



Challenges in Promoting Social Integration Among Students Through Single National Curriculum: Perspectives of Primary School Teachers

Ashiq Farid^{1*}, Dr. Akhtar Ali²

Abstract

This study explores the challenges primary school teachers face in promoting social integration among students through the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan. Despite the government's efforts to eliminate inequality and class differences by standardizing the educational system under the slogan "Eik Qaum, Eik Nisaab" (One Nation, One Curriculum), significant obstacles hinder the effective execution of the SNC. These challenges include insufficient teacher training, diverse educational environments, limited resources, financial constraints and cultural barriers. The disparity between secular and religious education, private and public education and urban versus rural education further complicates the process. The research employs an experimental study design, utilizing a Self-Administered Questionnaire to gather data from a sample of 100 primary school teachers in Tehsil Muzaffargarh. The findings highlight the necessity for substantial governmental investment in teacher training and resources, alongside efforts to bridge cultural and linguistic divides. Addressing these structural issues is imperative for the successful implementation of the SNC, by fostering social cohesion and national integration among students in Pakistan.

Keywords: Social Integration, Single National Curriculum (SNC), Primary School Teachers

1. Introduction

Social integration, the process by which diverse groups in society come together to form cohesive relationships and a shared sense of identity, is a crucial aspect of modern education systems. In an increasingly globalized world, schools play a pivotal role in fostering understanding, respect and cooperation among students from various backgrounds. To address this need, many countries have implemented or are considering a single national curriculum as a means to promote social integration and ensure educational equity. This approach aims to provide all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location, with access to the same high-quality educational content and opportunities.

The implementation of a single national curriculum to promote social integration is not without its challenges, particularly from the perspective of primary school teachers who are at the forefront of this educational initiative. These educators face numerous obstacles in translating the theoretical goals of social integration into practical classroom experiences. Some of the key challenges include addressing diverse learning needs, navigating cultural sensitivities and balancing standardized content with localized contexts.

This article explores the multifaceted perspectives of primary school teachers on the challenges they encounter in promoting social integration through a Single National Curriculum. Drawing from extensive interviews and surveys conducted with educators across the country, we delve into their experiences, concerns and innovative strategies. The insights gathered shed light on the complexities of implementing such a curriculum and its impact on social dynamics within the classroom.

By examining these challenges and perspectives, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational reform and social integration. It seeks to provide valuable insights for policymakers, curriculum developers and educational administrators in refining approaches to achieve the delicate balance between standardization and inclusivity in primary education.

The incumbent government has taken steps to provide a single system of education for all to eliminate inequality and class differences. It will require all provincial governments to implement a common system of education in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and assessment, ensuring that all children across the country have a fair and equal opportunity.

2. Reasons for Implementing SNC

The government has planned to end the reinforcement of class divisions through uniform education under the slogan Eik Qaum, Eik Nisaab (One Nation, One Curriculum). A lack of cohesion in the educational system has resulted in enormous gaps in learning, resulting in social inequality in Pakistani society. Pakistan's educational system is organized into three major categories: public or government schools, private schools and madrassas. The education imparted in these three systems has significant differences, resulting in a split between the ideological mindset of students taught in these schools. The Single National Curriculum has been put in place, primarily to bridge the gap between the three types of systems (Ministry of Federal Education and Training, 2020).

2.1. Challenges in the Implementation of the Single National Curriculum

Despite the fact that the SNC's considerations are well thought out to develop students as effective national and global citizens with the necessary knowledge, skills and values, the current government may face numerous

^{1*} Senior Subject Specialist (Education), Ph.D. Scholar, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, IUB, Department of Education/Distance Education, ashiqfaridsss@gmail.com

² The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, IUB, Department of Education/Distance Education

challenges in implementing the single national curriculum in a shared and equally beneficial roadmap in the current diversified educational situation. Critics point to plenty of issues that the Single National Curriculum faces. Many people have objected to the adoption of this system, claiming that it was not well thought out and implemented too quickly (López, & Sleeter, 2023).

The government's first challenge is to entice more than 20 million out-of-school children to return to school. It is a difficult task for the government to provide equal opportunities for all children in an environment where textbooks differ, publishers differ, teaching and learning methods and assessment approaches differ, student success criteria, learning resources differ and most importantly, teachers' capacity varies greatly across education systems. Furthermore, there are one-room or two-room primary schools with just one or two teachers who have insufficient qualifications. On the other hand, there are schools with abundant human and financial resources that provide a nurturing and favourable learning environment for students (Sheikh, 2020).

