

# **Navigating Leadership in The Era of The Single National Curriculum in Pakistan: A Case Study of Strategies and Challenges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Schools**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Education at the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Arts (M.A.)**



**Universitas  
Islam Internasional  
Indonesia**

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"In the journey of education, leadership is the compass that guides us through  
change and challenges, shaping a brighter future for all."

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

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In Pakistan, the Single National Curriculum (SNC) represents a significant educational reform aimed at standardizing education across the country to ensure equal and uniform opportunities for all students. This study focuses on the implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province characterized by its socio-cultural and economic diversity. It investigates how school leaders have adapted their roles in response to the SNC, the challenges encountered, and the impact on educational quality, teacher training, and student outcomes. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys with school leaders and teachers from various public schools, followed by thematic analysis to uncover key patterns. The findings reveal that school leaders have had to extensively alter their leadership styles, adopting transformational and distributed leadership approaches to manage the implementation challenges. Principals played a critical role in professional development, organizing workshops and training sessions to equip teachers with the necessary skills for SNC implementation. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain, including resistance to change among educators accustomed to traditional methods, and resource limitations, particularly in rural areas. School leaders have addressed these issues through strategic resource management and partnerships with NGOs. The cultural diversity of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also required careful consideration to ensure curriculum relevance and accessibility for all students, with school leaders working to establish culturally responsive teaching practices. Overall, the SNC has had a positive impact, standardizing educational quality across the province, improving teacher training, and encouraging student engagement. However, ongoing challenges necessitate continuous support and adaptive leadership strategies. This study highlights the importance of flexible, collaborative leadership in navigating educational reforms and underscores the need for ongoing professional development and community engagement to ensure the success of the SNC.

*Keywords: Single National Curriculum; School Leadership; policy implementation; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan*

# Table of Contents

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of Study .....	1
1.2 Identifying the Research Gap.....	5
1.2.1 Context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.....	6
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Research Objectives.....	6
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	7
CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	10
2.1 Literature Review.....	10
2.1.1 The Evolving Role of School Leadership .....	10
2.1.2 The Evolving Role of School Leadership in Pakistan .....	16
2.1.3 Impact of Leadership on Student Learning.....	18
2.1.4 Contextual Sensitivity in Leadership .....	21
2.1.5 Leadership Traits and Personal Leadership Resources.....	23
2.1.6 Challenges in Pakistani Schools .....	25
2.1.7 Rationale for the Current Study .....	27
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	28
2.2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory.....	29
2.2.2 Distributed Leadership Theory .....	29
2.2.3 Organizational Change Theory .....	30
2.2.4 Cultural and Contextual Considerations .....	31
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	33
3.1 Introduction to Methodology .....	33
3.1.2 Qualitative Research .....	33
3.1.3 Case Study .....	34
3.2 Data Collection .....	35
3.2.1 Interviews.....	37
3.2.3 Sampling .....	39
3.3 Data Analysis.....	40
3.4 Ethical Considerations .....	41
3.5 Positionality .....	42
3.6 Validity and Reliability.....	43
3.7 Research Subjects and the Place and the Time of Research .....	43
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	45
4.1 Results.....	45
4.1.1 Perception and Adaptation of Leadership Roles.....	45

4.1.2 Challenges in Implementing the SNC.....	54
4.1.3 Leadership Strategies and Interventions .....	63
4.1.4. Overall Indicative Impact of the SNC on Education .....	70
4.1.5 Conclusion of Findings .....	78
4.2 DISCUSSION .....	80
4.2.1 Interpretation of Findings.....	80
4.2.2 Comparison with Existing Literature .....	95
4.2.3. Implications for Policy and Practice .....	105
4.2.4 Limitations of the Study.....	108
4.2.5 Future Research Directions .....	110
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS.....	112
5.1 Summary of Key Findings .....	112
5.2 Implications of the Findings .....	115
5.3 Limitations of the Study.....	115
5.4 Recommendations for Future Research .....	116
5.5 Final Thoughts .....	116
REFERENCES .....	118

# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a brief overview of the study by introducing the background, purpose and significance of this research. It provides a background of the study by describing the current educational setting in Pakistan, the need for a standardized national curriculum, and the specific challenges faced by schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## 1.1 Background of Study

Pakistan, officially known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is a densely populated and culturally diverse country located in South Asia. It shares its borders with India to the east, China to the north-east, Afghanistan to the north-west, and Iran to the west, while its southern border meets the Arabian Sea. As of 2023, Pakistan boasts a population of over 241.5 million, making it one of the world's most populous countries, and it holds the distinction of having the largest Muslim population and also famous for its rich needlepoint of cultures, languages, and varied geographical landscapes, highlighting its unique position and significance in the region (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

The educational system of Pakistan involves a range of educational levels, from primary to higher education (Pakistan Education Statistics, 2021). Pakistan's educational system is undergoing a substantial reform characterized by a transition from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach particularly in public schools. Over the years, the country has introduced various reforms and policies to address the educational needs of its citizens. The structure of the education system is characterized by different educational boards, both at the federal and provincial levels (Khan, 2021).

In 2019, a significant educational initiative in Pakistan was embarked, as a Single National Curriculum (SNC) and soon after claimed the idea to be the step in a direction of one

system of Education for all such as curriculum, medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment, so in this way all children of Pakistan have equality as well as equity to receive high quality of education. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, has been associated with the slogan of “build the nation” during his political campaign, therefore he intended to launch SNC long before it was announced in August 2021, as “he said this initiative is an essential step in transforming the nation into a unified entity, rooted in common morals and ethos” as well as to update the curriculum of education system (Nazeer & Khan, 2022). The purpose of this initiative is to provide equal education to all children and to improve the quality of education in Pakistan (Institute of Islamic & Professional Studies, n.d.).

Hania Azal (2021) mentioned that the Single National Curriculum gives all individuals of society in Pakistan an equal chance in education. It provides equal opportunity and fairness in giving the children the education they require. In other words, national standardization and incorporation can be achievable through this initiative in education. Likewise, Dr. Maryam Chughtai, the Director of National Curriculum Council of Pakistan, she said in her interview that Single National Curriculum is a name of a large-scale education reforms exercise. This includes reforms agenda of four parts. The first is, improve the core standards of education at every learning level. Second is, improve the quality of textbooks available to our children. Third is, improve the capacity of the teachers who are supposed to teach this curriculum. Fourth is, reform the assessment system. Currently, it is based on rote memorization. We need to take that from rote memorization to concept-based learning. So, the goal of this initiative, this project, is to take a comprehensive and holistic picture of the education reforms, and to start with that we switch the foundational piece for all of this work. The foundational piece is, to identify the target, what is the destination we want to end up at? Which is to say the setting of the core standards by subject and grade and learning level – in other words, the point that we

required every child in Pakistan to come up to (Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 2021).

After the implementation of SNC, the leadership of school principals face many hurdles for the success of this initiative in the education system of Pakistan. According to the report of UNESCO (2019) access to education remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas of Pakistan. Khan (2021) stated that the quality of education and teacher training are important things that entail attention. Moreover, the effective leadership of schools and institutions performs a crucial role in piloting these challenges and understanding the potential benefits of the SNC. According to a study, after classroom teaching, the second most important thing is school leadership which is really significant for the better learning outcomes of students in schools (Leithwood et al., 2019). In addition to typical administrative responsibilities, headteachers must assume instructional, mentoring, and guidance roles to effectively affect educational development (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015; Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

Notably, the school administrators in Pakistan appear to lack sufficient professional development and training possibilities. Although most educators undergo training early in their careers, principals receive less assistance once they are entrusted with administrative duties. Given the substantial influence that school leadership possesses over student academic performance and the overall enhancement of the institution and such existing deficiency in professional development is a matter of concern (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015; Williams & Cummings, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Harris, 2004; Levine, 2005).

School leadership in Pakistan's public school system encounters numerous obstacles. Limited infrastructure and resources, difficulties in faculty recruitment, administrative obstacles, enrollment difficulties, and parental participation difficulties are a few of them. Although numerous headteachers acknowledge the changing requirements of their positions,

they are frequently confined to adhering to conventional, administrative-focused methodologies. This limitation mostly results from inadequate training in contemporary educational leadership practices and the absence of authoritative leadership norms (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015). Additionally, language barriers pose significant challenges. Principals are entrusted with distinct obligations and complexities since they are required to implement English as the primary language of instruction. Learner-centered strategies become complicated when the language of instruction in teacher training (English) differs from the language used in the classroom (Urdu). Due to this language mismatch, school principals face additional challenges adapting to the new educational paradigm (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015).

According to the study conducted by Mansoor and Akhtar (2015), leadership in public schools in Pakistan needs to be reevaluated in a timely manner. Such as how the leaders are performing and evolving their roles in schools to promote an effective positive educational system. While it is generally agreed that leaders should continue to evolve their leadership roles in order to meet contemporary educational needs, the vast majority of school administrators prioritize administrative tasks over transformational leadership practices and is always difficult for them to effectively engage the community in the educational process because of extended working hours, inadequate management skills, and lack of motivation, as well as administrative burdens. The leaders are not provided with proper training and once they on the top position they no longer have exposure to trainings and that is a great deal of challenge that Pakistani school administrators face in managing the changing educational landscape, because of their less or no interest in training program which highlights the urgent need for research and maintaining active training programs to be developed that can assist them in dealing with these challenges.

## 1.2 Identifying the Research Gap

Existing literature on school leadership has extensively explored various aspects of leadership's impact on educational outcomes. A study by Leithwood et al., (2008) emphasizes that effective school leadership is the second most important aspect after classroom instruction in maintaining and influencing the students' learning. Similarly, Robinson et al., (2008) argues that school leadership significantly impacts student outcomes as it shapes the conditions for teaching and learning.

Nonetheless, the identified studies provide considerable material to analyze school leadership, the challenges they face, and how they overcome those. Moreover, the literature review reveals the insufficiency of research on the issue of school leadership in developing countries with significant education reform, in this case, Pakistan and the SNC. Indeed, most studies on the topic are dedicated to developed countries, and western regions, which differ from developing countries, including Asian populations, in available resources and educational issues (Hallinger, 2011) This, in turn, underlines an increasing need for local research on the subject of school leadership and how it affects students' academic success under conditions of diversity and resource restriction.

Moreover, the implementation of the SNC in Pakistan is prone to some peculiar issues that are still vastly unexplored. Specifically, there is a lack of information on leading under conditions of low resources, overcrowded schools, and the incompatibility of the national program to the regional values. Even though various researches discuss school leader struggles in Pakistan, there is a scarce amount of information concerning how school leaders reconstruct their roles and practices to implement the SNC appropriately (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015).

### **1.2.1 Context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is a province in Pakistan with a fundamentally different educational context marked by various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This region faces multiple challenges associated with insufficient infrastructure, a lack of qualified teaching staff, and constant socio-political instability. Hence, it is even more complicated to implement the SNC, and school leaders need to be innovative and context-specific in finding possible strategies to cope with numerous obstacles.

Thus, in KP, a study to understand this phenomenon's nature and the ways school principals, in particular, perceive and re-create their leadership in light of the SNC is a necessity. The sum, exploring the SNC-associated innovations in KP school leadership has important implications for other developing countries with similar features.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How do school principals perceive and adapt their leadership roles in response to implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan?
2. What are the specific challenges school principals face in implementing the SNC, and how do these challenges vary across different school settings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan?
3. What effective leadership strategies and interventions have been employed by school principals to overcome the challenges associated with the SNC?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The Research Objectives of the study are given below:

- To explore how school principals perceive and adapt their leadership roles after the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
- To identify and analyze the specific challenges faced by school principals in the implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
- To examine and assess the effective leadership strategies and interventions employed by school principals to address the challenges associated with the SNC.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies not just in its contribution to academic research but also the practical application of educational administration and policy that can be applied in developing countries such as Pakistan. This study focuses on the challenges that the school leaders face particularly after the substantial educational reform, the Single National Curriculum of Pakistan (SNC).

An important aspect of this study is the fact that it presents a unique opportunity to examine the dynamics of educational leadership during the time of Single National curriculum (SNC). Pakistan, as a country that is just beginning to implement the SNC, provides a unique context for examining how educational leaders are navigating complex transitions at this time. Earlier the situation was not that challenging because a localized curriculum and policies were maintained by the provincial governments. Following the change, educational equity and equality are stressed by standardizing leader requirements throughout the country where the implementation is taking place. This not only throws light into the global policy consideration but is also very applicable situationally in both the local as well as international context. Therefore, this study will gain a more nuanced understanding of educational leadership

challenges and strategies in the local context, offering valuable lessons that may be applicable to other developing countries dealing with similar educational reforms in the near future.

In addition to the academic value, it may provide a substantial impact on educational policy and practice in the future particularly because it is an initial study and very timely in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. As the study explains the practical challenges faced by school leaders in response to the SNC and the strategies that they employ in response to those challenges, the study is able to point out the ways for developing an effective leadership practice in schools. Similarly, educational leaders are in a difficult position when they have to deal with the constraints of limited resources, cultural barriers that they face and many of them are resistant to change.

As part of the study, the focus is also on identifying effective leadership strategies and intervention methods, which is one of the most important aspects in educational leadership. After identifying problems and highlighting the solutions it is always important to change the focus to resolving the challenges and it is vital to have a problem-solving process in systematic scientific research. Therefore, in the study it is aimed to provide a roadmap for effective school leadership through global literature in the midst of systemic changes that can be faced by schools as a result of highlighting successful leadership practices from the theoretical and practical perspectives.

The findings of this study will also highlight how education policies are developed and implemented in Pakistan and similar contexts as a result of the findings of this study. Therefore, there is a potential that the policymakers can improve their ability to align the future policies they formulate with the needs and challenges faced by school leaders by understanding the practical realities of implementing broad educational reforms rather than copying it from the developed countries and implementing it without looking at its efficiency and impact. There

would be a higher likelihood of a successful implementation of such educational reforms if there were an alignment between these two factors.

As a final contribution, this study has made a considerable contribution to the broader field of change management in education by providing a case study that illustrates how educational institutions are able to respond to and manage significant systemic changes during times of change. Researchers and practitioners in the fields of organizational change would find the insights gained in this study to be of interest, providing them with a unique perspective on change management within the educational sector. Taking everything into account, this study offers valuable insights for academic research, educational policy, and practice, particularly in developing countries that are undertaking large-scale educational reforms. It is expected that the findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the complexities of educational leadership in such contexts, as well as providing an understanding of the strategies and challenges faced by school leaders during such periods of great change.

## **CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

This chapter explores the theoretical foundations that fortify the study on the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It entails two main sections: the literature review and the theoretical framework.

### **2.1 Literature Review**

This section offers a comprehensive examination of existing research related to educational leadership, curriculum implementation, and change management.

#### **2.1.1 The Evolving Role of School Leadership**

Leadership plays a very important role in every organization, particularly in the schools' system, successful leadership can change the whole environment of the school and takes the school towards the journey of success. This statement is justified by the body of research that correlates strong school leadership with better student performance, improved teacher competence, and schoolwide improvement. For instance, Robinson et al., (2008) argue that school leadership levels of influence on student outcomes are only surpassed by classroom instruction and that school leadership is a second among school-related factors contributing to variations in student learning outcomes after classroom teaching. In a broader sense, Leithwood and Jantz (2005) have shown the cumulative effects of transformative leadership through examples of improved school culture and student performance.

The term leadership is really complicated to define because the concept of leadership is evolving day by day. However, according to my understanding, leadership is an artistic technique in which the leader knows how to tackle the risks and find a solution for a problem and leads his/her team towards the path of success. Winston and Patterson (2006) described

that leader is one or more who guides the team. Leaders have many special skills to achieve organizational objectives. A leader shares his vision clearly about future success to inspire the team members to accomplish that vision. A leader believes in teamwork and gives preference to the ideas and perceptions of the team members and continuously helps his team to grow particularly to the changing situations of the world. Most importantly, a great leader cares about the wellbeing of his team to create a positive environment in an organization.

There are several theories of leadership. Great Man Theory of leadership was mentioned by Thomas Carlyle in his book “On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History” that heroes and leaders are born with innate qualities. In simple terms, some people are born with extraordinary skills of leadership that make them great leaders. This theory suggests that leadership quality is innate. According to this theory, you are born a leader naturally, not by nurture. Another theory, trait leadership theory that is a little bit similar to great man theory suggested that leaders are born with certain innate qualities, including physical and personality traits. However, this theory slightly increase the perspective of leadership compared to the Great Man Theory because it highlighted the role of learning and experience in leadership development. Another theory, contingency leadership theory suggested that the success of a leader not only depends on his abilities but also depends on the context and the aspects of situations. Another theory, behavior leadership theory suggested that leadership skills can be developed by training and observations as well as the actions of the leaders are important. This theory highlighted that leaders are not born; they are made through their professional development. According to the researcher’s point of view, not only nature but also nurture plays a very important role in effective leadership. Another theory, participative leadership theory proposes teamwork and allows team members to contribute ideas and participate in decision making. This leadership is also known as democratic leadership in which the leaders act like a mentor for the team members to achieve their goals

and also allows inputs from the team members. Another theory, transactional leadership theory is also known as management theory in which the leaders set the goals and standards for the team members with performance-based reward and punishment. Another theory, transformational leadership theory is also known as relationship theory in which the leader is like a guide and shares the same goal and vision with the team members. This type of leadership focuses on moral standards to inspire and motivate the team members (Cherry, 2022).

In the context of education, all the above theories of leadership play an important role because educational leadership develops a vision and provides direction to teachers, staff, students, and learning communities (Wilson, n.d.). According to a study, effective educational leadership strongly affects the learning outcomes of students as well as the environment of school (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Furthermore, Leithwood et al., (2008) argued that educational leadership is not only the actions of principals and administration but teachers also play an important role in the school setting. In addition, in the context of this study, all the above leadership theories are also crucial because navigating leadership in the context of implementing a Single National Curriculum in Pakistan presents unique challenges and opportunities, where various leadership theories can provide valuable insights.

The Great Man Theory, emphasizing innate leadership qualities, may suggest that certain educational leaders are naturally equipped to handle the complexities of this transition. However, the Trait Leadership Theory expands on this by acknowledging the role of learning and experience, emphasizing that leaders in the educational sector can develop the necessary traits to manage such a significant curriculum change through continuous professional development. The Contingency Leadership Theory highlights that context is a significant aspect in the vast diversity and dynamism of the education system, this aspect is quite pertinent to Pakistan. This theory implies that the effective leadership of implementing the single national curriculum is possible when the leading officers adjust to the changing climates and

varying needs of the distinct educational institutions. Behavior Leadership Theory emphasizing that leadership can be learned through training and observation, suggests that continuing training and capacity building for educational leaders in Pakistan would be beneficial. Thus, becoming a leader may imply learning new things and obtaining new skills and knowledge to succeed.

