Assessing the Impact of the Single National Curriculum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: How Do Teachers in Peshawar and Swat Valley Navigate Implementation Challenges?

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Abstract

This paper examines the application of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, with special reference given to the ways teachers in Peshawar and Swat Valley deal with the obstacles of this educational revolution. Introduced in 2021 and called One Nation, One Curriculum, the SNC is intended to unify the educational system in public, private, and madrassa sectors, but its application in KP, which has a different linguistic, cultural, and security situation, is associated with peculiarities. This study employs a qualitative case study to examine implementation realities through conducting a semi-structured interview with 32 teachers in primary and secondary schools, focus group discussions with school administrators and an examination of policy documents. The results demonstrate that there is an implementation gap: though teachers admit that the SNC can help to promote educational equity, they are severely affected by such issues as insufficient professional growth (55% indicate the lack of such training), material limitations (60% mention the lack of the necessary materials), ideological conflicts about religious content, and the lack of alignment between progressive curriculum goals and traditional methods of testing. Swat Valley teachers complain about security-related disturbances and lack of infrastructure, whereas Peshawar teachers have to cope with the high number of students in classes and language diversity. The researchers determine that teachers engage in a kind of agency, practical agency, which involves adapting, resisting, or selectively introducing the aspects of the curriculum depending on the realities of the situation, instead of adhering to the recommended changes. The study helps the comprehension of curriculum implementation in post-devolution Pakistan, as it provides evidence-based possible solutions to improve the professional development of teachers, the distribution of resources and policy coherence to meet the equity goals of the SNC.
Keywords: Single National Curriculum, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, curriculum implementation, teacher agency, educational reform, Pakistan, Peshawar, Swat Valley

1. Introduction

Education systems in Pakistan have been traditionally fragmented and three separate streams, such as the public, the private, and the madrassas, have been working with different curricula, pedagogical methods, and quality levels. This three-tier system has continued to bring about inequality in education with the wealthy students enjoying English medium education in the private schools whereas most students attend schools that are under-funded or the religious seminaries. To address these inequalities, in 2021 the Government of Pakistan introduced the Single National Curriculum (SNC) which is a bold reform agenda aimed at harmonising the learning materials in all three systems and offer One Nation, One Curriculum to some 50 million students throughout the country.

The SNC is among the largest educational reforms to ever have occurred in the Pakistani history, and which seeks to eradicate the concept of class-based educational apartheid in Pakistan and instead promote national unity by standardizing the content, medium of instruction, and assessment standards to be used. It will be implemented in stages (grade 1-5 2021-2022, grade 6-8 2022-2023, grade 9-12 subsequent years), which will focus on Islamic values, national identity, and the skills needed in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the reform has triggered a lot of controversy in terms of its ideological leanings, quality of pedagogies and its practicability especially in the multitask provincial setting in Pakistan.

The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) will be a unique example of SCN execution. After the 18 th Constitutional Amendment in 2010, provincial governments were granted the autonomy of education policy making (KP had autonomy in education policy-making) (Ahmad et al., 2025). The SNC is however federally required, which presents the conflict between provincial autonomy and national standardizing. KP has other contextual issues: a record of militancy and displacement, especially in Swat Valley; language diversity, with Pashto as the language of choice and Urdu as the medium of instruction; lack of educational facilities in the rural setting; and a security issue that interferes with schooling. They further complicate the generic issues of curriculum reform: teacher readiness, allocation of resources and alignment of stakeholder and KP is an important location to study the realities of implementation.

This paper examines the manner in which teachers in the Peshawar (the provincial capital and largest city) and in Swat Valley (a rather rural area and the region with the recent history of unrest) address the challenges of SNC implementation. Research questions that will inform this research are as follows: (1) What are the main issues that teachers encounter when applying the SNC in the unique contexts of KP? (2) How do teachers show agency in changing, opposing or altering curriculum demands? (3) How different is the implementation experience of urban Peshawar and rural Swat Valley? (4) What can be done to enhance teacher professional development and support systems, to enhance fidelity to implementation?

