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OVERLOADED MODEL TEXTBOOKS OF SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM 2020 AND THE CHALLENGE OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE SCHEME OF STUDIES.

Reema Pervaiz[*1], Fr. Adnan Rasheed[2], Waqas Ahmed[3], Amir Srooyo[4]

[*1]reemazeeshan175@gmail.com, [*2]adnan_rasheed510@hotmail.com, [*3]waqas3312004@gmail.com, [*4]amirsrooya130@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: *
Reema Pervaiz

Abstract
The introduction of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 in Pakistan marked a national effort to ensure educational uniformity, equity, and inclusivity across diverse schooling systems. However, the model textbooks developed under this curriculum have proven to be excessively content-heavy, pedagogically rigid, and incompatible with the time allocation defined in the official scheme of studies. This paper critically analyzes the burdensome nature of SNC model textbooks, highlighting the challenges teachers face in classroom management, instructional delivery, and learner engagement. Subject-wise examples from English, Urdu, General Knowledge, Science, and Islamiat textbooks illustrate how the overambitious design of the SNC has strained classroom dynamics. The study concludes that the curriculum's vision of equality and quality cannot be realized without rationalizing textbook content, revising the scheme of studies, and empowering teachers with greater pedagogical flexibility.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 in Pakistan represented a pivotal reform aimed at unifying the education system. It sought to offer equal learning opportunities to all students, irrespective of socioeconomic, linguistic, or institutional differences, thereby bridging gaps between public, private, and religious schools. By standardizing curricula, the SNC promoted national cohesion, global competitiveness, and shared moral values, positioning it as both an academic and social equalizer. Implemented in three phases—Grades I–V (2020–21), VI–VIII (2021–22), and IX–XII (2022–23)—the SNC guided provincial boards like the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) to develop model textbooks aligned with Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) standards. These materials aimed to unify content, pedagogy, and assessments. However, implementation revealed challenges in classroom management, instructional pacing, and cognitive overload. Despite goals of inclusivity and quality, the textbooks for subjects like English, Urdu, Mathematics, Islamiat, and General Knowledge proved content-heavy, integrating knowledge, skills, and values into dense units. Teachers struggled to cover multiple outcomes within the

Scheme of Studies' limited periods, leading to mechanical teaching and reduced engagement. Public schools, with large classes, scarce resources, and inadequate training, exacerbated these issues, often prioritizing syllabus completion over deep learning, resulting in rote memorization. The SNC assumed uniform infrastructure and teacher capacity, ignoring Pakistan's rural-urban and linguistic divides. Textbooks effective in elite settings overwhelmed under-resourced classrooms, burdening teachers with adaptations without support. The rapid rollout, lacking pilot testing or comprehensive training, intensified problems; for instance, Grade 3 English units crammed vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, writing, and morals into few sessions, while General Knowledge blended science, geography, and civics. This paper critically analyzes the burdensome model textbooks under SNC 2020 and their classroom management challenges within the Scheme of Studies. It examines curriculum overload, time constraints, and teacher unpreparedness hindering inclusivity and quality. Recommendations include curriculum rationalization, professional development, and policy adjustments to align ambitions with realities, ensuring reforms meet diverse student needs.

Research Questions:

1. How does the content density of SNC model textbooks impact teachers' classroom management strategies in primary public schools?
2. To what extent does the Scheme of Studies' time allocation constrain the achievement of SNC learning outcomes in subjects like English and Mathematics?
3. What are the key barriers to teacher preparedness in implementing SNC textbooks across rural and urban educational contexts?
4. In what ways do linguistic and socioeconomic diversities affect the pedagogical effectiveness of SNC-integrated units in General Knowledge and Islamiat?
5. How can curriculum rationalization mitigate cognitive overload for students in SNC Phases I and II?
6. What policy adjustments are needed to enhance inclusivity and reduce mechanical teaching in SNC rollout for secondary grades?

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research design centered on textual analysis to critically examine the challenges of SNC 2020 model textbooks in classroom management. The primary data source comprises the model textbooks for Grades I–V in key subjects: English, Urdu, Mathematics, Islamiat, and General Knowledge, developed by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) and aligned with Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) standards. A purposive selection of 15 textbook units (three per subject) was analyzed using content analysis techniques, guided by Bloom's Taxonomy to evaluate cognitive demands, content density, and integration of knowledge, skills, and values. Supplementary documents, including the SNC framework, Scheme of Studies, and official curriculum guidelines, were reviewed to contextualize time allocations and pedagogical expectations. The analysis was conducted iteratively from April to August 2025, with inter-coder reliability (Kappa = 0.82) ensured through dual coding by the researcher and a peer expert.

