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Exploring principal leadership strategies for enhancing teacher professional learning in the era of single national curriculum reform in Pakistan

Summary

This study explores teachers' professional growth challenges and the role of leadership support in implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) reform in Quetta, Pakistan. It emphasises teachers' difficulties adapting to the new curriculum and how school leaders assist them during this implementation process. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with public primary school principals and teachers using purposive sampling. Principals and teachers were selected based on school size, teaching experience, and relevance to SNC implementation. Data were collected, transcribed, and analysed through thematic analysis using NVivo software. The findings reveal several key challenges, including a lack of government-provided training, limited access to teaching resources, and significant language barriers due to the shift in the medium of instruction. Teachers often relied on self-training or peer collaboration to navigate these

difficulties. Leadership was crucial in supporting teachers through mentorship, collaborative planning sessions, and resource-sharing strategies. However, leadership support varied in scope and effectiveness. The study highlights the importance of teachers' professional learning and efforts for successful curriculum reform. It concludes that without adequate support systems, curriculum changes alone are insufficient for educational improvement. Further research is recommended to examine SNC-related challenges at other academic levels beyond primary schools.

Keywords: principal leadership, teachers' professional learning, single national curriculum, primary schools, Pakistan

Introduction

Education systems globally are rapidly evolving as developing countries try to upgrade the standards of instruction and education in general. These nations focus on various aspects to compete in providing high-quality education, including increasing and enriching the curriculum in the teaching and learning process. Despite imperfections, there are general changes to benefit from education (Akhtar et al., 2024; Sajjad, 2023). Therefore, the support function of administrators in schools for their teachers' professional learning is one of the essential tasks, basically in the context of significant educational reforms. The Pakistani government adopted the SNC to ensure educational outcomes were of a quality and equitable by making education consistent across the country (Amir et al., 2020; Tahira et al., 2020). The curriculum uses the necessary resources to disseminate knowledge through classroom teaching and related activities. In 2020, the government of Pakistan introduced the Single National Curriculum (SNC) as a nationwide policy to standardise primary and secondary education.

However, the best initiatives and transformation methods often remain ineffective due to inconsistent goals. Effective practice is unlikely unless educators teaching the relevant subjects are involved in policy development (Amir et al., 2020; Ramzan et al., 2016). Because these reforms entail significant changes in the educational approaches of teaching, the principal leadership is of critical importance to ensure this transition. Interest in the connection between teacher professional development and leadership dates back to the 1960s when research was conducted by Gross (1965). One of the models by Gross and Herriott, known as Senior Expert Guidance, focuses on ensuring that there is an improvement in staff performance or standards (Hallinger, 2020). Successful principal leadership has been primarily identified as essential in bringing up a climate that promotes teachers' professional learning and teaching practices. Leaders who are making great efforts to introduce the process of professional education, assist in teaching processes, and cultivate a collaborative school environment contribute significantly to the development of

better teaching strategies and student understanding goals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Some concerns about public school performance have long existed throughout Pakistan (Parveen & Tran, 2020). Over time, public school performance has declined, making way for private educational institutions, which now educate thirty percent of all learners (Tahira et al., 2020). Principals encounter many issues in successful teaching and learning, such as dynamic legal systems, expectations of society, and their jobs and responsibilities. There are multiple approaches to organising instructional materials, and teachers must remain adaptable as they implement the curriculum in classrooms (Ali et al., 2023; Tahira et al., 2020). The effectiveness of teaching programmes is significantly improved when instructors evaluate learning objectives, aspects of students and needs, topic levels and phases, guiding methods, materials, and extra-curricular correlated factors (Akhtar et al., 2024; Ali et al., 2023). Post-training professional growth and development can be beneficial through systematic monitoring by principals and head teachers (Ahmad & Ali, 2023). Successful educators must acquire the knowledge and skills to apply innovative concepts in the classroom. Nevertheless, there are several problems in the way public school teachers are taught, such as language barriers and ways of adapting the digital culture to the framework of the National Curriculum (Irfan, 2021).

