

Evaluation of Curriculum Alignment with National Education Policy in Pakistan

Hajrah Azeem¹, Fayyaz Ahmed Shaheen²

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Education Karachi, Pakistan Email: hajraazeem33@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Education Karachi, Pakistan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i2.2162>

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the coherence between Pakistan's National Education Policy 2009 and the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022–23. Using document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 10 secondary school teachers and 5 curriculum coordinators in Karachi, the study applies Porter's Survey of Enacted Curriculum model to assess alignment between policy and practice. Findings reveal six major gaps lack of alignment mechanisms, disruption from the 18th Constitutional Amendment, implementation challenges due to centralization-decentralization conflicts, inadequate equity and inclusiveness, persistent misalignment, and political-legal barriers. Thematic analysis further identified six themes: policy-curriculum misalignment, implementation challenges, constitutional and political issues, equity and inclusiveness, and the bridging roles of teachers and coordinators. The study concludes that weak alignment mechanisms and inconsistent implementation undermine curriculum coherence. Strengthening policy coordination, clarifying roles, and addressing political and ideological barriers are essential for effective curriculum reform in Pakistan.

Keywords: Curriculum alignment, national education policy, Single National Curriculum, Pakistan, secondary education, 18th Amendment, equity, qualitative research, thematic analysis

Introduction

Education development is unanimously recognized as the foundation of economic development, equality, and progress. The nation of Pakistan has come up with different education policies in 1959, 1972, 1979, 1992, 1998–2010, and 2009, which include high aspirations concerning literacy rate, enrollment ratio, quality of teaching staff, and curriculum revision. Nevertheless, according to Malik et al. (2022), the same systemic problems persist in the past 60 years, such as low financial investments, insufficient mechanisms for enforcing the laws, instability in politics, rural and urban divide, and a disconnect between objectives and results of the curriculum.

The latest period of curriculum revision entails the National Education Policy 2009 (NEP 2009) and the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022-23 (NCP 2022-23). The mentioned curricula were created on the basis of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) method. This method was elaborated to achieve educational equality in Pakistan regardless of students attending governmental institutions, elite private schools, or Deeni Madaris (Farooq et al., 2022). But according to the 18th Amendment of the Constitution of Pakistan 2010, legislative control over the curriculum was handed over to the provinces. Formulating a national curriculum within this constitutional context gives rise to important

concerns regarding the legal, legitimate, and relevant nature of the NCP 2022–23 in relation to NEP 2009.

In spite of the importance of the above policy event, research literature fails to offer any critical and evidence-based analysis for an alignment between the NEP 2009 and the NCP 2022–23. In addition, no empirical work has adopted any critical framework like SEC (Porter) to conduct a comparative analysis between NEP provisions and NCP objectives and SLOs. This paper attempts to bridge the gap by conducting an evaluative study involving qualitative data collection and analysis based on document analysis and semi-structured interviews with secondary school teachers/curriculum coordinators in Karachi.

Background and Significance

About 5.6 million children were out of schools at primary, the rate of literacy in Pakistan was 18% when Pakistan gained its independence in 1951. The figure rose to around 60% by 2018–19, placing Pakistan at the 152nd position among the 189 nations in the world in UNDP Human Development Index (Farooq et al., 2022). Pakistan was lagging behind by 50 years when it came to primary education and by 60 years when it came to secondary education. According to the UN Global Education Monitoring report of 2016 the secondary, and upper-secondary levels respectively. Given this state of affairs, it comes as no surprise that NEP 2009 aimed for universal primary enrolment by 2015 and an 85% literacy rate by 2015, both targets that have failed. The NCP 2022–23 represents the latest attempt to improve Pakistan's education sector under the framework of the SNC. Assessing whether or not the NCP 2022–23 adheres to the NEP 2009 thus takes on significance both academically and as a process of accountability if NCP 2022–23 fails to uphold the promises made in NEP 2009, then it may fall into the same 'commitment gap' and 'implementation gap' identified by NEP 2009.

Research Objectives

To assess the degree of alignment between the policy provisions of the National Education Policy 2009 and the content and structure of the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022–23.