This research is not only of interest academically, but also of urgent policy importance. In the effort by Pakistan to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education which is the goal of providing all with quality education) the reasons behind curriculum reforms success or failure in the difficult conditions are critical to the allocation of resources and so that reforms are designed. Moreover, the experience of KP provides lessons to other post-conflict territories struggling with the reconstruction and standardization of the education system.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Single National Curriculum: Policy History and Caught in the Crossfire.

The SNC is a product of the education reform agenda by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, which was developed as a tool of social justice and national integration. The official justification is the eradication of differences in streams of education, the decrease in socioeconomic stratification, and inculcation of shared values according to the Islamic doctrine and the national ideology. Protagonists believe that the old system promoted inequality by giving decent education to only those who can afford a private school whereas the SNC provides a standardized education and content irrespective of the type of institution.

Nevertheless, the critical analysis shows that the design and the objectives of the SNC have tensions. Niaz and Anand (2024) discuss the curriculum as a right-wing populism approach to the arguments that, on the one hand, it is claimed that it leads to the unification of the educational system, but, on the other hand, it may contribute to the further dissemination of social disparity by encouraging an exclusionary kind of religious nationalism. The intensive focus on Islamic material, e.g. compulsory Islamiat since 1st grade, with recitation of the Quran and its hadith, has also been controversial as to the inclusion of religious minorities, even in spite of constitutional guarantees. In a Lahore based study, the content of the English textbooks in grades 3-5 was determined to be a violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right to religious freedom between 9-23 per cent and it is clear that too much importance has been given to the ideology at the expense of cognitive development.

The pedagogical methodology of the SNC has been criticized too. In a critical analysis of SNC model textbooks used in Punjab, Alta (2022) writes that the curriculum is ideological in the sense that it incorporates the state narrative into elementary education, with indoctrination over critical thinking. There is lack of interactive and inquiry based education and mechanicality of teaching processes, which kills curiosity and creativity. Also, linguistic issues also arise because of the teaching of mathematics (symbolic language) in English to students whose thoughts are mainly in their native languages.

Some of the challenges to implementation recorded in Pakistan are: lack of teacher training (55% of teachers express dissatisfaction with the quality of training); lack of resources (60% of them include the lack of materials); the unwillingness of the teaching community used to the curriculum of Cambridge background; and the lack of alignment between progressive curriculum objective and regressive evaluation method. A study in District Khushab determined 90 percent implementation of SNC in the private schools but noted the challenges faced by teachers in terms of inadequate training and lack of resources especially in rural one room schools with underqualified teachers.

2.2 Theory of Curriculum Implementation and Implementation Gap

The research of curriculum implementation differentiates the intended curriculum (official policy), the implemented curriculum (what really happens in the classrooms) and the achieved curriculum (student learning outcomes). This model exposes structural implementation gaps that are consistent throughout the world of education reforms, namely the gap between policy proposals and school realities, which afflict educational reforms in developing nations.

The seminal work by Fullan (2015) about the three implementation levels denotes the use of materials (new textbooks and resources), teaching practices (pedagogical strategies), and beliefs (underlying assumptions about education). The only way of successful reform is alignment of all levels but teachers tend to use materials on a surface level keeping the old traditions and beliefs. This is the fatal mutation of reform whereby the good policies are

twisted in application- this is the explanation why most curriculum reforms do not achieve desired results.

Darling-Hammond (2000) argues that it is hard to enact curriculum changes without pertinent and efficient teacher training, which is supported by research studies in the developing settings. According to Emeh and Osunde (2015), there is a need to minimize challenges of implementation by providing on-going and specific teacher assistance. The theoretical implications are that the success of the SNC is not simply about the curriculum design but the so-called implementation infrastructure, i.e., professional development of teachers, appropriation of resources, well-alignment of assessment, and institutional support.