Participative (or Democratic) Leadership focuses on teamwork and extended collaboration during the decision-making process that can also significantly contribute to a seamless and inclusive transition to the SNC. Since it involves encouraging educators, parents, and even policymakers to take part in the process of development and implementation, this style seems to be particularly appropriate for the education system of Pakistan. Transactional Leadership emphasis on specific goals, standards, and rewards for performance is in the development of the new curriculum can create opportunities to set standards and keep everyone accountable. This approach will ensure a high quality of education and that everything will be done according to new guidelines. Likewise, Transformational Leadership, which focuses on the concept of individual vision and moral values is important since it enables the educators and other stakeholders to be inspired and remain motivated to follow the new curriculum. Transformational Leaders would help create a shared vision and passage to achieve excellence, and the transition process to attaining national educational goals would be less challenging.

The successful navigation of leadership in the era of Pakistan's single national curriculum requires a multifaceted approach, incorporating elements from various leadership theories. Each theory offers unique perspectives and strategies that can help educational leaders in Pakistan effectively manage this significant transition, ensuring that the single national curriculum is implemented efficiently and equitably across the country. The leadership in the era of Pakistan's single national curriculum is a multi-sided mechanism which can only work if it is informed and operates under several relevant leadership theories (Bush, 2008; Leithwood

et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2003). All the above-discussed concepts offer several unique perspectives and tools which can enable educational leaders in Pakistan to handle one of the most important changes; the single national curriculum implementation ensures its efficient and fair implementation in the country.

In the educational context, the rising context of distributed leadership is an imperative concern nowadays. According to the above explanation, “distributed leadership is one in which leadership duties and responsibilities are dispersed to many members of the school community”. This is one of the most relevant examples for the current scenario in Pakistan, where the Single National Curriculum is being implemented and proves to be a challenge for the traditional leadership style in the country. The entire nature of how leadership is developed and formed within schools’ changes when such a concept of leadership is utilized, as it encapsulates more qualities than mere engagement in activities and accomplishment of predefined tasks. Among such qualities, one may even outline the shared aspect of school leadership and management, as leadership is defined as a joint effort rather than a single individual’s quality (Spillane, 2006).

Moreover, there are several factors that determine how effective distributed leadership can be in its specific and broader way, but one of the key factors related to its essence is how it can be enacted and incorporated into a school's unique context specifically in the regions having diverse culture (Leithwood et al., 2019). The practical application of distributed leadership is very critical in understanding the role of leaders particularly in successful implementation of policies and in this context the implementation of the SNC in the diverse cultural and educational landscape of Pakistan, where schools vary completely in terms of their resources, student demographics, and community contexts. Therefore, the application of distributed leadership can play a potential and important role in implementing the SNC on a large scale in Pakistan and equally maintaining and utilizing a distributed leadership approach

as it allows the educators and policy makers to tap into the collective expertise and capabilities of various members of a school such as academic and non-academic staff and students, that can result in more efficient decision-making and problem-solving, especially in the context of complex issues such as curriculum reforms (Harris, 2013).

Some studies have further identified distributed leadership as majoring into various positive organizational outcomes, including positive students. For example, Hallinger and Heck (2010) have demonstrated that schools where effective distributed leadership exist have a better track record of student achievement and potential improved school performance as compared to other schools where leadership is not distributed effectively. In the same context, during the implementation of a SNC, the distributed leadership can be used as a way to facilitate the sharing and collaboration towards the best practices among academic and non-academic staff, thereby improving the quality of curriculum delivery and ensuring that students are offered an appropriate learning experience as expected (Bush & Glover, 2014).

Additionally, it is also important to note, that the effectiveness of this leadership style depends largely upon the dynamics of its implementation that requires developing a culture of trust, open communication, and the recognition of shared responsibilities needs a potential and deliberate effort on the part of the organization. These transitions need to be enhanced with more collaborative leadership models even though it can be particularly challenging in Pakistani schools, where a hierarchical structure is often present, therefore a more collaborative leadership model could be met with resistance or misunderstanding (Gronn, 2008).

Furthermore, distributed leadership in the context of the SNC also involves the complexity of balancing the central/ federal directives of the SNC with the local provincial/ cultural adaptations of the curriculum, in order to provide high levels of quality education for the students. When it comes to school leaders, they are responsible for working collaboratively

with their teams to make sure that the core objectives of the School National Council are met, even as they adapt the framework to meet the specific needs of each school context as highlighted (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Likewise, distributed leadership presents both opportunities and challenges and in order to be successful, school leaders and their teams must understand its basic notion and importance, embrace it, and implement it well so that it will be successful. Using distributed leadership as an effective tool to realize the goals of the school objectives that are aligned with the national objectives is an effective way of improving educational outcomes within diverse school settings when it is effectively harnessed.

### **2.1.2 The Evolving Role of School Leadership in Pakistan**

There has been a significant shift in Pakistan's educational landscape characterized by a transition from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach particularly after the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), and this has brought a change to the traditional role of school leadership, resulting in a significant change in the leadership roles. School leaders now need to be more focused on providing guidance and support to teachers, helping to create a potential culture of learning and development in the school. They also need to be more proactive in responding to new challenges and creating a learning environment that is conducive to student learning. Similarly, they also need to be actively engaged in advocating the quality of education as they have to compete at the federal level. In the past, school leadership in Pakistan has been viewed primarily through the lens of management, focusing on administrative tasks and responsibilities, rather than a more strategic approach of providing guidance and support to teachers and mainly the policies were developed at district or provincial levels but after the SNC the policies are made centralized from the federal/ central government and hence the expectation is different now, and the function of the schools leaders needs a shift from the management of resources to the development of processes and systems

that foster learning. They also need to prioritize the development of effective mentoring programs to create a culture of collaboration and innovation within the community at district levels. Finally, they also need to actively promote professional development opportunities for themselves and their academic and non-academic staff. Despite this, with the advent of the SNC, school leaders' roles are undergoing a radical transformation due to the involvement in a holistic approach to school leadership that encompasses not only administrative duties but also a strong influence on the teaching and learning environment within the schools as was highlighted even before the SNC introduction (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015).

Even in a global context, the school leader's multifaceted role has been acknowledged as one of the most evolving aspects of education in the new era that is in line with the broader global trend in educational leadership. In the last few years, educational leaders have increasingly been viewed as agents of change, as they are involved in the crucial task of translating educational policies into effective practices and helping to maintain the needy practices (Bush & Glover, 2014). This transformation is particularly pertinent in the context of Pakistan, where it is taking place at present after the SNC implementation. It has been noted that the SNC implementation presents unique challenges and opportunities and needs leaders who are able to navigate their institutions through periods of tremendous change not in the traditional way, but as visionaries and provide space to the development of processes and systems that foster learning (Harris & Jones, 2019).

In the context of the SNC, the expanded role of school leadership includes cultivating an environment conducive to learning, that also guides the pedagogical change, and ensuring that the curriculum is delivered effectively and equitably across a variety of educational settings to promote learning and therefore it is essential that school leaders are able to display adaptability to cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of the different communities

either in federal or provincial setup that make up Pakistan, since the socioeconomic and cultural landscapes are diverse throughout the country (Leithwood et al., 2019).

In addition to this, school leadership under the SNC has to deal with the challenges of resource allocation, teacher training, and community engagement while striving to achieve the overarching goal of standardizing and improving the quality of education across the country. The ability to engage multiple stakeholder groups in the educational process is crucial to this process, which requires a nuanced understanding of the local educational context (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). In Pakistan, the role played by school leadership has now evolved to reflect the dynamic changes after the implementation of SNC that has taken place in educational leadership already in the global context. It also insists that leaders have to be more than efficient managers as they have to be inspiring figures and have the ability to lead their schools through periods of significant educational reforms and be capable of inspiring their colleagues and staff.

### **2.1.3 Impact of Leadership on Student Learning**

According to the study of Bossert et al., (1982) “The Instructional Management Role of the Principal”, the school principals’ impact on student learning outcomes is indirect. They define how the schools are run, and while they do not impact the students directly, the effective principals influence a school’s condition to help enhance the quality of classroom teaching. Basically, learning is made possible by the interaction between the students and the teachers teaching them. Specifically, they contribute to effective learning outcomes in four broad zones. The first one, effective principals should set clear expectations. That means establishing explicit goals and expectations of academic performance and guiding teachers according to the classroom practices. The second one is creating a positive school culture by fostering a school climate that promotes learning and productive collaboration, ensuring that teachers share instructional strategies and approaches. The third one, they should manage resources and

programs ensuring that the resources such as instructional materials, professional development opportunities, and extracurricular programs are harnessed to support the instructional goals. Last but not least, they should support the teachers through class observation, providing timely feedback and encouraging alignment of instructional practices with school requirements.

While considering, the strong impact of school leadership on students' learning, particularly, the new context of the SNC in Pakistan that is increasingly complex and, at the same time, critical for credible outcomes in Pakistan. Therefore, school leaders should possess the background knowledge, training, and attitudes to lead and guide teachers and school students properly. They also need to be aware of the challenges posed after the implementation of the SNC and be prepared to confront the challenges. In a similar vein, school leaders must be flexible and be able to adapt to the ever-changing educational landscape which is the demand of the day. According to a recent study, there has been a considerable increase in school leadership's efforts to influence student learning, even though that influence may be indirect, a factor that is second only to the effect of classroom teaching on student learning and hence it also clarifies the role of leadership that it might be indirect but is second after the classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2019). In spite of this, it is still important to explore in depth the nuances of this influence in the local context because the situation in developing countries is not the same as developed one, especially in the context of a major curriculum makeover such as the Single National Curriculum (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

Another important duty of school leaders is they have to play a vital role in shaping the environment in which the learning process takes place, which goes far beyond the traditional administrative duties such as managing budgets, overseeing the maintenance of school facilities, and complying with district and national education policies. While taking into consideration the diversity of educational settings across Pakistan, the implementation of a new curriculum in the context of the SNC will require not only adapting to the new course, but also

ensuring that the course will be implemented effectively, taking into account the different educational settings whether rural or urban across Pakistan. There is a need for potential and substantial change that needs to happen in all geographical contexts but the changes might not be the same due to the landscape and cultural diversity. In order to improve the outcomes for students, school leaders need to influence and enhance staff motivation, improve their abilities, and improve their working conditions. All of these factors are interrelated as highlighted by the study (Leithwood et al., 2019).

There is also evidence to a variety of factors that play a potential part in mediating the relationship between leadership and learning outcomes, including school culture, teacher efficacy, and the socio-economic context of a school that's why it is a challenging task for school leaders in Pakistan to navigate these diverse contexts in order to successfully implement the SNC as there are huge variations in educational settings. This also poses a significant challenge to the implementation of the SNC in Pakistan and in order to achieve the intended educational outcomes, the leadership of schools must possess the ability to adapt curriculum to local contexts and equally engage the academic and non- academic staff and also motivate their students in the process of implementing the curriculum to achieve the intended educational outcomes because the role of leader is to provide a supportive ground for all the individuals within the school (Robinson et al., 2008).

Similarly, leadership has a significant impact on the learning environment, not just in terms of implementing policies, it has a significant impact on cultivating a conducive environment for learning as well as they are the agents of change therefore, they should create a school culture in which students and teachers are valued for the development of their learning and improving their skills and knowledge. This environment can be fostered by a number of leadership practices, including the creation of clear and potential goals, the provision of

appropriate resources, and the activation of collaborative practices among teachers as highlighted in the study (Day et al., 2016).

Likewise, as part of the Pakistani educational reforms, it is important for the school leaders to be capable of aligning the SNCs with the local needs and capacities of their respective schools in a way that meets the educational needs of their communities as foster a good educational impact within their respective communities in accordance with the expectations of the SNC. It is also essential for the leaders to develop a deep understanding of the content of the curriculum, the local teaching and learning conditions, as well as the broader community expectations and needs. During the course of the SNC's implementation, the leadership's role in mediating the above-mentioned factors plays an essential role in determining the effectiveness of the SNC particularly in improving the learning outcomes of the students as mentioned (Bush & Glover, 2014). An important aspect of the SNC is the impact of leadership on student learning in the context of the SNC, which requires a potential and critical understanding of the various factors that play a significant part in determining the educational outcomes of the students whether it be managing change as what school leaders have to do in this context. It is also a matter of leading a cultural and pedagogical shift from teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach that is crucial for the success of this curriculum reform, which is what school leaders have to do at the very first.

#### **2.1.4 Contextual Sensitivity in Leadership**

The Pakistani system of education, rich and complex, is historically sewn from three main threads: public, private, and madrassah. The first, public schools, welcoming low-income families. Primarily, they provide education for a minimum or no payment at all. The second one consists mainly of two types of private schools: elite ones offering expensive high-quality education and local private schools that provide good education for a price that is more

affordable. The third remains the most controversial and underprivileged: steeped in religious learning, it is ready to accept children of the humble and the faithful – those who can't pay for conventional schooling. This unique combination of stripes forms an accurate reflection of the Pakistani socio-economic landscape (Farooq et al., 2022).

In more details, the educational system in Pakistan is as follows: primary schools which comprise grades 1-5; middle schools with 6-8 grades; secondary or matric which comprises grades 9-10 and students receive the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and intermediate comprises grades 11-12 and students receive the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC). Furthermore, the higher education includes bachelor and master degrees. Moreover, there are private schools that combine the Cambridge education and the national educational system. Thus, the educational sector of Pakistan accounts for the country's diversity (International Trade Administration, 2023).

In such a highly diverse educational setting, school leadership has a critical influence, especially concerning the implementation of such tremendous reforms as the Single National Curriculum. SNC envisages unifying education in Pakistan by offering one common curriculum to promote equality and quality in education in the country. It has a huge impact on school leadership, as principals should be highly sensitive to the context where their schools exist, considering the specific socio-cultural, economic, and political factors affecting their respective school settings (Leithwood et al., 2019).

Effective school leadership in Pakistan can be postulated within the framework that is responsive to the country's educational environment, distinguishing between the circumstances of rural and urban schools. In their work, school leaders must be ready to respond to resource limitations, varied student groups, and community expectations. For instance, rural schools suffer from poor infrastructure, the absence of appropriate resources, and the lack of teacher

training. Urban schools are struggling with fully-occupied classrooms, a varied range of socioeconomic backgrounds, among other issues.

The concept of contextual sensitivity in leadership is to develop and sustain learning contexts that are sensitive to local exigencies and immigration alongside being consistent with national guidelines such as the SNC. This is critical for the effective alleviation of educational reforms. School leaders need to be active in involving stakeholders from communities, adjusting learning materials to local conditions, and creating a school environment that was “most conducive for learning and most conducive to inclusion” according to school representatives (Bush & Glover, 2014).

To address these contextual challenges, professional development can be utilized. Training programs targeting school leaders will help develop skills to deal with cultural diversity, effectively allocate resources and implement pedagogical changes. In order to facilitate environmentally responsive leadership, programs should be focused on assisting each leader responding to the unique context of their communities to be able to create an equal environment for education under supervision (Hallinger, 2011). In the case of Pakistan, the successful implementation of the SNC can be based on how contextually the school leaders are sensitive. Taking responsibility and action in a particular educational environment, their understanding and feedback will lead to a relative and sustainable increase in the quality of education.

### **2.1.5 Leadership Traits and Personal Leadership Resources**

Most recently, a shift has been noted in the field of educational research concerning leadership. While traditional leadership characteristics were at the forefront in the field for a long time, in recent years, more attention has been paid to personal leadership resources. It means that in addition to the focus on trait-like dispositions, traditional perspectives on

leadership also increasingly acknowledge the importance of the contextual sensitivity of leadership practices. As discussed earlier in the previous section, PLRs encompass a wide range of cognitive, social, and psychological abilities that contribute significantly to the effectiveness of school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2019). Among those traits, the most valuable and potential traits necessary for Pakistan's SNC implementation is to flourish are openness to transition, flexibility, resilience, and optimism, which can be seen as key pillars of success in every transformation (Venkataramani& Kothandaraman, 2020).

Similarly, when school leaders are faced with a tough task like implementing a standardized curriculum across a variety of educational settings, they must be able to demonstrate openness and flexibility in order to be successful. Therefore, while making significant changes in education, one of the most challenging aspects is dealing with the inevitable challenges and setbacks that will be encountered but optimism helps to maintain a positive outlook and motivates which helps in overcoming the challenges even when facing adversity.

Likewise, the ability to solve problems, to be emotionally intelligent, and to think along the lines of systems are all valuable skills for school leaders to have. Leaders need to be able to solve problems effectively in order to be able to deal with the practical challenges that come with implementations. The importance of emotional intelligence lies in managing relationships, understanding teachers' and students' needs, as well as fostering a positive school climate through the development of emotional intelligence.

In order to achieve a successful implementation of the policy, school leaders should understand how it interacts with many other elements in the school system and how it interacts with the system's wider implications, which is critical to successful implementation in general (Day et al., 2016). For Pakistani school leaders who are dealing with the implementation of the

SNC, contextual sensitivity and a thoroughly tailored set of personal leadership resources may be achievable and essential due to the benefits of adapting to many educational contexts, effectively coping with change, and eventually providing a vast level of education to the students, which is a salient goal of the SNC.

### **2.1.6 Challenges in Pakistani Schools**

There have been a new range of challenges for school leaders in Pakistan after the introduction of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), making it necessary for them to shift their focus from traditional administrative roles to more transformative leadership practices in order to be successful implementers and bring a positive change relevant to the expectations of SNC. For schools across Pakistan to achieve the best learning and teaching environment, this transition in the leadership role is a necessary part of the educational operation as highlighted by the study (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015).

Similarly, Pakistani schools are also facing a number of challenges as a result of the new educational reforms, and one of those challenges is a lack of infrastructure and the mandatory technological support. Schools, especially in rural areas, lack the basic facilities and resources that are required to ensure that learning and teaching are effective and successful. A number of factors contribute to this, including the lack of classroom space, a lack of educational materials, and limited access to technology (Aslam & Kingdon, 2012). In an effort to ensure a smooth and equitable implementation of the SNC, school leaders face a number of such significant challenges.

In addition, language barriers are another significant challenge that need to be resolved as there is a great deal of change going on in schools where Urdu or regional languages were previously the primary medium of instruction as a result of the SNC English is now emphasized as medium of instruction. A new language of instruction may not only affect students who may

struggle with the new language, but it may also affect teachers who may struggle with the new language due to their limited English proficiency. School leaders must be aware of the need for extensive language training and support, which is a pressing concern that school leaders must be able to address (Rahman, 2014).

