

A Thematic Analysis of the Perspective of District Education Officers (DEOs) on the Implementation of Single National Curriculum in Punjab Public Schools

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ABSTRACT: The Single National Curriculum (SNC) was launched as a major initiative of education reform in Pakistan in order to minimise the differences between the diverse educational systems and providing equal learning opportunities to all learners of the country. The high expectations may only be met through good planning, preparedness, provision, monitoring and support from the leadership. Most research has tended to be directed towards teachers and school leaders, with there being little focus on the views of District Education Officers (DEOs), who have a key role in implementing school policy. This study aims to discuss the views of the DEOs on the implementation of SNC in public primary schools of Punjab. Qualitative research design was used and eight DEOs were selected using purposive sampling and these were interviewed semi-structurally. Thematic analysis revealed that educational stakeholders viewed the SNC positively for promoting equality and standardization. However, significant issues were identified: inconsistent implementation quality, inadequate teacher readiness, resource shortages, infrastructure limitations, administrative hurdles, and urban-rural disparities. The findings highlight the necessity for ongoing training, robust monitoring, stakeholder awareness, and interdepartmental cooperation. Despite advancements in curriculum consistency and teaching practices, the SNC encounters challenges that require focused professional development, equitable resource distribution, and better governance for effective public school implementation. The results will be useful and valuable to the body of knowledge relating to curriculum reform and educational policy implementation in developing nations.

KEYWORDS: Single National Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Educational Reform, Professional Development

Introduction

Educational reform has been a topic of governments' attention globally as nations try to improve educational quality, boost learning achievements and promote social and economic development. Curriculum reform plays a prominent role among educational reforms since it directly affects teaching and learning situations and the standards of education. Curriculum changes tend to occur when society has new needs, educational quality needs to be enhanced, or students need to learn new skills and competences needed to engage in contemporary society (Fullan, 2016).

Pages: 17 – 29

Volume: 5

Issue: 3 (March 2026)

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Cite this Article: Islam, A., & Iqbal, M. J. (2026). A Thematic Analysis of the Perspective of District Education Officers (DEOs) on the Implementation of Single National Curriculum in Punjab Public Schools. *The Regional Tribune*, 5(3), 17-29. <https://doi.org/10.55737/trt/v-iii.270>

Curriculum reforms in developing countries are often aimed at rectifying long-standing educational inequalities and enhancing access to good education. The implementation of curriculum reforms, however, is a complex process which is affected by various institutional, administrative and contextual factors. The implementation processes in schools and educational systems have consistently been shown to be a factor that affects the effectiveness of the curriculum reform not only in terms of the design of the curriculum but also in terms of its implementation (UNESCO, 2024).

Since the independence of Pakistan, several changes in curriculum have been implemented, which have been the result of changing educational priorities and policy directions. Despite these reforms, there has been significant and continued inequality between public, private and religious schools. This has led to disparities in education opportunities, quality, and outcomes that have frequently affected students. This has led to repeated calls for more uniformity and fairness in the national education system from education policymakers.

In response to these concerns, the Government of Pakistan launched a major educational reform program called the Single National Curriculum (SNC), which is considered one of the biggest educational reform programs of recent decades. The main goal of the SNC was to offer a unified curriculum framework for all schools throughout the country. Its aim was to minimize learning gaps, create a uniform learning environment and provide equal learning opportunities for all students irrespective of their socio-economic status and type of schools (Government of Pakistan, 2021).

The SNC established common learning outcomes, common curriculum content and common expectations for assessment in schools. Policymakers intended that the reform would help to advance educational equity, social cohesion, and learning improvement. Moreover, the SNC sought to foster national identity and enhance students' knowledge and skills for the twenty-first century and their values.

While the goals of the SNC are well known, there has been much discussion about how the SNC is being implemented. Some of the studies conducted in Pakistan have reported that there are various issues related to the implementation of these programs, such as the lack of training for teachers, a shortage of instructional materials, infrastructure issues, administrative problems and variations in the context between urban and rural schools (Mukhtar et al., 2023; Zaman et al., 2021). The problems indicate that the process of curriculum reform is not only a policy process but also needs to be analyzed from the experiences of the implementers.