The literature of the policy-practice gap points to the fact that the macro-level reforms face the micro-level realities. According to Pak et al. (2020), curriculum implementation has some adaptive challenges in which teachers have to deal with conflicting requirements, scarce resources, and situational limitations. Educators do not simply implement policy passively but they are street-level bureaucrats who make discretionary decisions in interpreting and implementing policy. Systems of support and incentives can make this agency productive (adjusting reforms to local needs) or counterproductive (opposing or watering down reforms).

2.3 Education Decentralization and the 18th Amendment Backdrop

The 18 th Constitutional Amendment (2010) radically transformed the education governance in Pakistan through devolution of curriculum, standards and policy into provinces. The purpose of this decentralization was to accommodate the regional diversity and enhance accountability but this posed a new problem of coordination at the national level. According to Ahmad et al. (2025), KP has been assessed on its effectiveness in developing autonomous education policies, where shortage of policy experts, insufficient financial and human resources, political interference, and not consulting stakeholders, have been seen to have contributed to the poor performance of the province despite having constitutional powers to undertake such tasks.

The national standardization vs. provincial autonomy is a situation that is especially urgent to the SNC. Whereas the federal government dictates the SNC, the provinces still have constitutional powers in the area of education, which overlaps and conflicts with each other. The Sindh has disowned SNC entirely and Balochistan and the KP give the reason of lack of preparedness to be implemented. This tug-of-war between the center and provinces is damaging in terms of uniformity of implementation and breeds the question of whether or not the SNC is constitutional in a devolved system of governance.

Educational decentralization research recommends that effective devolution entails capacity building in provincial and district levels, definition of roles, and liaison mechanisms between the provinces. The experience of Pakistan shows that decentralization in the absence of either resource transfer or capacity development leaves unfunded mandates in which the provinces are supposed to provide education delivery without the relevant fiscal power or technical know-how.

2.4 Curriculum Reform and Teacher Agency and Professional Development

The teachers are at the vanguard of the intersection point where policy on the curriculum and student learning meet but are usually marginalized when reform is being formulated. The studies of teacher agency highlight that teachers are not just the executors of the external curriculum designed systems but are agents who influence the reform through their beliefs, knowledge and judgments about the context. Priestley et al. (2012) articulate the concept of agency as the productive or enabling condition of actors in that it is possible to engage

critically with own responsiveness to problematic conditions; in other words, they navigate structural constraints and have the opportunity to exercise professional discretion.

Teacher agency in curriculum reform contexts takes three forms: adaptation (alteration of curriculum materials to meet local conditions); resistance (rejection or superficial conformity to reforms); or creative interpretation (seeking new ways to meet the reform goals with the constraints). The degree of agency is based on the professional knowledge of teachers, levels of autonomy and the policy climate, which refers to the level of prescription, monitoring and accountability.

Teacher agency can only be facilitated with professional development. According to Chen (2023), Taiwan has a s/he led system of teacher professional development to reform curriculum where practiced-based learning is applied long term as opposed to a single training workshop. Effective professional growth: subject specific content and pedagogy; continuous help in mentoring and communities of practice; goes hand in hand with assessment and accountability systems; and treats teachers as active learners instead of passive receivers.

The record of teacher professional development in Pakistan is not good. The education of pre-service teachers is too theoretical and lacking in connection with reality in the classroom, and in-service training is intermittent, poorly funded, and ill-structured in terms of reform requirements. The implementation of the SNC has been surrounded with the so called cascade training models in which the master trainers are in charge of training district officials who in turn train the teachers a diffusion process which generally dilutes the content and does not respond to the challenges related to context.

