). *Inclusion and education: All means all*. Retrieved from <https://unesco.org>
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*.



Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

Unterhalter, E. (2019). The many meanings of quality education: Politics of targets and indicators in SDG 4. *Global Policy, 10*, 39-51.

Zakir, Z. H. (n.d.). *DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN STUDENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BALTISTAN*.

Zaman 1, M. S., Saleem 2, K., & Ali 3, S. (2021). Implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) at Primary Level: Teachers' Expectations and Concerns. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq, 4*(4)