District Education Officers (DEOs) are one of the key actors involved in curriculum implementation. DEOs play an important role in the educational administration system as they are the link between the policymakers and schools. They are tasked with overseeing schools, overseeing implementation of the curriculum, organizing teacher training programs, assessing implementation progress, and dealing with any implementation issues. DEOs are important players in the process to ensure that the policy goal is effectively carried out in the classroom through these functions.

However, there has been relatively little research on DEOs' attitudes towards the implementation of the SNC. The existing literature mainly centers on teachers, students, or school leaders, but does not provide much information about district-level educational administrators' experiences. As a direct link between policy and implementation, DEOs have insights that are valuable for understanding implementation processes, administrative issues, monitoring systems, and educational outcomes.

It is critical to understand DEOs' perceptions of curriculum implementation, as there are several levels of the educational system that affect it. Educational administrators bring an understanding of how the implementation varies by school, of systemic challenges to the school, and of the effectiveness of support mechanisms that can be

gained through their observation. Their experiences can thus be used as valuable evidence to enhance curriculum implementation policies and practices.

This study aims to fill this gap and understand the views of the District Education Officers about the implementation of the Single National Curriculum in Punjab public schools. In detail, it explores their attitude towards the reform, the conditions for implementation, the strategies they used to implement the reform, the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, teacher professional development, challenges faced in implementing the reform, the coordination process, the outcome, and suggestions for improvement.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were used to guide the study:

1. To gain insight into the perception of the District Education Officers on the implementation of the Single National Curriculum in Punjab public schools.
2. To understand the factors that affect the implementation of the SNC.
3. To investigate the problems faced in implementing the curriculum.
4. To explore monitoring and evaluation mechanisms supporting implementation.
5. To discuss recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the implementation of SNC.

Literature Review

Implementation of the curriculum describes the actual process of turning the curriculum goals, content, instructional methods, and assessment procedures into practice within the classroom. Coordinated action of policy makers, educational administrators, educational leaders, teachers and communities is needed for effective curriculum implementation. While curriculum development focuses on designing educational goals and learning experiences, implementation concerns the practical realization of these goals within educational settings.

Educational change is a complex process, as Fullan (2016) suggests, because it requires changes in beliefs, practices, organizational arrangements, and institutional cultures. Implementation of this approach must go beyond a set of policy directives to require support, some professional learning, leadership and a commitment to providing resources to support it. Often, the failure of educational reform is due to difficulties in implementation, rather than to weaknesses in policy design.

In all developing countries, teacher preparation, teaching resources, monitoring systems, and contextual constraints are recurrent obstacles to implementation. The above difficulties underscore the need to consider implementation processes in the eyes of those who are involved in educational administration. The Single National Curriculum and Educational Equity is a policy that seeks to resolve the disparities in the education of boys and girls.

The SNC was launched to address the long-standing educational disparities existing in the education system in Pakistan. In the past, the distinctiveness of the public school, private school, and religious school systems resulted in disparities in curriculum content, learning opportunities, and educational outcomes. Policymakers saw curriculum standardization as a means for educational equality and national unity.

Educational equity is about providing equal opportunities for education to all students regardless of their socio-economic status. UNESCO (2024) highlights that, in addition to access to education, equitable education systems need equal access to quality learning experiences. The SNC is consistent with this by developing common learning outcomes and curriculum standards in the various learning sectors.

The study shows that curriculum standardization can help to achieve greater uniformity in education and lessen disparities. But researchers warn that education is far from a level playing field when it comes to curriculum uniformity. While uniform instructional goals are important, teacher quality, access to resources, buildings, and administrative support can still vary and lead to unequal educational experiences.