Furthermore, one of the most critical challenges that teachers face is the lack of competence in the classroom. There is a requirement of the SNC for teachers to adopt a new pedagogy and teaching methodology particularly after the shift is made from teacher-centered classroom to student-centered one. Another problem with the new curriculum is that a lot of teachers may not have the training or skills for delivering it effectively as previously teachers were hired without any proper training or teacher education. There is a widening gap in teacher competence, which necessitates school leaders focusing their efforts on professional development and capacity-building initiatives so that teachers are well equipped to handle the demands of the new curriculum (Farooq, 2011).

Likewise, due to the socio-political pressures that have been exerted on Pakistan in the last few decades, educational reforms have also been made drastically. Schools' leaders are often confronted with complex political landscapes, as well as competing expectations from a variety of stakeholders, including parents, community leaders, education officials, and other stakeholders. It is likely that these pressures will interfere with the decision-making process and adversely affect the pace and effectiveness of SNC implementation (Shah, 2013). It is necessary for Pakistani school leaders to adopt a more transformative approach to leadership in order to overcome the challenges of infrastructure limitations, language barriers, teacher competence, and socio-political pressures that are currently facing the country. Considering these challenges, there is a for innovative, adaptive, and proactive attitude to address them, while focusing on the overall quality of the education, in line with the objectives of the SNC.

### **2.1.7 Rationale for the Current Study**

In the above comprehensive review of the literature on educational leadership, particularly in the context of Pakistan's implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC), it is evident that there are both significant complexities involved in this transformation as well as gaps in the practicality and understanding of how these challenges are and will be addressed on the ground. Even though the existing literature provides valuable insights into the evolving role of school leadership, and the impact of leadership on student learning, the role of distributed leadership, contextual sensitivity, and the traits and resources required to be an effective leader, but yet it remains important to have empirical data specifically related to the Pakistani context and most important during the time of reforms which is bringing a shift in its educational system towards a more holistic transformation.

A number of studies which have been conducted on the challenges faced by school leaders in Pakistan have highlighted the multifaceted nature of these challenges, such as infrastructure limitations, language barriers, issues of teacher competency, and sociopolitical pressures (Mansoor & Akhtar, 2015). In spite of these challenges, there is a noticeable gap in the literature when it comes to how school leaders actually address and manage these challenges on a daily basis, especially under the newly implemented SNC as there are limited empirical evidence to contextualize such practices within the unique educational landscape of Pakistan, despite the fact that theoretical frameworks and models provide a basis for understanding effective leadership practices.

This study will fill the existing gap of knowledge by examining how school leaders in Pakistan are adapting to the SNC, and the specific strategies they are employing to overcome the challenges they are facing, and how their leadership influences the teaching and learning environment. This study is aimed to investigate how school leaders are adapting to the SNC

and what are the strategies they are employing and to provide a deeper understanding of how leadership theories can be applied in a practical way to ensure the major educational reforms in the context of Pakistan which is a developing country and is looking to achieve a more holistic application and practicality of leadership theories. In addition to contributing to the academic discourse around educational leadership in similar contexts, this study will also provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational administrators, and practitioners involved in the educational system of Pakistan and other countries experiencing similar educational transformations.

Additionally, this study will address the need for a more localized form of research that considers the sociocultural dynamics of Pakistan as part of the current study where the situations are completely different in rural and urban settings. Developing effective educational leadership strategies that relate to the unique needs of different regions within the country requires a deep understanding of the interplay between these dynamics and educational leadership. During a significant period of educational reform in Pakistan, this study proposes to fill the gaps that are previously identified in the literature by providing an empirical examination of the challenges and strategies of school leadership during this new educational reform in Pakistan. This research will therefore not only contribute to the theory of educational leadership in times of change, but will also be able to provide practical insights into the realm of educational policy and practice that can be used to help inform and guide future education policy and practice both locally and globally.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is designed to furnish a wide-ranging understanding of the leadership dynamics involved in the implementation of Pakistan's Single National Curriculum (SNC). In the socio-cultural context of Pakistan, it combines main

theories from the fields of educational leadership and change management. Transformational Leadership Theory, Distributed Leadership Theory, Organizational Change Theory, and considerations of cultural and contextual factors are included in this framework.

### **2.2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational Leadership Theory highlights the role of leaders to inspire and motivate their staff to gain higher levels of performance and also foster the competence of leadership in them as defined in the inspiring works of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985). This theory suggests that effective leaders can lead to enhanced performance and organizational change by fashioning a significant change in the staff's way of thinking and beliefs.

This theory will help the researcher to see the sights that after SNC shift how school principals in Pakistan inspire, motivate, and guide their staff. The theory will offer insights into principals' abilities to articulate a clear vision for the SNC, modernize pedagogical approaches, and also address the professional developmental needs of their staff (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

### **2.2.2 Distributed Leadership Theory**

This theory defines leadership as a shared, collaborative process that extends beyond traditional hierarchical roles that is supposed by Spillane (2006). It underlines the collective leadership actions taken by several individuals in an organization. This perspective will be crucial in understanding the collaborative nature of leadership in Pakistani schools during the SNC implementation. It will help in inspecting how leadership responsibilities are distributed among different stakeholders and how this collective approach influences the effectiveness of the SNC (Harris, 2008).

### **2.2.3 Organizational Change Theory**

Organizational Change Theory, developed by Kotter in 1996, acts as a guide for organizational change. This theory contributes much to the education sector in developing and implementing huge educational reforms like SNC. Kotter's model incorporates an eight-stage process; the first stage is establishing a sense of urgency, where the need for change is communicated to all stakeholders to create initial momentum for its implementation. After that, a power coalition is established consisting of influential leaders who would be able to help in sponsoring as well as driving the process of change.

The next step is to come up with a vision and a strategy spelling out clearly in what direction one wants to move and what strategic steps one needs to take in order to experience the required change. This has to be communicated down the line in such a manner that every member of the organization understands and is oriented towards the change. In the next step, one should ensure the empowerment of broad-based action, where obstacles in the way are removed and others who want to help are able to do so in contributing towards the change effort.

Equally important to the model is the enfolding of short-term wins generation. It focusses on short-run objectives and the achievement, thus allowing some early wins to be celebrated, which means building momentum to reinforce the value of change. The initial successes achieved helps in consolidating the gains achieved and thus produce more change. It ensures that the organization will continue adapting to the new vision. Finally, anchoring new approaches in culture cements change by embedding new behaviors and practices into the organizational fabric so that they can survive for a longer period.

This research will adopt Kotter's Organizational Change Theory for the analysis of how the school principal navigates these complexities in the implementation of SNC. The theory

provides a structured lens through which to explore the different phases and strategies that such leaders may use during a reform process. Elucidated by Kotter's model, this study aims to understand the effectiveness and possible problems principals may encounter in leading such a profound educational change.

#### **2.2.4 Cultural and Contextual Considerations**

In educational leadership, the concept of leadership is related to uncovering the importance of cultural and contextual factors that is grounded on the understanding that leadership does not function in a vacuum but is influenced by the societal and cultural contexts in which it is located. In other words, it is a fact that leadership needs a context and space where it can happen. It cannot be in isolation rather; we need a context for it. This aspect of the theoretical framework is based on the concept of culturally responsive leadership, which in its potential way recognizes the need for leaders to be aware of and responsive to the cultural changing aspects inside their schools and communities (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

Similarly, the current study highlights that this framework plays a central role in context, where the diversity of culture, region, and socio-economic is important in both rural and urban contexts. It will make available a lens to discover how school leaders in Pakistan navigate and respond to the diverse cultural and contextual challenges seen after the implementation of the SNC. Leadership strategies that are effective, inclusive, and culturally sensitive are important for development of the expected outcome, so therefore understanding these shades are vital (Shields, 2010).

Likewise, the combination of all these theoretical perspectives that are discussed above offers a robust framework for investigating the leadership strategies and challenges confronted by school leaders in the context of the SNC in Pakistan. These approaches allow for a meticulous understanding of how leadership is practiced and experienced in diverse cultural

and educational backgrounds, in the view of the unique urban and rural educational landscape in Pakistan. Predominantly in a developing country context such as Pakistan, a multidimensional framework is needed so that the research can drive to a successful contributions and outcomes and can add to the existing body of knowledge on educational leadership in times of change.

## **CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study, detailing the techniques and procedures used to identify, analyze, and interpret the data. The chapter provides a comprehensive framework guiding the research design, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, research subjects, the place, and the timeline of the study.

### **3.1 Introduction to Methodology**

Research methodology means the techniques and procedures used to identify and analyze information about a specific research theme as well as provides a framework and guiding principle for researchers to clearly define research questions and objectives. It includes all the important aspects of research, including research design, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and the overall framework within which the research is conducted. These points can help the researchers to understand what research methodology is. So, in simple words, research methodology is a strategy or approach to update the existing knowledge. Kothari (2004) clearly explained in his book “Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques that research methodology is a systematic way to find out solutions to problems in research. So, this study will employ a qualitative research methodology to thoroughly investigate/explore the experiences and perspectives of school leaders regarding the implementation of Pakistan's Single National Curriculum (SNC).

#### **3.1.1 Qualitative Research**

Creswell and Gutterman (2019) define research as a set of activities taken to collect and analyze information with the goal of enriching knowledge, improving practices, and even informing policy debates. Creswell (2013) defined the research steps as: identifying the

research topic, reviewing literature related to your topic, defining the research purpose, data collection, analyzing data, and reporting the findings.

In research, there are three different approaches. First, the qualitative method deals with words. Second, the quantitative method deals with numbers. Third, the mixed method is the combination of qualitative and quantitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to the context of this research, a qualitative method is best for this research to deeply explore the experiences and perspectives of school leaders regarding the implementation of Pakistan's SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The decision to employ a qualitative research approach in this study is primarily driven by the nature of the research questions, which aim to explore the complex and context-specific experiences of school leaders during the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Qualitative research is particularly suited for investigating phenomena in their natural settings, allowing for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences. This approach enables the capture of rich, descriptive data, which is essential for understanding the nuanced and multifaceted nature of educational leadership challenges in a developing country context.

### **3.1.2 Case Study**

Case study research design would be ideal for this research because this allows the researcher to explore the detailed insights into the challenges, strategies, and perceptions of school leaders in the era of Single National Curriculum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It provides a wide-ranging understanding of the phenomenon within its natural setting, highlighting the contextual factors that influence the process and outcome of the curriculum. According to a study, case study is a practical examination which explores a phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 2009).

There are four types of case studies. Firstly, descriptive case study describes a phenomenon in detail in real world context. Secondly, explanatory case study describes a particular phenomenon that why and how certain conditions take place. Thirdly, exploratory case study describes the exploration of phenomenon to identify principles and patterns. Finally, the fourth category is instrumental case study that is specifically on a case to bring out the insight on an issue and help draw generalizations. (Yin,2018). This research would be an exploratory case study research because the researcher will explore the experiences and perceptions of school leaders (Principals) after the implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

The case study method for this was selected as the research design to provide a comprehensive examination of the specific context of SNC implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This method is appropriate for exploring contemporary events where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined. An exploratory case study design allows for an in-depth investigation into the strategies and challenges faced by school leaders, offering valuable insights into their lived experiences. This approach is particularly useful in capturing the complexity of the issues at hand, providing a holistic understanding of the leadership dynamics in this unique educational reform environment.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

This study employed data collection strategies in order to obtain more resourceful and genuine data. The practice of combining different techniques, procedures, and “data sources” to achieve a full view of the subject of study and to validate data is referred to as multiple sources of data (Gay et al., 2012).As the methodology is qualitative therefore data was primarily collected through the combination of two research techniques interviews and google

forms, which are both align with the methodology and is chosen for their adaptability and ability of producing elicited details and nuanced responses (Guest et al., 2013).

The choice of data collection method was made in accordance with the intent and objectives of the study, which aims to explore the experiences and challenges that school leaders that have gone through the implementation of the SNC. This qualitative nature of the research was decided on the basis of a deep understanding of these complex, context-based phenomena. In view of the exploratory nature of the research questions, the choice fell upon interviews, and google forms as prime data collection techniques from schools' leaders. FGD technique was utilized as a triangulation with teachers to cross check the gathered information. Such methods are appropriate for eliciting in-depth and elaborated accounts pertaining to participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes. While interviews allow an in-depth probe into the views expressed by a single individual at a time, FGDs engage interchange among participants, thereby uncovering shared experiences and differing viewpoints. Such qualitative methods were chosen for their capacities to return very full and complex data that would provide valuable insights into leadership strategies and challenges pertaining to SNC implementation. Data collection techniques were thus chosen based on how well they can answer the research questions, ensuring internal coherence and methodological soundness in this approach to the study.

Similarly, informed by Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, this study had data collection methods designed to capture information relevant to the theoretical framework put forward for understanding how the change management process in SNC implementation was navigated by school leaders. There were two primary data collection techniques used: interviews and google forms, which were guided to elaborate on how school leaders navigated each stage in Kotter's model. Questions were meant to delve into multiple components of the change process: how school leaders created a sense of urgency among staff and stakeholders, how they built a strong

coalition, and how formulation and communication of a vision for the change manifested. Moreover, the interviews tried to find out how identification of obstacles or challenges was done and how they were surmounted, how the short-term wins were realized and celebrated, and how such wins were used to build on the momentum for further change. This structured approach insured those methods of data collection stayed very close to the research objectives and theoretical framework. The focus on Kotter's 8 steps allowed for a detailed examination of strategies and actions of school leaders, providing an understanding of the comprehensiveness of their role in managing the educational reform brought about by the SNC.

### **3.2.1 Interviews**

In the research, interviews are the first step in data collection. Interviewing has become deep-rooted in contemporary culture and is therefore the most practical method for gathering information about people, groups, and organizations (Fontana & Frey, 2005). It is used to receive crucial information about the experiences and perceptions of school leaders after the implementation of the SNC. An interview is a qualitative research method that depends on asking questions in order to collect data for research. Interviews comprise two or more people, one is the interviewer, who is asking questions and the other is interviewee, who answers the questions. There are several types of interviews: 1) Structured interviews 2) Unstructured interviews 3) Semi-structured interviews. First, structured interviews have predetermined questions. Second, unstructured interviews are more flexible. Third, semi-structured interviews fall between structured and unstructured interviews (George, 2023).

Semi-structured interviews would be more appropriate as this on the experiences and perceptions of school principals after the implementation of Single National Curriculum in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This type of interview is often open-ended as well as flexible, but follows a determined thematic framework, giving a structured order. So, that's why they

are often considered the best of both worlds. It allows researchers to explore in-depth insights into the leadership strategies and challenges after the SNC. Semi-structured interviews offer researchers the opportunity to ask predefined questions for comparison across interviews and also allow researchers for follow-up questions and exploration based on the responses of the interviewees. This approach is particularly fruitful in understanding intricate problems like educational leadership and curriculum implementation, where personal experiences and viewpoints are vital.

Online interviews are conducted using the Zoom platform due to the geographical constraints posed by the researcher's location in Indonesia. According to the study, Zoom is a successful method for conducting qualitative interviews (Archibald et al., 2019). The key advantages of using Zoom for qualitative interviewing, reflecting impersonal, practical, and logistical considerations: relationship, suitability, easiness, and accessibility. Since Zoom enables live, face-to-face conversations, it guarantees that the interaction is alive and productive and that the problems with dealing on an international basis have been alleviated. There is always a time difference between Indonesia and Pakistan, thus to arrange interviews, the researcher adhered to a zoom link and reach out to the chosen individual through a purposive sampling procedure. Given the variable aspirations and viewpoints, the semi-structured interview is the most suitable format, whereas Zoom web conference's recording option permits accurate expression.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent and participant confidentiality, is rigorously adhered throughout the research process. The researcher interviewed 12 participants: 12 school leaders (principals) from both urban and rural areas through online Zoom. In order to triangulate data and keep uniformity in the collection process, the questions were framed in the same way to be posed to each participant. It results not only in a thorough comparative analysis of multiple, conflicting, or collaborative perspectives, but it also allows

the conclusions drawn about the strategies and problems of leadership in the SNC times to be more consistent and be more reliant overall.

### **3.2.2 Sampling**

The sampling technique employed purposive sampling and data was gathered from principals and head teachers from public schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, encompassing both urban and rural environments. This sampling strategy was chosen so that those who were willing and had experience under the SNC could be interviewed and to ensure a representative cross-section of experiences and perspectives related to the SNC implementation (Palinkas et al., 2015). Similarly, including principals from diverse backgrounds and school contexts, the study aims to enrich the understanding of leadership challenges and approaches under the SNC. Likewise, the sample size or the number of participants was around 12 principals that were equal in number from rural and urban areas in public schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

However, the primary limitation of this sampling plan is that due to my current location in Indonesia, data collection would be remote, and all participants must have access to the internet. This could lead to selection bias towards people who are more technologically advanced, and who also might not reside in rural low-access areas, meaning I have excluded important perspectives.

This limitation was addressed by the following ways to implement in the study: First, the researcher collaborated with local assistants and hired them from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to conduct the research. These assistants would help reach out to the target population offline, for example, through in-person interviews or distributing and collecting survey forms physically. Second, the researcher used multiple platforms of communication where participants have access to the internet such as Zoom, telephone, WhatsApp, and Email to ensure the number of

participants, considering that various people have different internet accessibility and digital literacy levels.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The data analysis for this research followed Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis approach, that was a most suitable and effective method due to the nature of data (semi-structured interviews) and used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the qualitative data. This iterative process included several key stages, which are given below:

**Familiarizing with the Data:** First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and read through several times along with the focus group notes. This close reading made it possible to begin to develop a conceptual understanding of both the data's depth and breadth. For instance, multiple initial readings could bring up themes of recurrent discussions of challenges such as resource scarcities or new strategies of compliance with new curriculum.

**Generating Initial Codes:** Second, after getting used to the data collection was followed by creating short codes. During this phase, the researcher used a manual coding method to assign only a few terms to the data to encompass anything substantially relevant to the research question. For example, all references to "resource allocation," "training," or "curriculum understanding" in the comments were designated with the initial terms.

**Searching for Themes:** Third, codes were brought together into possible themes. This step entailed arranging the numerous codes into themes, and codes were grouped to mean something essential about the data as regards the research question. For instance, originally coded "resource allocation" and "budget constraints" might develop a broad theme known as "Resource Challenges."

Reviewing Themes: Fourth, themes should be reviewed. They are reviewed in two stages: first, check the extent to which they function in relation to the coded individual extracts. Second, evaluate the whole data collection and try to gauge whether they distill a meaningful pattern across the entire dataset. This might result in themes being mixed, broken down, or discarded.