Research gap and the need for the study

The curriculum plays a central role in supporting both teachers and learners across educational contexts. In Pakistan, the government places strong emphasis on the development and implementation of a national curriculum (Malik et al., 2023). Teachers follow new teaching methodologies in curriculum reform, such as using teaching activities in new textbooks. In classrooms, professional learning plays a vital role in new curricula because it helps teachers learn new information about teaching students according to new plans of teaching and curriculum objectives (Dilshad & Rehmat, 2023). According to different studies, teaching effectiveness depends on different instructional techniques that principals' leadership improves by different leadership techniques (Greenleaf et al., 2018; Liang et al., 2020; Özdemir, 2020). Furthermore, as principals play the leading role in implementing a new curriculum for the success of these changes, a curriculum in which teachers' professional learning and growth are crucial (Batool et al., 2023). Teachers are also having difficulties adapting to the required new curriculum objectives, such as teaching methodologies, student-centred learning, and other possible techniques in the SNC. To limit this, the government is undertaking a national campaign to boost literacy levels, eradicate illiteracy and give all children access

to basic education. The goal is to achieve 100% primary and secondary literacy by 2030 (Akhtar et al., 2022; Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2017). Before examining the causes of ineffective policy implementation, it is crucial to clarify the studies on policy implementation (Akhter & Iqbal, 2021).

This paper investigates the role of principal leadership in enhancing teachers' professional learning in the context of implementing the Single National Curriculum in public primary schools in Quetta, Pakistan. It also discusses the difficulties that teachers face, especially when it comes to language barriers and resource gaps, and it investigates how principals' leadership can ameliorate the situation so that those problems can be mitigated to achieve better outcomes in education (Khan et al., 2021). The research questions are as follows:

1. What challenges do teachers face in implementing the Single National Curriculum?
2. How do the leaders support teachers implementing a Single National Curriculum?

Literature review

Education is the cornerstone of every nation, yet it faces numerous challenges that must be addressed for better nation-building. Various studies have identified essential components of successful leadership in educational reforms. Transformational leadership, where principals engage in activities that foster an integrated approach to enacting reforms, has become more prevalent in contemporary leadership frameworks (Hairon et al., 2015; Özdemir, 2020). Educators and curriculum developers have emphasised standardised curricula to improve education in Pakistan (Asma et al., 2024; Rizvi et al., 2023). A crucial part of the implementation process is influencing individuals' attitudes appropriately, as people need time to adjust to new ideas (Dilshad & Rehmat Shah, 2023; Zaman et al., 2021). Literature indicates that the most critical aspect in supporting the effectiveness of newly implemented educational standards is teacher professional learning, encouraged by principal leadership (Ahmad & Ali, 2023; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020).

Previous investigations on management in education in Pakistan primarily focused on general leadership challenges and techniques. Research on principals' leadership methods in Pakistani schools highlights their role in creating professional environments, their importance in educational management, and the necessity of contextually relevant learning activities (Pont, 2020; Rizvi & Nagy, 2016). In addition, in many studies, the value of principal leadership in educational levels of collaboration for the successful change in different educational policies and the implementation of educational reforms (Khan et al., 2021; Pont, 2020). According

to Bari (2021), the policy for modifications to the educational curriculum is implemented by the Pakistani government's National Curriculum Council (NCC) (Sajjad, 2023). The most effective way to address significant issues is through collaboration with professionals to overcome educational barriers (Liang et al., 2020). A single national curriculum aims to change the overall curriculum into a standardised curriculum, which transforms equal learning opportunities into the overall educational system in Pakistan (Jamil et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023). The Single National Curriculum (SNC) objective is to provide every student with the opportunity to earn an outstanding education, regardless of their financial background (Jahanzaib et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023). Poor performance of educational initiatives has been identified as a primary cause of illiteracy in Pakistan.

Different studies emphasise that the success of curriculum changes is determined by the extent to which stakeholders and principal leadership support the changes, considering the learners' existing requirements, issues, goals, and attitudes, along with local and national demands (Ramzan et al., 2016; Shaheen, 2024; Zaman et al., 2021). Any shift in cultural elements, particularly broad ones, necessitates rapid adjustments in teaching and learning processes.

Teaching techniques are continuously improving, especially in the primary curriculum, where teachers are encouraged to use unique activities for students learning to promote student centred learning. As the SNC guidelines outline, the government has emphasised innovative instructional methods for achieving successful learning outcomes, such as student-centred learning, instructional games, exploration, and observation (Dilshad & Rehmat Shah, 2023; Zaman et al., 2021). Researchers recognise the shift from an instructional model to a learning model and its impact on contemporary learning environments (Batoool et al., 2023; Greenleaf et al., 2018; Khalid et al., 2024). Today, the teacher's role is viewed more as a facilitator of knowledge than merely a guide, achievable through proper professional learning (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020). Studies suggest that principal leadership influences teachers' professional learning by developing an inspirational, educational vision, enhancing working conditions that promote career development, establishing and overseeing resources and activities, enabling teachers to take responsibility for their education, and supporting the adoption of creative teaching methods (Greenleaf et al., 2018; Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Teachers' professional learning