Educational Leadership and Curriculum Implementation

Educational leadership is crucial in the process of implementing curriculum reform. Effective leaders promote communication, offer instructional direction, coordinate professional development, and track progress of implementation. Marinette and Hui (2020) state that instructional leadership is still one of the most reliable factors when implementing educational reform.

District Education Officers perform important leadership functions within educational systems. They are not only responsible for administrative oversight, but they also provide instructional support, coordinate professional development, communicate policy, and monitor policy implementation. As a result, their leadership practices have a strong impact on the outcomes of curriculum implementation.

Research indicates that good educational leaders provide conducive and stimulating learning environments for innovation, teamwork and incremental improvement. They also support schools in addressing implementation barriers through guidance, resources and technical assistance.

Teacher Professional Development and Curriculum Reform

Teacher PD is one area of the curriculum that has been identified as one of the most crucial elements of curriculum implementation. When the curriculum changes, teachers have to acquire new skills because new pedagogical approaches, learning outcomes, new materials, and new assessment methods are usually integrated.

As stated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), effective professional development is ongoing, collaborative and linked to practice in the classroom. One-time training workshops are often insufficient for supporting meaningful instructional change. Rather, teachers need continuous learning, practice, and feedback about implementation.

It is important to recognize that within the framework of the SNC, professional development takes on special significance, for teachers are expected to adjust to outcome-based learning models, to new content standards and new assessment expectations. A study in Pakistan indicates that the success of implementation is dependent on teacher preparedness. Lack of training can lead to confusion, reluctance and variability in application.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that support this study are Educational Change Theory of Fullan (2016) and Policy Implementation Theory. The theoretical frameworks are complete in their scope and offer a strong understanding of the implementation of SNC in Punjab public schools.

Educational Change Theory

According to the theory of Educational Change, educational reform is a multifaceted process that requires changes in belief, practice, organizational structures, and behaviour of stakeholders. Fullan (2016) identifies a number of critical factors for the successful implementation of educational reforms: leadership support, teacher commitment, professional development, resource availability, and continuous monitoring.

Fullan says that change in education is not about the introduction of a new policy. Instead, the stakeholders have to grasp, embrace and participate in the reform process to be successful. The ability to implement new practices

needs to be built up by teachers, school leaders and educational administrators together. Thus, educational reforms often face difficulties when appropriate support structures are not put in place.

The adoption of the SNC can be seen to embody numerous assumptions of educational change theory. Teachers need to adopt new teaching methods, new learning outcomes, and new assessment methods in the new curriculum. These changes require lots of professional development and continuous support. In addition, monitoring, guidance and resources need to be provided by the educational administration to facilitate implementation.

The District Education Officers' experiences in this study highlight the importance of several factors to the process of educational change. Their attitudes toward teacher readiness, systems of monitoring, materials and resources, and obstacles to implementation are very similar to Fullan's description of educational change as complex and continual.

Policy Implementation Theory

Policy Implementation Theory is centered on the mechanisms by which policy intent is considered as action and result. The theory acknowledges that policy success is tied to policy implementation mechanisms at different administrative levels, in addition to the design of the policy itself.

Policy implementation scholars argue that implementation outcomes are influenced by communication processes, administrative capacity, stakeholder cooperation, resource allocation, and monitoring structures. The implementation of policies can be problematic if their goals are not clearly defined, resources are limited, or stakeholders are not coordinated.

The SNC is a national educational policy designed to promote educational equity and curriculum uniformity. The actors involved in implementing this policy are the federal government, provincial departments, district administration, school leaders and teachers. Thus, there is a need for effective coordination of these actors for successful implementation.

The results of this study prove that the theory of Policy Implementation is relevant to the study of the implementation of SNC. Important themes that arose in relation to implementation outcomes were communication gaps, coordination, administrative barriers, resource disparities, and monitoring. The theory thus serves as an appropriate lens through which to explore the experiences of District Education Officers tasked with putting the curriculum policy into practice.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design that aimed to explore the perspectives of the District Education Officers regarding the implementation of the Single National Curriculum in Punjab public schools. Qualitative research is well suited to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and interpretations of complex social phenomena. The study sought to gain a deeper knowledge of the process of curriculum implementation; to this end, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate.