Defining and Naming Themes: Fifth, once the final candidate themes had been established, each theme should be refined. This entails determining and defining the themes' essence, reflecting what they are about and establishing what aspect of the data each theme is capturing. For example, the theme "Leadership Adaptation" might be defined as how educational leaders adapt to and modify their strategies to adequately implement the new curriculum.

Producing the Report: The final step in the process consisted of connecting together the analyze narrative with colorful data extracts, placing the analysis in relation to existing literature and responding to the research questions. This explained what was discovered, but also addressed how and why that was relevant.

In short, the above systematic and analytical approach provided rich, detailed, and complex accounts of the data, offering deep insights into the leadership experiences and strategies under the Single National Curriculum in the context of Pakistan.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are a mandatory aspect in carrying out any research and hence was a top priority throughout the whole research. The first consideration was Informed consent obtained from all participants who took part in the study, ensuring they are fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as mentioned (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The second consideration was confidentiality, and it was also strictly maintained, and therefore all data were anonymized to protect participant identities. The third consideration was related to specific culture and context of the study. That is why cultural sensitivity was also emphasized, particularly given the diverse cultural dynamics within the country, Pakistan. This involved respecting and considering the various beliefs, practices, and customs of the participants (Liamputtong, 2020), and the data was securely stored and accessed only by the researcher and the team if there is any member.

### **3.5 Positionality**

Holmes (2020) explains positionality, a concept that portrays the researcher in relation to three zones: the phenomenon under investigation, those who participate in the research, and research design, context and process. Accordingly, this positioning can make it clearer what role the researcher occupies in the study and what biases he or she might have. While conducting this research regarding the Single National Curriculum of Pakistan and its implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the researcher positionality as an English language teacher at Army Public School and colleges Mardan (APSACS) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan for about four years add novelty, genuineness, and significance to this research project. The firsthand experience in the education field represents an insider's outlook that has the capacity to present a much deeper acquaintance with the course implementation. Moreover, this position allows the researcher to adapt with the principles and misunderstandings that school leaders face. Consequently, the researcher may collect data more nuanced and analyze it from a more empathetic viewpoint due to her familiarity with that situation. Nevertheless, the researcher should also consider her own experiences and predispositions and be aware of how they might impact the research problem.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are necessary aspects, and one should consider them for one's research findings to be credible and reliable. Some strategies used in validation include member checking, which means members are given the interview transcripts to verify their views, not findings. The process of giving the findings to the participants to read would let them comment and verify the information captured, and the way in which their responses and stories are captured is accurate. Once these interviews are transcribed, the participants in the interviews record their interviews and thereafter. This will be reviewed by the interviewees who will also be given an opportunity to comment or correct what is in the transcripts. This method acts as a tool for data validation from the source; therefore, it would involve the chances of misinterpretation or errors. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), member checking is one of the key approaches to check the accuracy of participant data and its reliability.

To further ensure the trustworthiness of the results, triangulation was used. This approach relies on methods and sources of data to enhance the strength of the findings by comparing outcomes. Such data sources as interviews, and google forms were used in the present study to provide a mix of information. Consequently, findings from different sources were analyzed to verify and validate each other by creating links between the results from varied data sources. This enhanced the reliability and level of comprehension of the researcher's conclusion about the leadership strategy and leadership challenges resulting in the Single National Curriculum in the context of Pakistan.

### **3.7 Research Subjects and the Place and the Time of Research**

This section describes the research subjects (Participants) who participated in this study and also discussed the place and the timeline when the research is carried out. The research

subjects (Participants) of this study are 12 school leaders (Principals) in public schools from rural and urban regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The place (Site) of this research is Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The time of the research was carried out as follows: The first month (January 2024) were devoted to a literature study, the formulation of research topics as well as making of the interview guide, as suggested by Yin (2017). This phase also included preparation and planning, including obtaining necessary permissions and finalizing the research design. The following months (February to April 2024) were dedicated to the writing process of chapter 1, 2, and 3. The subsequent month (May 2024) was dedicated to writing the whole thesis, research instrument, data collection phase, data analysis and initial interpretation of findings. In the final month (June 2023) final discussions, write-up of results and conclusion of the study, and preparation of the thesis draft for submission as well as revision of the thesis is carried out.

## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The chapter is divided into two main sections: Results and Discussion. The Results section offers a thorough version of the findings, highlighting key themes and patterns that emerged. The Discussion section interprets these findings, linking them to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, and exploring their implications for educational practice and policy.

### **4.1 Results**

#### **4.1 Results**

This section represents the findings of the study. The results are organized around the major themes emerging from the data that includes leadership adaptation, challenges in implementation, and overall impact of the SNC. Precisely, it highlights how school leaders adapted to their role, major challenges that they faced, and perceived effects of the implementation of SNC on educational quality, teacher training, and student outcomes.

#### **4.1.1 Perception and Adaptation of Leadership Roles**

The SNC factor has drastically caused an impact on the roles of leadership in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and this section look after perceive and adapt their leadership roles. This section also tries to look into what exactly are the specific changes and general changes in their roles as leaders. How this change can best work towards taking the SNC initiative to success. It brings out the evolution of the leadership that now is more dynamic, collaborative, and data-driven in nature, enforced by demands for change from the new curriculum.

##### ***4.1.1.1 Evolution of Leadership Roles***

##### ***Changes in Leadership Focus***

The introduction of SNC has therefore forced the school heads to focus on other strategic areas of operation, such as curriculum design, teacher professional support in development, and building a culture of continuous improvement. For example, many participants reported that their roles changed to focus more on aligning curricula with the new standards. According to Leader A,

"With SNC, my leadership role has changed in nature with a focus more on curriculum development, teacher training, and data-driven decision making, leveraging my teaching experience in striving toward excellence in instruction."

The school leaders also pointed out that this would only be possible if the support for the teachers to change towards the new curriculum was felt; this included support in advanced training and offers of resources which would ensure its effective delivery. For example, Leader B noted,

"The introduction of the SNC in Pakistan has greatly enhanced my role as a Deputy Principal. Initially, my aim was to modify our teaching methods and materials so that they fell within the new standards. I worked for advanced training for the teachers so that they could teach the revised curriculum effectively."

#### *Enhanced Collaboration and Training*

Notably, the evolving roles of leadership under the SNC have also brought about an increase in this emphasis on collaboration. The new curriculum has forced school leaders to create closer links between teachers and students, as well as between teachers and parents, for the implementation to run smoothly. As Leader A commented, there has been an initiative to establish a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement among teachers, students, and parents. This involved managing change processes and creating a collaborative environment where all the stakeholders work together in pursuit of common educational goals. According to Leader C,

"Implementation of the SNC in villages of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has really changed the way I lead. One of the biggest things in this area has been getting all schools to comply with uniform syllabus standards. We have been working hand in hand with the teachers

in far-flung villages to upgrade their teaching materials and using approved textbooks within the new curriculum guidelines."

Workshops and training were imperative in this joint operation. The sessions provided skills and knowledge to the teachers but most importantly served as sharing forums and problem-solving platforms. As confessed by Leader D:

"It has been a learning curve for all those concerned, but our workshops and training sessions have really been important in terms of getting teachers up to speed."

#### *Data-Driven Decision Making*

Another significant change in leadership roles has been the move toward data-driven decision making. As a consequence of the implementation of the SNC, leaders needed to make informed decisions with data and by evidence so that instruction and/or student outcomes could be improved. Leader A shared an example of using data-driven decision making as part of the evolved leadership role: Its importance, as Leader A discussed, is in managing the process of change and in the drive to instructional excellence. Further, Leader E mentioned:

"My role has evolved to focus more on creative learning and making sure that the teaching methods used are relevant and continent for the new standards of the curriculum. I have been working a lot on really innovative teaching practices and how to equip teachers to teach the curriculum."

The approach involves systematic data collection and analysis in order to inform decisions on curriculum implementation, resource allocation, and teacher training. The school leaders will be better placed to know areas that require improvement, track effectiveness of interventions, and thus make adjustments. This focus on data shall ensure that decisions are not only informed but in line with the set goals by SNC, hence leading to better learning outcomes.

#### ***4.1.1.2 Specific Aspects Requiring Adaptation***

Substantial adaptations in realms of curriculum design, pedagogical practices, resource management, teachers' training, stakeholder communication, and engagement had to be

ensured under the Single National Curriculum. These changes were necessary to suit educational practices according to the new standards set up by the SNC.

### *Curriculum Design and Pedagogical Practices*

Setting up the SNC required principals to be more focused on the curriculum design and teaching practices. The leaders had to make sure that besides adhering to the national standards, there were modern ways of teaching involved. As narrated by Leader A,

"The implementation of SNC has required me to adjust my leadership approach in curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and modes of assessment to pay more attention to student-centered learning, critical thinking, and skills development."

This was a shift from the traditional didactic, instructor-centered approach to a more student-centered approach to learning, with an emphasis on critical thinking and practical skills. To supplement the point, leader B added:

"I have had to give priority to the teacher training and development for effective delivery of the new curriculum, focusing on competency-based education and innovative teaching strategies."

### *Resource Management and Teacher Training*

There were two major areas that needed huge adaptation: resource management and teacher training. A big challenge was ensuring that schools were adequately resourced first, and secondly, that teachers had sufficient training to deliver the new curriculum. As Leader B explained,

"Resource management has been prioritized—ensuring that we have all the needed textbooks and digital tools available. Also, I increased information flow to parents, students, and staff to address their concerns and have them on board for this smooth transition."

Leader C highlighted the importance of continuous professional development, stating,

"Training and Development: I arranged an extensive training program that would help teaching staff, like AA, deliver the new curriculum effectively. For example, Teacher AA attended workshops where she learned new teaching methodologies and how to use some of the digital tools integrated into the SNC."

### *Stakeholder Communication and Engagement*

Some of the factors that contributed to the effectiveness in the implementation of SNC were such as communication and stakeholder engagement. This was in the sense that school leaders were supposed to involve all the stakeholders such as the teachers, parents, and the community. Effective communication with the stakeholders was important as noted by Leader D:

"I have been working on standardizing content to ensure all topics align with the new national standards. This requires comprehensive training for teachers on how to teach the revised curriculum effectively. Management of resources to ensure we are adequately supplied with textbooks and relevant digital tools for practice has also been a priority. I have also increased communication with parents, students, and staff so that I can address their issues and facilitate as smooth a transition as possible."

Leader E added

"Further to support Student AA, I engaged his parents by providing them with information and resources about the SNC. This helped them be oriented on how to help AA with his studies at home by creating a conducive learning environment."

That is what the SNC necessitated in many radical changes at the level of the school leadership. Among them were professional attention to curriculum design and pedagogical practices, efficient management of resources, continuous teacher education, and constant contact and liaison with all stakeholders to ensure a smooth and successful transition to the new curriculum.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Perception of Leadership Role in SNC Implementation***

The successful execution of SNC in its entirety is dependent on the perception and proactive endeavors of school leaders. This section moves into the vision creatively developed by school leaders for the implementation of SNC, the collaborative culture they nurture, the support and guide mechanisms they put in place, and how, in general, their leadership is affecting the educational environment.

### *Vision and Collaborative Culture*

The leaders in the school consider themselves to be a linchpin in effecting successful execution of the SNC. They felt that having a clear vision to lead this transition would help provide a very cohesive way of approaching the adoption of new curriculum standards. Leader A expressed it by saying,

"Well, the idea of leadership here, particularly at this time, seems to have been one of bringing about a very definite sense of vision in leading this transition. I think school leadership plays an important role in ensuring the SNC is satisfactorily implemented. The school leader should develop a clear vision and collaborative culture among the teachers, students, and parents; encourage support and guidance toward the SNC for smooth implementation and bringing about desired results."

There has to be a collaborative culture. In the opinion of the school leaders, cooperation from teachers, students, and parents is necessary in addressing the challenges and achieving the goals set by SNC. According to Leader B,

"The success of the implementation of SNC greatly relies on school leadership. This means that the leaders have to ensure that their schools meet the national standards as prescribed by the government, revising of the curriculum material, organize teachers' training, and manage resources."

### *Support and Guidance Mechanisms*

This leadership role within the context of the SNC implementation path also carries with it a need to provide support and guidance to both teachers and students. School leaders are engaged in mentoring teachers and providing them with professional development opportunities, ensuring adequate resources. As Leader C explained,

"Facilitation to staff wherever they require guidance or support is important. For example, I have been providing professional development programs for teachers in order to build their capacity and confidence in delivering the new curriculum. Besides, I have put in place a mentorship program to offer guidance and support."

Leader D Added,

"I think that in trying to ensure a successful practice of SNC in schools, the school leadership plays a very essential role. Leaders are supposed to provide the vision, build collaborative cultures, and support and guide the teachers, students, and parents in the process, hence making the transition smooth and achieving the desired results."

Other support mechanisms that emerged during the study include regular monitoring and provision of feedback. As one of the leaders, E, observed,

"We set up a system through which to monitor, in a timely way, how well the implementation of the SNC was going. This involved classroom observations and eliciting feedback from teachers and parents. We used such information to make adjustments to effectively implement the curriculum."

#### *Overall Leadership Impact*

The overall impact of leadership on the implementation of the SNC is deep. Leaders are instrumental in effecting the change required for the new curriculum to take hold. They are on the frontline in managing the change, dealing with the challenges, and getting everyone on board with the new educational standards. According to Leader F, this comprehensive impact was underscored when he said:

"The SNC policy aspires toward standardization and improvement of quality education in Pakistan through a uniform curriculum framework. This type of leadership is required at the school level to spearhead the change and ensure not only that their schools are working toward these new standards but also engaging in the improvement of educational outcomes for all."

Leader G demanded constant improvement.

"As a leader, one has to be proactive, flexible, and adaptable to the changing situation. It is, therefore, of paramount consideration to develop a strong team and empower teachers so that challenges towards intended targets may be overcome. Indeed, the SNC has great potential to affect a positive change in the education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and, therefore, the principles of monitoring progress, sharing of best practices, and sharing challenges have to be pressed forward for its successful implementation."

The interpretation of leadership functions, as related to SNC implementation, has been focused on clarity of vision, collaborative culture, strong support and guidance mechanisms, and relentless pursuit of improvement in the overall educational sectors. All these, put together, shall help face out the challenges and seize the opportunities afforded by the SNC to ultimately result in a more uniform and higher quality system of education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

#### ***4.1.1.4 Application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model***

The leadership strategies played by the school principals in implementing the SNC are very much in line with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. This section explains how each of the model steps manifests itself in the actions and decisions taken by the principals, making it a structured framework to aid in understanding their approach on top to manage this major educational reform.

**Creating Urgency:** First, the leadership created a sense of urgency for the immediate adoption of the SNC. This was so by emphasizing potential benefits the curriculum would bring to the improvement of education standards and uniformity among many schools. For example, Leader A stressed that the reform was necessary to create an environment conducive to quality education and encouraged staff and other stakeholders to participate in the change process.

**Building a Powerful Coalition:** According to Kotter's second step, school leaders established guiding coalitions comprising the major stakeholders: senior teachers, administrative staff, parents, and community members. The coalitions played a significant role in leading change as well as offering support and facilitation toward making the desired transformation. Leader B described the process of building a coalition that would own the job of championing the new curriculum to have wide-based support and collaboration.

**Developing a Vision and Strategy:** A clear and compelling vision of the future was developed, clearly stating the SNC implementation goals and outcomes expected to be realized. The vision was used by the school leaders to develop strategies through which the realization would be done, and hence all efforts were well-coordinated and set on course to realize the desired educational outcome. Not only was it a guiding principle in that it was a tool, but it kept all the efforts of the stakeholders aligned.

**Communicating the Vision:** This process had to be coupled with effective communication of the vision. This step required the heads of schools to adopt various communication strategies

to ensure that the vision and its implications were clearly understood by the teachers, students, and even parents. This step consisted of a number of regular meetings and information sessions, further "amplified" by digital communication tools, which could disseminate information and clarify doubts, as observed by Leader C.

**Empowering Broad-Based Action:** First, school heads worked on the removal of hurdles that might impede the course of action. Some of the obstacles were resistance to change, the availability of resources, and professional development for teachers to help them teach in a new curriculum. This supported the staff in handling the new curriculum with confidence and competence. According to Leader D, what was essential at this point was the equipping of teachers with the skills and tools needed to adjust to the new standards.

**Producing Short-Term Wins:** There were strategic planning and celebrations for short-term wins, as they would prove to be effective in demonstrating benefits of the SNC and creating momentum for further change. These short-term wins were realized early in student engagement and also in the integration of new teaching methodologies. Rewards and recognition helped in sustaining the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and students to the reform process.

**Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change:** Building on these first successes, the school leaders continued the process of change through consolidating the gains and ongoing improvement. This meant refining the strategies taken on board, facing new challenges, and continuous engagement with the stakeholders to have the reforms firmly attached to the school's operations and culture.

**Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture:** Finally, the new approaches were devolved to the school culture in a bid to ensure that the change developed by the SNC was sustained over time. This involved institutionalizing the new curriculum standards into daily practice and

creating an enabling environment that values continuous improvement and innovation. In this regard, Leader E stressed that new standards were continually reinforced through training and support to the teachers with the view of entrenching the change.

#### **4.1.2 Challenges in Implementing the SNC**

Implementation of SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has brought in its wake some serious challenges that school leaders have to face, including in-house resistance to change by the stakeholder, resource and infrastructure challenges, and heavy professional development. Each of these areas carries unique challenges that will require strategic and thoughtful leadership if they are to be overcome.

##### ***4.1.2.1 Significant Challenges Faced***

These major challenges that were encountered in the implementation of SNC could be summarized under the themes of resistance to change, resource limitations, infrastructure issues, and professional development needs. These are interrelated challenges that sometimes feed into one another and intensify each other's effect on complicating putting the SNC into practice in a demanding way.

##### ***Resistance to Change***

One of the greatest challenges school leaders are faced with is the resentment towards change coming from all stakeholders: teachers, students, and parents. This is because there exists an ease of teaching the past curriculum, together with a disliking for the new standards and ways of teaching. According to Leader A,

"The most significant challenges that have been put towards me in the implementation of the SNC in my school are the resistances to change from some of our teachers and staff. All of these resistances can be ascribed to the comfortability with the previous curriculum and the discomfort of adjusting to new standards."

Another challenge is the resistant culture of the teachers, having served for so many years in a particular framework, thereby finding it hard to change to a new system. Sometimes this is characterized by an unwillingness to attend training and sometimes a lack of participation in new teaching methods. In that regard, Leader B added,

"Many teachers were used to the old curriculum and transitioned with much difficulty into the new standards and pedagogy. The high trainings and constant professionalism put them at ease and competent in the instruction of SNC."

