

The Role of Teachers and Teaching Methodologies in Meeting the Objectives of the Single National Curriculum

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Executive Summary

First phase of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) is to be rolled out in this calendar year, though its objectives have already been proffered by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT). Teacher's performances in the public sector are often scrutinized, but rarely analyzed from the perspective of teachers themselves. Though there are multiple challenges that will undoubtedly need to be addressed including the enrollment of children not part of the education system in schools, inequality in access and the quality of textbooks, there are important recommendations based on existing challenges that need to be reviewed **before** the implementation of Single National Curriculum. Few recommendations offered are:

- Training teachers to adapt modern teaching methodologies and digital skills through workshops
- Evaluating performances of teachers based on these workshops
- Representation of teachers in the 'Institution Advisory Boards'
- Engaging teachers as active stakeholders in the development of textbooks at par with the SNC.

Issue

In order to meet the objectives of the SNC, teachers and teaching methodologies in the public sector will need to adapt to modern teaching practices. The SNC cannot possibly be implemented without training and empowering the trainers to disseminate knowledge in a sustainable manner, aligned with the goals of the SNC.

Analysis

The objectives addressed in the implementation of the Single National Curriculum are misplaced and inadequate. Regardless of the shift in focus towards a more conducive and practical learning, the process will remain incomplete without:

- Incentivizing efficient teachers' conduct
- Ensuring dissemination of knowledge through modern teaching methodologies
- Enhancing the capacity of teachers in the mainstream and engaging teachers as primary stakeholders in the Education System.

Incentivizing Efficient Teachers' Conduct

Discincentivizing the 'rote system' and introducing scientific learning methods needs to be complemented by teachers' adequate training. Teachers/Professors in the public system, and low tiered private schools (which constitute approximately 40% of private school enrollment), work on insufficient salaries, while being part of a bureaucratic structure that is not reflective of the urgency to adapt to modern education trends, notably owing to a recurring change in Higher Education Department Secretaries. Additionally, teacher/professor promotions are kept stalled,

owing particularly to excessive bureaucratic oversight, discouraging professional conduct of teachers.

There exists no specific/or even a case to case metric to evaluate teacher performances. Ostensibly, the ‘pass – fail ratio’ of the students being taught a particular subject/course by a teacher is a standard of judgment of an instructor’s efficiency. However, given a fragmented examinations system, such a standard is both misused and inherently flawed. It ought to be noted, that promotions, correlates directly to upward financial mobility; the lack of which is remarkably discouraging for teachers.¹

Furthermore, following the increase in need for digitalizing education, teachers in public institutions have faced much more difficulties in coming to terms with evolving technologies compared to their counterparts in the private institutions.

Modern Teaching Methodologies

Reluctance in low tiered private schools, shown by the teachers to adapt and students to be receptive to ‘competency based learning,’ is remarkably regressive. The KWL Chart (‘**Know**’, ‘**Want** to know’, and ‘**Learnt** during the course’) having been introduced as a learning tool failed to make much impact since teachers were hesitant to do away with the traditional teaching methodologies. The failure was more glaring in terms of the accountability process; to gauge the impact of the Chart on the learning experience.² There were no follow ups to what, in its experimental phase in Pakistan, is essentially a ‘21st century teaching practice.’ Proper implementation of the KWL Chart would give students a clearer understanding of the syllabi, and its practical use through ‘outcome based learning’. Similarly the teachers will have a better insight into revamping the syllabi to better suit the needs of the students.³

Additionally, teacher trainings, through ‘demonstrative’ workshops have become redundant insofar learning innovative teaching methodologies are concerned. Though trainings are held, they are not ‘outcome based’ and there exists no criteria to determine the success of said trainings. Furthermore, training programs need to complement new textbook material, keeping in line with the objectives of the SNC. Teacher trainings, customized to impress upon teachers, the importance of critical thinking, a feature emphasized repeatedly in the objectives of the SNC, have become increasingly important.⁴ In addition to very little prospects for career progression, teaching methodologies employed by the teachers have not been able to evolve, resulting in stymied growth.

¹ Prof. Irfan Yawer (Assistant Professor/Head of Department, Government Post Graduate College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi), in discussion with the author, October 2020.

² Mrs. Ishrat Irfan (Coordinator, The Educators Khyaban –e-Sir Syed Campus, Rawalpindi), in discussion with the author, October 2020

³ Details and benefits of the KWL Chart are listed in Annex A

⁴ Prof. Irfan Yawer (Assistant Professor/Head of Department, Government Post Graduate College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi), in discussion with the author, October 2020.

Launching of the ‘Coding Skills Development Program’ by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT) is laudable, and buoys the objectives of the SNC to keep up with the set TIMSS standard. The Program will focus on education through digital platforms. Introduction of such ventures will require specialization of public school teachers, if the Program is to be made sustainable, a responsibility that needs to be taken up by MoFEPT.