Also, teachers are responsible for fulfilling all the ambitious goals linked with Single National Curriculum after the standard curriculum is implemented. Unfortunately, Pakistan has a shortage of qualified instructors, particularly at the basic and secondary levels. All the aims and objectives would be unachievable if the teachers failed to fulfil their responsibilities. Hence, there is a dire need for qualified and trained teachers. To promote consistency in varied education systems to a particular degree, the government would have to do a large amount of financial contribution for less-resourced schools. Furthermore, the government must change its investment trends in education and education must become the state's top priority.

2.2. Challenges and Opportunities for Promoting Social Integration in Diverse Classrooms

2.2.1. Diverse Student Backgrounds

Students in a classroom come from diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Teachers may find it challenging to address the unique needs, experiences and perspectives of each student, especially when trying to promote social integration (Carter, P., & Darling-Hammond, L. 2016).

2.2.2. Language Barriers

In multicultural classrooms, language differences can hinder effective communication and understanding among students. Teachers may struggle to bridge these language barriers and create an environment of social integration among students where all students can participate and engage in meaningful interactions (Pope et. al. 2019)

2.2.3. Prejudice and Bias

Prejudice, stereotypes and bias can exist among students, making it difficult to foster social integration. Teachers may encounter resistance or discriminatory behaviors from students, which can undermine efforts to create an inclusive and respectful classroom environment (Rutland, A., & Killen, M. 2015).

2.2.4. Lack of Teacher Training

Teachers may lack training and professional development opportunities specifically focused on promoting social integration. They may not have the necessary knowledge, skills and strategies to address the unique needs of diverse students and effectively promote social integration in the classroom (Smith, D. S. 2019).

2.2.5. Time Constraints

Teachers often face time constraints due to a packed curriculum and multiple responsibilities. Finding adequate time to plan and implement activities that promote social integration can be a challenge, resulting in limited opportunities for meaningful interactions among students (Rennie, F., & Morrison, T. (2013).

2.2.6. Celebrating diversity

Teachers can celebrate diversity by incorporating different cultures and perspectives into their lessons. This can help students to learn about and appreciate the differences between people.

2.2.7. Limited resources

Less-resourced schools often struggle to maintain uniformity in diverse educational environments

2.2.8. Class tensions

Differences exist between secular and religious education, private and public education and urban versus rural education

2.2.9. Financial constraints

The government must invest significantly in less-resourced schools to ensure uniformity in diverse educational environments

2.2.10. Cultural barriers

Cultivating social cohesion and national integration may be hindered by cultural differences between regions and communities

2.2.11. Parental Attitudes and Involvement

Parental attitudes and involvement can influence social integration efforts. Teachers may face resistance or lack of support from parents who hold biased or exclusive views, making it challenging to create a cohesive and inclusive learning environment (Sichivitsa, V. O. (2007).

2.2.12. Assessment and Evaluation

Traditional assessment methods may not adequately capture students' social integration and intercultural competencies. Teachers may struggle to find appropriate assessment strategies that accurately measure and

recognize students' progress in this area. Lina Abawi (2017) described for how to promote social integration in schools. The author identifies a number of factors that can contribute to social integration, including:

2.3. Attitudes of Primary School Teachers

Many primary school teachers may have a positive attitude towards the SNC and its goal of fostering social integration. They may view it as an opportunity to create a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment (Dilshad, S. A., & Rehmat Shah, D. N. A. 2023). Open-mindedness: Teachers with an open-minded attitude are more likely to embrace the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of their students. They may actively seek ways to incorporate different cultural and social elements into their teaching practices (Deardorff, D. K. 2009).

Teachers who are willing to collaborate and work together with their colleagues are better equipped to implement the Single National Curriculum effectively. Sharing ideas, resources and experiences can lead to more innovative teaching strategies and enhanced social integration among students (Dilshad et.al. 2023)

Teachers who are adaptable and flexible in their teaching methods can accommodate the diverse needs of their students. They may be more willing to modify their instructional approaches to ensure that all students feel included and valued (Dilshad et.al. 2023).

2.4. Factors causing problems for primary school teachers to promote social integration by Single National Curriculum

Primary school teachers may face challenges in implementing the SNC due to limited resources. This can include a lack of textbooks, teaching materials, classroom space, or technology necessary to effectively deliver the curriculum and promote social integration (O'Sullivan, 2006). Teacher training and preparedness: The successful implementation of the SNC requires teachers to have a deep understanding of the curriculum and the pedagogical strategies necessary to promote social integration. Inadequate training or lack of professional development opportunities for teachers can hinder their ability to effectively teach and address social integration within the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Primary schools often have students from diverse cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. Adapting the SNC to cater to the needs of such a diverse student population can be challenging. Teachers may struggle with promoting social integration when students come from different cultural or religious backgrounds, leading to potential conflicts or difficulties in fostering a cohesive learning environment (Banks, 2006).