The study was conducted using a research paradigm that is interpretivist in nature and believes that reality is socially constructed through human experiences, interactions, and social processes. This paradigm gave the researcher the opportunity to delve into the interpretation that District Education Officers had about the implementation of the SNC in their professional context.

Participants

Four District Education Officers (DEOs) and Four Deputy District Officers (DDEOs) were selected as participants. The subjects were selected by purposive sampling as they had first-hand experience in implementing the SNC curriculum, supervising education, teacher training, and monitoring activities, and they had the capability of giving rich and relevant information about the implementation of SNC. Selected officers were experienced in administration and were quite active in the review of the curriculum in their districts.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The semi-structured interview is flexible yet allows for key issues pertinent to the research questions to be addressed in a similar manner across the participants.

A protocol for conducting the interviews was created using literature and research objectives. The questions in the interview were on:

Perceptions about the SNC.

1. Implementation requirements.
2. Teacher readiness and teacher professional development.
3. Monitoring and evaluation measures.
4. Coordination & governance mechanisms.
5. Implementation challenges.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), was used as a framework to analyze the collected data. Thematic analysis is an adaptable qualitative approach which allows the researcher to detect, structure and interpret themes in qualitative data.

The analysis was carried out in six steps:

Phase 1: Familiarization with Data

Interviews were transcribed and read multiple times in order to comprehensively understand the respondents' answers.

Phase 2: Initial Coding

Relevant portions of data regarding SNC implementation were located, and initial codes were given to them.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

The codes were organized into larger categories that reflect the more general patterns observed with participants.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Themes were identified and developed to be coherent and consistent.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

For each theme, it was well formulated and connected to the research goals.

Phase 6: Report Writing

The final themes were found and presented as themes in the findings section.

The analysis resulted in eight major themes:

1. Perceptions of SNC as Educational Reform.
2. Implementation Requirements.
3. Implementation Strategies.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation.
5. Teacher Professional Development.

6. Implementation Challenges.
7. Coordination and Governance.
8. Outcomes and Recommendations.

The interviews with eight District Education Officers (DEOs) were thematically analyzed, and eight major themes were extracted that highlighted issues regarding the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in public schools of Punjab. These themes offer important information on how administrators view curriculum reform, its implementation, professional learning, systems of monitoring, implementation barriers, governance, educational outcomes, and plans for the future.

Theme 1: Perceptions of SNC as an Educational Reform.

The first theme touched on DEOs' views of the overall mission and value of the SNC. There was a solid agreement among the participants that the SNC would be a revolutionary reform in education aimed at achieving equity in education and closing the gap between various educational systems.

The focus for the majority of participants was the purpose of the SNC as a response to the inequalities that were present in the past between public and private schools. DEO 1, DEO 3 and DEO 7 saw the curriculum as a project to encourage equality of educational opportunities through shared learning opportunities for all students. Likewise, DEO 2 and DEO 4 emphasized the need to narrow down educational gaps that had existed across school systems on a systemic level.

A few participants mentioned that the SNC is a tool to provide uniform educational experiences throughout Pakistan. DEO 5 and DEO 6 state that the curriculum offers a shared thread for outcomes, content, and expectations. Participants felt that a uniform curriculum could help to develop a sense of fairness and national unity.

The results align with earlier studies which indicated that standardization of curricula is frequently proposed as a means to improve the equity of education and facilitate equal learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2024). The results also accord with the policy documents of the Government of Pakistan that have declared educational equality the foremost target of the SNC.

Participants, however, showed overall positive attitudes toward the reform but also recognized that the issue of educational equality is not only about curriculum standardization. Multiple DEOs highlighted that despite implementing a shared curriculum, inequities in resources, infrastructure, and teaching quality persist and affect educational outcomes.

The results align with Fullan's (2016) view that structural and contextual factors must be tackled if educational change is to take place. While the process of curriculum reform can set up some standards, the meaningful application of these standards will rely on the ability of educational institutions to implement policy intent.