Capacity Building

Objectives of the SNC, which are essentially centered on ‘creative and critical activity-based learning approaches’ and the conventional teaching of standard Quranic verses and *Ahadith* do not align in narrative. The Government’s ambiguous stance over the employment of *Qaris* in public schools will be counterproductive, while reinforcing traditional rote memorization. Not only do the stringent measures of learning used by *Qaris* do not complement the shift to modern approaches to learning, they will serve to undermine teachers in the mainstream public education system, who have little incentive to improve and innovate. The use of *Qaris* is a short-term solution to the issue of uniform religious education, not sustainable in the long run, for which capacity building through training in the curriculum of *Islamiyat* of teachers already part of the mainstream education system is a more viable option.

Additionally, teachers’ representation as primary stakeholders in the public education has been overlooked. The SNC was devised without much consultation from teachers and parents. The model of the College Councils that fulfilled this very purpose has now been rendered defunct.⁵ Based on their interactions with the students, teachers will have better insight into how well students can adapt to a renewed curriculum and modern approaches to teaching. Their involvement in decision making when it comes to implementing the SNC, is not just valuable but necessary.

⁵ Prof. Irfan Yawer (Assistant Professor/Head of Department Government Post Graduate College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi), in discussion with the author, October 2020

Recommendations

- Mandatory ‘week long’ training workshops may be held for teachers, bi annually focused on the following principles
 1. Adapting to ‘online learning,’ through the use of digital platforms to hold classes and assessments needs to continue regardless of the state of the pandemic. The MoFEPT can partner with digital platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet to ensure that a single platform is used and teachers are trained accordingly.
 2. The employment of ‘competency-based learning’ through modern teaching methods, such as the KWL Chart is important. Additionally, the KWL Chart and ‘outcome-oriented methods’ must be made mandatory when the SNC is rolled out. Their successful evaluation can be achieved through inclusion in the examination framework.
 3. Hosting separate workshops for ‘computer teachers’ to learn basic Coding Skills. Computer teachers can help them introduce basic coding lessons in the curriculum, High School onwards. This measure will complement the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication’s (MOITT) initiative.
 4. Training ‘*Islamiat*’ teachers in the public sector in accordance with the syllabi to be part of the SNC is a better initiative. Teachers are to be trained to reflect practical and outcome-based approaches, using real life examples and models.
- Evaluating performances of teachers in workshops may be used as an assessment for promotions. Such a measure will improve the stature of the workshops and lead towards a proper framework for promotions.
- Teachers adapting modern teaching methods, in their tutoring may be given awards at the closing of each academic session. KPIs can be used as a metric to gauge teacher performances.
- ‘Teacher’s Council’ may be drafted from each district to offer changes/recommendations to the implementation of the SNC. The Council can include the Heads of each institution in the District and subject teachers chosen on a rotational basis to serve the Council for future meetings of the body.

Conclusion

The recommendations put forth in light of the discourse in the policy brief focus on enhancing the capacity of the teachers in the public sector, incentivizing more efficient tutoring conduct in the process. The implementation of the SNC without tending to such hurdles will exacerbate problems. The first step to modernizing the education system is to ensure that teachers tasked with implementing any new curriculum are adept in modern teaching methodologies and that their opinions/criticisms, based on interactions with students are valued. For teachers to become an integral part of the process, their grievances including those highlighted need to be addressed.

| K-W-L Chart | | |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Topic: _____ | | |
| What I Know | What I Want to Know | What I Learned |
| | | |

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Annex A

The KWL Chart

- The KWL Chart is a teaching instrument that can be used throughout the course of an academic session. The alphabets ‘K’ for what is already ‘known’ and ‘W’ for what the student expects to learn from the course are to be filled at the start, whereas the alphabet ‘L’ for what the student has learnt during the course is filled systematically throughout the session.
- Reviewing the Chart at the end of the session identifies the differences in what the student expects to learn, and what has actually been taught in the course. It assists in planning for a more engaging curriculum for the coming year, shaped around student expectations, which is a better ‘outcome-based’ approach. The Chart is useful for teachers teaching Primary level Classes, all the way to High School.
- Given the dominant use of traditional teaching methods, students and teachers are reluctant to make use of such innovative methods. The onus of adopting more modern techniques however is on teachers who can create a conducive environment for students to make use of modern tools in education.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Mr. Waleed Yawer has been working as an Assistant Research Associate at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) since July 2019. Before joining IPRI he served as a Research Associate and Assistant Editor at the Centre for Strategic Contemporary Research (CSCR). His fondness for research stems from his academic background in International Relations in his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees; during which he was part of various research oriented extra-curricular endeavors. He has vast experience in organizing international and national conferences, including most notably IPRI's flagship event, The Margalla Dialogue 2019. He contributes regularly for national dailies.

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