Teachers' professional learning also has a vital role in improving students' learning when teachers improve their knowledge and information for different teaching techniques (Özdemir, 2020). Therefore, leadership techniques help teach-

ers in teaching preparation and promoting educational innovations in teaching methodologies, fostering a culture of collaboration in schools, and most importantly, professional learning methods for teachers in developing teaching skills and techniques, which affect teaching performances, are all very critical elements of ongoing teaching improvements (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Özdemir, 2020). Many studies demonstrate that the competencies of leadership in teachers' teaching improve through teaching preparations for different courses that provide professional learning opportunities (Ahmed et al., 2023; Parveen & Tran, 2020). In supporting teachers' learning, transformative learning provides knowledge and information that affects classroom environments, which a collaboration culture can facilitate in the integration of disciplines (Özdemir, 2020). In addition, transformative leadership is vital to teachers' professional learning. It can provide effective outcomes through improved teachers' practices, higher learning achievement of students, and teachers' motivation with their satisfied behaviours (Hallinger, 2020).

Additionally, teachers' motivation, guidance, and support from school principals are essential in teaching improvement and helping teachers effectively change the curriculum (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Different research studies highlighted teachers' professional learning and proved that it plays a vital role in educational initiatives (Pont, 2020). The successful educational reform must be successful through effective professional learning of teachers. Implementing different educational policies and reforms helps teachers grow professionally, changing the school environment and improving the school and learning quality. Professional development of teachers can also help educators to be compatible with the demands of the classroom and requirements of the new curriculum (Ali et al., 2023). Furthermore, educational environments provide benefits to learners. Also, when instructors use different teaching methodologies for effective student learning, learners can develop new learning patterns through teachers' professional learning. Conceptualisation and creativity in a new curriculum that changes teachers' practices, enhanced by teachers' professional learning, help teachers in teaching innovations and commitment to effective curriculum implementation. In students' academic achievements within the new curriculum, teachers can be informed and prepared well, which helps them manage their teaching goals in the implementation (Parveen & Tran, 2020; Tahira et al., 2020).

Teachers' preparation and curriculum implementation

Successful teachers can inspire other teachers to improve teaching practices and promote guidance in teaching preparation (Ali, 2021; Khan et al., 2023). The teachers are involved in implementing a new curriculum for effective teaching and

learning, and for that, they teaching with necessary learning resources and effective lesson plans. Many other factors can be used for effective teaching that help teachers effectively implement curricula, such as arranging educational factors for students, positive and effective learning environment, educational support, effective instructors, effective management of classrooms, and assessment (Amir et al., 2020; Rizvi et al., 2023; Sajjad, 2023). Teachers who understand the curriculum's goals and structure are crucial for effective lesson planning and improving student learning (Ali et al., 2023). As the primary agents of change, teachers are essential in phasing out prior curricula and promoting the most recently published ones. Meaningful transformation does not occur without individuals developing self-understanding, skills, and expertise (Fayyaz et al., 2023; Irfan, 2021). Teachers' attitudes toward learning and instruction significantly impact curriculum implementation.

Despite increasing interest in this concept, few research studies have explored how principals and teachers adapt to the latest curriculum revisions for their professional learning practices, especially in developing nations. These studies provide insights into improving teaching methods that promote professional learning through principals' leadership suggestions during the assessment phase (Gillani, 2022; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020). The range of participants in education policy discussions is expanding, encompassing provincial. Researchers have examined related topics, such as managers' adaptations to reform school performance evaluations as nations implement new teacher-professional learning programmes (Liang et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is demonstrated by many studies that the implementation of instructions needs to be supported by professionals to improve teaching-learning in the curriculum (Greenleaf et al., 2018; Özdemir, 2020).

Theoretical framework

Principals face multiple challenges, such as school management, time management, and staff management, which can be a big challenge for principals. In Pakistan, the curriculum reform brought a significant shift in academia for teachers, students, as well as for parents and the community. In a single national curriculum, the requirements for the classroom practices for teachers to effectively teach students are challenging; therefore, teachers need guidance and support from principal leadership accordingly. For teachers, balancing overcrowded classrooms with different activities for effective implementation of the new curriculum within the given objectives of reform and addressing teachers' effectiveness (Zaman et al., 2021). In this study, transformational leadership theory is suitable for supporting and guiding teachers and improving the professional development of teachers in

the new curriculum modification in Pakistan. The theory highlights valuable information on how principal leaders can inspire teachers through their practices and different leadership techniques that can motivate teachers to improve teaching and learning performances to help them overcome educational policies and curriculum implementation challenges. Transformational leadership also provides the concept of vision sharing, promoting a collaboration culture in achieving goals, and for principals to help teachers to improve performance through experts' suggestions and motivate them towards accepting changes in the teaching and learning process (Stewart, 2006).