To examine the impact of curriculum devolution under the 18th Amendment on the alignment and implementation process between NEP 2009 and NCP 2022–23.

To identify and analyze the provisions of the National Education Policy 2009 that are absent or inadequately addressed in the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022–23.

To explore how the National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022–23 addresses and balances the conflicting ideologies of centralization and decentralization in curriculum design and implementation.

Research Questions

1. To what extent is the NCP 2022-23 in line with the policy provisions mentioned in the National Education Policy 2009?
2. In what way does the curriculum devolution due to 18th Amendment affect the alignment of policy and curriculum between NEP 2009 and NCP 2022-23?
3. Which provisions of NEP 2009 were not taken into account within the NCP 2022-23?
4. How is the dilemma of centralization/decentralization ideology managed in NCP 2022-23?

Rationale of the Study

Despite repeated education reforms, Pakistan still faces a gap between education policy and

curriculum implementation. The National Curriculum of Pakistan (2022–23) aimed to modernize and standardize education, but its implementation became challenging after the 18th Amendment, which decentralized education responsibilities. This study examines the alignment between the National Education Policy 2009 and the National Curriculum 2022–23 to identify gaps, assess policy coherence, and explore the challenges of centralization and decentralization. The findings will provide practical insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators to improve future education reforms in Pakistan.

Limitation

This study has several limitations. It is geographically confined to Karachi and relies on a small, purposively selected sample of secondary school teachers and curriculum coordinators, which limits generalizability beyond this context. As a qualitative study, the findings are interpretive and context-specific rather than statistically generalizable. Finally, the thematic analysis reflects researcher interpretation and captures alignment at a single point in time, while policy and curriculum processes remain ongoing and subject to change.

Literature Review

The educational policy-making in Pakistan has been defined by what Malik et al. (2022) refer to as the policy pendulum, whereby each new government has made grand promises of reform that were later abandoned or rolled back when the political tides turned against them. The 1959 National Education Commission made provision for compulsory education until ten years of age along with a stress on character formation all recommendations that remained unrealized due to a lack of resources. The 1972 National Education Policy included nationalization of private institutions and the introduction of free education up to Class X; however, due to the economic collapse and the war of 1971, these policies could not be realized.

The NEP 2009 has been developed following a lengthy three-year stakeholder consultation exercise and is considered the most participative amongst Pakistan's educational policies. However, according to Dildar, Saif & Naz (2016, as cited in Malik et al., 2022), despite being the first policy document that identified both these gaps, it has not succeeded in bridging them either. Farooq et al. (2022) carried out a qualitative content analysis of the SNC approach through an expert interview of a provincial education secretary, a school association chairperson, and a publisher of a publishing company. Their results indicated that the SNC outlines the medium of instruction, core subjects, assessment procedures, and annual learning calendar, which is similar to other international benchmarks such as TIMSS. But there are notable difficulties faced by the SNC, such as the lack of competent teachers, inadequate laboratory facilities, and unwillingness of Sindh province to embrace the SNC approach, resulting in only 50% societal acceptance.

The NCP 2022-23 features established SLOs at all levels, compulsory Islamiyat from Grade 1 onwards, Religious Education for five minority communities, and mathematics and science content aligned with TIMSS standards. Additionally, there is a uniform medium of instruction with English language for mathematics, sciences, and computer studies at the secondary level.

The NCP 2022-23 features established SLOs at all levels, compulsory Islamiyat from Grade 1 onwards, Religious Education for five minority communities, and mathematics and science content aligned with TIMSS standards. Additionally, there The NCP 2022-23 features established SLOs at all levels, compulsory Islamiyat from Grade 1 onwards, Religious Education for five minority communities, and mathematics and science content aligned with TIMSS standards. Additionally, there is a uniform medium of instruction with English language for mathematics, sciences, and computer studies at the secondary level.