Theme 2: Implementation Requirements and Strategies

This Theme covers the implementation requirements and strategies for the project. All the participants highlighted the need for a holistic approach of planning, engaging stakeholders, providing resources and preparing teachers for the successful implementation of SNC.

Most DEOs emphasised the need for good implementation planning. DEO 1, DEO 2 and DEO 5 emphasized the need for thorough implementation plans to accompany curriculum changes, which specify roles, schedules and support plans.

One of the most common implementation needs that came up was teacher training. Professional development was always a recurring theme across all participants as a key component in supporting teachers to understand curriculum expectations, learning outcomes, and instructional methods.

Stakeholder awareness was also considered an important implementation strategy. Multiple DEOs reported conducting awareness sessions, orientation meetings, and stakeholder briefings for teachers, school leaders and community members. The activities were designed to increase awareness of the curriculum and counter opposition to change. Another key strategy that came up in the discussions was district-level planning. DEO 4 and DEO 8 underscored the need for localised implementation approaches that reflect local needs and resource realities.

The results are in line with the Policy Implementation Theory, which highlights the need for communication, planning and stakeholder involvement in the successful implementation of policies. Consistent with this, Ralebese et al. (2025) reported that successful reforms in education are more likely to happen if stakeholders are involved in the implementation process.

Theme 3: Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Monitoring and evaluation emerged as a central component of SNC implementation. A range of monitoring strategies were mentioned by participants, such as school visits, classroom observations, feedback systems, progress reports and monitoring teams.

The majority of DEOs reported the presence of formal monitoring bodies to monitor activities of implementation. Monitoring teams visited schools, observed learning in the classroom, assessed the way learning is being taught and gathered information regarding the implementation.

One of the most effective monitoring approaches was the classroom observation as described by several participants. Administrators could evaluate teachers' awareness of the requirements for the curriculum by observing the teaching and learning process in class. There was also a widespread use of feedback collection systems. Participants shared their experience on the use of monitoring reports to give direction to teachers and school leaders on curriculum implementation challenges.

The findings are consistent with those of Marinette and Hui (2020) that instructional supervision and ongoing feedback are critical elements of successful educational reform. Good monitoring systems enable accountability, help to identify implementation challenges, and can enable ongoing improvement.

Some respondents noted, however, that monitoring effectiveness varied from district to district because of workload, staffing constraints, and logistical issues. The findings indicated that monitoring systems need further strengthening in order to provide for consistent monitoring implementation oversight.

Theme 4 'Teacher Professional Development' contains these learning outcomes.

One of the most prominent findings was that teacher professional development was a significant theme in the study. Teacher Training was the key identified for effective implementation of SNC by all the participants.

Giving attention to the learning outcomes of the curriculum, competency-based learning and new assessment methods were initially challenging for many teachers, DEOs noted. To promote teacher readiness for this, professional development programmes were introduced.

Workshops, seminars, orientation programmes, online training, and face-to-face training were reported as methods used. Several DEOs emphasized the need for orientation training on the Curriculum, which aimed to orient the teachers to the objectives and requirements of SNC.

Nevertheless, participants reiterated time and again the need for ongoing professional learning, rather than short-term training events. Specifically, DEO 2, DEO 3 and DEO 6 indicated a need for continued support for teachers to ensure implementation quality is maintained.

These findings echo those of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who believe that ongoing professional learning is crucial to successful curriculum reform. Professional development should be regarded as a continuous process, not an event.

The findings also contribute to Fullan's (2016) idea that an important condition for educational change is educators' understanding and adoption of new practices. Unless backed by ongoing professional development, curriculum changes will not yield results.

Theme 5: Implementation Challenges

One of the most consistent themes from the participant responses was implementation challenges. The general opinion of the DEOs was that the SNC was acceptable, but there were a number of issues that could impact its effectiveness.