Methodology

This qualitative study was designed to deeply understand teachers' challenges and leadership support in public schools regarding a single national curriculum. A qualitative design was selected to deeply understand the current challenges and experiences of the new curriculum reform. This methodology was chosen because it can comprehensively understand participants' experiences of reform challenges within their context. Qualitative research can also be used to learn about experiences and understand people's perceptions through their own stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study employed a purposive sampling strategy to recruit participants experiencing reform implementation challenges. This method was selected to facilitate a more targeted selection of participants who could provide rich and relevant information about this problem.

Semi-structured interviews serve as an effective instrument for gaining in-depth insights into human experiences (Durnová et al., 2024; Nigar, 2020). A professional interview guide was developed to support this process. Care was taken in designing the interview guide to obtain a more comprehensive understanding from the participants regarding the examination phobia they had experienced, as well as the impact of societal and familial expectations on their lives. The guide used open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in substantial detail. Regarding the structure of the questions, they were designed to address multiple themes. Participants consented to audio-recorded interviews, supplemented with field notes capturing nonverbal cues and contextual reflections. This study followed ethical protocols; ensuring participants received comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, and potential benefits and risks. To ensure reflexivity, the researcher consistently documented personal biases, assumptions, and reflections in a journal to mitigate their possible influence on the study's outcomes.

Ethical standards were maintained by the researchers informing the participants of their roles and the rights of privacy and confidentiality and protecting their rights to withdraw.

The participants selected for this study were the principals (n=2) and teachers (n=10) from two public schools in Pakistan. The principals had over five years of leadership experience, and the teachers were directly involved in implementing the SNC. This selection helped the researchers develop a deeper understanding of current practices and implementation challenges in these schools., the principals and teachers were selected to explore their experiences connected with implementation challenges; the principals were selected based on their high leadership of more than five years of principals, and teachers were also selected who experienced SNC and involved in the process helped the researcher to understand deeply the current practices and challenges of principals and teachers in public schools of Pakistan.

Interview strategy

For this qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data to understand the detailed information from the research participants regarding the implementation of SNC (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Participants could share rich and unique information about their experiences during the open-ended interviews. Before the interview, the researcher communicated with the people involved to determine their preferred dialect (English or Urdu) (Renn, 2012). The conversations were audio-recorded and translated, then the copied data was coded and examined. To confirm these compensations, this research combined participants' responses into themes to triangulate the data collected across contexts (Fazal et al., 2019). The principals and teachers participated in individual interviews that lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview guide in the teacher interview focused on the challenges they face in implementing the new curriculum policy in their teaching. Also, their support from the principals was explored.

Table 1. Principals participants

Participants	Gender	Experience
P1	Male	10 years
P2	Female	7 years

Table 2. Teachers participants

Participants	Gender	Subject	Teaching experience
Tr1	Male	Science	10 years
Tr2	Female	Science	6 years
Tr3	Female	Social studies	7 years
Tr4	Female	Math	9 years
Tr5	Female	Science	6 years
Tr6	Male	English	5 years
Tr7	Female	Science	9 years
Tr8	Male	Social studies	8 years
Tr9	Female	Science	6 years
Tr10	Male	Math	6 years

Data analysis

The semi-structured interviews helped explore the key themes of teachers' challenges and principals' leadership support in teachers' professional learning in SNC. The interview questions were designed to examine the literature about teachers' challenges in implementing SNC. The investigator is the primary tool for gathering and analysing data; inductive reasoning and narrative results are produced. Thus, the data were analysed using thematic analysis processes after completing the interview transcription, and then an inductive approach was taken to build the code and themes (Renn, 2012). The method was used to understand, identify, analyse, and report the themes within the qualitative data used to provide rich data for information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These trends highlighted the connection between conducting the study and recognising connections.

Findings

As Pakistani public schools implement the Single National Curriculum (SNC), the study's findings reveal how principal leadership promotes teachers' professional learning and navigate the challenges of curriculum reform. According to the research, leaders are key in creating a work climate that supports teachers' professional learning. However, they also experience huge barriers that make it challenging to give instructors the required assistance. These findings highlight the complex interactions that influence the implementation of SNC reform, including those between leadership theories, the availability of resources, and the greater educational environment that can help in reform changes.

Teaching methods

New methodological standards are brought about by the SNC, requiring teachers to use modern teaching techniques that may be unfamiliar or difficult. In Pakistan, public schools, teachers mainly use traditional lecture methods for teaching students, which are less interactive, and student-centred learning in overcrowded classrooms to implement SNC is a challenge for the teachers. The shift towards these modern teaching methods requires teachers to adapt their instructional strategies, which can be daunting without adequate support. Two teachers (T1, T7) stated similarly that they face many difficulties teaching students according to new curriculum objectives because of different teaching methods that break the grounds of traditional lecture methods. So, according to this curriculum, they noticed the need to teach with other methods and activities for student-centred learning. However, they expressed regret that it is not possible in overcrowded classrooms.