2.5: Post-Conflict and Linguistically Diverse Education Education in Post-Conflict and Linguistically Diverse Education

The context of the implementation of KP is determined by its recent history of conflict and diversity because of language. Swat Valley had seen both Taliban control (2007-2009) and military operations displacing thousands of people and destroying schools and disrupting years of education. The reconstruction of education in post-conflict situations is characterized by such challenges as: destroyed infrastructure; traumatized students and teachers; a curriculum full of conflict stories; and security issues which restrict access to education, especially by girls.

There is further complication in linguistic diversity. Urdu is the national language and the medium of instruction, although, in KP, the majority speaks Pakistani, which is known as Pashto. Studies on mother-tongue education have shown that children acquire best through learning literacy and numeracy skills first in their first language and new skills and languages are then introduced gradually. The SNC practice of teaching in Urdu, early exposure of English in mathematics and science, potentially poses language barriers to learning in the Pashto-speaking children and in rural locations where Urdu is not widely exposed.

The following contextual factors indicate that the implementation of a uniform national curriculum is not perhaps suitable in the diverse realities of KP. As noted by comparative education research, reforms that are contextually responsive, i.e. are adjusted to local circumstances and do not use universal solutions are required.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The proposed study will use a qualitative case study method, which is suitable to research complicated educational phenomena in practical settings. The case study design allows studying in detail teacher experiences, challenges in implementation, and situational factors that influence SNC implementation in two different environments (urban Peshawar and rural

Swat Valley) in KP. This comparative case design sheds light on the variation in implementation in different contexts and finding out shared challenges and responses.

The research utilizes a variety of data sources to facilitate triangulation: semi-structured interviews as teachers; focus group discussion as school administrators; classroom observations as well as policy documents, textbooks and training material analysis. This multi-source method increases the validity by juxtaposing the views of the stakeholders and comparing the intentions that are made with the practices that are observed.

Sites and Participants 3.2 Research Sites and Participant Selection

Peshawar: Provincial capital where there are mixed schools of all kinds, the infrastructure is relatively better and the exposure to an array of educational influence is available. The two urban and peri-urban primary schools are considered research sites, two of which are private schools.

Swat Valley: This is one of the rural areas with recent history of conflicts, poor infrastructure, well-established traditional social system, and Pashto as the main language. There will be two in the main town of Mingora (the research site) and two in the rural locations.

The participants were chosen based on the purposive sampling to be diverse in terms of: type of school (public/ private); level (primary/ secondary); gender (male/ female teachers); and experience (novice/ seasoned). The sample is split into 32 teachers (16 in Peshawar, 16 in Swat; 18 female and 14 male) and 8 school administrators and 4 education officials within the district.

3.3 Data Collection

Semi Structured Interviews: The interviews were carried out with teachers through interview guide which included: professional background; SNC training experiences; implementation challenges; strategies to adapt to it; opinion on the contents of the curriculum; and recommendations on what can be done to improve it. Interviews were recorded in Urdu or Pashto (and translated to be analyzed) and took 45-60 minutes with approval.

Focus Group Discussions: There were two FGDs that were conducted with administrators (one in each area) that addressed the systemic issues, allocation of resources, monitoring processes, and the coordination between schools.

Classroom Notes: There were four observations (two in each place) in classrooms in teaching practices, SNC materials used, student engagement, and language of instruction.

Document Analysis: Policy document of SNC, materials of KP Textbook Board, training manuals, and evaluation system were examined against alignment, clarity and ideology.

3.4 Data Analysis

The tapes of the interviews were transcribed and put into English. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data according to the six steps of the six-step approach that Braun and Clarke (2006) described to analyze the data: familiarization with data; initial coding; theme searching; theme reviewing; theme defining; and report writing. Coding and theme organization were facilitated by use of the NVivo software.

The analysis was done in various stages, starting with the emergent themes referred to as initial coding (e.g., "training inadequacy," "resource constraints," "ideological concerns") and grouped into more general categories (implementation challenges, teacher adaptations, contextual factors). Comparative analysis was done on differences between Peshawar and Swat and between public and private schools.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The institutional review board gave ethical approval to the study. Informed consent was given by all the subjects, and it was ensured that there was confidentiality and right of withdrawal.