The most common challenge reported was resource issues. The participants reported a lack of teaching materials, teaching resources, and teaching equipment needed for the effective implementation of the curriculum. Rural schools were especially short of infrastructure. Limited classroom facilities, overcrowding and a shortage of technological resources were reported by several DEOs as limitations to implementation.

Another significant challenge was the preparedness of teachers. The teachers had quite a bit of variation in understanding the learning outcomes and pedagogical needs. Some teachers quickly made the changes to the curriculum, while others found it difficult to meet the curriculum requirements.

Other factors that hindered implementation were administrative obstacles and delays in communication. Coordination between different levels of administration was reported to be problematic, and information did not flow fast enough.

Another issue brought up by participants was pedagogical resistance to pedagogical changes. Some teachers found it difficult to make that transition from traditional to competency-based teaching methods advocated by the SNC, and this was seen in this condition.

The findings of the study are in line with the previous studies conducted in Pakistan and other developing countries, which identified the key factors for successful implementation of curriculum as teacher readiness, availability of resources, quality of infrastructure and administrative capacity (Mukhtar et al., 2023; Mullick et al., 2014).

The findings also indicate that factors beyond the curriculum design affect educational reform. This requires comprehensive support mechanisms for effective implementation that can tackle systemic challenges.

Theme 6: Coordination and Governance

Participants emphasized the importance of coordination and governance in supporting SNC implementation. The need for interdepartmental cooperation was seen as crucial in achieving consistency in policy communication and implementation activities.

A few DEOs indicated that there were coordination mechanisms between schools, district administration and provincial authorities. But there was often a lack of communication, and coordination was identified.

However, some participants mentioned delays in communication and inadequate collaboration among administrative units reducing the effectiveness of implementation. Digital communication systems might be more efficient at coordinating and sharing information, some DEOs said.

This study is in line with the Policy Implementation Theory, which places emphasis on administrative capacity and communication processes as factors that determine policy outcomes. Good governance arrangements are essential to ensure that policy decisions are effectively conveyed and consistently executed on a school-by-school basis.

Theme 7: Outcomes of the SNC

Participants noted that there were a number of positive results related to SNC implementation. Uniformity of curriculum was the most common achievement identified. DEOs generally concurred that there were fewer distinctions in the curriculum between educational institutions and common learning standards were established.

A few participants also mentioned that their teaching was improved as a result. Structured approaches to instruction were increasingly used by teachers to meet the curriculum learning outcomes. Enhanced conceptual learning and improved student engagement were also noted by some participants. While these advances were welcome, participants still stressed that full educational equality has yet to be reached. Inequalities in resources, quality and context persisted in education outcomes.

The results indicate that, despite its limitations, the SNC has been a valuable addition to the process of educational standardization and has made significant contributions to this goal. Educational equity should not just be based on the uniformity of the curriculum, but access to educational resources and opportunities should also be equitable, consistent with UNESCO (2024).

Theme 8: Recommendations for the improvement of SNC implementation.

The last theme was on the recommendations of the participants on strengthening the implementation of the Single National Curriculum. In all of the interviews, DEOs highlighted the significance of the SNC as a worthwhile education reform effort, but they pointed out that it's going to take ongoing efforts and institutional support to ensure its ongoing success.

- i. **Enhancing Teacher Professional Development:** The most frequent recommendation was teacher training and professional development. The need for a comprehensive training program, which could be followed up with a series of on-the-job training sessions to ensure proper implementation, was a common theme. Instead, continuous professional development (CPD) programmes should be institutionalised to support teachers during the implementation. Some of the DEOs stressed the need for practical, classroom-based training that allows teachers to see how curriculum objectives can be fully realised through effective teaching practices. The participants also suggested follow-up mentoring programmes to support the learning they had received in training sessions. The results align with Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who suggest that ongoing professional learning experiences have a strong impact on instructional effectiveness and educational reform outcomes.
- ii. **Strengthening Monitoring Systems:** The participants emphasised the importance of having more effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. While monitoring structures are already in place, several DEOs reported inconsistencies across districts and schools. The participants suggested the frequency of school visits should be raised, the school observation system should be enhanced, and digital monitoring systems should be used to track accountability and implementation. Improved monitoring systems would enable education authorities to quickly identify where challenges are likely to arise in implementation and target their support appropriately. The goal is to enhance the quality of resources and infrastructure. To improve resources and infrastructure. One