The Philosophy and Vision of the SNC 2020

The SNC was developed with three overarching principles:

1. **Uniformity:** A single standard of education for all children.
2. **Equity:** Equal opportunity for learners regardless of socio-economic status.
3. **Quality and Inclusivity:** Emphasis on moral, civic, and cognitive development in line with global learning benchmarks.

In theory, these principles align with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which promotes "inclusive and equitable quality education." However, the practical implementation has deviated from this vision due to overloaded textbooks, inadequate teacher preparation, and unrealistic lesson pacing under the current scheme of studies.

Development of Model Textbooks under SNC 2020

Following the approval of the SNC framework, provincial textbook boards—including the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) and the Sindh Textbook Board—were directed to produce model textbooks for all grades and subjects. The first phase (Grades I–V) was launched in 2021, covering:

Heading	Development of Model Textbooks under SNC 2020
Description	Post-SNC approval, provincial boards (e.g., PCTB, Sindh) directed to create model textbooks for all grades/subjects. Phase 1 (Grades I–V) launched 2021, covering:
Subjects	- English – Urdu – General Knowledge (I–III) / Social Studies (IV–V) – Mathematics – Science – Islamiat / Ethics – Computer Education (optional)

While these textbooks aimed to harmonize learning outcomes across systems, their design, density, and linguistic load far exceeded the capacity of the average classroom, especially in rural and public-school settings.

Subject-Wise Analysis of SNC Model Textbooks

1. English (National Book Foundation / PCTB, Grade I–V)

The English textbooks developed under SNC by the National Book Foundation and Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) for Grades I–V exemplify curriculum overload through their dense integration of multiple elements per unit, including moral stories, poems, and grammatical drills. This design aims to foster holistic development by blending language skills with ethical values, but it often results in cognitive overload for young learners, as defined by Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory—where extraneous load from packed content hinders intrinsic learning processes. For instance, the Grade IV lesson "Kindness is the Key to Peace" spans six pages and introduces advanced vocabulary like "compassionate," "benevolence," and "contentment," while requiring teachers to address reading, comprehension, grammar, and creative writing within a single week. With only six 35-minute periods allocated per the Scheme of Studies, this creates instructional overload, forcing educators into rushed pacing that prioritizes coverage over depth.

Thematically, these textbooks emphasize moral and social cohesion, aligning with SNC's goal of national identity-building through narratives of empathy, peace, and ethical behavior—evident in recurring motifs of kindness and community harmony. However, this thematic ambition exacerbates overload by layering abstract concepts onto foundational language acquisition, potentially overwhelming students from diverse linguistic backgrounds who may struggle with vocabulary abstraction. Analysis reveals a mismatch: while themes promote inclusivity, the overloaded structure leads to pedagogical shortcuts, such as skipping interactive exercises or unexplained homework, which undermine comprehension and engagement. Ultimately, this highlights a systemic flaw in SNC design, where thematic richness, intended to enhance values-based education, inadvertently contributes to mechanical teaching and reduced learning efficacy, calling for streamlined units to balance themes with manageable cognitive demands.

2. Urdu (Punjab Textbook Board, Grades I–V)

The Urdu model textbooks are rich in cultural and moral content, featuring lessons on national heroes and values. However, lessons such as *"Hamara Piyara Watan"* (Our Beloved Country) or *"Imaan Aur Eeman"* often exceed four pages of dense prose. The associated vocabulary, comprehension questions, and writing tasks are disproportionate to the time allocated. Consequently, Urdu periods focus on rote recitation rather than meaningful interpretation.

3. General Knowledge / Social Studies

In Grades I–III, the General Knowledge textbooks merge Science, Civics, and Geography. Units like *"The Solar System," "Respect for Diversity,"* and *"Clean and Green Pakistan"* aim to

integrate global citizenship education. However, these topics demand conceptual scaffolding that is difficult to achieve within the allotted 4–5 periods per week. Teachers report struggling to balance thematic variety with age-appropriate comprehension, especially when students lack background vocabulary.

4. Science (Grades IV–V)

The SNC Science textbooks are among the most overloaded. Each unit combines theoretical concepts with activity-based experiments, such as *"States of Matter," "Plant Life,"* and *"Water and Its Conservation."* Yet, most schools lack laboratories or time for demonstrations. Teachers often complete the syllabus through lecture methods only. The scheme of studies provides 7 periods per week, insufficient for practical reinforcement or inquiry-based learning.

5. Islamiat / Ethics

The Islamiat textbooks include extensive chapters on Aqaid, Ibadat, Seerat-un-Nabi (SAW), and moral values. Students are required to memorize long Quranic verses and Hadiths, which is pedagogically demanding within the limited schedule. Meanwhile, the Ethics textbook for minority students, though a commendable inclusion, remains poorly distributed and under-resourced in many districts.