Resistance also sprawls to the pupils and parents who were used to the old system, hence may not appreciate the new curriculum quickly enough. As alluded by Leader C,

"There were initial concerns and resistance from some parents who were not quite sure of this new curriculum and its impact on the education their children were receiving. Managing these expectations, gaining their trust, has been a critical component of our efforts."

Some major concerns of the parents are about the potential disruption to the education of their children and uncertainty about whether the new curriculum will work. Clearly, such concerns will have to be effectively communicated and proof of SNC benefits given for these parents.

#### *Resource Limitations and Infrastructure Issues*

There is a big challenge with respect to resource limitations, especially infrastructure inadequacies in effectively running an SNC. Considering the extent to which schools in all areas, particularly the rural and under-resourced, have adequate materials and facilities is one huge challenge. The challenges in resources were described by Leader D:

"Getting the right textbooks and digital tools that aligned with the SNC was hard. Acquiring the resources, mainly those subjects affected by enormous changes, needed deliberating planning and budgeting."

Coupled to the challenges of effectively teaching the new curriculum was access to updated textbooks and digital tools. Again, a common problem in all provinces is unequal

distribution, with rural schools facing more challenges in accessing these resources. Leader E provided an insight into infrastructure issues:

"The physical and technological infrastructure was lacking at times in some of the more rural or under-resourced areas. This made it harder to put some aspects of the curriculum into practice, especially those that required digital tools or the use of some of the newer teaching aids."

Most of the rural schools lack the minimum infrastructure that would support modern concepts of education. Some of these are reliable internet connectivity, decent classrooms, and even modern teaching aids. Having these shortcomings, it has been quite a challenge to provide uniformity in education across different regions. It was emphasized by leader F on the wide discrepancy between regions:

"Rural area challenges include no access to the internet, a scarcity of resources, and a large number of students from rural areas who have little or no exposure to modern methods of teaching, which may differ from other schools' experience in more urban or developed areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

#### *Professional Development Needs*

The implementation of SNC requires extensive professional development. For the delivery of an absolutely new curriculum, it is important to train teachers as much as possible for which heavy investment in system training programs and support is called for. This was emphasized by leader G:

"SNC implementation requires a great deal of professional development or training on the part of teachers to deliver this new curriculum. This includes not only the learning of new content but also new teaching methodologies and assessment practices. "

In fact, transitioning to the SNC is not solely a matter of new content but also of a different teaching philosophy and new teaching methods. Under such circumstances, comprehensive training programs become central in equipping teachers with the necessary skills to navigate this shift successfully. Leader H added:

"The professional development of teachers must be continuous to help them meet up with the new standards. We organized elaborate training sessions and workshops to enhance their capacity and confidence, which shall nevertheless remain an ongoing effort."

Professional development needs tailoring into subsections in order to address the specific challenges posed to the teachers while working in different settings. One such leader elaborated,

"The challenge is serious in the rural areas, in non-Urban speaking mother-tongue regions. These teachers need special training to enable them to overcome their language difficulties and teach effectively in a non-native language."

The SNC, when implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, will face a myriad of complicated change-related issues, inadequate resources and infrastructure, and professional development requirements. These challenges can be overcome only by strategic leadership, sensitive planning, and unflinching commitment toward continuous improvement and support in every endeavor taken up by the stakeholders.

#### ***4.1.2.2 Comparison with Previous Challenges***

The implementation of the Single National Curriculum has itself launched a set of challenges, quite different from those faced before the SNC came into being. This section makes an attempt to contrast and compare SNC-related challenges to the ones previously faced in the following three areas: incremental improvement versus fundamental transformation, structured versus flexible approaches, and standardization efforts.

##### *Improvements vs. Fundamental Transformation*

Before the SNC, most of the challenges for the school heads were those that would have involved incremental improvement within the same framework. These usually meant making small and feasible changes that would have improved education.

As Leader A commented,

"Before the SNC, the challenges we faced were more about making small improvements in our current practices, such as renovating teaching methods or improving classroom management."

However, SNC implementation is inherently a root transformation of the education system. As Leader B further elaborated,

"SNC seeks a more profound transformation of pedagogical practices. It is not a fine-tuning exercise but one of radical change in terms of how we do things around here to achieve new standards at the national level."

It involves the very depth of curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and methods of assessment. On the depth of this change, leader C commented,

"The SNC's competency-based education, critical thinking, and skills development thrust has caused a deeper shift in mindsets and practices, making the challenges sharper and wider."

### *Structured vs. Flexible Approaches*

Another major difference between past challenges and those brought forth by the SNC is the movement from a flexible to a more rigid approach in education. Before the SNC, many of the decisions regarding curricula, adoption of textbooks, and adoption of the teaching method were allowed more leeway at the discretion of the schools themselves. This flexibility afforded space needed for tailoring approaches that better suited individual schools and their particular students.

Leader D described the previous approach as

"Compared with before the SNC, we enjoyed greater autonomy in choosing the materials and teaching methods for our course. It was thus easier to adjust our approach according to the particular characteristics of the students and the resources at hand."

With the implementation of SNC, it has evolved into a more prescriptive model where there will be more of a standard curriculum with specified teaching methods applied to all schools. As Leader E further elaborated,

"The SNC has made the education sector more structured. Nowadays, we have a standardized curriculum to be followed by all schools; this has greatly reduced our flexibility compared to before."

While this linearity is meant to support consistency and equity in education, it also creates many challenges as far as its implementation is concerned. Thus, schools have to

structure their practices in relation to national standards, which may be tough, especially for those that previously enjoyed greater autonomy. What leader F put it,

"Setting up the consistency of the implementation of SNC across all grades and subjects has been a big challenge. It involves continued monitoring and support, which ensures all teachers and students are on the same page in view of the new standards."

### *Standardization Efforts*

The SNC also aims to work on a uniform education system throughout Pakistan, bridging disparities in the quality of education so that every child must get good quality education without any type of discrimination. This standardization effort rather contrasts strongly with the situation in the previous system, wherein the quality of education used to be varied tremendously between schools and regions. According to leader G, the variability in the previous system was

"Before the SNC, there was no uniformity within the curriculum; therefore, although there existed more freedom for teachers, there was also more inconsistency in what was taught. Sometimes this had equaled disparities in quality across different classes and grades."

These very disparities will be ironed out by the SNC through a uniform framework of curriculum. This was explained by Leader H as:

"The SNC policy is directed towards unification and standardization of quality education throughout Pakistan with a uniform curriculum framework. This is, in a way, an attempt at standardization, whereby all children, irrespective of any place or socio-economic background, shall have the same quality of education."

Standardization in and of itself has challenges. This calls for changes in school practices, implicitly significant changes to the design of curriculum, resource allocation, and training of teachers. As commented by Leader I,

"Standardizing the content to meet new national standards has provided extensive training for teachers, managing resources to provide all the necessary textbooks and digital tools for new instructions, and increased communication with parents, students, and staff."

Problems that have to be taken care of in the implementation are very different from those experienced earlier. Whereas, in the earlier attempts these were more incremental in

nature within a loosely defined framework, the SNC, in contrast, requires truly transformational change in the character of the system, a much tighter frame, and enormous standardization efforts across the country. Addressing the new challenges asks for strategic leadership and careful planning, driven by perpetual commitment to constant betterment and support of all those concerned.

#### ***4.1.2.3 Unique Challenges in Different Settings***

The Implementation of the Single National Curriculum has come up with varied challenges on the ground in different settings across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These challenges are significantly different between rural and urban schools, socioeconomically and culturally, and come with regional issues. There is a need to understand the unique challenge in formulating effective strategies to deal with these.

##### *Rural vs. Urban School Challenges*

The challenges that rural schools faced in the implementation process of SNC are vastly different from those of urban schools. Challenges in a rural school setting usually concern basic infrastructure and the availability of resources, while urban schools face large student populations and very diverse educational needs. According to Leader A, the problems that rural schools face are:

"Challenges in the rural areas are inadequate internet access, shortage of resources and a high number of students from rural areas who have little exposure to the modern techniques of teaching. This builds up as a major barrier to the implementation of SNC with proper effectiveness."

Infrastructure deficiencies in rural areas make it difficult to provide the necessary facilities for modern education. Leader B elaborated,

"In each of those more rural or under-resourced areas, the physical and technological infrastructure was not always up to par. Therefore, it made implementing some of those aspects of the curriculum—especially digital tools and some of the newer teaching aids—a little more difficult."

In addition, it is typical for rural schools to have a hard time staffing their institutions with qualified teachers. As Leader C shared,

"One of the major challenges in rural areas is the shortage of well-qualified teachers. Many teachers would like to work in urban schools where working conditions are better, and this leads to understaffing of rural schools struggling to meet the demands of SNC."

Urban School Challenges: In contrast, urban school challenges pertain to dealing with a more significant number of students and the consistent application of the SNC in different schools. These were elaborated on by Leader D:

"Urban schools have more students, so it's difficult to give attention and support to all. Plus, their background is different and that has forced us to adopt a new teaching methodology to suit different requirements."

In urban schools, the variations in parental support and involvement also become issues.

According to Leader E,

"In urban areas, the extent of parental involvement ranges from very high to very low. There are those parents who are very supportive and others who do not have the time due to other commitments. This difference can affect how the students are able to cope with the new curriculum."

### *Socioeconomic and Cultural Barriers*

These are strongly influenced by the socioeconomic and cultural barriers to SNC implementation, which vary in various regions and even communities, thus affecting its reception and implementation. This was illustrated by leader F noted,

"The prime problem is the bad financial condition of the students due to which they cannot focus on study alone. When they reach home their only concern is to get bread and eat three times a day. This is because of the bad economic planning of the country and due to the lack of scholarships being provided to the deserving students."

Poverty and economic challenges interfere almost to the point of prohibition on the part of the student participating in school as many students must work to support their families. This occurs more frequently in areas with low economic status where, it appears, the SNC faces more of a challenge in its implementation. Cultural impacts also are extremely vital in regards to implementing the SNC as well. As Leader G expressed,

"There are also some distinct challenges coming from the cultural and societal front, especially on the part of gender segregation and less female participation in education in our region. The cultural norms hamper or even kill the effectiveness of the new curriculum, especially about making it more gender-equal and inclusive."

Inter-linguistic communication also brings complexity in the implementation of SNC.

As leader H explained,

"Therefore, to teach these subjects through the medium of Urdu in areas where it is not the mother tongue presents an added challenge to the teacher and student. The requirement of teaching a curriculum in a language that is not spoken or understood widely needs additional support and resources to make learning effective."

### *Specific Regional Issues*

Different problems exist in different regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to their nature. The regional problems may include geographical isolation, security threats, and the level of government support. Geographic difficulties were pointed out by Leader I, who said,

"In remote mountainous areas, schools can only be accessed in remote areas, particularly in harsh weather conditions. This geographical isolation limits the availability of resources and support for the effective implementation of SNC."

Security problems in some areas also present challenges to the implementation of the SNC. As leader J put it,

"In some areas, security problems make it impossible for teachers and students to go to school regularly. It destabilizes the learning and progress of implementing the curriculum effectively."

The level of government support also varies from one region to another, affecting how schools can successfully implement the SNC. As leader K explained,

"In some regions, the local authorities and NGOs have been very supportive, making it relative with quite an ease to overcome the hurdles of implementing SNC. In other places, the responses remain minimal, and we are unable to meet up with the demands of the new curriculum."

The challenges to the implementation of SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are uniquely different in nature, varying considerably between the rural and urban settings due to socioeconomic and cultural barriers, having specific regional issues. All of these challenges

require nuanced and context-specific approaches with regard to different community needs and contexts.

### **4.1.3 Leadership Strategies and Interventions**

Some robust leadership strategies and interventions would implement the SNC effectively in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. To manage the difficulties brought about by this curriculum, the school leaders applied several strategies. Three of the effective strategies reviewed here are professional development programs, mentorship and support systems, and resource management initiatives.

#### ***4.1.3.1 Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges***

The implementation of the SNC, therefore, is such an exercise that has called for the formulation and implementation of a good number of strategies aimed at mitigating the various obstacles met in the course of the journey. This includes adopting some strategic measures by school leaders to facilitate smooth implementation and effective delivery of the curriculum.

##### *Professional Development Programs*

Among the strategies being used to cushion the SNC challenges are professional development programs. Through such, teachers will be equipped with knowledge and skills to effectively deliver the new curriculum. In this regard, Leader A said:

"We recognized that professional development is key to the successful implementation of SNC, so we did a number of intensive training sessions and workshops for our teachers to understand the new curriculum and undertake modern teaching methodologies."

These professional development projects generally include trainings in the form of workshops, seminars, and professional learning communities that engage in continuous reflection. According to one leader, Leader B,

"Our approach to professional development is not an event, but a process. We have regular refresher courses and provide opportunities for teachers to have peer group reflection and share best practices."

In essence, these programs need to be designed with the teachers' needs in mind, who work in different settings. As explained by leader C,

"Special focus in the rural areas has been on the provision of support to teachers who may not have had enough exposure to modern teaching methods; this goes on to include running specialized training sessions that talk to their unique challenges."

### *Mentorship and Support Systems*

Mentorship and support systems are very instrumental in helping teachers and staff to navigate the challenges of SNC. The systems provided ongoing guidance and support whereby teachers were not left alone in facing the transition. Regarding mentorship, it was observed by leader D:

"We have been able to develop a mentorship system wherein experienced teachers take under their wing those less experienced. These have been invaluable in providing support and sharing practical insights into implementing the new curriculum."

These systems are integral with regular support meetings and feedback sessions.

According to Leader E,

"We have regular support meetings in which colleagues are able to discuss challenges and share solutions. It's a safe space where teachers can voice their concerns and get some constructive feedback."

Besides the peer support, the direct support and guidance are given by the school heads.

As it was commented by Leader F,

"As a manager, indeed, I do make sure I am approachable to my staff members. I regularly keep in touch with the teachers to find out how they are coping and if there's anything that can be done to support them at this time."

### *Resource Management Initiatives*

One of the key strategies in overcoming the SNC challenges pertains to effective resource management. This implies ensuring that schools have appropriate resources to deliver the new curriculum. Leader G elaborated on the work done regarding that:

"Resource management has been dominant in making sure that we have adequate textbooks and digital tools. This entailed proper planning and budgeting in order to procure the right resources."

Also instrumental to resource management were partnerships with local authorities and NGOs. As Leader H explained,

"We have partnered with local authorities and NGOs in order to secure more resources for our schools. Indeed, this has been very important in rural areas."

But it's not only securing the resources that matters, how one distributes and uses those secured resources is also very important. As leader I explained,

"We have put in place a system to ensure there is an equitable distribution of resources and that they are used effectively. These range from regular audits and teacher feedback on any gaps or needs."

These strategies that school leaders have adopted to outmaneuver the challenges of implementation of the SNC are multifaceted, comprehensive, reaching out to professional development programs, mentorship, and support systems, all the way to resource management initiatives—these have been essential in letting schools negotiate with success the complexities of the new curriculum and ensure its implementation.

#### ***4.1.3.2 Involvement of Teachers and Staff***

The teachers and the staff need to be taken on board with regards to the implementation process of the SNC. Involvement during the process of addressing challenges and putting up structures that will ensure the successful integration of the curriculum into schools is a necessity. This goes hand in hand with regular meetings and workshops, peer support and feedback mechanisms, and active participation in decision-making.

#### ***Regular Meetings and Workshops***

Regular meetings and workshops ensure that teachers and staff are aware of the implementation process and provide opportunities to discuss ideas for professional development, challenges, and leading practices. Consequently, these meetings were imperative, as Leader A concludes,

"We have regular meetings to take stock of how SNC is doing, look through whatever problems have surfaced, and ensure that everyone is on the same page. These are important from a cohesion standpoint."

Workshops are yet another essential feature, providing hands-on training and practical knowledge. Leader B opined,

"Workshops will therefore be organized to put teachers abreast of skills and expertise relevant in effectively delivering the new curriculum. These sessions are interactive and focus on real-world applications of the curriculum."

Leader C emphasized that such workshops were continuous.

"We keep on running sessions throughout the year to ensure that teachers remain supported and trained, as is necessary. This continuous professional development is key to adapting to the new standards."

#### *Peer Support and Feedback Mechanisms*

Peer support and feedback mechanisms create a shared environment in which teachers learn from each other and commonly solve similar problems. Such mechanisms provide a sense of community and shared purpose. Leader D described the peer support system:

"We have set up peer support groups whereby teachers can work together to help each other with the challenges of implementing the SNC. Such groups meet regularly to share ideas, strategies, and good practices."

Feedback mechanisms are also important for continuous improvement. According to Leader E,

"We have a feedback mechanism in which teachers can give their input on the curriculum and how to implement it. This feedback is very instrumental in the necessary adjustments and improvements of the curriculum so that it suits the needs of our children."

Added leader F,

"Promoting open communication and feedback among teachers has kept us abreast with the emerging problems, which we have managed to solve before hurting the SNC. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in overcoming the challenges of the SNC."

#### *Decision-Making Participation*

Involving teachers and staff in SNC decision-making processes helps to create ownership and commitment. If teachers feel that their opinions and professional skills are being treated seriously, it will be easier for them to become engaged and proactive about how to work with the curriculum. Leader G stressed the need for participatory decision-making:

"We engage the teachers in decision-making with regards to the implementation of the SNC. Their contribution is very vital in the designing of teaching strategies, selecting resources, and planning school activities."

Leader H commented on how this participation made a difference,

"When teachers are involved in active decision-making, they feel a part and thus have a better sense of ownership over the success of the curriculum. This sense of ownership translates into a greater dedication of effort in teaching."

Participation in decision-making further applies to addressing specific challenges. As leader I explained,

"We have brainstorming sessions regularly where teachers can come up with ideas on how to address the challenges they face. We have been able to come up with very innovative strategies through this collaborative problem-solving approach, which has greatly helped our implementation efforts."

Successful implementation of the SNC requires involvement of teachers and staff through regular meetings and workshops, peer support and feedback mechanisms, and active participation in decision-making processes. These strategies contribute to ensuring that teachers are well-supported, engaged, and empowered with skills to effectively deliver the new curriculum and to respond to challenges that may arise in the process.

#### ***4.1.3.3 Role of Community Engagement***

Community engagement thus becomes essential need for the successful implementation of the SNC. Engaging parents, local authorities, and the broader community with the process aids in building support and ownership, enables effective communication, and has the capacity to quell any misgivings that might be supervening on a smooth transition to the new curriculum.

### *Building Support and Ownership*

Successful execution of the SNC requires building support and ownership with community members. According to the leaders, community involvement makes the community much more supportive and creates a much better atmosphere for both students and teachers. As said by Leader A,

"Community engagement is a very critical component in terms of gaining support and seeking ownership from parents, guardians, and the wider community. That would see everyone on board, benefiting and working toward the realization of SNC."

