

## Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in District Ziarat- Quetta

Latif Ullah

Ph.D. Scholar. Department of Education, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences,  
Metropolitan University Karachi, [latifgharshin@gmail.com](mailto:latifgharshin@gmail.com)

**Prof. Dr. Shahida Sajjad**

Department of Education, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Metropolitan  
University Karachi, [shahida\\_sajjad75270@yahoo.com](mailto:shahida_sajjad75270@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

*The Single National Curriculum in Pakistan was one of the government's strategies in trying to set targets and goals of improvement of educational standards to enhance the quality of education in the country. This quantitative explanatory study used a descriptive-correlational approach to explore the various challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Single National Curriculum in District Ziarat of the province of Baluchistan in Pakistan. Through a simple random sampling, 250 teachers from primary, secondary, middle, and higher secondary schools of district Ziarat were selected. A self-structured closed-ended questionnaire was developed to explore the various aspects of Teacher's Challenges. Results demonstrate that teacher challenges are moderate to high across all dimensions, even though all categories of challenge are statistically significant in their distribution. Overall, teachers perceived notable challenges affecting curriculum implementation, with teacher autonomy and administrative and principal support showing slightly higher mean scores, indicating a stronger perceived impact. The results found that there is a significant relationship between **teacher-related challenges** (training, resources, autonomy, workload, and administration support) and the implementation of the SNC. Additionally, all dimensions of challenges are equally significant, suggesting a systematic and interconnected impact on SNC implementation rather than isolated issues.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, Teachers, Single National Curriculum (SNC)

### Introduction

A curriculum is an orderly plan for teaching and learning that forms the foundation of an educational system. It is a detailed plan of action that identifies particular learning objectives, content, instructions, evaluation procedures, and required resources (Ibad, 2024). It also helps in bringing uniformity between the different schools and ensures that the students get access to a similar level of education regardless of where they are based (Shaikh & Benedetti, 2024). Single National Curriculum (SNC) is a significant educational change in Pakistan aiming to streamline the learning content in public schools, privately-run learning institutions, and religious seminaries (madrasahs) (Irfan, 2021). The education system in Pakistan before its introduction was quite fragmented, and there were wide gaps in the quality and content of the education, which had continued to increase inequality among the students of different socio-economic statuses. The SNC is designed to eliminate these disparities by achieving equality

in education since all students (irrespective of the schooling system) are to get the same set of basic knowledge (Jahanzaib et al., 2021).

Even though its ultimate aims are progressive, the implementation process of the SNC is faced with critical challenges, such as the low levels of stakeholder participation in its development; the teachers, district education managers, and local experts were sidelined in its development, and this may compromise its successful implementation. Also, the success of the curriculum relies on the allocation of heavy resources to teacher preparation, newer textbooks, and infrastructure modification. There have also been criticisms about whether it strikes the right balance between religious and secular education, as the society of Pakistan is a pluralistic one. Although the SNC is a vital initiative in an effort to achieve educational equity, its efficiency is determined by balancing regional inequalities, implementing the voices of the grassroots, and providing flexible responses to the local demands. Without such corrections, the policy can become just a perfect scheme instead of being a revolutionary practice. The issue of curriculum implementation has not been reported in studies around the effectiveness of curriculum, particularly in the context of Balochistan. Pakistan's SNC is an unprecedented new educational policy that is expected to unify the learning outcomes in all the public, private, and religious schools in Pakistan. Nevertheless, there is a very real research gap in terms of grasping the way the curriculum is actually implemented on the ground at both provincial and district levels. It does not mirror the socio-cultural and language contexts of the regions, such as that of Balochistan (Jan et al., 2023).

The study was based on the following objectives:

1. To explore the various challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Single National Curriculum in District Ziarat of the province of Balochistan in Pakistan.
2. To investigate the relationship between **teacher-related challenges** and the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

### **Literature Review**

The SNC in Pakistan was one of the government's strategies in trying to set targets and goals of improvement of educational standards in order to enhance the quality of education in the country. It was established in 2020 and aimed at harmonizing the many curricula that are used by the different educational boards and institutions (Ali, 2024). The initiative helped in offering equitable education to all students regardless of their social and religious background, and the area they come from or the poverty level of their families (Haider, 2022).

It was a good initiative of the government, but it was associated with many policy deficiencies and challenges. One of the important ones was its practicality across various types of educational contexts (Fayyaz, 2023). In Pakistan, the educational system has a considerable distribution of resources, quality of teachers, and requirements of the regions. This uniformity does not consider the disparities it seeks to rectify, which may result in unequal educational attainment by the subjects of the SNC. If there are schools located in remote or low-income areas, they are most likely to fail to meet the curriculum on account of an absence of resources/infrastructure (Shah, 2023).