NEP 2020 of India, discussed in Umachagi & Selvi (2022), provides an effective point for comparison. Established under five pillars accessibility, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability, NEP 2020 establishes a new holistic assessment center (PARAKH), recognizes explicitly the problem of dropouts in secondary education, and connects with the SDGs by 2030. However, in accordance with Umachagi & Selvi (2022), 'there lies a world of difference between laying down a policy on paper and following it in spirit'. The same is true for the recently launched NCP 2022-23 of Pakistan. NEP 2009 requires equitable education for girls, minorities, rural people, and madrasa pupils. According to Malik et al., prior initiatives have always struggled to convert their equity goals into actionable and financed endeavors. There has never been any study conducted that empirically evaluates whether the SLOs proposed by NCP 2022-23 accurately represent the requirements set forth by NEP 2009. There is also no research in the literature from 2016 through 2026 on the application of Porter's SEC and Webb's model for Depth of Knowledge on Pakistan's curriculum-policy interaction.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the theoretical framework offered by Porter's Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) that sees curriculum alignment as the degree of match between intended curriculum (policy mandate), prescribed curriculum (formal curriculum documents and SLOs), and enacted curriculum (classroom practice). The present study concentrates on the connection between intended and prescribed curriculum, but the semi-structured interview data will give us insight into the latter because it will include teachers' and coordinators' views of the enacted curriculum.

In addition to SEC, we have institutional theory that addresses the issue of coercive isomorphism in the case of the SNC, i.e., an imposed and standardized curriculum, which is at odds with normative expectations concerning the 18th Amendment. In terms of implementation theory (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973), the study will help identify the necessary conditions for successful policy implementation.

Methodology

Research Design

The research will adopt a qualitative research methodology based on the interpretivist paradigm. Two principal research methods that have been adopted include document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Document analysis will be instrumental in establishing a comparison between the two curricula at the intended and prescribed levels. Semi-structured interviews will facilitate an understanding of the enacted curriculum whereby the participants' perception and interpretation of the curriculum as prescribed by the policies will be examined.

Population of the Study

The sampling frame of this research includes all individuals who play an important role in curriculum planning, policy implementation, and curriculum implementation at the secondary school level in Pakistan. There are two primary target population groups that will be included:

Secondary School Teachers: This category involves all teachers teaching in public and private

secondary schools (classes IX-X) in Karachi who are actively involved in implementing the NCP 2022-23. Therefore, the target population of this research will consist of all secondary school teachers and curriculum coordinators at public and private secondary schools in Karachi, Sindh Province, Pakistan. It is pertinent to note that Karachi will be targeted by this study because of the conflict surrounding the introduction of the SNC in the province.

Sample of the Study

The number of respondents involved in the current study is 15, where there were 10 secondary school teachers and 5 curriculum coordinators. The number of respondents used was in keeping with the required number of respondents in qualitative research studies.

Table 1: Profile of Participant Teachers (n = 10)

Code	Gender	School Type	Subject	Exp.(Yrs)	Qualification	Class	Board
T1	Female	Public	English	8	M.A., B.Ed	IX-X	Sindh
T2	Male	Private	Mathematics	12	M.Sc., B.Ed	IX-X	Federal
T3	Female	Public	Biology	5	M.Sc., B.Ed	IX-X	Sindh
T4	Male	Public	Urdu / Pak. Studies	10	M.A., B.Ed	IX-X	Sindh
T5	Female	Private	Physics	6	B.Sc., B.Ed	IX-X	Sindh
T6	Male	Public	Chemistry	9	M.Sc., M.Ed	IX-X	Sindh
T7	Female	Private	Computer Science	7	M.Sc., B.Ed	IX-X	Federal
T8	Male	Public	Social Studies	4	B.A., B.Ed	IX-X	Sindh
T9	Female	Private	Mathematics	11	M.Sc., M.Ed	IX-X	Federal
T10	Male	Public	Islamiyat / Ethics	14	M.A., B.Ed	IX-X	Sindh

Table 2: Profile of Participant Curriculum Coordinators (n = 5)

Code	Gender	School Type	Role	Exp.(Yrs)	Qualification	Coordination Responsibility
C1	Female	Public	Senior Curriculum Coordinator	15	M.Ed., M.Phil	Overall secondary curriculum planning and SLO mapping