Since it is a sensitive topic to criticize government policy, anonymity was used, and identifiable information was deleted in transcripts. The special consideration was given in Swat Valley due to the recent history of conflicts and the current state of security.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Implementation issues: Resources, Training and Infrastructure

Lack of resources to implement SNC was the most widespread problem found by teachers in both the places. The teachers interviewed in Peshawar indicated a lack of adequate teaching resources, especially textbooks, workbooks and other materials in SNC-alignment. One of the teachers mentioned: "Textbooks were provided to us two months later than the beginning of the academic time. Then we had but one book, to the entire subject of the whole class. What are we supposed to do when the students are not able to keep up? (Interview, Peshawar, March 2024).

This was even worse in Swat Valley where resources were at a very low level. Rural schools complained of inadequate basic facilities such as electricity, furnitures and toilets, not mentioning curriculum related resources. According to a headteacher in upper Swat, the SNC demands the activity based learning, group work and project based assessment. However we have 60 students in a 30 students classroom with no electricity supply to projectors and computers and a zero budget to support materials. It supposes that we do not have a school curriculum in existence (Interview, Swat, April 2024).

A gap that was identified as a key problem was professional development. Only 45 percent of the teachers said they had received any SNC training and those who rated it as insufficient. Training was usually one day workshop oriented on content coverage and not on pedagogical strategies. One of the Peshawar teachers when asked about the new books remarked: They informed us about the contents of the new books, but not how to teach differently. The same chalk-and-talk and only new content are being used though (Interview, Peshawar, February 2024). Women educators in Swat complained about special exclusion in training because of cultural barriers to traveling and co-educational classes.

4.2 Content Concerns and Ideological Tensions

Educators were very apprehensive regarding the ideological orientation of the SNC especially the overwhelming focus on religious content. Though it is true that Pakistan is an Islamic nation, many of its teachers, particularly in the private schools, had doubts about the suitability and inclusiveness of the religious content and its pedagogical suitability. One of the teachers of a private school in Peshawar said: We have Christian and Hindu students in our school. SNC Islamiat curriculum presupposes that all students are Muslim. It has to be taught since it is on the exam, yet it makes our minority students ignore them (Interview, Peshawar, March 2024).

At Swat Valley, where religious tradition is high, some teachers saw the Islamic content provided by the SNC to be not rigorous enough against the traditional madrassa education. A Swati male teacher in the countryside noted: "Parents in our region would prefer that their children study Quran and Hadith in detail. The SNC is somewhat religious yet not so much so that our community expects. Their preferred way of education is madrassas" (Interview, Swat, April 2024). This implies that the SNC can meet both the secular and the religiously conservative constituencies.

There was certain tension created by language of instruction. The SNC provides instruction in Urdu with the introduction of English and Pashto-speaking students in Swat find it hard to master the Urdu language. One of the primary teachers explained: All our students speak Pashto at home. They fail to understand when we teach in Urdu. When we

teach in Pashto, we are not adhering to the curriculum. And lots of children are lost" (Interview, Swat, April 2024). The same linguistic barrier was not so sharp in Peshawar where there is more exposure to Urdu, however, noted as a challenge.

4.3 Teacher Agency: Adaptation, Resistance, and Selective Implementation

In adapting, resisting or selective implementation, instead of a passive implementation, the teachers engaged in a high level of agency in implementing the SNC. This practical agency had a number of forms:

Selective Implementation: When choosing content, teachers gave priority to things that would support the examination needs and disregarded the optional activities or project aspects. One of the teachers interviewed stated that a secondary teacher concentrates on what is going to be tested. The SNC is busy with numerous activities and projects, however, when they are not in exam, we leave them to do the syllabus' (Interview, Peshawar, March 2024).