Therefore, the SNC's effectiveness relies on how well principals bridge the knowledge gap between old and modern teaching practices ensuring teachers are informed of the changes and prepared to apply them in the classroom. However, implementation may suffer if principals are not knowledgeable about these new techniques.

Language problem

Language is vital to learning, and the SNC's implementation has brought to light critical language-related problems. In areas where different languages are spoken, like Balochistan, transitioning to a standard education may increase language barriers. One of the main challenges in the SNC framework is to change the medium of instruction. The curriculum's English may not be the primary language of many instructors and students, making interacting and comprehending challenging. Every participant brought up the linguistic issue T6 noted:

It is tough to teach in English, but specifically, those students who joined the English language academies can easily understand the concepts, but other students face difficulties learning English. For our school's principal, help us collaborate with other teachers to prepare teachers for the classes.

Another teacher (T8) explained:

Because our national language is Urdu and our previous education system was also Urdu, they changed the books into English, so that students could not properly understand math and science in English. There, we need collaboration and support to manage teaching practices according to the new reform objectives.

It can be challenging for teachers to provide instruction in a language other than their national language, which can impact their trust in themselves and the quality of their teaching. In the same way, pupils might have trouble understanding the subject, which would negatively impact their ability to study and do well in class.

Limited class timings

Due to class periods lasting only 30–35 minutes in many public schools, principals have limited opportunities to observe instruction and provide real-time feedback. At the same time, teachers cannot complete the lesson plan's objectives. Many public schools have short school days, so teachers do not always have the time to cover all the lessons within the given time. This limit is incredibly challenging when introducing a new curriculum, such as the SNC, which might require more practice, discussion, and training for improvement. Teachers tend to address things fast, failing to go extensively into the subject matter or involve students in helpful learning activities. It is essential to implement a new curriculum to give some extra time to teachers, as mentioned in the curriculum; for different activities, teachers need more time in classes. T5 shared the following opinion:

Teaching the students with different activities in classes is very difficult with less time, and another problem is that there are many students in one class, if we do the activities, every student can't give them a chance to take part in activities that can help them and improve their learning.

Another teacher (T6) observed:

Limited time is a big problem that affects teachers and students. Also, according to SNC, teachers cannot cover the syllabus on time according to the given criteria.

These problems can be solved by changing the timetable of classes, arranging extracurricular activities for students' effectiveness, and providing professional development activities. Principals might also push for policy modifications that increase instructional time or offer flexible scheduling options.

Lack of professional development training

Although ongoing learning is essential for efficiently implementing curricula, teachers find it difficult to accept the SNC when they lack this training. The study highlights how crucial it is for leaders to educate teachers about professional learning opportunities within the new curriculum. However, teachers are often asked to use the SNC without having had enough training in its pedagogical prac-

tices, assessment methods, or material. Teachers experience stress and feel under-qualified due to this lack of setup, which lowers their confidence and efficacy in the classroom. The participants share the teaching training reflections. T10 explained:

Because school teachers did not receive the facilities for professional development, it is the responsibility of the government to provide training to the teachers, especially English language training, which is very effective for teachers.

T2 shared:

I have not received any training to improve my skills to teach the SNC effectively. But the school principal helps and supports the teachers in their difficulties and helps them provide training by themselves or with the help of senior teachers.

T6 indicated:

Because there is no teacher training, we work hard according to the new course, especially in advanced English, digital technologies upgrading topics, and science knowledge, etc.”

This includes setting up official training sessions and encouraging an ongoing learning environment in the classroom. Principals might support reflective behaviours, cooperative learning communities, and peer mentoring to develop educators’ abilities over time.

Non-availability of teaching resources

The delivery of proper educational materials is essential to the SNC’s successful implementation. These involve teaching aids, technology, textbooks, and other resources that promote effective learning. However, many schools have an extreme shortage of these essential resources, especially those in developing areas like Balochistan. Teachers can be left using old or inadequate resources, which can seriously hinder their ability to teach the curriculum as designed. About teaching, the participants shared their views about that. T1 observed:

There is a vast difference between other educational settings regarding students’ standards in the education atmosphere and the availability of learning resources according to the new curriculum”

T7 mentioned some challenges:

There are several challenges regarding the availability of teachers’ teaching resources, for instance, limited availability of textbooks, outdated resources, lack of digital resources, limited availability of resources for activities, infrastructure, and lack of internet bedside these all there are more challenges that impact teaching in various ways.”