Leader B mentioned that engaging community leaders or other key influencers will help to gain greater overall support.

"We have written letters to them, asking them to serve as advocates for the SNC. With their blessing, we were able to build trust and get acceptance from the community, and thus the implementation became easier."

The building of ownership also involves providing opportunities for the community to give input or contribute towards the educational process. Leader C explained,

"We have started programs in which members of the community can work in schools, attend educational meetings, and be involved in making decisions about school policies. This is an inclusive approach that ties the community closer to the SNC."

### *Communication and Workshops*

Communication is very essential in keeping the community abreast of and involved in what is going on. Regular updates, meetings, and workshops clarify the SNC's objectives and gains to the community members, clearing misunderstandings, and offering a channel through which feedback can be communicated. Indeed, communication is very key, as leader D added,

"We always maintain proper communication with the parents and community members. Newsletters, community meetings, and social media updates are some of the ways in which we can continuously update the stakeholders on the SNC's progress and achievement."

Informational sessions and workshops are very successful in educating the community about the SNC. As leader E said,

"We hold workshops with parents and community members and explain the new curriculum: what it entails, what it sets to achieve, and how their children will benefit from it. The sessions are interactive, allowing the community to ask questions and voice their concerns."

It is in light of this that Leader F added,

"We also use these workshops to demonstrate how parents can support their children's learning at home. By providing practical tips and resources, we empower parents to be active participants in their children's education."

#### *Addressing Community Concerns*

Another critical component of community engagement is community concern address. The trust and keeping the community on your side with respect to SNC come from proactive identification of the issues and responding to them. Leader G emphasized addressing concerns:

"We have set up a dedicated team that handles community concerns and feedback. This team is responsible for listening to issues by the community, timely responses, and implementing the solution if possible."

Leader H described how the leadership handled concerns,

"We hold regular surveys and feedback sessions to understand the community's concerns. Based on the feedback, we work out an action plan to deal with these issues and go back and communicate to the community what we are doing."

That will help in ensuring transparency and accountability, which in turn is very essential for them to remain trustworthy. Leader I said,

"We stay transparent in our process and decisions. We keep the community informed about the progress on addressing their concerns, and with this, the group comes to build trust and ensures continuous support."

Among the essential strategies that ensure the successful implementation of the SNC are community engagement, building support and ownership, keeping effective

communication, and addressing community concerns. These components help create a supportive and collaborative environment for the new curriculum within a school setting. A supportive and collaborative environment for the new curriculum with regard to community settings calls for engaging the community in the process of education to help leaders of the schools overcome difficulties and provide the smooth and effective implementation of SNC.

#### **4.1.4. Overall Indicative Impact of the SNC on Education**

The Single National Curriculum has changed everything regarding the education system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This section expounds on the overall indicative impact of SNC, which incorporates standardization, qualitative betterment, improved pre-service training and in-service development of teachers, and focus on the development of critical thinking as well as related skills among children.

##### ***4.1.4.1 Positive Outcomes***

The SNC establishment has brought positive changes to a lot of the educational landscape of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These outcomes are very important in understanding the broader implications of the new curriculum and the potential for education transformation across the region.

##### ***Standardization and Quality Improvement***

The most significant and important positive impact of SNC is that it standardized the curriculum throughout all schools. This kind of standardization aims at ensuring that all students, regardless of their residential area and socio-economic group they belong to, receive consistent and quality education. According to Leader A, "The benefit of standardization is tremendous." Further added,

"The SNC has offered a uniform framework that sees to it all learners are taught the same, thus help in coherence and quality sustenance from one school to another. This is particularly important in bridging the educational gap between urban and rural areas."

Standardization facilitates monitoring and assessment of educational outcome. As observed by

Leader B,

"A standard curriculum makes possible the procedures of evaluation and comparison of the students' achievement across different schools. It also identifies areas that need improvement and allows for intervention programs to enhance the quality of education."

Moreover, because of standardization, uniform teaching materials and resources have been developed, and these materials are relevant to the delivery of high-quality education. As explained by Leader C,

"The SNC has created standardized textbooks and teaching aids to guarantee that all students are able to benefit from the same quality learning materials."

#### *Enhanced Teacher Training and Development*

The implementation of the SNC has required huge investment in teacher training and development. This professional development brought an overall improvement in quality and effectiveness to teaching. As leader D bluntly puts it, "Had the teachers not been trained.....

"In order to sustain SNC, we have had to invest heavily in professional development programs for our teachers. There are programs that equip teachers with the competencies and ability to deliver the new curriculum effectively."

Also, over time, a complete system of training programs has been developed to cover all areas concerning the SNC, from new teaching methodologies and assessment techniques to digital tools. According to Leader E, these professional development initiatives include intensive workshops and continuous learning opportunities in hands-on training sessions that focus on how to apply the SNC in concrete practice:

"Our professional development includes intensive workshops, continuous learning opportunities, hands-on training sessions on how one would apply the SNC in concrete practice."

Increased teacher training has instilled teacher confidence and motivation. As the leader F noted,

"The professional development programs have not only improved teaching practices but also boosted teachers' confidence in their ability to deliver the new curriculum, hence improving their motivation to keep on their good work of providing quality education."

*Focus on Critical Thinking and Skills Development*

This is what SNC focuses on: critical thinking and practical skills. It ensures to change people's mindset in learning, empowering them to face the world. That's what leader G said, elaborating on the reasoning behind:

"It emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills development, very important in helping students succeed in the fast world today. One of the very significant positive outcomes for the new curriculum is this shift away from rote learning toward competency-based education."

This focus has led to a change of teaching methodologies, with greater focus on interactive approaches in teaching and student-centered learning approaches. According to Leader H,

"In an effort to develop critical thinking and skills, we have adopted more interactive and experiential learning methods. They are ways of getting students to really be actively involved in the process of their learning and to apply it in real-life situations."

What is more, relevance and student engagement have been significantly enhanced due to a focus on developing critical thinking and skills. This impact on student engagement was underlined by Leader I, who noted:

"The practical skills and critical thinking developed by the new curriculum have managed to make learning more interesting and relevant to the learner. This has brought higher levels of student engagement and motivation."

Due to the implementation of SNC in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, some positive results emerged that included standardization and improvement of quality, enhancing teachers' training and development, and increasing emphasis on critical thinking and skills development.

These outcomes would be quite imperative if the system of education were to be changed and the learners are to be better equipped for the future.

#### ***4.1.4.2 Challenges and Barriers***

Despite these positive results, there have been a number of major challenges and barriers that the implementation of the SNC has faced. These are the challenges of change and adaptation, limitations of resources and infrastructure, and the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Region.

##### *Resistance to Change and Adaptation*

One of the major challenges to the implementation of the SNC has been gaining stakeholder acceptance from teachers, students, and parents. Resistance can be said to be basically based on a pull toward the practice that one is used to and may not want to go in for new methods. This is what Leader A had to say about this challenge:

"The biggest challenge that we had to contend with was the levels of resistance from a number of staff who were very comfortable with the previous curriculum and found it hard to change in order to meet the requirements of the new standards."

For teachers who have been teaching for many years using a specific educational structure, it may be hard to change instructional strategies and assessment techniques to comply with SNC expectations. Further in this regard, Leader B commented,

"Many teachers were too used to the old curriculum and found it challenging to change their pedagogical style and strategies to accommodate the new requirements of the SNC."

Parents and students also proved resistant, especially in understanding and accepting the gains that the new curriculum would bring. As Leader C commented,

"There was some kind of resistance from the parents in the beginning due to unawareness of the impact that this new curriculum was to bring on the education of their children. Addressing these concerns and gaining their trust was a very critical part of our efforts."

### *Resource and Infrastructure Constraints*

The most prominent constraints of the SNC include those on resources and infrastructure. Especially in rural and under-resourced, are somehow not suitably equipped with materials and facilities to deliver curriculum content. According to Leader D, this was described by expressing the constraints of resources:

"Getting the right textbooks and digital tools that are aligned to the SNC has been a challenge. Acquiring them, especially for those subjects where there are huge changes, called for critical planning and major budgeting."

Later on, inadequate infrastructure in most schools complicates the implementation process. Leader E shed light on these issues:

"In rural and ill-equipped areas, both the physical and technological infrastructure are not that good. This makes certain parts of the curriculum difficult to implement. Many of these require digital tools or modern teaching aids."

Some of these infrastructural problems are issues such as unavailable reliable internet access, inadequate classroom space, and also old facilities that hinder the delivery of a quality education. Leader F said that there were wide discrepancies between the different regions.

"While the rural areas remain devoid of internet access, some schools have very old and obsolete physical structures in comparison with schools located in more urban or developed areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

### *Diverse Socioeconomic and Cultural Contexts*

These different socio-economic and cultural contexts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also throw up specific challenges towards the implementation of the SNC. These contexts influence the receptivity of the curriculum and how it gets implemented in different communities. Leader G said about the economic challenges,

"Many of the students are from economically weak backgrounds. They remain unaware of their proper interest and aptitude. If the basic necessities are not being met, then education is considered secondary."

Next in line are cultural problems, which also to a great extent influence the issues encountered. According to leader H,

"Cultural norms, such as gender segregation and limited female participation in education, pose another different challenge. Thus, this may hinder the potential effectiveness of the new curriculum with respect to tackling gender and social inequality and increasing inclusiveness."

There are also challenges concerning language barriers in the SNC's implementation. Leader I has commented,

"In those areas where Urdu is not the mother tongue, both teachers and students have to bear extra hardships. Teaching and learning the curriculum in the second language requires additional support and resources for better comprehension and teaching."

Although the execution of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has had some positive results, huge challenges and barriers have been identified as well. Resistance to change and adjustment, resource and infrastructure constraints, and a diversity of socioeconomically and culturally diverse contexts buck up against the effectiveness of the new curriculum within the region. Any attempts to resolve these require a wholesome and context-sensitive approach if the SNC is to have successful integration into the education system.

#### ***4.1.4.3 Role of Leadership and Community in Implementation***

The role of leadership to community engagement holds important contributions to the proper implementation of SNC. This section will review the key functions of leadership, strategies of engaging the community, and the long-term impact and sustainability.

##### *Essential Leadership Functions*

Effective leadership is fundamental in the implementation of the SNC. Leaders are important guides in this transition and can facilitate the process by surmounting obstacles supportively with a helping hand to students and teachers. According to Leader A, clarity of vision and direction must be met.

"As school leaders, we are to provide the vision and set targets for the implementation of the SNC. This involves aligning our school's practices with the new curriculum standards and ensuring all stakeholders are on board."

Leadership functions also extend to provide continued help and guidance to teachers.

As a very strong statement on this function, Leader B noted,

"Of course, there will be a need for continued support of the teachers—regular follow-up, provision of professional development, and resources to support their work to adapt to the new curriculum."

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the school heads to ensure that resources needed by the schools in terms of materials and infrastructure are available. As Leader C noted,

"It means that effective management of resources is one of the key functions of leadership in ensuring adequacy: the right textbooks, digital tools, and facilities in our schools are the basic requirements for the successful implementation of SNC."

### *Community Engagement Strategies*

Community involvement is a very important factor for developing support and its proper functioning to execute this SNC. School leaders engage parents, local authorities, and the general community in school processes through different ways.

Leader D explained their way of community involvement as,

"We make sure that parents and members of the local community are directly involved in the implementation process of curriculum reform through regular meetings, workshops, and informative sessions, which helps to develop understanding and support for the new curriculum."

The workshops and information sessions provide opportunity to allay community fears through education about the rationale for and advantages of the SNC. Leader E said,

"Our workshops are intended to explain the goals and benefits of the SNC, address any misconceptions, and offer some practical ways for parents to support their children's education at home."

Equally important is building good relations with the local authorities and community leaders. As Leader F put it,

"Collaboration with the local authority and community leaders has been a cardinal factor in getting broader support from the SNC. Their endorsement builds trust and encourages community participation."

### *Long-Term Impact and Sustainability*

In the long run, SNC's sustainability and impact depend on continuous efforts by school leaders and the local community through thriving and enhancing curriculum. Continuous attention to improvement and adaptation will be required to ensure that these benefits of the SNC that have been accrued are sustained. It was noted by Leader G that continued monitoring and evaluation remains essential.

"To maintain the positive impact of the SNC, we will need to monitor and evaluate its implementation regularly. This will involve collecting feedback from teachers, students, and parents, and making necessary adjustments in the curriculum."

Sustaining the benefits of the SNC also calls for commitment to continuous professional development on the part of the teachers. As Leader H noted,

"Continuous professional development is essential in maintenance of quality education. Ongoing training and provision for support to ensure that teachers are well-placed to deliver the curriculum effectively."

How important community involvement is key to the long-term sustainability of SNC, leader I explained:

"For the SNC to remain a change force, there needs to be increased engagement and ownership. This not only includes keeping parents current on student progress but also in working together to overcome any difficulties that may arise."

It becomes very important that the role of leadership and community engagement is enshrined in the implementation of the SNC. Key leadership roles would, therefore, be setting a clear vision, supporting teachers, and efficiently using resources. The strategies for engaging the community include follow-up communication, workshops, and good liaison with the local authorities and community leaders.

For long-term impact and sustainability of the SNC, continuous monitoring and professional development should be coupled with active involvement of the community. These efforts are important in sustaining the positive outputs and outcomes of the SNC, through which it will prove to be successful in transforming education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

#### **4.1.5 Conclusion of Findings**

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) is implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which brought considerable change and challenges to the educational environment. In view of the new curricular mandates, school leaders remodeled their roles about the working of new curriculum requirements with increased focus on curriculum development, teacher development, and facilitated the establishment of collaborative and data-driven practices.

#### **Key Insights:**

A key success factor for SNC is that it has been able to co-opt existing leadership roles as school leaders have had to redefine their roles in response to the requirements from SNC, which emphasizes things like alignment with curriculum objectives, professional development, and stakeholder engagement. In order to make this transition, there had to be a change toward a more strategic and supportive management of schools; and increasingly collaborative style of leadership emphasizing continuous improvement, along with teacher co-operation, student and parent involvement. Leaders at all levels are more proactive in managing the process of curriculum change, and rigorous professional development fosters among teachers a sense of shared responsibility by all staff for educational goals.

On the other hand, the implementation of the SNC has encountered significant challenges. Among them of particular importance is that the teachers, the students, and the parents themselves had their own resistance to change behavior; therefore, trust and acceptance had to be created and sustained over time. Resource and infrastructure bottlenecks, especially in rural areas, may also hamper the provision of the required inputs for effective curriculum implementation. Furthermore, the heterogeneous socioeconomic and cultural situations in the region have presented challenges in the standard implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, thus necessitating alternative approaches for local needs. These sorts of

challenges highlight the complexity involved in implementing standardized curriculum across a diverse range of situations. In responding to such challenges, the school heads have implemented various strategic steps to enhance the effectiveness of SNC implementation.

Similarly, professional development programs, as mainstream efforts to prepare teachers with skills and the knowledge they need to implement a new curriculum, guide teachers in the changes with mentorship and support systems. Collaboration and support in the implementation of changed teaching approaches have been encouraged. This is further complemented by programs of resource management and community engagements that are driven to accompany stakeholders in meetings to ensure the needs of the schools and create a feeling of ownership among the many stakeholders. These strategic interventions were quite key to breaking implementation barriers. Though the SNC is considered to have had an overall positive effect on education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it has returned significant results in several realms. On the other hand, standardizing the quality of education has been another merit to all children regardless of where they belong.

Likewise, the benefit of such initiative programs has also crystallized: there has been better training and development for teachers to enhance their professionalism, classroom practice, and general confidence. Given the emphasis of SNC on critical thinking and skills development, it would mean that the practices in education are more interactive and student-centered; thus, learning would be relevant and interesting. But then, these difficulties are things that should be constantly worked upon, and this includes resistance to change, lack of resources, or the imbedded diverse regional contexts in order for the SNC to be a success continuously.

## **4.2 DISCUSSION**

This section of my thesis provides a detailed analysis of the finding and bridging them with the theoretical framework and existing literature for broader implications. It also provides a detailed overview of interpretation of the collected data by exploring the significance and further discusses the contributions and overall understanding of the study. Similarly, the section covers several key areas that includes adaptation of leadership roles, the challenges encountered by the leadership of schools, the strategies and interventions that school leadership employed for a successful implementation of the new curriculum and the overall impact of these interventions and implementation of education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **4.2.1 Interpretation of Findings**

The major findings that emerged during the course of the research study are discussed in this section in detailed manner. This includes the changes in the role of school administrators in the post-SNC era, identification of the main hurdles in the implementation process, evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions brought in by the leadership, and inquiry into the overall impact of SNC on education.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Analysis of Leadership Adaptation***

This section represents the key findings that have been derived from the study on how school leader roles have been remodeled in regard to SNC, the major challenges or issues that the leadership had to deal with in implementing the SNC, and the impact of various leadership interventions and strategies on the development of schools. This section intends to explain the findings about the dynamics of changes and reforms that are in the process of implementation in the educational system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

#### ***Leadership Adaptation in Response to the SNC***

The implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa required a massive shift in the role of the school administrators. Traditionally, school leaderships have held administrative roles and managed the running of the schools on a day-to-day basis, ensuring that the set standards of curriculum instruction were maintained (Smith & Johnson, 2018). Requirements of the SNC, however, called for a more engaging, hands-on approach to leadership. In essence, transformational leadership theory elucidates how leaders inspire and enthuse their staff to deliver a more valued and high performance (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).

#### *Detailed Interpretation of Leadership Role Adaptation*

School leadership had to become one of the strong drivers for curriculum implementation, which in itself was a shift of educational leadership practice in a more hands-on direction. It involved actively participating in curriculum development, facilitating extensive teacher training programs, and managing the integration of new teaching methodologies and assessment practices. Fullan (2001) accentuates that effective leadership in educational reforms does not ignore the complexities of change but fosters a culture of continuous improvement. According to leader A, the shift was necessary: "We have had to go beyond traditional roles and assume leadership responsibility to guide our schools in this major transition. This has involved direct involvement in training teachers, production of new teaching materials, and assurance of actual classroom integration of the new curriculum."

Furthermore, school leaders needed to develop strategies to manage resistance to change among teachers and staff. This involved creating an environment that fostered trust, collaboration, and continuous support. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) note that adaptive leadership is crucial in navigating complex changes and involves mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges. Leader B highlighted the importance of this supportive approach, noting, "It was crucial to build a supportive environment where teachers felt confident and valued. We

organized regular meetings, provided ongoing feedback, and ensured that teachers had the resources they needed to succeed." The adaptation also required a strategic vision to align the school's goals with the objectives of the SNC.