Pedagogical Adaptation: Instructors adjusted activities given in SNC to the needs of resources. As an illustration, group work was provided in rows instead of groups and project-based learning turned into individual homework assignments because of the absence of materials to work with in classes.

Content Supplementation: In private school, especially in Peshawar, the teachers used to supplement SNC materials with extra textbooks and other textbooks, materials of Cambridge or Oxford curriculum, which they did just to ensure the pre-SNC standards were not violated by the official demands. One of the principals of a private school affirmed: parents pay good fees to get quality education. The SNC in itself is insufficient. We train SNC concerning the government check but learn with international books in practice (Interview, Peshawar, February 2024).

Resistance: There was active resistance by some teachers to SNC requirements that they considered to be inappropriate and non-workable. An established teacher in Swat did not want to teach some English language materials that he deemed as culturally unacceptable and instead he taught some traditional Pashto literature.

4.4 Differences in context: Peshawar vs. Swat Valley

Striking variations were developed in contexts of implementation:

Peshawar teachers have also stated that the access to resources, training and professional networks were more accessible, but large classes (50-60 students), heterogeneous classes with Afghan refugees and pressure of wealthy parents who insisted on teaching in English were also a problem. In Peshawar, private schools enjoyed much autonomy, and decoupling of formal and actual practice.

Teachers in Swat valley had worse infrastructure shortages, security threats on girls education and the community pressure on religious education. They also, however, mentioned greater levels of community support of schools and coherent school cultures. Swat female teachers had been especially limited by the cultural norms that restricted their movement and their career growth.

Though security issues in Swat were reduced since 2009, implementation is still influenced by this issue. Schools were occasionally shut down because of security operations and it interfered with curriculum coverage. One of the teachers has remarked: We spend weeks of instruction in suspensions. Then we have to hurry to cram the SNC before exams. It is impossible to have quality" (Interview, Swat, April 2024).

4.5 Assessment Misalignment

An example of essential implementation obstacle in the two sites was the lack of congruence between the forward-looking objectives of the SNC and the conservative examination

framework. It is also the case that the SNC focuses on critical thinking, creativity, and on project-based learning, yet the assessment is oriented towards rote memorization and memorization of facts. It was noted that teachers are teaching to the test, instead of using SNC pedagogical requirements.

The reason behind the dilemma, according to a secondary teacher in Peshawar, is the fact that the SNC is encouraging us to think critically, whereas the board exams require memorized definitions. Students do not pass exams in case the lessons are taught critically. We are to decide whether to stick to the curriculum or to guarantee a successful student performance" (Interview, Peshawar, March 2024). Such assessment-practice gap invalidates the transformative potential of the SNC and turns it into content changes, rather than the pedagogical innovation.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Implementation Gap Policy Intention vs. Classroom Reality

This report records a large gap in implementation of the grandiose goals of the SNC and ground level realities in KP. Although the curriculum contains the vision of learning activities, development of critical thinking, and equity in education, teachers face the problem of the lack of resources, insufficient training, and the lack of balance between assessment systems and traditional practices. This is not the only gap that can be found in Pakistan; curriculum reform has a problem with implementation all over the world, especially in situations where resources are limited. Nevertheless, the fact that the SNC takes the one size fits all approach does not help in mitigating these issues since they do not consider KP circumstances that include linguistic diversity, post-conflict recovery, and lack of infrastructure.

The result that teachers have a prudent agency in implementing reforms or opposing these changes is consistent with the implementation theory that focuses on the professionalism of teachers and situational judgment. This agency is rather a manifestation of logical reactions to unreasonable demands, as opposed to an indicator of teacher failure. The teachers are supposed to apply a pedagogically advanced curriculum that is resource intensive with lack of support mechanisms. Their adaptations including selective implementation, content supplementation, pedagogical modification are simply coping strategies and not opposition to change.