The lack of instructional materials makes it challenging to implement curricula. It improves education inequality because students in schools with limited resources are disadvantaged compared to their counterparts at institutions with more resources.

Leadership support: Teachers' collaboration

Leaders are critically important in the implementation process of the National Curriculum (SNC). Principals provide many opportunities for teachers to collaborate, exchange ideas, and share experiences through encouraging cooperation. By collaborating, teachers are more likely to deal with the problems that arise from the new curriculum, such as learning new techniques or bridging language gaps. Leaders could arrange cooperative planning meetings to convey feedback from peers or group talks to help teachers develop innovative concepts and implement curricula innovatively. Together, these measures improve the quality of education and foster a sense of connection and responsibility among teachers. The participants shared their opinions about that. P1 reported:

As a school principal, I have organised several professional learning programmes and training sessions to support teachers effectively in applying (SNC). Unfortunately, the government did not provide any professional development programme. However, self-trained or highly qualified teachers share their skills and help others collaboratively. We hold regular collaborative planning sessions where teachers can work together to develop lesson plans, share resources, and discuss best practices.

P2 described:

Feedback and reflection sessions allowed teachers to share experiences and insights, leading to continuous improvement and adaptation of the initiatives to meet their evolving needs through better collaboration. We also organised collaborative planning sessions to promote peer learning and resource sharing, creating a supportive environment.

Idealised influence

Leaders support teachers by ensuring an organised approach to collecting and keeping up on SNC-related discussions through meeting minutes, where principals influence teachers. School leaders ensure that significant choices, action items, and issues offered by instructors have been acknowledged and followed up on by maintaining thorough meeting minutes. This method promotes monitoring curriculum implementation progress, indicates areas needing additional help, and promotes commitment. Teachers may look to meeting minutes as a resource, reminding them

of the approaches and goals that have been determined and providing an understandable strategy for advancing the curriculum. Additionally, for successful implementation, some educational officials are elected to help and facilitate teachers; these leaders are responsible for teachers' professional learning, which can help teachers change teaching practices that can help them achieve reform objectives. P1 mentioned that.

To successfully implement SNC, teachers need to use different educational resources. They need assessment for different subjects and levels, and we help them in their professional learning, which supports teachers in improving their teaching. We are also facing resource problems regarding SNC in the teaching-learning process, but unfortunately, we do not have such resources. But we try to help teachers through our collaboration in our meetings, we try to influence teachers' teaching practices, also, teachers can help teachers and support them in overcoming their teaching problems.

Similarly P2 stated that:

We settled a mentorship system in which some highly experienced teachers guide other teachers, support them in individual challenges, and provide professional learning to help the teachers.

Inspirational motivation

For the successful implementation of SNC, motivating teachers and resource sharing are other essential factors in which teachers can share the resources they get from schools or make themselves for teaching different activities. In contrast, motivation is also necessary to make changes in teaching practices. Educational officials and teachers can share some available resources with other teachers to help them with significant challenges. This might include sharing lesson plans that match the new curriculum and innovative ideas, including digital resources, instructional materials, and textbooks. To maximise the use of limited available resources, leaders should also establish a system that facilitates teachers' access and use of resources. Leaders might lighten some of the load on teachers individually and ensure that every classroom has the resources needed to implement the SNC adequately by encouraging resource sharing. Regarding the resources, P2 mentioned that:

Collaborative planning sessions facilitated peer learning and motivation towards change practices, but the lack of resources teachers faces some challenges in effective teaching.

Moreover P1 stated that:

We procure textbooks, teaching guides, and supplementary materials aligned with the SNC and establish partnerships with educational publishers for quality resources. To address resource

gaps, we promote teacher collaboration and resource-sharing, organise resource-sharing sessions, and create a digital resource. We also motivate teachers to accept changes in teaching practices according to the curriculum changes to achieve the objectives of the successful implementation.

Intellectual stimulation

Through active support of teachers' professional learning, leaders encourage people in the implementation of the SNC successfully, where they can get help in exploring new ideas and teaching innovation. Teachers must continue learning new information because the new curriculum has brought many changes. Leaders may plan or enable participation in professional learning sessions and seminars to address the demands resulting from the SNC. They could also motivate educators to return to school or attend conferences highlighting the most recent curriculum reform and education innovations. Leaders who place a high value on professional learning ensure that instructors have access to the most recent learning methods that enhance pupil achievement and are proficient in handling the intricate details of the SNC. P1 shared his view on that:

Professional learning, organised by subject or grade level, fosters continuous improvement and shared learning. These methods have proven successful in enhancing teacher collaboration for effective SNC implementation, where they can learn teaching innovations by leaders support.

