

## Perceptions of Primary School Teachers Regarding Training of Single National Curriculum in District Okara (Pakistan)

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### Abstract

*The plan of a single national curriculum is inspired by the latest international trend that is being followed by various countries. In Pakistan, a single national curriculum claims to create national harmony and promote equal academic opportunities for students regardless of social status, gender, and ethnicity. This study focused on investigating the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding the training of a single national curriculum that has been introduced by the government of Pakistan Tehrik e Insaaf since 2020. The nature of the study was quantitative. The sample was taken from the primary schools of district Okara. Data collection was carried out by using a self-developed questionnaire. The data was collected from primary schools of district Okara. Independent samples t-test was used in inferential statistics to find out the significant difference among demographic variables (gender). To check the difference among these variables (qualification and experience), One-way ANOVA was applied. The results also revealed the positive view of primary teachers that a single national curriculum may have the potential to eradicate educational disparities present in our society.*

**Keywords:** Single National Curriculum, Perceptions, Primary Teachers, National Curriculum Council.

### Introduction

Pakistan, as a state, has always tried to give sufficient weightage to quality education during the policy-making process. National Education Commission (NEC), which was founded in 1959, prioritized offering a quality education system. Article 25-A of Pakistan's constitution makes it an obligation for the government to provide each child with free and compulsory education for children 5 to 16 years of age (Irfan, 2021). According to the 18th amendment in Pakistan's constitution, provinces were given full authority over the educational process, but that resulted in compromised educational quality. National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 entrusted the task of analysis of educational progress to the Inter-Provincial Education Ministerial Conference (IPEMC). The IPEMC took the initiative to establish the National Curriculum Council (NCC), which had to come up with a unified curriculum that could meet the requirements of national ideology and social setup. The NCC brought up the idea of a single national curriculum after consultation with the stakeholders.

The stakeholders from the academia recommended amendments, and finally, the single national curriculum project was completed (Irfan, 2021). Ever since its inception, Pakistan has experienced various types of education systems, including government schools, private schools, Urdu medium, English medium, Madrassa school system, and elite educational institutes. This divide has always created discrepancies in almost all corners of social life in Pakistan, whether it is academic,

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cultural, linguistic, or economic. Although, in the past, some efforts were put to eradicate disparities through educational systems, elite educational institutes always used to get away with it. However, the current single national curriculum offers a more wholesome approach to promoting equality and harmony (Fazil et al., 2021). In any society, the role of teachers in implementing curriculum is an undebatable concept. Teachers' active participation is essential in the process of curriculum implementation as well as curriculum development. A substantial quantity of empirical research, as a result, points out that, in order to achieve successful curriculum implementation, a feeling of ownership in teachers and other future users must be cultivated.

Thus, the engagement of practicing teachers may result in reform efforts that are more practical and relevant to their classrooms. As a result, integrating teachers in the conceptual and development phases of curricular change may help them build their professional competence and comprehension of the innovation in issue, as well as their commitment to putting the change into action. So, teachers who are informed about the aim and substance of curricular reform are better able to establish their teaching priorities and adapt these priorities in order to support learners' progress (Butt et al., 2021).

Education and training of teachers are interlinked, especially if there is a change in curriculum. A single national curriculum introduced by the government of Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan is claimed to prove to be a great game changer in the Pakistani educational system. Much research is being conducted on this topic. It fills in the gap found in previous studies related to the impact of a single national curriculum at the primary level in district Okara. It also addresses the need for teacher training regarding a single national curriculum and the perceptions of teachers regarding the significance of training. The statement of the study is perceptions of primary school teachers regarding the training of a single national curriculum in district Okara.