of the key concerns brought up by the participants was resource inequality. There were several DEOs who suggested the distribution of education resources should be equitable across schools, including in the rural areas where implementation is often more difficult. The suggestions given by the participants included improving the school infrastructure, providing more access to teaching materials, and enhancing technological resources to help implement the curriculum. The problem of inequalities in resources was seen as a crucial issue in order to reach the SNC's aim of achieving educational equality.

- iii. **Rural School Support:** A number of entrants talked about the importance of addressing the needs of rural schools. In the rural context, the provision of infrastructure, staffing, teacher training and resources is often more problematic. Participants made the point of considering implementation strategies to fit the local context, and that further support should be offered to schools in disadvantaged areas. These measures would help minimize disparities in implementation quality and in educational outcomes.
- iv. **Participatory Policymaking:** Some of the DEOs suggested more engagement of educational administrators, school leaders and teachers in the curriculum planning and policy revision process. Participants felt that incorporating stakeholders would enhance the relevance of policies, increase stakeholder buy-in and support implementation. This recommendation falls in line with the modern educational reform literature, which emphasizes the need for collaborative decision-making and involving stakeholders in order to reach sustainable educational change (UNESCO, 2024).

Conclusion

The study investigated the perceptions of District Education Officers regarding the implementation of the Single National Curriculum in public schools of Punjab. The results offer interesting insights into the potential and problems associated with one of the most important educational reform programs in Pakistan.

Overall, the participants had a positive attitude towards the goals of the SNC and considered it a positive step towards the goal of minimising educational disparities and standardising curricula. The results indicate that the SNC has contributed to a more consistent curriculum content, learning outcomes and expectations for learning across the schools.

However, the study also noted some barriers to the effectiveness of implementation. Shortages of resources, infrastructure, teacher readiness, administrative, communication and rural/urban challenges continue to impact implementation outcomes. The problems highlight the need for curriculum reform to go beyond the policy level and be institutionally supported to achieve the desired results. One of the key reasons for the implementation's success was teacher professional development. Ongoing training, hands-on instructional support and capacity-building efforts were a recurring theme. Good monitoring and evaluation systems were also viewed as key tools in holding to account and as a tool for continuous improvement.

The results also show that coordination and governance structures are needed to enable the implementation of curricula. Effective communication, interdepartmental working and stakeholder engagement are key to translating policy intentions into the education system.

Finally, while the SNC has been involved in the standardisation and equity in education, its long-term goals will not be realised without sustained investment in teacher development, resource provision, monitoring systems and institutional capacity building. Educational policy makers need to recognise that the success of implementation of

the curriculum depends not only on the design of the curriculum, but also on the wider educational context in which the curriculum is implemented.

Policy Implications

Based on the findings, the following policy implications are put forward:

1. Implement a program of ongoing teacher professional development.
2. Improve monitoring and evaluation in the district.
3. Make the allocation of educational resources between schools equal.
4. Establish support initiatives for rural and disadvantaged schools that are targeted.
5. Enhance interdepartmental communication and coordination processes.
6. Install digital monitoring and reporting procedures.
7. Engage teachers and educational leaders in review of curriculum.
8. Enhance district and school instructional leadership.

Future Research Directions

1. The study focused on the District Education Officers in public schools in the province of Punjab. Future studies may:
2. Explore teachers' and head teachers' views on implementing SNC.
3. Make comparisons between urban and rural districts.
4. Discuss with students what has happened to them while they were engaged in the SNC.
5. Investigate the lasting effects of the SNC on students' achievement.
6. Use mixed-method approaches to analyze how the curriculum is implemented as viewed from various stakeholder perspectives.

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