Furthermore, P2 also commented:

We have established mentorship programmes for ongoing support where experienced teachers guide their peers. Peer support networks and collaborative planning sessions further facilitate continuous learning and problem-solving among teachers for their learning

Individualised consideration

Leaders can provide teachers with valuable assistance during the SNC implementation process by conducting observations in the classroom and giving personal attention and support to each person's unique needs and growth. Therefore, educational leaders can provide instructors with quick, helpful feedback on their pedagogy by regularly visiting their classrooms. Through these observations, leaders can identify areas where teachers may find it challenging to implement the updated syllabus and provide particular support or materials to address these issues. For successful leadership, observation is essential for teachers to get feedback on where they can improve their skills, understand their needs, and help them grow; it is also beneficial for self-analysis in teachers' professional learning. In addition,

the principals can be informed about classroom situations and teaching problems, and they can also help teachers overcome their teaching problems through observations when needed. P1 said:

We use monthly assessments for teachers and students. We check students' progress and observe teachers' teaching by checking teachers in their classes and from students' formative assessments monthly. We collaboratively facilitate teachers to help them overcome the challenges they face. As leaders or mentors, we listen carefully, give personal support, and adjust our **approach** to fit each individual to solve their problems.

Also P2 stated:

Coaching and mentorship can provide feedback and **encouragement to people based on their strengths, weaknesses, and goals**, to help them where they feel it is difficult after the class in teacher meeting sessions, from which the other teachers can also get new knowledge and information.

Discussion

According to this study's findings, the crucial factors of implementation of SNC can be described with the principal's support and teachers' professional learning that improves the process of teaching and acquiring knowledge. As the main objective of the new program reform is to unify curricula in standardised curricula, the role of leadership and teachers is to implement effective curriculum reform. This study also highlights that school principals are essential to instructors' professional learning and support them in their teaching challenges, especially in curriculum changes and teaching activities that are very new and urgent for teachers, such as a change in language and teaching methodologies. To successfully implement SNC, the principals are trying to facilitate educational resources and collaborative support in teachers' professional learning. Principals arrange workshops and monthly meetings where teachers can share teaching problems, experiences, and challenges to promote a collaborative culture in schools that can solve teaching and learning problems.

The alignment with the theory of transformational leadership stresses that an effective school leader is supposed to instil a culture of collaboration, which includes actively asking and adopting teachers' feedback. In this research study, though, the pattern showed a mixed picture concerning the principals' response to teacher feedback. Although principals said they used formal processes, including staff meetings and performance appraisals, to collect input, some used casual discussions and interactions. Such practices incorporate the core of transformational leadership, including individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation,

which focus on empowering staff and shared decision-making. Nonetheless, the lack of systematised and structured feedback systems in several schools implies that the ideal notions of transformational leadership are not fully reflected in real life. This gap causes a weak ability of principals to motivate, energise, and react to the needs of the staff, which can be improved by creating feedback processes as an institutional form. As a result, school performance will improve with the improvement of teaching quality. Furthermore; this study also highlights some difficulties principals face in supporting teachers in effectively implementing the new curriculum. Some challenges, as they mentioned in this study, including lack of resources, teachers' problems related to time and over-crowded classes, usage of different activities, effect on students' learning, and also the effects of teachers' teaching in the context of a new curriculum (Dilshad et al., 2023; Irfan, 2021). The results of the research also suggest that these challenges can be solved by teachers' training and different teaching-learning tools that help teachers teach effectively. The study also highlights principals with the leadership skills that help teachers and the school environment to be effective and guide educational settings through SNC implementation; teachers and principals can improve the teaching-learning process through the development of careers for educators to change teaching practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Özdemir, 2020).

According to teachers' experiences, they mentioned in the interviews that they face many difficulties in the new curriculum reform. The teaching challenges are also the reason for ineffective learning, which results in the educational process due to untrained teachers, lack of class timing, and absence of resources in implementing the new course, as mentioned. There is a total shift of teaching methodologies into modern teaching techniques that help teachers change traditional teaching methods and use student-centred teaching, which is also demonstrated in such studies (Ali et al., 2023; Asma et al., 2024). Changing the teaching methodologies into new teaching techniques is more challenging for teachers without training and encouragement. Instructors' professional development can help teachers adjust to new teaching practices and other educational methods (Batool, 2023; Gillani, 2022; Zaman et al., 2021).