5.2 The Decentralization Paradox

The paper exposes the contradiction of decentralization in education, that is, the 18 th Amendment decentralized education to provinces so that policy can be tailored to the context and SNC restores centralization. The fact that KP has not been able to formulate its own policies independently, as reported by Ahmad et al. (2025) may indicate that centralized standardization is a good idea. Nevertheless, the homogeneous content of the SNC does not consider the linguistic and cultural characteristics of KP, especially the Pashto language and the local knowledge.

This conflict of national unity as opposed to regional diversity cannot be easily addressed. Extreme provincial independence will lead to continued inequalities and strict national standardization disregards the local realities. One of the middle paths could be national standards with provincial flexibility of implementation, which means that KP could be flexible in its language of instruction, add local content, and change schedules without affecting essential standards of learning.

5.3 Teacher Learning: Cascade to Embedded Learning

The findings of insufficiency of teacher training as reported in the study are consistent with those of the global information regarding the fact that the training models based on cascades

i.e. master trainers training district officials who train teachers are ineffective in complex pedagogical reforms. Sustained, practice-based professional development is required to teachers which: includes content and pedagogy expertise about the subject; offers them constant mentoring and peer support; corresponds to the evaluation systems; and honors the professional knowledge of teachers.

Taiwan has provided an example: systemic teacher professional development (Chen, 2023) provides a whole set of pre-service education, novice teacher induction, sustained learning in the professional learning community, and career growth based on professional growth. The system of Pakistan does not provide such aspects and resorts rather to the occasional workshops, which are not related to the classroom reality.

5.4 Policy and Practice Implications

On the basis of these results, it is recommended that the study recommends that:

Contextualized Implementation: Provide KP with the latitude in the language of instruction (capability to use Pashto-medium instruction during the initial grades), a time frame to complete the implementation process, and the localization of the content, but the preservation of the national norms in terms of core competencies.

Resource Commitment: Provide the schools with the textbooks and materials on time; invest in the school infrastructure, in rural Swat especially; and offer specific budgets on SNC implementation, not unfunded requirements.

Professional Development Reform: Instead of cascade training, commit to embedded, long-lasting, professional learning; instead of infrequent workshops, continue to mentor and mentee over an extended period of time; and instead of separate subject-specific professional learning communities, overall, they constitute a system of professional learning.

Assessment Alignment: Reform Assessment systems so that they require critical thinking and application, and not memorization; and balance assessment with the SNC pedagogical objectives in order to implement them faithfully.

Stakeholder Engagement: Involve teachers, parents and communities in the curriculum review process; respond to religious content and inclusiveness issues; and develop ownership by involving the stakeholders in the participatory processes as opposed to acting as top-down agents.

6. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the application of the Single National Curriculum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, and has shown that there exists a lot of discrepancy between the intended policies and the classroom practices. In Peshawar and the Swat Valley, teachers meet implementation problems with the practical agency, changing or opposing curriculum demands or selectively responding to contextual constraints. Although the equity goals of the SNC can be praised, the lack of funds and resources, the deficiency of professional training and development, the tensions of the ideologies and the replacement of the evaluation systems have complicated the process.

The research makes a contribution to the study of curriculum implementation in post devolution, post-conflict settings, where national standardization and provincial autonomies, progressive and traditional assessment, policy ideals and material resources are in tension. The results indicate that effective curriculum change in Pakistan needs not only improved curriculum design, but also investing in implementation facilities, including teacher development, provision of resources, assessment congruency, and stakeholder involvement.

The challenges of the SNC provide insights into changes in education reform around the world as Pakistan approaches the 2030 deadline of Sustainable Development Goal 4: without

changes in the institution, teachers, and resources, such ambitious changes cannot work. KP teachers, who exercise professional judgment in challenging situations, should be supported but not blamed in areas of implementation. Pakistan can only have the desired educational equity and quality when its policymakers and practitioners establish a real partnership.

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