In addition, the leaders in schools had to develop ways of overcoming resistance to change from the teaching staff and other employees. The leaders had to build a sense of trust, cooperation, and constant assistance. Heifetz et al, (2009) state that adaptive leadership is one that guides complex changes; it entails the process of mobilizing people to face challenging factors. It was this very supportive approach for which Leader B commented, "The main thing was to build a supportive environment where teachers felt confident and valued. We organized regular meetings, provided ongoing feedback, and made sure that teachers had what they needed to succeed." Strategic vision was also required in adaptation for the attainment of alignment between the goals of the school and the objectives set out in the SNC.

In this respect, the leaders had to establish clear expectations, explain the benefits of the new curriculum, and monitor the implementation process. Elrod and Kezar (2006) further raise the point that there have to be clarity of vision and strategy as these are the essential elements in implementing educational reforms. In this respect, leader C said, "We needed to have a clear vision and strategy for how we were going to implement the SNC. This involved some specific goal-setting, communicating those goals to our staff, and regularly assessing where we were. "

Likewise, it was a drastic shift in leadership roles in response to the SNC that had to be oriented strategically and supportively as compared to routine administrative tasks for school leaders. Not only did school leaders have to engage in curriculum development and professional development, but they also needed to help resolve the issue among teacher which is resistance to change and set clear strategic direction so their respective schools could

effectively navigate the implementation process. It provides the detailed interpretation of how leadership practice has evolved to meet the challenges that come with efficiently supporting a new curriculum.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Examination of Implementation Challenges***

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had to face numerous challenges throughout its implementation process. These are indeed very complex issues, and most of the challenges came from internal reluctance of teacher and staff to adopt new processes and practices, plus the fact that there was a deficiency in resources as well as problems linked with cultural diversity. Now, in this section, these issues will be further explored with examples and contextual conditions.

##### *Resistance to Change*

One common challenge to the implementation of educational reforms is resistance to change and this kind of resistance emanates from teachers, administrators, parents, and even students. More specifically, some teachers may resist changes due to the fact that they are used to established procedures or fear adding more work on themselves or question the effectiveness of a new curriculum (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022). For instance, the teachers may feel that the new curriculum adds more to their already defined roles and there is less orientation coming with resources. Resistance can also additionally be fueled by experiences relating to powerlessness in decision-making that eventually causes disengagement and disenchantment (Heifetz et al., 2009).

A study carried out by Lomba-Portela et al. (2022) reported that changes in legislation along with the perception of polarized responsibilities were commonly identified as aspects blocking resistance from teachers. The study found that established and experienced staff,

particularly in public schools were more resistant. This opposition was typically underlined by a desire for continued routine and comfort with the old ways being utilized.

### *Resource Constraints*

One of the main challenges that have been identified in implementing the SNC is resource constraints. Some of these examples may be underfunding, lack of modern educational materials, a system or facility that cannot handle the enrolment rate leading to inadequate infrastructure and limited accessibility for technological application. Many of the schools in developing regions do not have enough basic educational resources even according to a report from World Bank (2021), which adversely affect their capacity to successfully apply new curriculums.

Resource constraints have been a huge challenge in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Rural schools, especially face a grave problem with the restricted availability of essential facilities and materials. As exemplified by numerous schools not having textbooks, laboratory equipment and digital tools for the new system which require such resources. Moreover, the dearth of training facilities and professional development opportunities for teachers only served to make the situations more complicated (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002).

### *Cultural Diversity*

The implementation of the SNC is further complicated by cultural diversity. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a mixture of linguistic, ethnic and cultural variable population. The diversity can create difficulties in both standardization and curricular relevance to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate for all students.

For example, the language of instruction can be one such formidable barrier. Even in many parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Urdu is not a primary language. Therefore, rolling out an Urdu-heavy curriculum can actually be problematic for students and teachers alike who are more fluent in other local languages. In addition, cultural norms and values can also play an influential role in attitudes towards education as well acceptance for the SNC to be effective (Garcia-Huidobro et al., 2017).

### *Specific Examples and Contextual Factors*

An example of resistance to change is the refusal by certain teachers to use information and communication technology (ICT) in their teaching practices. This is reinforced via the notion that many teachers are ill-equipped and uncertain about how to embrace ICT in their teaching practice solutions, which causes resistance (Ben Youssef, 2015). Government policies, political reasons or any financial crisis like lack of funding could be other challenges for the new world technologies to mesh up with education system. In Tunisia, there are wide disparities in quality as well curricula across different regions which is a testimony to resource constraints. Economic and political crises have delayed the advancement of educational reforms, underscoring that successful implementation requires sufficient financial resources as well as a long-term commitment from decision makers (Ben Youssef 2015).

Cultural diversity shows that how different cultures respond differently to education reforms displays a problem of cultural diversity. In Tunisia for instance, the resistance of teachers to integrate ICT in their teaching comes from both the traditional way they teach and its inconsistency with local practices (Datnow & Park 2014). The SNC in KP is encountering serious resistance to change, resource constraints and cultural diversity which need to be addressed pragmatically. These challenges need to be addressed through an all-encompassing

approach, engaging the support and resources of each actor in decision-making while taking into account this rich cultural perspective prevalent in the region.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Evaluation of Leadership Strategies and Interventions***

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) effective implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa needed strong leadership strategies and interventions. This portion critically evaluates the impact of professional development programs, mentorship systems and resource allocation initiatives; and good practice strategies are highlighted.

##### *Professional Development Programs*

Professional development programs are necessary and useful, in order to give teachers, the right knowledge for implementing new curricula wisely. These programs often succeed to the extent that they offer ongoing, site-based training which can meet teachers where help is needed most (Wallace Foundation, 2023). For instance, professional development projects that focus on collaborative learning and application are likely to be more successful. Wallace Foundation research (2013) shows that sustained professional development programs could have a positive and statistically significant effect on teaching practices and student learning if it includes follow-up support, or extend beyond just workshops, so teachers can practice new skills in their own classrooms.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the SNC has been introduced with a series of teacher professional development programs to help teachers to make this shift effective in their teaching practices. These programs have included workshops, seminars, and long-term coaching sessions. One of the significant examples is the series of workshops to introduce teachers to competency-based pedagogy which is central to SNC. These workshops have in

turn assisted teachers to learn and implement new pedagogical practices within their classrooms.

### *Mentorship Systems*

Support for teachers in making transitions to new curricula is a vital aspect of mentorship systems. Mentorship matches novice teachers with experienced educators who can offer them guidance, support and practical tips (UNESCO, 2016). They support mentees with curriculum, classroom management and professional learning opportunities.

Within the SNC, there are systems of mentorship that have been set up to support teachers, particularly, those in rural and under-resourced areas. These processes have ranged from more formal or less informal mentoring partnerships. As one example, experienced teachers have been assigned as mentors for new or less experienced teachers who receive continued feedback and support. This strategy has worked very well to changeless confidence among teachers and help smooth implementation of SNC.

### *Resource Management Initiatives*

Effective resource utilization is a key enabler for effective implementation of educational reforms. This involves the provision of financial, physical and human resources for curriculum development (Davies & Davies, 2006). Strategic resource management and planning, monitoring and adjusting resources to meet school needs in order for them to teach the new curriculum well.

Resource management initiatives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been focused on providing schools with the required materials and infrastructure to deliver SNC. This has extended to the supply of new textbooks, e-learning tools and other educational materials.

There are also moves to strengthen school infrastructure, upgrading classrooms and other facilities of the schools that will give access for better internet connections. In another compelling initiative, the government teamed up with non-governmental organizations to finance and disseminate a series of educational resources in remote communities where schools were not comprehensive. This joint exercise between them has helped in eliminating resource crunches to work for effective SNC implementation.

#### *Case Studies and Examples of Successful Strategies*

One of the significant examples of a leadership strategy is the mentorship and professional development program of a rural school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The pairing of each new teacher with an experienced teacher, with the school offering regular professional development sessions devoted to competency-based education, means that this same school reported drastic and lasting improvements in classroom practice year after year. Additionally, teachers indicated greater feelings of confidence and preparedness to teach the new curriculum while earning a 20 percent gain on assessment scores.

On the other side, the provincial education department rolled out a strategic resource management initiative. The department did a critical needs assessment to identify the resource gaps and then funded the resource gaps. This was what had covered the procurement of up-to-date textbooks, installing digital classrooms complemented by technical support across schools. As a result, schools reported better preparedness and equipping towards delivering SNC.

#### ***4.2.1.4 Overall Impact on Education***

The introduction of SNC in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, has been associated with profound effects on the quality of education, teachers, and students' outcomes.

Drawing on transformational leadership theory, distributed leadership theory, and organizational change theory that adds depth to such an analysis related to change.

### *Impact on Educational Quality*

The Single National Curriculum was introduced to bring uniformity in educational standards all over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is apparent from the research that well-implemented curriculum reforms are useful for bringing about a change in instructional practices and student participation (Keister & Grames, 2012). In this regard, transformational leadership has been crucial because of its focus on motivating and inspiring staff to deliver better performance (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). It is because of the school leaders that the culture of continuous improvement has been fostered, aligning educational practice to the new standards and creating consistency and uniformity across schools.

Educational quality has been improved due to the Distributed Leadership style, as this style emphasizes that leadership is a joint endeavor rather than a one man show (Spillane 2006). Schools have ensured a more inclusive and impactful education by engaging various stakeholders in the processes of decision-making and implementation. This approach has enabled a culture of information and practice exchange delivering an enhancing effect on both classrooms teaching standards as well student outcomes (Harris, 2008).

### *Impact on Teacher Training*

Nguyen and Ta (2018) stress the interdependence amongst teacher training programs is an essential tool to ensure that teachers have adequate mastery of the new curricula in order to deliver it effectively. The SNC has also reinforced regular professional development for teachers to adapt new pedagogical practices and utilize modern digital tools in the classroom. Consistently, professional development which entails mentoring and collaborative learning has

been proven to dramatically improve teachers' pedagogy as well student academic performance (Wallace Foundation, 2023).

These training initiatives have also been driven by transformational leadership. Leaders have encouraged and supported teachers in their on-going professional development, learning the skills required for the implementation of SNC (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) so that they teach better. These training programs are also rooted in Organizational Change Theory, particularly the Kotter (1996) model. School leaders successfully led their schools through the SNC implementation by establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition and developing vision.

#### *Impact on Student Outcomes*

Broadly, the SNC has had mixed results on student outcomes with progress seen in some areas of focus and ongoing challenge observed elsewhere. The competency-based program and the emphasis on critical thinking skills within the curriculum ought to produce increased student satisfaction, as well as improved standardized assessment performance (Schmidt et al., 2017). Yet, in many contexts they have done little more than compensate for uneven resource provisions or access to well-designed learning materials. However, the real struggle continues to be for effective holistic support systems aimed at tackling these gaps.

The use of transformational and distributed leadership practices has helped to facilitate successful student outcomes by fostering an encouraging and engaging educational setting. Leaders have directed their efforts on nurturing high expectations culture and developmental resources to support the students (Bass, 1985; Spillane, 2006). Organizational Change Theory offers a structure for dealing with the transition and management of resistance to change, therefore keeping the emphasis on enhancing student learning experiences and outcomes.

### *Discussion of Positive Outcomes and Ongoing Challenges*

The standardization of educational materials has been one of the main positive contributions that resulted from SNC and on which more student may benefit, leading to a fairer education system across all regions. Teacher training programs have been stepped up a lot and there has also been an increased level of disciplinary focus on critical thinking which led to interesting learning environments for students (Kelley & Knowles, 2016).

Notwithstanding these successes, a number of challenges still remain. One major challenge pertains to resistance to change by educators and administrators, particularly because most of the stakeholders have been oriented towards using traditional teaching approaches and sometimes might be very resistant to new practices (Lomba-Portela et al., 2022). Another is a resource constraint within the rural and under-resourced areas that limits SNC from reaching its full potential. Inadequate infrastructure, limited access to teaching materials, and insufficient funding are such problems that are obstacles to the success of a curriculum, and rectification in these regards is incumbent upon the authorities concerned for the successful execution of curriculum (Ben Youssef, 2015). After its implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the SNC has generated valuable improvement in the quality of education and the training of teachers, along with improving the student outcomes. However, the persistence of the tide of opposition and the scarcity of resources emphasizes the need for perpetual efforts to sustain and support these reforms.

#### **4.2.1.5 Application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model**

The leadership strategies implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the practical application of the SNC can be understood more vividly if situated within the framework of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. Such a framework provided a comprehensive structure for

managing significant educational reforms, thus helping school leaders to systematically engage with the challenges and complexities inherent in large-scale change.

1. **Creation of Urgency:** Well, the creation of a feeling of urgency was the foremost step toward having the school community accept the SNC. The school leadership highly communicated the need for change in the curriculum, backed by emphasizing the probable gains in terms of quality of education through a unified national curriculum. In this step, the leaders used data and evidence to project the inadequacies that existed in the educational system, hence making a compelling argument for change to happen now. For instance, the leaders used inequities across regions regarding standards of education and the need for uniformity to ensure equity in education.
2. **Building a Powerful Coalition:** Top teachers, educational administrators, parents, and community opinion leaders form the guiding coalition by coming forward to take up the change process. Such coalitions are very useful in advocating for the SNC through their leadership and support to drive the change process. The stakeholders were many and diverse, guaranteeing a wide base of support and aid in dissipating various fears and resistances coming from different corners. Only through their influence and expertise could leaders rally a very strong united front to promote and sustain the reform effort most effectively.
3. **Produce a vision and strategy:** Clearly articulate what the vision is for the SNC implementation success to depict what the future state would look like and describe which strategic steps are to be undertaken toward that end. The vision furnished a kind of roadmap that would guide actions and subsequent decisions thereafter. In the process, strategies were worked out for alignment of the curriculum with educational standards at the national level, incorporation of competency-based learning, and enhancement of critical thinking and practical skills. It was expressed through formal

communications, strategic planning sessions, and public statements for a clear understanding among the stakeholders as to what were the goals and objectives.

4. **The vision communication:** Through effective communication, the vision was vivid in the minds of all stakeholders in the school community to follow clearly in the implementation. The leaders in the schools conveyed the vision and any new developments through regular meetings, newsletters, workshops, and digital platforms. Of importance, such continuous communication served to address misconceptions, clarify expectations, and sustain the momentum of the change initiative. Since the leaders communicated the vision transparently and coherently, it gave rise to a shared commitment.
5. **Empowering Broad-Based Action:** Leaders got rid of all the obstacles that would impede progress to empower broad-based action. Systematic logistical hurdles, such as a lack of teaching materials, were addressed, while professional development opportunities for teachers were offered extensively so they could have sufficient knowledge and skills. By creating an enabling environment and facilitating access to resources that foster innovation, leaders allowed teachers and staff to actively engage in the implementation process. Provision of constant support and encouragement was also paramount in developing confidence and competence among the teaching staff.
6. **Creation of Short-Term Wins:** Since leaders agreed that it was necessary to demonstrate quick wins, they strategized and celebrated short-term wins, such as the successful piloting of new ways of teaching, positive responses from parents and students, and initial improvements in students' engagement and performance. These small wins were celebrated, and this not only keeps up the morale but also serves as concrete proof that the change is indeed paying off. From these early wins, credibility and momentum were built up in laying a firm support basis for the continued implementation of SNC.

7. Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change: The short-term victories provided an impetus for changes to continue implementing and consolidation of the gains. That is, it improves and builds on successful initiatives, amplifies successful practices, and keeps a continuous monitoring process in order to allow space for improvement. Moreover, leaders also anchored efforts in ensuring that new policies and processes introduced to the operational framework of the school were sustained. The iterative process of feedback and adjustment was a very crucial process for refining implementation strategies and increasing their effectiveness.
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture: This final stage involved anchoring the new approaches into the organizational culture. The school leadership in this case intended to institutionalize the change by making a big part of the new standards for curriculum part of their ordinary practice, setting a culture that permitted constant learning and progress, establishing new values and norms underpinning the ideas of the SNC, and promoting creativity and excellence in education. Through a school culture in support of curriculum reform goals, leaders at all levels worked to ensure the change was not only adopted but also sustained in the long run.

In a nutshell, the application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model provided a robust framework for managing the complex process of Single National Curriculum implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It assisted school leaders in dealing systematically with all possible problems that could have been derived from the process of transition, from resistance to change to the effective use of resources in accomplishing such change. The detailed analysis of each step indicates just how useful the model can be in guiding educational reforms and points out the critical role of leadership in the navigation of large-scale changes. It becomes relevant and effective in a school setting by finding an application in the context of SNC implementation, thus offering very valuable insights for future educational reforms.

## **4.2.2 Comparison with Existing Literature**

This section is designed to place the results of the study in contrast to some other research on educational reforms. It contextualizes the findings, discuss themes that are consistent with what has been documented in literature and reflect on unexpected insights or areas where results may appear to be at odds, reinforcing or dividing from established knowledge. This sort of comparison is useful for grounding the findings from the study, to show what it can add relative to this past work and where need exists in terms of potential future research.

### ***4.2.2.1 Leadership Adaptation in Educational Reforms***

#### *Comparison with Existing Studies on Leadership Adaptation*

Given the complexity of change, leaders have to play a major role that how they adapt their leadership roles to address changes that are befalling them at various points as they bear the responsibility for having created an environment conducive towards new initiatives. Research suggests that effective leadership includes providing inspiration and motivation, encouraging collaboration among staff members in the school and aligning practices with reform goals (Fullan 2007; Heifetz et al., 2009). (Fullan, 2007; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

This is in line with the transformational leadership approach that emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating their staff to perform above expectations. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), in support of this concept, pointed out that transformational leaders will induce changes among the staff to its perceptions about itself. For example, school leaders of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are actively participating in capacity building and resource management to help the implementation of the SNC same as other educational reforms (Fullan 2007).

Educational reforms, which are based on distributed leadership and shared answers play a pivotal part as well. Spillane (2006) writes that leadership is not bound to those in formal administrative positions, but found among multiple stakeholders. This was a consistent theme in the research, specifically how school leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa worked alongside with teachers, parents and community members to support the implementation of SNC. Such a result resonates with that of Harris (2008) who emphasizes the way in which distributed leadership can increase schools' collective capacity to successfully put reforms in practice.

#### *Similarities in Approaches and Outcomes*

A key thread in the findings, mirroring other literature, is that professional development matters. As such, this current study reinforces the message from those found in other research on a need for ongoing context relevant teacher training to shift pedagogical practice to accommodate new curriculum (Nguyen & Ta, 2018). For example, when the Finnish Core Curriculum Reform underlined that teacher's preparation should be appropriate to meet new school standards (Soini et al., 2021). A second piece of common ground is the collaborative approach to leadership. The study reported that Participative leadership, engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process is important for successful rollout of the SNC. It is in line with the Finnish reform, where participation, co-operation and trust were core to the reform strategy (Pless & Maak 2001).