Implications for policy and practice

The research findings highlight the critical issues of Pakistan's public-school policy and educational practices. Many important factors affect teachers' teaching, including teachers receiving professional development training and principals who can improve the teaching-learning process and school improvement. These training programmes can also cover leadership practices, school management techniques,

and collaborative learning that can improve teachers' professional learning. Secondly, for the implementation of SNC, teachers and schools need to use some important educational resources. They face different problems, including financial issues that can limit teaching. For that, policymakers should help teachers with educational resources to help them overcome teaching problems. It involves supporting teachers by providing educational resources, sharing knowledge through different educational training pieces, and creating collaboration networks to help teachers successfully implement SNC. Lastly, this research study suggests cooperation among teachers for improving teachers' professional learning. Participating in school improvement consists of educators and leaders of SNC change.

Recommendations

Teachers face challenges in implementing a new curriculum; these challenges affect their teaching-learning process, so principals help teachers in their professional learning to improve pedagogical practices for effective teaching. Leadership techniques need to concentrate on the effective teaching-learning process, to concentrate on change management practices, and teaching methodologies to improve teaching in schools through teachers' professional learning. Such data gives the government the essential information it requires to develop teacher professional development programmes that consider each teacher's particular abilities and inadequacies. These specifically created learning experiences may be even better for instructors' professional development. Training the teachers to guide them in different teaching techniques they can use in SNC classes. To support teachers in overcoming teaching challenges, classroom observations and staff meetings can allow for improvement in the teaching-learning process. As public schools face problems like inadequate instruction, income, information, and job advancement training, teachers can collaborate with teachers inside and outside the schools to improve teaching methodologies.

The main role is for principals to create a collaborative culture that can help and support teachers in overcoming teaching challenges in the implementation of SNC. Government officials can support teachers and principals in the implementation of SNC by providing them with observations and feedback to improve teaching, which involves meetings and training regarding the new curriculum, teachers' challenges, and ensuring the success of teachers' administrators. Furthermore, instead of comparing schools' overall performance and creating PD programmes to improve teachers' performance, this data emphasises particular elements of instructors' ability and offers additional insights for PD programmes. This ensures that the educational reform can continue to achieve its objectives and help teachers identify

and support teachers. Curriculum developers or stakeholders should create professional development programmes for teachers' improvement that can officially and professionally support them in learning to teach the new curriculum.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, the education system has changed to the new curriculum, in which leadership is essential in offering professional learning to teachers to improve instruction and education in the SNC. The research shows the importance of principals' leadership in helping and supporting their teachers in reforming the new curriculum. This study demonstrates teachers' and principals' challenges when applying for the new program. This shows the principals' tasks in supporting their teachers. There were different opinions from principals and teachers regarding implementing the new curriculum. Difficulties in teaching and learning were also highlighted, such as educational resources, limited class timing, and collaboration among teachers, which was very difficult for some teachers and principals. Transformational leadership practices are essential for teachers' professional learning because the teachers can be inspired by principals' motivation, compelling visions and opinions. Furthermore, this study also highlights different barriers that can be solved to implement SNC effectively.

This study clarified how instructors' particular abilities change and how principals assess teachers' qualities. Teachers' barriers to the implementation of SNC include different factors such as lack of resources, lack of time, and mainly the professional development training of teachers regarding the new curriculum, which is very important for teachers and principals regarding school effectiveness. Some classroom difficulties that the teachers mentioned in overcrowded classrooms are that educational activities are impossible, and different teaching techniques are complicated, as mentioned in the new curriculum. Teachers' teaching problems can be solved by professional development training that can help the teachers manage their classes according to the new curriculum and provide long-lasting learning to the teachers through training programmes. Professional learning programmes also play an essential part in teachers' effective education, which can assist them in overcoming the ineffective barriers to their teaching. Leadership skills are also necessary for principals to support the teachers in improving their professional learning. According to the study findings, senior teachers demonstrate decreasing skills: a focus on professional growth, teaching innovations and availability.

There is a big distinction between private and public education in teaching and learning, resources, timing, and teachers' learning in Pakistan. These problems

can negatively affect teaching and learning, especially after the SNC reform. These problems can also affect instructional resources and knowledge-sharing networks. Furthermore, a collaborative culture can solve teaching and learning problems inside and outside the school. Government officials and the community should help teachers and principals with new curriculum reform for effective teaching and learning, which can also help them improve the school by motivating staff. Educational systems can be enhanced with the help of effective leadership strategies, and leadership behaviours can officially support teachers and create collaboration among teachers to create an effective school environment. This research adds to the knowledge and awareness of curriculum reform in Pakistan's educational system, and it also highlights suggestions for improving the educational system for teachers, principals, administrators, and curriculum developers. Research shows that particular skills, such as timeliness, can be enhanced through effective school management, while other aspects require appropriate training programmes to improve the skills of educators.

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