Another drawback is the problem of noninvolvement of stakeholders in the curriculum formulation. When drawing up the SNC, the consultations from teachers, parents, and education specialists that are vital in making sure that the curriculum caters to the real needs

and Provider challenges were limited (Thakur et al., 2021). This has evoked criticisms on the appropriateness and practicability of skills learned in the curriculum and what is implemented in real classes. In particular, the preparation and training of teachers has been cited as an area of concern as far as implementation of the new curriculum is concerned (Iqbal & Tatlah, 2022).

Also, there are concerns raised about SNC in that it concentrates on content substance rather than the methods of teaching. Perhaps one of its shortcomings is that while the curriculum insists on a prescribed syllabus, it fails to capture current practices in teaching and learning as well as skills in analytical thinking (Muqadar et al., 2023). This could lead to more mechanical learning as opposed to developing the analytical and problem-solving skills in students. Eradicating these policy shortcomings entails public participation by all the educational players in setting up a new curriculum inclusive of the needs of diverse learners, as well as the modern education system.

### **Main Challenges to Curriculum Implementation**

An effective implementation of curriculum involves various challenges that affect its success and effectiveness. Such challenges may vary from resource constraints to change resistance. This is one of the first issues with the implementation of a curriculum where there are not enough resources. Essential materials in delivering a curriculum, like textbooks, technology, and teaching aids, may affect schools by becoming scarce (Aslam et al., 2024; Karakus, 2021). Moreover, they can interfere with access to these resources due to inadequate funding, therefore reducing the capacity to offer the required professional development to the teachers. In the absence of the necessary resources, implementation of the curriculum may not be as planned and result in the lack of consistency in instructional programs and inequality among learners (Namubiru et al, 2024).

In order to be able to realize the effective implementation of the curriculum, teachers must be well prepared and supported. Most teachers do not get proper training and subsequent professional support for the new curriculum. This may lead to a misconception of the content and pedagogy that the curriculum handles, and this may influence the quality of teaching (Khushi, 2023). Also, the teachers might require further assistance to revise their teaching styles and include the new materials in the process. In the absence of appropriate training and support, the curriculum might not be applied uniformly or even successfully in the different classrooms (Abedi, 2023).

Another issue of concern with regard to curriculum implementation is the resistance to change. Both teachers and stakeholders might hesitate to implement new curricula because they are comfortable with the current ones or exhibit doubts regarding the new ones (Aytac, 2023). All new methods or content may not be accepted by teachers who feel that their teaching routines are being interfered with, or because teachers feel that these changes are not being implemented after due consultation. To address this resistance, it is important to communicate openly, engage stakeholders in the development process, and show the advantages of the new curriculum so that they feel vested in the process of positive attitude and buy-in (Kim, 2024).

The curriculum implementation may become difficult where neither the curriculum nor the local context or culture of people are matched (Mpuangan & Ntombela, 2024). A uniform

curriculum does not necessarily resonate with the needs of the unique communities and does not necessarily reflect their values or educational priorities. The same applies to the various regions that may have different cultural backgrounds or special situations. During circumstances like this, it is important to adjust the curriculum to make it culturally relevant and supportive of the different contexts (Numan & Ayaz, 2023). These background factors can result in failure of engagement and relevance, hence affecting the overall efficiency of the curriculum. These existing issues have to be tackled, as they require a complex strategy that will encompass supplying resources and teacher training, and support. Opposition to the adoption of curriculum should be addressed by effective management structures, and the curriculum must also be flexible to fit into the local setting and culture.

Research on the SNC in Pakistan reveals several critical gaps that need to be addressed to enhance its effectiveness and implementation. One significant gap is the impact of the SNC on the regional disparities that exist amongst different provinces in Pakistan. While the curriculum aims to standardize education across the country, there is limited research on how well it will address the diverse needs of students in different geographic and socio-economic contexts. Another research gap concerns the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the SNC. Although the curriculum is intended to be a unifying framework, there is insufficient research on how well the teachers are adapting to the new requirements. Detailed studies are needed to explore the adequacy of the training provided and the support structures available to know about the specific difficulties that the teachers and educators encounter. The insights into these challenges can provide a path to the development of more effective training programs and support systems, which can ensure that the teachers are well-equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively.

