**Single National Curriculum and the Rising Concerns**

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Realising the significance of education as a panacea to all socio-economic and political problems of Pakistan, Imran Khan officially announced Single National Curriculum (SNC); terming it a milestone to end all inequalities in the education system. Being one of the major components of PTI’s manifesto, the long-debated SNC will be implemented in three phases. The first phase has been launched at the primary level from class one to five. The second phase will apply to classes five to eight in 2022. The last phase will be comprising classes ninth to 12th in 2023.

The development of SNC is the outcome of the adoption of multiple educational models, including the Singaporean curriculum model, the Scandinavian model, Cambridge and the UK’s curriculum model. Moreover, some intellectual and scholarly deliberations were also held with the most experienced educationists to draw comparisons between the elitist and public education systems in Pakistan to achieve the best and cohesive uniform curriculum. This would alleviate disparities and incongruities between various existing education systems in the country. Apart from its numerous advantages for students in general and Pakistan in particular, the SNC is not free from multiple rising concerns regarding its smooth implementation

Currently, there are three to four education systems popular in Pakistan, including “private schools,” “public schools,” “seminaries/madrasahs” and “oxford schooling.”

Keeping this huge multifariousness into account, the SNC was introduced with the sole objective of promoting national integration and cohesion by mainstreaming unfocused and neglected sections of education.

The SNC preferably focuses on providing a fair and equal opportunity to all children belonging to different kinds of schoolings so they receive a high-quality education; leading to upward social mobility.

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Furthermore, the introduction of a uniform system of education will certainly ensure the holistic development of students at a rudimentary stage in light of emerging international trends and local aspirations. The imposition of the SNC will create a sense of patriotism among multiple tiers; helping eradicate the class-based system of education. It also focuses on equipping learners with principles and attributes such as righteousness, decorum, tolerance, reverence, peaceful coexistence, environmental awareness, democracy, human rights, global citizenship and personal safety.

Besides the above-illustrated objectives and characteristics of the SNC, analysts and educationists have come up with strong criticism against this nationally-launched project. They are of the view that this initiative is in direct contradiction with the 18th amendment, which empowers all provinces to make educational policies and adapt them according to their regional needs for further ameliorations in the education system contrary to the unilateral imposition by the federal government. Considering it a provincial subject, Sindh province has categorically refused to adopt the federally-announced SNC. Being an educationist, I believe that the government could have worked on other important areas to add improvements to the education sector. It should first have brought 2.5 million out-of-school children to schools but it requires huge finances to build new infrastructure. Provision of technical and vocational education could have been its area of priority. To provide easy access to students of remote areas, arrangements of transportation could have been made. Teachers training programmes could have been initiated. But pitifully government surreptitiously chose the SNC: the cheapest project.

While designing the curriculum, the convenience of the parents was also not taken to realise where the loopholes exist; negating Pakistan’s commitments to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Another big flaw is that the launched curriculum is entirely based on the same benchmark of the 2006 Curriculum. I went through the textbooks with changed content and found that only one person has written the whole book for grade one and another single person for other grades and so on; sheerly declining the importance of diversity of ideas by not allowing other writers to contribute. The SNC also offers no separate plan or proper adjustment for minorities for their religious studies. It is forcing them to follow the same religious content being taught to Muslim students which is a clear contravention of Article 22 of our constitution.

Moreover, architects of this new curriculum have focused only on quantity, not quality; putting a burden on students and encouraging them to rote learning. For instance, the syllabus of Islamic studies has been enhanced and aggrandised to a considerable extent by including complete recitation of Holy Quran, Sayings of Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) and some more chapters on lives of Prophets. I have seen PTC teachers remonstrating for SNC’s complex and lengthy content which they find quite arduous to understand and teach despite taking training on it. Students too are facing great difficulty in studying and comprehending complex material urging them for memorisation.

In my opinion, some little modifications could have been made in the already existing curriculum aimed at creating in students some specific qualities including critical thinking, analytical skills, cognitive behaviour, and creativity hence making them more practicable and demonstrative in real life contrary to putting on them the burden of the SNC.

However, to address these rising concerns regarding the SNC, the government must work on structural shortcomings such as making choices of subjects available at all levels for minorities, periodic training of the teachers, bringing all the out-of-school children to school to make a Single National Curriculum viable. All kinds of societal hindrances coming in the way of girls intercepting their access to education must be removed. Moreover, the allocation of more budget for the education sector is imperative for more improvements. The religious parties and religious scholars of the country must be taken on board for reforms in madrassahs.

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