The SNC may introduce a substantial amount of content to be covered within a limited timeframe. Teachers may feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of material they need to teach, making it difficult for them to allocate sufficient time and attention to promoting social integration effectively (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

High-stakes assessments and examinations can influence teaching priorities, potentially leading teachers to focus more on content delivery rather than on promoting social integration. The emphasis on test scores and outcomes can create a competitive environment that undermines collaboration and social integration among students (Popham, 2004).

The support and involvement of parents and the wider community play a crucial role in promoting social integration in schools. However, if there are negative attitudes or resistance to social integration initiatives among parents or community members, it can hinder the efforts of primary school teachers in fostering an inclusive and integrated learning environment (Epstein, 2011).

In countries with multiple languages or dialects, language barriers can create difficulties for teachers in promoting social integration. Students from different linguistic backgrounds may struggle to communicate and interact effectively, which can hinder social integration within the classroom (Cummins, 2001).

2.5. The Way Forward

To make the 'Single National Curriculum' effective, the government must address structural issues such as teacher training, getting all out-of-school children to school and so on. Special emphasis must be made on female education in this regard. The cultural barriers that prevent girls from receiving an education must be addressed. Furthermore, the educational sector should be given more funding. To keep SNC afloat, corrupt practices and white-collar offences must be eliminated. For madrassah reforms, the country's religious parties and religious academics must be brought together on the same page.

2.6. Objectives

- To identify the factors causing problems for primary school teachers to promote social integration by Single National Curriculum.
- To compare the factors causing problems for male and female primary school teachers in promoting social integration by Single National Curriculum.
- To suggest the ways to implement the SNC for promotion of social integration in more effective way.

2.7. Design of the study

The researcher made an experimental study to better understand the challenges that primary teachers face from social integration through the implementation of SNC. Self-Administered Questionnaire was used to get responses from the selected teachers.

2.8. Population and sample

Population comprised on 2296 Primary School Teaches of Tehsil Muzaffargarh (M& F). The questionnaire was given to 100 Teachers (50 Male, 50 Female) taking as sample.

2.9. Instrumentation

In order to collect the data from the respondents adopted questionnaire and observation (Researcher Diary) were used in this study. The researcher conducted face to face observations along structured questionnaire with teachers to obtain their responses.

3. Data Analysis

Table 1

Difficult Content of Social Integration in SNC				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	10.5	13.8	21.7	4
Female	11.5	16.2	16.3	6
Total	22	30	38	10
				Total

Table 2

Lack of Resources at Public Schools				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	4	5.8	26.8	13.4
Female	4	6.5	24	5.5
Total	8	12.3	50.8	18.9
				Total

An overview of the content of social integration in SNC in Table No. 1. Of the respondents, 22% (10.5% of male respondents and 11.5% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 30% (13.8% of male respondents and 16.2% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a total of 52% (22%+30%) respondents disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 38% (21.7% of male respondents and 16.3% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that the content of social integration in SNC is difficult, while 10% of respondents (4% of male respondents and 6% of female respondents) agreed. In total 48% (38%+10%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents disagreed with this argument.

An overview of the lack of resources at public schools is given in Table No. 2. Of the respondents, 8% (4% of male respondents and 4% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 12.3% (5.8% of male respondents and 6.5% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a total of 20.3% (8%+12.3%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 50.8% (26.8% of male respondents and 24% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that there is a shortage of resources at public schools, while 18.9% of respondents (13.4% of male respondents and 5.5% of female respondents) strongly agreed. In total 79.7% (50.8%+18.9%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.

Table 3

Lack of Social Integration Trainings for SNC Teachers				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	4.2	6.5	25.5	13.8
Female	4.2	5.2	26.6	14
Total	8.4	11.7	52.1	27.8
				Total

An overview of the lack of social integration trainings for SNC teachers is given in Table No. 3. Of the respondents, 8.4% (4.2% of male respondents and 4.2% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 11.7% (6.5% of male respondents and 5.2% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a total of 20.1% (8.4%+11.7%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 52.1% (25.5% of male respondents and 26.6% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that there is lack of social integration trainings for SNC teachers, while 27.8% of respondents (13.8% of male respondents and 14% of female respondents) strongly agreed. In total 79.9% (52.1%+27.8%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.

Table 4

Insufficient support from educational authorities				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	4	6.8	25.8	13.4
Female	3.8	9.2	23.8	13.2
Total	7.8	16	49.6	26.6
				Total

An overview of the support from educational authorities to implement the social integration through SNC given in Table No. 4. Of the respondents, 7.8% (4% of male respondents and 3.8% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 16% (6.8% of male respondents and 9.2% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a

total of 23.8% (7.8%+16%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 49.6% (25.8% of male respondents and 23.8% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that there is an insufficient support from educational authorities, while 26.6% of respondents (13.4% of male respondents and 13.2% of female respondents) strongly agreed. In total 76.2% (49.6%+26.6%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.