### Methodology

This quantitative explanatory study used a descriptive-correlational approach. Through a simple random sampling, 250 teachers from primary, secondary, middle, and higher secondary schools of district Ziarat were selected. The majority of them (49.6%) were in the age range of 31 to 40 years, the majority (37.2%) were from primary schools, and the majority of the teachers (68.8%) had a Master's degree. A self-structured closed-ended questionnaire was developed on various aspects of Teachers' Challenges (20 items), including: Training and Professional Development (4 items), Resources and Materials (4 items), Teacher's Autonomy (4 items), Workload and Management (4 items), and Administration's/Principal's Support (4 items) of Ziarat District. The researcher distributed the survey questionnaires in hard copy because there were limited internet facilities and connection issues in Ziarat District. Further, this method ensured comprehensive participation across all strata. The data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Single National Curriculum in District Ziarat?

Table 1 reports that the teachers were provided training and professional development to understand the contents of the new curriculum, use practical strategies for implementing the curriculum, their access to mentors/specialists when encountering challenges, and the relevance of the training to the subject. The highest mean scores were observed for item

number 2, which states that “the training provided practical strategies for implementing the curriculum”,  $M = 3.49$  ( $SD = 1.213$ ), and item 4, which states that “the training was relevant to my subject”,  $M = 3.46$  ( $SD = 1.186$ ).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Training and Professional Development of Teachers (N=250)*

|   |  | SD | D  | N      | A       | SA      | M       | SD      |
|---|--|----|----|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | I received sufficient training to understand the contents of the new curriculum. | 23 | 47 | 59     | 70      | 51      | 3.32    | 1.24    |
|   |  |    |    | (9.2%) | (18.8%) | (23.6%) | (28.0%) | (20.4%) |
|   |  |    |    |        |         |         |         | 8       |
| 2 | The training provided practical strategies for implementing the curriculum.      | 19 | 38 | 52     | 84      | 57      | 3.49    | 1.21    |
|   |  |    |    | (7.6%) | (15.2%) | (20.8%) | (33.6%) | (22.8%) |
|   |  |    |    |        |         |         |         | 3       |
| 3 | I have access to mentors and specialists when I encounter difficulties.          | 18 | 39 | 68     | 78      | 47      | 3.39    | 1.16    |
|   |  |    |    | (7.2%) | (15.6%) | (27.2%) | (31.2%) | (18.8%) |
|   |  |    |    |        |         |         |         | 7       |
| 4 | The training was relevant to my subject.   | 15 | 44 | 58     | 78      | 55      | 3.46    | 1.18    |
|   |  |    |    | (6.0%) | (17.6%) | (23.2%) | (31.2%) | (22.0%) |
|   |  |    |    |        |         |         |         | 6       |

Table 2 reports that the majority of them expressed their agreement about the provision of resources and materials as a challenge in the implementation of SNC. The highest mean score was observed for item 7, which states that “I have sufficient time to create supplementary materials for lesson topics”,  $M = 3.66$  ( $SD = 1.076$ ).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Resources and Materials provided to Teachers (N=250)*

|   |  | SD | D  | N       | A       | SA      | M       | SD      |
|---|--|----|----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 5 | I have been provided with all the necessary teaching and learning materials. | 14 | 45 | 59      | 75      | 57      | 3.46    | 1.186   |
|   |  |    |    | (5.6%)  | (18.0%) | (23.6%) | (30.0%) | (22.8%) |
| 6 | The learning material is well aligned with the curriculum objectives.        | 14 | 40 | 52      | 98      | 46      | 3.49    | 1.131   |
|   |  |    |    | (5.6%)  | (16.0%) | (20.8%) | (39.2%) | (18.4%) |
| 7 | I have sufficient time to create supplementary materials for lesson topics.  | 9  | 34 | 45      | 107     | 55      | 3.66    | 1.076   |
|   |  |    |    | (3.6%)  | (13.6%) | (18.0%) | (42.8%) | (22.0%) |
| 8 | My school's facilities support the requirements of the new curriculum.       | 27 | 43 | 43      | 72      | 65      | 3.42    | 1.328   |
|   |  |    |    | (10.8%) | (17.2%) | (17.2%) | (28.8%) | (26.0%) |

Table 3 reports that the teachers were given autonomy. The highest mean scores were observed for item number 10, which states that “I feel my professional expertise is trusted in delivering the curriculum content”,  $M = 3.95$  ( $SD = .923$ ), and item 12, which states that “I



Table 6 highlights the administration's or principal's support in implementing the SNC curriculum, and the results indicate that the majority of the teachers were continuously communicated regarding the curriculum by their administration or principal, teachers are supported by school leadership, curriculum reforms have a positive impact on students' learning, and colleagues help teachers to teach content. The highest mean score was observed for item number 19, which states that "the curriculum reforms have a positive impact on student learning",  $M = 4.11$  ( $SD = .967$ ).