Code	Gender	School Type	Role	Exp.(Yrs)	Qualification	Coordination Responsibility
C2	Male	Private	Head of Academics	11	MBA + B.Ed	Curriculum review, teacher PD, exam alignment
C3	Female	Public	Subject Coordinator (Sciences)	8	M.Sc., M.Ed	Sciences curriculum mapping and lab coordination
C4	Male	Private	Head of Department	6	M.A., B.Ed	Language arts, Urdu/English curriculum implementation
C5	Female	Public	Curriculum & Assessment Lead	13	M.Ed., Ph.D (cand.)	Policy-curriculum alignment, SLO review, reporting

The sample intentionally includes participants from public schools, elite private schools, and low-cost private schools to capture the full range of curriculum implementation contexts in Karachi.

Data Collection

The document gathering process was carried out systematically. The government policy documents were collected from the official government libraries. For collecting peer-reviewed journal articles, 'curriculum policy alignment Pakistan,' 'evaluation of Single National Curriculum,' 'NEP 2009 implementation' and 'education under 18th amendment in Pakistan,' limited to 2016-2026. Semi-structured interviews were taken from each participant separately at the school sites. Interviewing took place by using an interview guide comprising ten open-ended questions about the NEP 2009.

Ethical Consideration

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects. Confidentiality is guaranteed by the use of pseudonymization (T1-T10; C1-C5). Audio recordings and transcriptions will be kept confidentially and will only be accessed by the research team. There is no deception in the experiment, and participants can quit at any time.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis produced 47 primary codes from the transcriptions of 15 interviews. These codes were organized into 18 sub-themes and further into 6 major themes. The coding system is described in Table 3 below. Theme frequency among the two participant groups is provided in Table 4.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis Coding Framework — Curriculum Alignment with NEP 2009

#	Theme	Sub-Theme / Category	Initial Codes	Sample Participant Quote	Participants	Frequency
1	Policy-	Awareness	Limited	"I have heard of	T1, T3, T4, T6,	7

#	Theme	Sub-Theme / Category	Initial Codes	Sample Participant Quote	Participants	Freq.
	Curriculum Alignment Gap	of NEP 2009 provisions	policy familiarity; surface-level knowledge no formal orientation; policy documents not shared	the NEP 2009 but never read it. We only receive textbooks and the scheme of work." (T4)	T8, T10, C4	
		SLO–NEP goal alignment	Partial SLO alignment; outcomes-based language new; cognitive demand mismatch; rote vs. higher-order	"The SLOs are written at a higher level than what students can achieve given our resources." (C5)	T2, T5, T7, T9, C1, C2, C5	7
		Curriculum document accessibility	Curriculum materials unavailable; outdated 2006-syllabus textbooks still in use; no printed SLO frameworks	"We are still using the old 2006-syllabus textbooks in some subjects. No new books arrived." (T8)	T3, T4, T6, T8, T10, C3, C4	7
2	Implementation Challenges	Teacher training on NCP 2022–23	One-day orientation only no follow-up no subject-specific guidance; no practical lesson-plan	"We had a one-day orientation about the SNC. That is all. No one explained how to use it in class." (T1)	T1, T2, T3, T5, T9, C1, C2, C5	8

#	Theme	Sub-Theme / Category	Initial Codes	Sample Participant Quote	Participants	Fre q.
			training			
		Resource & infrastructure gaps	No labs, no computers; insufficient English textbooks; overcrowded classrooms; no specialist teachers	"Physics requires practicals. My school has no working lab. I teach theory only." (T5)	T3, T5, T6, T8, C3, C4	6
		Assessment –curriculum disconnect	Board exams still rote-based; SLO-aligned assessment not practiced; teaching to exam not to SLOs	"The board paper tests memorization. I teach for the board, not for the SLOs." (T9)	T2, T4, T7, T9, T10, C2, C5	7
3	Constitutional & Political Tensions	18th Amendment awareness	Provincial autonomy awareness; federal imposition narrative; confusion about jurisdiction; Sindh resistance	"Sindh has its own curriculum authority after the 18th Amendment. The SNC is a federal pressure, not a constitutional right." (C1)	C1, C2, C5, T4, T10	5
		Dual curriculum experience	Sindh board vs. federal board; parallel curriculum materials; conflicting SLOs;	"In Karachi some schools follow the Sindh board and others the federal SNC. It is confusing for everyone." (T4)	T1, T4, T6, T8, T10, C1, C3	7