The proponents of a single national curriculum have time and again debated on the backdrop scenario of our academic systems, as they have tried to conceptualize this idea by aligning it to our national ideological bending. According to former Federal Minister of Education Shafqat Mehmood (2018-2022), a single national curriculum that sparked a wide debate in Pakistani academia is a revolutionary step towards unifying our nation. Each student will have equal opportunities to achieve quality education regardless of their financial background (Jahanzeb et al., 2021). The single national curriculum represents the idea of universal education in Pakistan. It offers the same guidelines for curriculum and mode of instruction. It is encouraged to implement in order to achieve academic and social equality (Tayyab et al., 2022). A single national curriculum can be conceptualized as a wholesome approach towards educational reforms. These reforms encompass four important factors of our educational system. Firstly, a single national curriculum intends to improve the learning criteria of each phase of education. Secondly, it involves improvement regarding the content present in our textbooks; thirdly, enhancing the professional capacities of teachers and providing them with proper training sessions; last but not least, it focuses on developing a modern concept-based evaluation system. In other words, a single national curriculum is an initiative that takes the whole academic scenario to reform (Chughtai, 2021).

Here, an important question emerges: Why is it important to launch a single national curriculum? In Pakistan, the single national curriculum can create balance in society by bridging the gap between the public and private sectors. A single national curriculum is especially important to creating national solidarity and preserving the ideological grounds of our society. The process of nation-building can be successful if the academic activities are guided through a single national curriculum (Abbas et al., 2022). A uniform curriculum that contains creativity as an integral objective has become an international trend. It is being introduced in many countries all around

the globe. Even countries that have a federal political system are also implementing the idea of a single national curriculum despite the differences between the center and the units (Abbas et al., 2022).

### **Single National Curriculum in the World**

Global politicians and educators are focusing their attention on how kids and teenagers may learn the necessary features of innovation as part of their education as a result of the growing realization that innovation is a crucial component of economic success. The Australian government committed the country to fostering "confident and innovative participants" as part of its educational priorities, according to the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, which establishes educational priorities for the next ten years. Since 2006, early childhood creativity has been given top emphasis in China's educational priorities, with the term "encourage creativity in children" appearing frequently. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's educational reform has come to place a strong emphasis on creativity to prepare pupils for the challenges of a twenty-first-century society. The Cross-thematic Curriculum Framework, which was established in primary school in 2003, placed a heavy emphasis on helping children develop their creative and imaginative skills through inquiry and discovery, according to a detailed examination of the Greek curriculum. The ability to create, which includes questioning comprehension, problem-solving, and group conversations, is seen as a crucial skill for redefining the objectives of education in the twenty-first century. Despite having a global impact, the drive for 21st-century skills began in the United States of America. According to Wyse, Dominic, Ferrari, and Anusca (2015), creativity is acknowledged at the European level as a transversal component of all major lifelong learning capabilities and as a transversal aspect of all essential lifelong learning competencies. Australia's educational systems are undergoing rapid change as a result of several national schooling reforms. Over the past ten years, a number of initiatives have been made to increase national uniformity in education, including the development of a national curriculum, regular national assessments in literacy and numeracy, national standards for teachers and principals, and a new national model of school financing. As a result of worries about the changing role of education in a globalizing world and economy, Australian governments have begun to rethink how schooling might be more effectively harnessed as a component of national social and economic policy. Political centralization as part of the construction of the notion of a strong state, which combined central control with social democratic faith in the state, this transformation occurred (Molstad & Karseth, 2016).

### **Objectives of the Study**

Some of the objectives of the study were to;

- Examine the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding training of a single national curriculum at the primary level.
- Investigate the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding the scope of a single national curriculum at the primary level.

### **Research Method and Procedure**

This study was quantitative and descriptive by method. In order to learn about the opinion of primary school teachers regarding the training of a single national curriculum in the district, the Okara Survey method was used. The study consisted of all male and female primary school teachers who worked in district Okara in public schools. The total population was 6000, 2964

female and 3036 male teachers. The sample was selected, and stratified sampling techniques were used to know about the perception of primary school teachers regarding the training of a single national curriculum in district Okara. There were two strata, male and female.