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics of Administration's or Principal's Support for Teachers (N=250)*

|    |   | SD     | D       | N       | A       | SA      | M    | SD    |
|----|---|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|-------|
| 17 | The administration continuously communicates with me regarding the curriculum implementation. | 14     | 45      | 48      | 75      | 68      | 3.55 | 1.222 |
|    |   | (5.6%) | (18.0%) | (19.2%) | (30.0%) | (27.2%) |      |       |
| 18 | I am supported by the school leadership in implementing curriculum changes.                   | 14     | 34      | 52      | 87      | 63      | 3.60 | 1.165 |
|    |   | (5.6%) | (13.6%) | (20.8%) | (34.8%) | (25.2%) |      |       |
| 19 | The curriculum reforms have a positive impact on student learning.                            | 7      | 13      | 23      | 109     | 98      | 4.11 | .967  |
|    |   | (2.8%) | (5.2%)  | (9.2%)  | (43.6%) | (39.2%) |      |       |
| 20 | My colleagues help me teach the curriculum content well.                                      | 9      | 19      | 53      | 99      | 70      | 3.81 | 1.043 |
|    |   | (3.6%) | (7.6%)  | (21.2%) | (39.6%) | (28.0%) |      |       |

### **Research Question 2**

Is there a significant relationship exist between **teacher-related challenges** (training, resources, autonomy, workload, and administration support) and the implementation of the Single National Curriculum?

**Research Hypothesis:** There is a significant relationship between **teacher-related challenges** (training, resources, autonomy, workload, and administration support) and the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between **teacher-related challenges** (training, resources, autonomy, workload, and administration support) and the implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics on the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the SNC. Results demonstrate that teacher challenges are moderate to high across all dimensions, even though all categories of challenge are statistically significant in their distribution. Overall, teachers perceived notable challenges affecting curriculum implementation, with teacher autonomy and administrative and principal support showing slightly higher mean scores, indicating a stronger perceived impact. This indicates that all dimensions of challenges are equally significant, suggesting a systematic and interconnected impact on SNC implementation rather than isolated issues.

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics on the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the SNC (N=250)*

|                                     | M    | SD    | Chi-Square                  |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Training & Professional Development | 3.41 | 1.014 | 71.776 <sup>a</sup> (.000)  |
| Resources & Materials               | 3.51 | .950  | 110.128 <sup>a</sup> (.000) |
| Teacher Autonomy                    | 3.82 | .715  | 137.072 <sup>b</sup> (.000) |
| Workload & Management               | 3.74 | .649  | 83.408 <sup>c</sup> (.000)  |
| Administration & Principal Support  | 3.77 | .882  | 129.904 <sup>d</sup> (.000) |
| Teacher challenges                  | 3.65 | .653  | 78.800 <sup>e</sup> (.004)  |

- a. 0 cells (0.0%) expected frequencies > 5 (min expected cell frequency is 14.7).
- b. 0 cells (0.0%) expected frequencies > 5 (min expected cell frequency is 17.9).
- c. 0 cells (0.0%) expected frequencies > 5 (min expected cell frequency is 20.8).
- d. 0 cells (0.0%) expected frequencies > 5 (min expected cell frequency is 15.6).
- e. 0 cells (0.0%) expected frequencies > 5 (min expected cell frequency is 5.0).

Table 8 reports the correlation analysis between teacher-related challenges and the SNC implementation. The results from the analysis show that challenges perceived by teachers are positively correlated with curriculum implementation. Among the challenges, teacher autonomy has the strongest individual correlation ( $r = .805$ ) with curriculum implementation, and administration and principal support also have a high correlation ( $r = .840$ ) with curriculum implementation. Overall, teacher-related challenges are very strongly correlated with curriculum implementation ( $r = .924$ ), which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that a higher level of challenge is associated with a greater impact on curriculum implementation. The research hypothesis, which states that “there is a significant relationship between **teacher-related challenges** (training, resources, autonomy, workload, and administration support) and the implementation of the SNC”, is accepted because all challenges are significantly related to how effectively the curriculum is implemented.