#	Theme	Sub-Theme / Category	Initial Codes	Sample Participant Quote	Participants	Fre q.
			different exam systems			
		Political discontinuity	SNC perceived as political project; concern about policy reversal; inconsistency across governments	"Every government brings a new policy. Teachers cannot keep changing. We lose years of continuity." (C4)	T1, T3, T10, C2, C4, C5	6
4	Equity & Inclusion Concerns	English-medium mandate & equity	English disadvantages rural/poor students; medium barrier; socioeconomic divide; unequal readiness	"My students cannot understand English instructions. The policy says teach science in English but how?" (T3)	T1, T3, T5, T6, T8, C3, C4	7
		Gender responsiveness	No gender-sensitive content; female students' needs ignored; no guidelines for girls' schools	"The curriculum does not address challenges our girl students face — socially, culturally, or academically." (C1)	T1, T3, T5, C1, C5	5
		Minority & religious inclusion	Religious Education for minorities welcomed; no trained teachers; no	"The idea of Religious Education for non-Muslims is good, but there are no trained teachers or	T7, T10, C2, C5	4

#	Theme	Sub-Theme / Category	Initial Codes	Sample Participant Quote	Participants	Freq.
			textbooks; provision inoperative	textbooks." (C2)		
5	Teacher Agency & Professional Identity	Curriculum enactment autonomy	Adapting curriculum informally; substituting content; ignoring SLOs; teacher-made materials dominant	"I create my own notes and exercises. The official materials do not work in my classroom context." (T2)	T2, T5, T7, T9, C2, C3	6
		Professional development needs	Demand for SLO-based lesson planning training; need for policy literacy; desire for PD on curriculum-assessment alignment	"I want to understand the SLOs properly and plan lessons around them, but no one has trained me." (T7)	T1, T2, T5, T7, T9, C1, C5	7
		Exclusion from curriculum design	Top-down curriculum; no teacher consultation; policy imposed not co-created; lack of ownership	"No one asked teachers what we needed. The curriculum came from above. We had no say at all." (T6)	T3, T4, T6, T8, T10, C1, C3, C4	8
6	Coordinator Role: Bridging Policy &	Policy translation function	Coordinator's interpret policy; buffer role;	"My role is to read the curriculum documents and	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5	5

#	Theme	Sub-Theme / Category	Initial Codes	Sample Participant Quote	Participants	Fre q.
	Practice		explain SLOs; bridge institutional expectations with classroom	translate them into practical terms teachers can use." (C1)		
		Coordinator –teacher collaboration	Formal vs. informal collaboration; weekly planning in elite schools; isolation in public sector	"In our school we meet weekly on curriculum plans. In public schools teachers work alone with no support." (C2)	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, T2, T7	7
		Accountability mechanisms	SLO coverage monitoring; lesson plan review; school-level assessment alignment; reporting to administration	"I check lesson plans against the SLOs each month. Most teachers don't know which SLOs they're covering." (C5)	C1, C3, C5	3

Table 4: Theme Frequency — Participant References per Theme

#	Theme	Teachers (n=10)	Coordinators (n=5)	Total	% Refs	Dominance
1	Policy-Curriculum Alignment Gap	8	5	13	27.7%	Very High
2	Implementation Challenges	9	5	14	29.8%	Highest
3	Constitutional & Political Tensions	5	5	10	21.3%	High
4	Equity & Inclusion	7	4	11	23.4%	High

#	Theme	Teachers (n=10)	Coordinators (n=5)	Total	% Refs	Dominance
	Concerns					
5	Teacher Agency & Professional Identity	8	4	12	25.5%	High
6	Coordinator Role: Bridging Policy & Practice	3	5	8	17.0%	Moderate

Note: Total references = number of participants (out of 15) contributing coded data to each theme. Percentages computed against maximum 47 coded references.