### Instrument of the Study

For the data collection, a self-developed instrument with a five-point Likert scale was employed. For the purpose of developing the questions, the researcher read a variety of books and publications. The study's participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about how they felt about the training of a single national curriculum in the district of Okara for primary school teachers. A five-point Likert scale was utilized to score a closed-ended questionnaire (SDA=1, DA=2, UN=3, A=4, SA=5).

### Data Collection

The information was gathered with the consent of the relevant education department officials. By visiting the schools and speaking with primary school instructors, the data was gathered.

### Data Analysis

Version 21 of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to analyze the data. The independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were utilized in inferential statistics to determine whether there was a significant difference between the demographic variables.

**Table 1 Independent Sample t-Test to Identify the Difference Between Male and Female Primary School Teachers Regarding Perceptions of Single National Curriculum Training**

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Male	300	1.0951	6.34012	598	-1.208	.008
Female	300	1.1010	5.45342			

Table 1 shows that an independent t-test was used to determine if male and female primary school teachers' perceptions of training for the single national curriculum differed. Males ( $M= 1.0951$ ,  $SD 6.34012$ ) and females ( $M= 1.1010$ ,  $SD 5.45342$ ) had a significant difference ( $t= -1.208$ ,  $p=.008$ ). Therefore, it concludes that there is gender-based differences in opinions of single national curriculum training between male and female primary school teachers.

**Table 2 Independent Samples t-test to Identify the Difference Between Roles in School Regarding Perceptions of Single National Curriculum Training.**

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Head Teacher	111	1.1157	6.12390	598	3.510	.409
Teacher	489	1.0940	5.79956			

Table 2 indicates that an independent t-test was applied to identify the difference between primary school teachers working as head teachers at primary school and primary school teachers regarding perceptions of training of a single national curriculum. There was no significant difference between head teachers ( $M= 1.1157$ ,  $SD 6.12390$ ),  $t= 3.510$ ,  $p= .409$ , and teachers ( $M= 1.0940$ ,  $SD= 5.79956$ ). Therefore, it determines that no significant difference exists between head teachers and teachers at primary schools regarding perceptions of single national curriculum training.

**Table 3 One-way ANOVA for the Difference Among Primary School Teachers About Perceptions of Single National Curriculum Training on the Basis of age.**

Qualification	Sum of Squares	<i>Df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	121.907	29	4.204	3.817	.000
Within Groups	627.718	570	1.101		
Total	749.625	599			

Table 3 indicates that one-way ANOVA was applied to identify the difference among primary school teachers about perceptions of single national curriculum training. Results indicated that there was a significant difference  $F(29, 570) = 3.817, p = .000$  in perceptions of primary school teachers regarding the training of a single national curriculum on the basis of their age (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59) years. It is concluded that there was no significant difference among primary school teachers about perceptions of training of a single national curriculum on the basis of age.

**Table 4 One-way ANOVA for the Difference Among Primary School Teachers About Perceptions of Single National Curriculum Training on the Basis of Teaching Years**

Qualification	Sum of Squares	<i>Df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	150.533	29	5.191	4.932	.000
Within Groups	599.932	570	1.053		
Total	750.465	599			

Table 4 indicates that one-way ANOVA was applied to identify the difference among primary school teachers about perceptions of single national curriculum training on the basis of their experience in teaching. Results indicated that there was a significant difference  $F(29, 570) = 4.932, p = .000$  in perceptions of primary school teachers regarding the training of a single national curriculum on the basis of their experience in teaching (>4, 5-14, 15-24, 25 and > 25) years. It is concluded that there was a significant difference in perceptions of a single national curriculum on the basis of primary school teachers' experience.