**Table 8**

*Correlation Analysis between Teacher-Related Challenges and Curriculum Implementation*

| Correlations                        | Training & Professional Development | Resources & Materials | Teacher Autonomy | Workload & Management | Administration & Principal Support | Teacher challenges |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Training & Professional Development | 1                                   |                       |                  |                       |                                    |                    |
| Resources & Materials               | .576**                              | 1                     |                  |                       |                                    |                    |
| Teacher Autonomy                    |                                     |                       | 1                |                       |                                    |                    |
| Workload & Management               |                                     |                       |                  | 1                     |                                    |                    |
| Administration & Principal Support  |                                     |                       |                  |                       | 1                                  |                    |
| Teacher challenges                  |                                     |                       |                  |                       |                                    | 1                  |

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|                |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Curriculum     | .596** | .642** | .805** | .743** | .840** | .924** |
| Implementation | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) | (.000) |

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\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Discussion

The study findings indicate that teachers experience moderate to high levels of challenges in SNC implementation at District Ziarat. However, the intimacy of mean scores across all dimensions of challenges suggests that challenges are systemic rather than isolated in implementing SNC. Among challenges, training and professional development were rated moderately high, indicating partial preparedness but room for improvement. This is supported by the previous study by Chachar et al. (2023), who identified inadequate professional development opportunities for teachers as one of the key obstacles to improving education quality in Balochistan, and emphasized that teacher training should be more practical and strengthened for more effective curriculum implementation. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2025) indicated that inadequate training and professional development are key barriers to quality education; they further argued that curriculum reform and teacher preparation are linked. For this, better training strategies would support the effective implementation of educational changes.

The current study's results found that access to mentors was moderately positive, showing that some institutional support structure exists. Jan et al. (2023) supported this finding and highlighted that training and teacher-related tools affect the implementation of SNC, implying some institutional support context. They further highlighted that trained teachers and educational strategies positively influence the implementation of SNC feasibility. Similarly, Sain et al. (2025) reported in their study that mentor access was moderately positive in SNC implementation, indicating that some support structures exist. This indicates that teachers with better mechanisms, such as guidance, show more confidence in curriculum implementation. Findings report that the resource availability was perceived as a challenge, particularly in contextual alignment and infrastructure support, which is supported by literature that resource availability affects implementation effectiveness, infrastructure support is critical for contextual alignment, and low-resource settings face challenges (Hasson et al., 2023; Jan et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2023; Ullah et al., 2025). This suggests the importance of adapting interventions to context. Similarly, the current study reports that the time to create supplementary materials received relatively higher agreement by teachers, suggesting teacher commitment despite constraints. Horn and Little's (2010) work supports this finding that teachers prioritize professional learning even with limited resources.

However, the teacher autonomy reflected professional trust and flexibility in classroom practice, as per the current study's findings. Literature supports this finding that teachers' autonomy fosters trust in professional judgement and high autonomy enables flexible classroom practices (Evers et al., 2023; Sajjad et al., 2013; Vangrieken et al., 2017; Ullah et al., 2025). Thus, high autonomy positively influences the adaptation or modification of SNC to local classroom realities, and the teachers' workload was reported as increased, which confirms reform-related pressure on teachers to implement SNC. Tikkanen et al. (2020) supported the study's findings that curriculum reforms increase teachers' workload, though

teachers experience stress and pressure from reform demands. Therefore, this confirms that there is a need for strategies to manage reform-related stress.

The current study received strong agreement for administrative and principal support, highlighting leadership's positive role. Lijun and Te (2024) support these findings that administrative and principal support enhances teachers' effectiveness, and strong leadership fosters a positive school culture. Hence, it confirms that leadership is crucial for motivating and guiding teachers in implementing the curriculum. Thus, the findings of the current study and literature confirm that teacher readiness is central to curriculum reform success, and teacher-related challenges significantly influence curriculum implementation.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that the teachers in District Ziarat face moderate to high challenges in implementing the SNC. However, all challenge dimensions are closely related, indicating a systemic implementation issue, such as training provided some support, but further strengthening is required; resource availability and infrastructure remain important concerns; teacher autonomy positively supports curriculum delivery; increased workload has added pressure on teachers during implementation; and administrative and principal support plays a strong facilitating role. Thus, the teacher-related factors significantly influence curriculum implementation as strong statistical correlations confirm the impact of teacher challenges on implementation effectiveness, indicating the need for successful SNC implementation, requiring continuous teacher support, resources, and contextual adaptation.

### Recommendations

The current study recommends policy reforms, which must move beyond content standardization toward teacher-centered support systems. Furthermore, uniform curriculum policies require flexible implementation strategies at the district level, as curriculum reform is not merely a policy shift but a capacity-building process. The study recommends continuous professional development and institutional support for the sustainable SNC implementation. Additionally, school infrastructure should be improved to meet the curriculum requirements, reduce excessive workload through balanced content planning, enhance teacher autonomy while maintaining curriculum standards, and allocate sufficient time for lesson planning and material development. Moreover, schools should establish a mentoring support system at the district level to develop context-sensitive implementation strategies for districts like Ziarat.

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