Results

The thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 secondary school teachers and 5 curriculum coordinators yielded six key themes, which provide insight into the complex interplay between curriculum policy alignment in the secondary education context of Karachi, Pakistan. It is evident from the analysis of the themes that the ambitions of both NEP 2009 and NCP 2022-23 are largely unfulfilled within the classroom because the necessary environment for true curriculum policy alignment has not yet been created.

Theme 1: Policy-Curriculum Alignment Gap

The most widespread observation made was that of an underlying awareness gap between the intentions set forth by the NEP 2009 and the material that is being utilized by the teachers to deliver lessons to their students. Of the ten teachers surveyed, eight stated that they have heard very little of, if anything, about the NEP 2009. The teachers interviewed noted that they did not receive any kind of introduction into the new policy, but rather textbooks and schemes of work. According to T4, who has ten years of teaching experience in a public school, "I have heard of the NEP 2009, but I have never read it as I have only been provided textbooks and scheme of work." Curriculum coordinators were more aware of the NEP 2009; however, the most experienced coordinator among them (C5), with his doctoral candidacy, still noted that SLOs defined by the NCP are written on a higher cognitive level than the students can reach due to resource limitations. In addition to that, all eight interviewees noted that NCP 2022–23 curriculum materials were not available yet.

Theme 2: Implementation Challenges

The theme of implementation problems occurred amongst all fifteen participants the most frequent category as compared to any other, indicative of the ubiquity of the disconnect between curriculum policy and implementation in classrooms. Three themes relating to implementation arose: lack of training, resource and infrastructure insufficiencies, and the disconnect between assessment and curriculum. In terms of training, it appears that the only type received by most participants was the one-day orientation program related to the NCP with no follow-up and no specific guidance provided in subject areas or lesson planning for SLOs. T1 pointed out the one-day orientation program as the only training she had received, in line with Farooq et al.'s (2022) argument that SNC cannot be implemented successfully without regular training programs for teachers. Resource and infrastructure insufficiency was prevalent in the case of public sector schools. According to T5, it became impossible for her to implement the NCP, as required by law, as there was no working laboratory available in her school. C3 confirmed that lab coordination existed in only one of the four public schools she oversaw.

Theme 3: Constitutional and Political Tensions

The theme was most evident amongst coordinators, all of whom mentioned the constitutional and political elements of the disputed implementation of the SNC in Sindh. Coordinator 1 emphasized the central constitutional element; since the 18th Amendment gives Sindh the right to develop its curriculum, the SNC becomes a federal influence rather than a constitutional obligation within Sindh. The same viewpoint was held by Coordinator 5 and by the teachers of public schools who were confused between their duties to the curriculum of Sindh Board and those of the federal SNC. Coordinator 4 raised concerns about the institutional fatigue that resulted from the inability of teachers to withstand the constant changes initiated by every new government, while the lack of continuity in the curriculum was itself a form of education formal practice.

Theme 4: Equity and Inclusion Concerns

The use of English language for education emerged as the most critical equity issue among all the other issues mentioned by seven out of the ten participant-teachers in the case of government schools in which all the children had been taught in their primary years in Urdu or regional languages only. T3 saw this as impossible from a teaching standpoint because of not being able to teach biology through English medium if the child has no understanding of English language. It led to the adaptation of the curriculum since the teachers would teach in Urdu despite having a prescribed curriculum that is different from the implemented one in terms of medium of instruction. Gender responsiveness was seen as absent by C1 in which she said that the curriculum lacked measures to cater to the needs of female students despite it being mandatory under NEP 2009. Minorities' religion education remained on paper as there were no qualified teachers or textbooks available.