**Table 5 One-way ANOVA for the Difference Among Perceptions of Primary School Teachers Regarding Training of Single National Curriculum on the Basis of Qualification**

Qualification	Sum of Squares	<i>Df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	48.940	29	1.688	3.544	.000
Within Groups	271.455	570	.476		
Total	320.385	599			

Table 5 indicates that one-way ANOVA was applied to identify the difference among primary school teachers about perceptions of single national curriculum training on the basis of qualifications. Results indicated that there was a significant difference  $F(29, 570) = 3.544, p = .000$  in primary school teachers about perceptions of single national curriculum training on the basis of qualifications (matric, Bachelor, Master, postgraduation). It is concluded that there was a significant difference between primary school teachers' perceptions of single national curriculum training on the basis of qualification.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of primary school teachers toward the training of a single national curriculum. Like any other profession, training plays a significant role in the field of education as well. Each education system requires training sessions from time to time in order to make it a success, especially if there is a drastic change in the curriculum strategies. Various researchers have discussed the importance of training for teachers (Abbas et al., 2022; Butt et al., 2021; Fazil et al., 2021; Irfan, 2021; Kamran, 2020). Untrained staff can prove to be a huge constraint in the way of achieving educational goals. It is important to understand the needs and expectations of teachers and learners to develop and implement a curriculum (Abbas et al., 2022; Irfan, 2021).

A new curriculum naming a single national curriculum has been introduced in Pakistan since 2020. It has been implemented at the primary level, and primary school teachers are given training related to this curriculum. The results of this study showed that primary school teachers are of the view that they need more training sessions in order to implement a single national curriculum productively. Irfan (2021) has also discussed the same matter. This study found that most of the teachers believe that their capabilities can be enhanced with the help of professional assistance and training. Zaman et al. (2021) have also found that teachers' professional development can be increased with the help of training programs. Educational experts need refresher courses to enhance their professional competence (Abbas et al., 2022). This research, like some of the previous studies (Abbas et al., 2022; Irfan, 2021), concluded that a single national curriculum can be more effective if proper training programs are offered to the teachers.

However, according to this research, the majority of the teachers are of the view that the senior teachers keep their professional attitude the same due to training. One of the previous studies conducted by Zaman et al. (2021) has also come up with a similar concern. Some of the in-service teachers' lack of willingness is a great challenge to implement a single national curriculum (Zaman et al., 2021). It has been discovered through this research that most of the teachers believe that it will not be easy for Madrassah teachers to teach in English, and a single national curriculum should not be introduced in Madrassah without proper training plans. Irfan (2021) has raised the same concern that more professional assistance is required to teach English.

Some of the previous studies have determined national integration and uniformity as one of the merits of a single national curriculum (Fazil et al., 2021; Jahanzeb et al., 2021; Tahir, 2022; Tayyab et al., 2022; Zaman et al., 2021). The findings of this study have also reiterated that the majority of teachers think that a single national curriculum holds the potential to create national harmony and social cohesion. This study showed that most teachers are of the opinion that a single national curriculum can end academic disparities, as claimed by some of the previous studies like Zaman et al.'s study that was conducted in 2021.

According to this study's findings, most teachers believe that the scope of a single national curriculum is wide, and it covers a variety of themes like social development, life skills, and critical thinking. These findings align with the previous studies' results. A single national curriculum offers a variety of academic topics and extends its scope to Madrassah students as well as students with disabilities (Abbas et al., 2022; Fazil et al., 2021; Jahanzeb et al., 2022).

## Recommendations

- According to the findings of this study, the study recommends implementing the single national curriculum in its true spirit; more advanced training modules should be introduced to enhance the professional development of the teachers.

- It is recommended, as per the findings of this study, that the Madrassah system should be given more time to understand a single national curriculum. Furthermore, to bring Madrassahs into the mainstream academic fold, it is important to offer more training sessions and professional guidance to the Madrassah teachers.
- According to the findings of this study, it is recommended that the draft of a single national curriculum should not be considered an absolute document, and curriculum developers should take guidance from the studies conducted on the topic of the single national curriculum.

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