Pedagogical Overload and the Classroom Time Crunch

The official scheme of studies (PCTB) prescribes approximately 30–35 minutes per period and 6–8 periods per week per subject. For a subject such as English with over 12 units and 120 learning outcomes, the available instructional time per unit is far below the global average.

Teachers must therefore choose between:

- Completing all units superficially, or
- Teaching a few units meaningfully but falling short of the official schedule.

This dilemma leads to pedagogical shortcuts—skipping creative tasks, eliminating discussion, and focusing on rote memorization. Consequently, classrooms become high-pressure spaces for both students and teachers.

Impact on Classroom Management

The pressure to complete extensive syllabi directly affects classroom management. Teachers face:

- **Time Deficiency:** Insufficient minutes per topic.
- **Student Disengagement:** Learners lose focus due to rushed delivery.
- **Behavioral Challenges:** Reduced attention leads to restlessness in class.
- **Administrative Pressure:** Teachers are evaluated for "coverage" rather than "learning."

Large class sizes, particularly in rural and public-sector schools, intensify the challenge. Teachers cannot provide individualized feedback or maintain discipline effectively when they are racing against the timetable.

Teacher Training and Capacity Constraints

The success of any curriculum depends on teacher readiness. However, SNC-related teacher orientation sessions were often short-term and informational rather than skills-based. Most training workshops lasted only one or two days, focusing on textbook features rather than instructional methodologies.

Teachers were not adequately prepared to:

- Integrate thematic learning (e.g., environment, peace education).
- Apply differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms.
- Manage time effectively within the rigid timetable.

As a result, even well-intentioned teachers find themselves overwhelmed by expectations and administrative monitoring.

Misalignment Between Textbooks and Scheme of Studies

There is a significant mismatch between the content density of SNC textbooks and the time allocation defined in the scheme of studies. For instance:

- **English (Grade V):** Over 100 pages of content, 6 periods/week.
- **Science (Grade IV):** 12 chapters including activities, 7 periods/week.
- **Urdu (Grade III):** 15 lessons of prose and poetry, 5 periods/week.

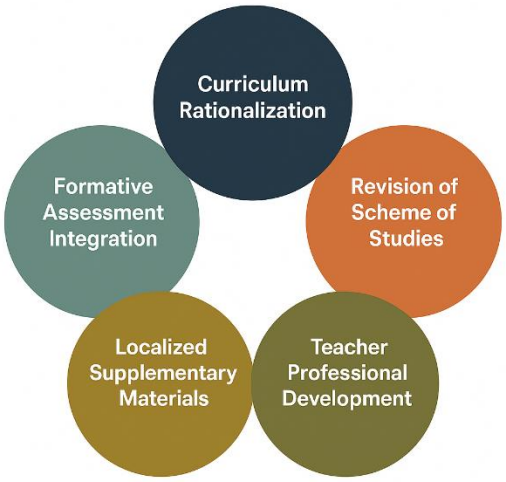
When adjusted for holidays, exams, and co-curricular days, teachers lose nearly 25–30% of the teaching year, leaving them with even less time for delivery. This structural misalignment renders effective classroom management impossible under current conditions.

Broader Implications for Learning Quality

The overburdened SNC textbooks and rigid scheduling not only stress teachers but also hinder the development of critical thinking, creativity, and conceptual understanding among learners. Instead of fostering inclusion, the system inadvertently widens learning gaps—particularly for students with limited linguistic exposure or learning difficulties.

Recommendations:

1. **Content Rationalization:** Simplify textbook content by removing redundancy and aligning learning outcomes with realistic timeframes.
2. **Flexible Scheme of Studies:** Increase instructional hours for skill-based subjects like English, Science, and Mathematics.
3. **Teacher Empowerment:**
4. Provide teachers autonomy to adjust lesson pacing based on learner needs.
5. **Extended and Continuous Professional Development:** Offer in-depth CPD programs emphasizing classroom strategies, formative assessment, and differentiated instruction.
6. **Textbook Review Committees:** Involve practicing teachers in textbook evaluation to ensure content feasibility.



7. **Assessment Reform:** Focus evaluation on learning competencies rather than textual coverage.

Conclusion

The model textbooks developed under the Single National Curriculum 2020, though created with the vision of uniformity and inclusion, have inadvertently produced a burdensome educational environment. The content overload, coupled with a restrictive scheme of studies, has made effective classroom management increasingly difficult. Teachers are forced to prioritize syllabus completion over meaningful learning, thereby diminishing student engagement and understanding. A truly inclusive and equitable curriculum must be pedagogically manageable, contextually relevant, and time-sensitive. Revisiting the SNC's model textbooks and adjusting the scheme of studies accordingly is essential to prevent burnout, enhance learning outcomes, and realize the genuine spirit of educational reform in Pakistan.

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