Theme 5: Teacher Agency and Professional Identity

An important finding that arose out of the analysis is that, rather than just applying the prescribed curriculum to the letter, teachers of all types revealed a considerable degree of informal agency in this matter. Teacher T2 of an elite private school revealed that he developed his own notes and exercises since the available curriculum could not be used in his class. Such informal curriculum deviation goes largely unnoticed by the policymakers. It is notable that teacher agency was not necessarily empowering, as public school teachers found that their adaptations were necessitated by circumstances rather than chosen professionally. The need for professional development was consistently voiced; eight of fifteen participants showed interest in training in how to develop lessons based on SLOs. Teachers were clearly motivated to implement the new curriculum but lacked institutional means of doing so. What teachers felt was their exclusion from the process of curriculum development; T6 summed up that teachers had not been consulted the curriculum came from above, thus violating the principles of its development.

Theme 6: Coordinator Role in Bridging Policy and Practice

All Five of the coordinators stated that their job was policy translation, in which they had to read the NCP for 2022–23 and translate what they found there into practice for the teachers. C1 stated that this was her main responsibility. It is important because, as identified in Theme 1, very few teachers were aware of the NEP 2009 and how the policies were derived from it. The problem was that the ability of the coordinators to undertake this job varied significantly depending on whether the school was a high-quality private institution or a public institution. At private institutions, it was clear from the interviewees' responses that they undertook weekly planning sessions, peer review of lesson plans in terms of SLOs, and reporting practices. However, at the public schools, the coordinators when they existed felt isolated, with high administrative pressure. C5 explained that the majority of teachers who worked under her did not know about which SLOs they should have been teaching.

Cross-Cutting Pattern: The Three-Tier School-Type Divide

In each of the six categories, there were stark differences in alignment experiences according to

school types. For instance, private elite institutions exhibited greater coordination between coordinators and teachers, more available resources, increased policy knowledge, and the ability to conduct classes using SLOs. Conversely, government institutions experienced the opposite in all respects. In this regard, low-cost private institutions found themselves in an in-between position, with their aspirations matching those of private institutions but facing difficulties at the level of resource endowment similar to government institutions. The three-tier system of experience of alignment reflects the structural educational disparity based on class division that both the NEP 2009 and NCP 2022-23 aimed to solve and represents one of the most profound insights from this research.

Conclusion

The development of the NCP 2022-23 took place in contradiction to the 18th amendment and research aimed to examine the congruency between Pakistan's National Education Policy 2009 and its National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022-23 using a qualitative approach, including document analysis and semi-structured interviews conducted among 15 participants representing secondary school teachers in Karachi. Based on the results of this study, it can be stated that, although the NCP 2022-23 is a reformative policy in some aspects, it contradicts the NEP 2009 concerning more basic ones, namely constitutional validity, equity promotion, and implementation strategies. The most important point the Joint Declaration of 2011 hence, it failed to be adopted by the province of Sindh and received a neutral position from the province of Balochistan.

Pakistan's educational development from the conference of 1947 to the six major policies indicates that policy language alone is not enough for successful implementation if there is no constitutional legitimacy, provincial ownership, financing of implementation processes, equity-focused structure, and teacher participation. The NCP 2022-23 cannot be used as a national curriculum without overcoming these deficiencies. The accounts of the teachers and coordinators who have participated in this research offer an insight into the human costs of failed curriculum alignment, not the failure of policy as such, but the day-to-day concessions in classrooms, frustration among professionals, and children who suffer from being subjected to a curriculum that offers equity it cannot achieve. This research provides the first evidence-based analysis of alignment between the NEP 2009 and NCP 2022-23 based on the experiences of practitioners and documents.

Discussion

In this context, the outcomes of the current study suggest that there is only an uncertain and contested curriculum-policy alignment in Pakistan that is fragile and constitutionally unstable. The NCP 2022-23 reflects significant success along some axes, especially in incorporating outcome-based SLOs, implementing standardized procedures for assessing the SLOs, and bringing Deeni Madaris into the purview of formal schooling. This success mirrors the recommendations made in NEP 2009 and hence must be recognized. However, such successes are overshadowed by other critical failures in the alignment process.