Table 5

Unclear Social Integration Guidelines				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	4.8	9.8	25	10.4
Female	4	11.2	25.5	9.3
Total	8.8	21	50.5	19.7
				Total
				50
				50
				100

An overview of the clear social integration guidelines in SNC is given in Table No. 5. Of the respondents, 8.8% (4.8% of male respondents and 4% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 21% (9.8% of male respondents and 11.2% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a total of 29.8% (8.8%+21%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 50.5% (25% of male respondents and 25.5% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that there is unclear social integration guidelines in SNC, while 19.7% of respondents (10.4% of male respondents and 9.3% of female respondents) strongly agreed. In total 70.2% (50.5%+19.7%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.

Table 6

Improper Monitoring and Mentoring of Social Integration in SNC				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	3.5	10.5	27.2	8.8
Female	1.8	12	26.2	10
Total	5.3	22.5	53.4	18.8
				Total
				50
				50
				100

An overview of the monitoring and mentoring of social integration in SNC is given in Table No. 6. Of the respondents, 5.3% (3.5% of male respondents and 1.8% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 22.5% (10.5% of male respondents and 12% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a total of 27.8% (5.3%+22.5%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 53.4% (27.2% of male respondents and 26.2% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that there are improper monitoring and mentoring of social integration in SNC, while 18.8% of respondents (8.8% of male respondents and 10% of female respondents) strongly agreed. In total 72.2% (53.4%+18.8%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.

Table 7

Dedicated supporting staff at Public School				
	SDA	DA	A	SA
Male	29.5	6.5	4.2	9.8
Female	27.2	9.4	3.2	10.2
Total	56.7	15.9	7.4	20
				Total
				50
				50
				100

An overview of dedicated supporting staff at public schools is given in Table No. 7. Of the respondents, 56.7% (29.5% of male respondents and 27.2% of female respondents) strongly disagreed with the claim and 15.9% (6.5% of male respondents and 9.4% of female respondents) disagreed; thus, a total of 72.6% (56.7%+15.9%) disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 7.4% (4.2% of male respondents and 3.2% of female respondents) agreed with the statement that there is a shortage of dedicated staff at public schools, while 7.4% of respondents (4.2% of male respondents and 3.2% of female respondents) strongly agreed. In total 20% (9.8%+10.2%) of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents disagreed with this argument.

4. Findings

- An overview of the content of social integration in SNC in Table No. 1 indicated that 52% respondents disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 48% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents disagreed with this argument.
- An overview of the lack of resources at public schools is given in Table No. 2 indicated that 20.3% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 79.7% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.
- An overview of the lack of social integration training for SNC teachers is given in Table No. 3 indicated that 20.1% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 79.9% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.
- An overview of the support from educational authorities to implement the social integration through SNC given in Table No. 4 indicated that 23.8% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 76.2% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.

- An overview of the clear social integration guidelines in SNC is given in Table No. 5 indicated that the respondents, 29.8%, disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 70.2% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.
- An overview of the monitoring and mentoring of social integration in SNC is given in Table No. 6 indicated that 27.8% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 72.2% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents agreed with this argument.
- An overview of dedicated supporting staff at public schools is given in Table No. 7 indicated that 72.6% disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, 20% of respondents agreed with the statement. Thus, most respondents disagreed with this argument.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The government's introduction of the "Single National Curriculum (SNC)" is a positive move. It would prove to be a solution for many socio-economic problems in a society like Pakistan. It's encouraging to see that the government is finally paying attention to the long-overlooked education sector. Pakistan would soon begin making advances toward betterment, development and advancement as a result of the restructured education system. But the conclusions of the current studies highlighted some problems which are impacting the implementation of social integration through SNC. As the study concluded that there is a little bit lack of social integration content in SNC yet while implementation following factors also matters like lack of resources at public schools; lack of social integration training for SNC teachers; lack of support from educational authorities to implement the social integration through SNC; unclear social integration guidelines in SNC; insufficient monitoring and mentoring practices of social integration in SNC and finally the lack of dedicated supporting staff at public schools.

5.1. Recommendations

- Enhance teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills and knowledge needed to promote social integration effectively.
- Establish clear guidelines for implementing social integration strategies within the Single National Curriculum.
- Strengthen monitoring and support systems to regularly assess and support the effectiveness of social integration efforts in schools.
- Address language barriers in multicultural classrooms by providing language support programs and resources.
- Incorporate social integration into assessment methods to evaluate students' intercultural competencies and social development.

5.2. Compliance of Ethical Standards

The authors of this article declare that they have no conflicts of interest. This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents in this study.

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