The constitutional tension is the most consequential finding. A national curriculum that two provinces refuse to adopt cannot function as a national curriculum. The NEP 2009's vision of jointly owned policy, honored by the 2011 Joint Declaration, has been effectively superseded by a centralized initiative that did not secure genuine provincial co-ownership not merely a political problem, but a curriculum quality problem. The persistence of implementation gaps (Theme 2) reflects Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) 'complexity of joint action': every additional actor, resource requirement, and institutional step between policy intention and classroom practice increases the probability of failure. The NCP's requirements for specialist teachers and laboratory infrastructure, without corresponding funded programs, replicates the pattern that undermined the NEP 1998–2010 (Malik et al., 2022).

Equity issues are especially problematic due to their regression from clear commitments made by

the NEP 2009 itself. Without a basis in equity considerations, the insistence on the use of English is a mechanism of exclusion of the population groups, rural students, poorer families, linguistic minorities which were the NEP's priorities. In light of this, Umachagi and Selvi's (2022) discussion of potential problems with India's NEP 2020 applies to Pakistan's case even more strongly; since the educational divide in terms of differences between schools in urban elite areas and rural areas is wider here than in India, there is a significant risk of aggravating inequality by way of standardization of curricula. The issue of teachers' agency (Theme 5) recontextualizes the discussion of implementation; teachers cannot be seen as passive resisters, and rather as proactive professionals without structural support.

Recommendations

Establish a joint Curriculum-Policy Alignment Review Committee to conduct biennial evaluations of alignment using Porter's SEC framework.

Institutionalize the 2011 Joint Declaration model to ensure future curriculum revisions reflect genuine federal-provincial co-ownership.

Implement a National Curriculum Equity Audit to examine SLO attainment across gender, province, location, language, and school type for targeted policy adjustments.

Curriculum Developers

Integrate provincial linguistic and cultural elements into the National Curriculum Framework through a modular approach, combining a core national curriculum with province-specific modules on language, history, and cultural traditions.

Mandate gender-sensitive pedagogical guidelines within the curriculum, ensuring they are required components rather than optional additions.

Revise the English language policy to include transitional language support programs for students transitioning from Urdu or regional language instruction at the primary level.

For School Leaders and Teachers

Pursue professional development opportunities that foster skill development in designing lessons based on SLOs and implementing formative assessments as envisioned by the NCP 2022-23.

Lobby for lighter workload for coordinators and policy education to improve the bridging role between the coordinator and teacher.

References

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2) 27–40.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2) 77–101.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dildar, S. M., Saif, N. & Naz, A. (2016). Review of policies of Pakistan: Planning and implication flows. First International Conference 5Es, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2) 147–160.
- Economic Survey of Pakistan. (2019–20). Ministry of Finance Government of Pakistan.
- Farooq, R. U., Qasim, M. I., & Saddique, U. (2022). Content based evaluation of national curriculum framework of Pakistan. *Journal of Research and Reviews in Social Sciences Pakistan*, 5(2) 1829–1839.
- Government of Pakistan. (2009). *National Education Policy 2009*. Ministry of Education, Islamabad.

- Government of Pakistan. (2010). The Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Act, 2010. National Assembly of Pakistan.
- Government of Pakistan. (2022). National Curriculum of Pakistan 2022–23. Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Islamabad.
- Landis, J. R., & Koch G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for data. *Biometrics*, 33(1) 159–174.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Malik, F., Manzoor, H., Kumar, H., Channa, S., & Raza, T. (2022). Critical analysis of policies of Pakistan. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(11) 1762–1778.
- Porter, A. C. (2002). Measuring the content of instruction: Uses in research and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 31(7) 3–14.
- Pressman, J. L., & Wildavsky, A. (1973). *Implementation: How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland*. University of California Press.
- Tongco, M. D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications* 5 147–158.
- Umachagi, A. E., & Selvi, R. (2022). National Education Policy 2020. Higher education: A brief review. *Journal of Studies in Education* 11(2) 19–29.
- UNESCO. (2016). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Education, for people and planet*. UNESCO Publishing.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2019). *Human Development Report 2019*. UNDP.