#### *Differences in Approaches and Outcomes*

Leadership has been adapted in a different context, and there are differences when it comes to starting the process of adaptation. This research discussed major resistance to change status among the educators of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, however, other studies such as Fullan (2007) suggests such levels of resistivity can be decreased if teachers are included in high scale

and early involvement into systems transformation. This variation might be due to specific cultural and socio-political in which the regions were researched.

In corresponding to that, resource challenges especially in the rural areas presented a significant barrier throughout. This is very different to how reforms might happen in areas constrained resources as newer ability now created processes which are deemed more effective. An example of the success that can come from these natures of behaviors would be observed in a Finnish reform which included previously established infrastructure and sufficient resources means for transitioning to new educational standards (Moos et al., 2020). The study on implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shares similarities with literature regarding educational reforms, especially about transformational and distributed leadership. Nonetheless, the specific conditions of a certain context in terms of resource and cultural resistance pointed to demands for particular ways how leadership adapts in diverse settings.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Addressing Resistance to Change***

Resistance to change is a common problem in educational reforms. The literature points to a number of strategies for overcoming this resistance, such as involving stakeholders in the change process; offering ongoing training and support; articulating clear communication mechanisms with all parties; establishing strong safety measures. Looking them through the prism of a study implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the Single National Curriculum (SNC) implementation makes these strategies more amenable to understand their application and effectiveness.

#### ***Engagement and Participation***

There must be a meaningful engagement of stakeholders early in the reform process to reduce resistance. Kotter (1996) advocated that through the planning and decision-making

process the teachers would have a sense of enterprise in regards to implementation as well having less anxiety regarding change. Fullan (2007) suggests that involvement in reform efforts results in a sense of collaboration and input on the part of all stakeholders. School leaders, therefore involved teachers, parents and community members in the SNC implementation process which led to a wider ownership of reform as well as the reduction level of resistance against it.

### *Professional Development*

Continuous Professional Development is important to assist educators in adjusting with new curricula. Guskey (2002) has suggested that professional development experiences should be continuous, time-appropriate and in commitment to strengthening the technical prowess of teachers thereby building their self-assurance. Effective training also helps to overcome competency apprehensions and offers real-world strategies for introducing the new methods. Professional development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa became a cornerstone of the SNC; it delivered workshops, seminars and coaching to impart skills as well as knowledge amongst teachers.

### *Clear Communication*

Clear and stable communication concerning the goals, benefits, and procedures of reform minimizes uncertainty and promotes trust. Heifetz et al, (2009) also note that effective communication can assist to ensure a shared understanding among stakeholders of the reasons for change occurring in terms what needs to be done and why it is necessary. The results shed light on the fact that allowing for open lines of communication and providing frequent updates during the SNC implementation was a strategy employed by school leaders towards

overcoming resistance and establishing teacher as well as student mindsets to be more progressive about their attitude toward change.

### *Support Systems*

Much like the comprehensive support system, mentorship and resources greatly help educators manage these transitions. Mentorship programs pairing seasoned educators with less experienced ones, Spillane (2006) posits can lend aid and a lifeline throughout the transition. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for instance, one of the major strategies adopted was mentorship to guide teachers on how to adapt new methodologies in teaching and integrate the curriculum into their daily practice effectively.

By matching these with the strategies from this study it becomes clear that there is a large similarity to how resistance can be addressed. However, there were additional difficulties due to the unique socio-cultural and resource constraints in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These included challenges related to, for example: resource constraints that significantly hampered more widespread and comprehensive provision of professional development activities - especially in rural regions; and support structures. This stands in contrast to areas with less resource constraints and stronger support systems. Overcoming resistance to change should be approached on different fronts as it requires stakeholder engagement, consistent capacity building opportunities, ongoing communication and a strong support system. The strategies identified in this case study of the SNC implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan overlap with those reported from literature and also suggest that due to varying settings there are unique contextual challenges faced which call for specific approaches to manage resistance adequately.

#### ***4.2.2.3 Resource Management in Curriculum Implementation***

Especially successful implementation of curriculum reforms requires effective resource management. This section examines the resource management challenges and strategies found in this study of the implementation of Single National Curriculum (SNC) and juxtaposes them against similar issues highlighted by previous research. In this context, common themes and particularistic experiences are discussed to present multiple dimensions with the purpose of furnishing a nuanced depiction.

### *Challenges in Resource Management*

In terms of educational settings, the resource management refers to the planning of different types of resources such as financial, physical and human resources to support curriculum implementation (Davies & Davies 2006). In KP, a number of major challenges were highlighted, particularly, in the rural setting due to limited resources. The challenges were in terms of lack of funding, inadequate teaching materials, lack of infrastructure and less access to technology. These restrictions not only undermine the successful delivery of the updated curriculum but also prove to be a considerable obstacle in achieving educational objectives.

Similar problems have been defined in the literature. For example, National Center for Education Statistics (2023) identifies effective resource management as a key duty of principals wherein they manage resources in the context of student diversity and ensure these allocations reflect both school community mission and vision. Diverse educational settings encounter an even more complex challenge of equitable resource management where the range of student needs must be met with limited resources.

### *Strategies for Resource Management*

In order to tackle these difficulties, several strategies have been suggested and implemented in both study-induced literature and more generally:

1. Needs Assessment and Goal Setting: Effective resource management begins with the thorough assessment that what students and teachers need. This includes specifying educational objectives and matching resources with the intended learning goals (American University, 2023). In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, school leaders also led needs assessments to help them rank order resources so that the most critical areas were dealt with first.
2. Data-Driven Decision Making: Data driven decision making is key. By analyzing student-achievement data and resource utilization, administrators may determine where to allocate resources most productively (Davies & Davies, 2006). This study demonstrated that school administrators in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were equipped to employ data-driven methods for identifying the most promising interventions and strategies aimed at ensuring higher student learning levels.
3. Prioritizing Equity: Equity in resource allocation is critical to ensure all students are provided with what they need, especially those most likely also to be the underserved or marginalized. Examples of strategies for managing resources equitably include advocating for increases in funding, redistributing current resources, and offering assistance to high-need students (American University, 2023). The focus on equity in this study resulted significant efforts to ensure all schools, particularly those of more rural locale receive adequate resources.
4. Collaboration and Partnerships: Collaboration with outside organizations and building partnerships will provide schools access to further contributions and assistance. Partnerships with NGOs and community groups can provide funding, materials, and expertise to support resource management (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa NGOs have been key in filling shortage of resources and supporting the SNC implementation.

### *Common Themes and Unique Findings*

The literature and results from this study reflect common themes of conducting needs assessments, using data to inform decision-making; ensuring equity within resource distribution, and collaboration. The results obtained reveal that these strategies are effectively grounded in realistic practices for managing resources within an educational context. However, the study also identified some specific concerns for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly, in rural areas, where resources have been scarce and interventions need to be tailored. These results highlight the need to adjust resource constraints strategies according to the situations and needs of materials demand from educational environment.

Effective resource management is an age-old practice, a strategy that involves planning and arrangements based on the usage of resources available. The strategies identified in this study for the SNC implementation into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are similar to what has been documented elsewhere, however unique context-specific challenges brought forward here highlights that one size fits all may not be effective. Solving these challenges is essential to implement the curriculum reforms effectively and meet educational objectives.

#### ***4.2.2.4 The Role of Community Engagement***

##### *Comparison of Findings on Community Engagement with Existing Studies*

Community involvement is considered one of the key ingredients for effective educational reforms. According to Brookings (2023) and the Great Schools Partnership (2023), research on education continually reinforces that it is critical for parents, students, and local organizations to be engaged in schools so they feel a part of their educational community. While resistance to change and implementation can be highlighted as major challenges in

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, community engagement played a significant role in facilitating this change and effectuating the implementation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) across KP as observed in this study.

The literature demonstrates that, when it comes to the global reform approach in education by sustainable and effective change at all three levels (macro-meso-micro), participation of community will be source solution. For instance, the Brookings Institution (2023) argues that the inclusion of families and community members in defining why we have a strong education system allows for public values and norms to align with such purposes. This alignment is essential for meeting long-term education objectives and reducing obstacles to reform.

Based on the study's finding, school leaders that engage community members in playing an active role during the SNC implementation encountered less resistance and gained more support for making these changes. This finding is consistent with Great Schools Partnership (2023) research, which makes the case that doing more and equitable community engagement leads to stronger education learning environments. In this approach, by engaging all the stakeholders in decision-making processes; schools can effectively address the needs and desires of all their students followed with more friendly learning environment.

#### *Importance and Impact of Community Involvement in Educational Reforms*

Community involvement in educational reforms is important for several reasons. Firstly, it makes the reforms responsive to local contexts and needs. The more that community members are involved, the better as their thoughts can be a valuable conduit for insight and feedback which help inform what reform is effective and relevant (Brookings 2023). For example, involving parents and local leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa helped amend the SNC

to address cultural and socio-economic challenges resulting in better acceptance of its implementation.

Secondly, community involvement leads to ownership and responsibility. When community members are involved in the reform process, they will be more likely to support and maintain any changes that do occur. Collaboration leads to shared ownership and less resistance because others feel they were part of this process (Great Schools Partnership, 2023). In this study, schools that communicated the SNC and conferred with parents or other members of the community showed higher levels of commitment and participation from both parents, and students.

Finally, community participation can come to fill those gaps in resources and support. By engaging with local partners and community assets, schools will capitalize on relationships to help them better ensure the successful implementation of reforms (Brookings Institution, 2023). Non-governmental organization (NGOs) partnerships in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa brought in additional resources and knowledge that were necessary for managing resource constraints successfully, which was critical to the effective SNC implementation. This study found that the implementation of SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan aligns with the existing literature which argues for community participation being critical to basic education reforms. Involving the community not only enriches interventions and makes reforms feel more appropriate and embraced but also fosters a supportive environment that is critical to ensuring continuous improvement in education.

### **4.2.3. Implications for Policy and Practice**

The implications of the findings further conclude significant policy and practice recommendations with reference to the implementation of Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model to Policy and Practice***

By applying Kotter's 8-Step Change Model to these findings, the researchers can derive useful lessons for implementing the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The model organizes its framework informatively for both development in policy and practical applications in the educational setting.

1. **Recommendations for Educational Policy:** This facet can be taken by policymakers from Kotter's step of "Creating Urgency" by emphasizing the need to address inequalities in resource allocation, especially towards under-resourced rural areas. Investment in educational infrastructure and technology is made with considerations for "Empowering Broad-Based Action," which better places schools in a position to overcome some of the logistical barriers and hence enhance the quality of education. Moreover, since the model is directed at "Generating Short-Term Wins," showing quick successes in distribution of resources and training for teachers may help gain momentum and support for further reforms.
2. **Best Practices for School Leaders:** The "Developing a Vision and Strategy" step of Kotter can be implemented by the school leaders in clearly articulating the goals and expectations of the SNC. An open ear culture, data-driven decision-making—these correspond to "Communicating the Vision" and "Empowering Action" to ensure that all concerned parties are well-informed and engaged. Next is the implementation of effective programs for recruitment and continuous professional development

opportunities, correlating to the step of "Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture," which institutionalizes it.

3. **Strategies That Ensure Effective Teacher Education Training:** In the teacher training process, Kotter's model focuses on "Building on the Change" with professional development that is continuous. Workshops with hands-on activities, peer collaboration, and long-term coaching could be considered an extension of both "Generating Short-Term Wins" and "Consolidating Gains." Continuous professional growth will help teachers scan in a sustained manner the new curricular expectations and pedagogical interventions.
4. **Greater Community Involvement:** The "Forming a Powerful Coalition" step illustrates the development of strong community and organizational partnerships. On the "Enhancing Community Involvement" front, as recommended, schools must engage parents and local leaders in meaningful and candid decision-making processes. Feedback systems coupled with working relations with NGOs underscore both "Communicating the Vision" and "Empowering Broad-Based Action," respectively, for a helpful and collaborative environment in which the SNC can be implemented.

Thus, to implement SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa successfully, what is required is a comprehensive approach relying on Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. This framework not only helps in comprehending the dynamics of change but also provides clear, pragmatic steps to ensure that reforms are well adopted and sustained. Such evidence-based strategies should be able to integrate more successful and sustainable adoption of the new curriculum.

#### *Educational Policy Recommendation*

Policymakers should consider a number of evidence-based recommendations to support the effective implementation of the SNC. The first thing, there is a need to increase the

investment in educational resources, especially where they have been less abundant historically such as resourced rural areas. Providing adequate financial support for newly developed teaching materials, as well as infrastructure and technology that will supplement the quality of education in line with new curriculum goals (Davies & Davies, 2006). Further, the policies should encourage continuous professional development of teachers. Training program with the contents of new curriculum, teaching methodology and skill-based method should be compulsory for teachers in order to have necessary skills as well confidence (Nguyen & Ta, 2018).

#### *Best Practices for School Leader*

The study also listed best practices for school leaders which would improve the chances of successful curriculum implementation. Effective leadership should involve a clear vision and goals consistent with the SNC, promote an open ear culture among all stakeholders as well. In addition, school leaders must utilize data-driven decision-making processes to ensure that resources are allocated effectively as well as used intensively in tracking progress (Fullan, 2007). Creating stronger models for recruitment programs so that teachers are supported in new ways can improve teacher adaptability to anticipated stimulants.

#### *Strategies for Effective Teacher Training*

An important part of teacher training programs should be designed for the fulfilment of needs of teachers to implement the SNC. Practical strategies involve building in practical elements such as hands-on workshops, collaborative learning orientations and coaching over time. In addition, the emergence of lifelong learning will continually guide teachers to update with teaching method and changes in curriculum (Guskey, 2002). Online training resources,

combined with professional learning communities, can be helpful in terms of teachers' continuous growth and development.

#### *Enhancing Community Involvement*

Establishing the right relationships with community partners is a key factor for education reform to be successful. During implementation, schools should work directly with parents and local organizations or community leaders. Effective community involvement strategies include holding routine meetings, setting up feedback systems and participating in decision-making (Brookings 2023). Schools may also consider to work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to access more resources and support. In doing so, schools will help enable a cooperative and engaged community that supports the SNC. The successful implementation of the SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa needs a multi-dimensional strategy involving an enabling policy environment, strong school leadership, intensive teacher capacity building and vigilant community participation. Implementing curriculum can certainly be better supported using these evidence-based, best practice strategies and will help the new curriculum meet with more success in its adoption and sustainability.

#### **4.2.4 Limitations of the Study**

In the discussion of the limitations of this study, we need to acknowledge several key factors that may have influenced the findings. These limitations are grouped into methodological constraints, scope and generalizability, and challenges in data collection.

#### *Methodological Limitations*

One major methodological constraint in the present investigation was its foundation on qualitative data, which had been gathered via online interviews through utilizing Google Forms

and virtual interview using Zoom. These measures were necessitated given logistical concerns, like the geographical distance and summer break in Pakistan at this time of year. While online methods served to provide pragmatically feasible solutions, they may have restricted the scope of interaction and probing responses further effecting a toning down on data richness. Moreover, the data-collection method that participants self-reported through Google Forms may introduce biases such as social desirability bias; where respondents provide responses, they think are anticipated rather than true reflections of their thoughts and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The teachers were interviewed to help correct possible biases and confirm the principals' headteachers' responses. The information provided by the headteachers could thus be cross-checked through this process of triangulation and provided a better insight into how effectively the SNC being implemented. To transcend the limitations of self-reported data and to enhance the qualitative legitimacy for this work, multiple perspectives are included, with the use of both one-to-one Zoom meetings, online group interviews with teachers and Google Forms (Patton, 2015).

#### *Scope and Generalizability*

The study was limited to public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and it only focused on school leaders, teachers' perspectives that were current in the region. While lending important insights on the ground realities for implementation of SNC at this context, these findings are limited in their generalizability to other regions such as Pakistan due to marked differences in socio-economic development stage and respective cultural-educational practices. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presents its own unique challenges and, thus, strategies identified might need prioritization differently in urban contexts or other provinces. Consequently, the generalizability of these findings should be treated with caution (Leavy, 2017).

### *Data Collection Challenges*

The main difficulties from the data collection focused on timing and method of interviews. Because the interviews were conducted over summer vacation, some principals and teachers may not have been available for interview which could potentially reduce the number of participants as well as heterogeneity of views. Second, the interviews were held online and variably depended on internet access from remote areas where availability might have been less frequent compare to an urban or more technologically equipped schools, it is possible that this selection bias influenced participation.

Nevertheless, attempts were made to provide a representative sample though including urban and rural participants utilizing different means of communication (Palinkas et al., 2015). Although this study has generated useful information related to leadership dynamics and difficulties of implementing the SNC in KP, while interpreting the findings one should also keep in mind these limitations. Future studies could overcome these limitations by using mixed-methods, extending the scope with more regions and employing more robust data collection techniques to improve the validity and generalizability of findings.

#### **4.2.5 Future Research Directions**

This study has identified a number of further research investigations. Further focus research should explore the most effective leadership strategies that work best for what kind of a school context specially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A study can also look at how cultural and socioeconomic factors come into play regarding the incorporation of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) which could enhance the understanding about how these variables affect educational outcomes.

More to the point, the evaluation of the long-term effects of the SNC must be carried out with longitudinal studies. These could provide the on-going information about the impact of SNC on outcomes, including student achievement, teacher effects, and school improvement over a number of years. Such a long-term view would allow the capturing of trends and patterns that could not be captured using short-term studies, hence giving a fuller picture of how effective or sustainable the curriculum is (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Broader comparisons with other regions or countries would enable further interpretation to take place and thus make this information useful for informing the success of curriculum reform. One could determine best practices or common challenges associated with SNC in KP or when launching such initiatives elsewhere by comparing the implementation and results with counterparts. Such a compare-and-contrast approach would increase the generalizability of findings and therefore contribute to the international dialogue driving educational reform (Leithwood & Day, 2008).

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The last chapter contains the major findings of the study, together with the implications for policy and practice, limitations of this study, concluding remarks, roadmap to guide future researchers, and comments on the importance of the research and reiterate the need for continuous efforts and collaboration amongst educators, involvement of policy makers and the community for successful and sustainable implementation of the SNC.

### 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This extensive research focuses on the enactment of SNC in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including how leadership roles have been adopted what are the challenges that emerged during its implementation phase and what are overall implications on educational quality standards, teachers' training programs, as well as student outcomes. The findings reveal that school leaders needed huge role redefinition in order to successfully carry out the process of its implementation. It squarely falls within the transformational and distributed leadership styles, which are instrumental in the navigation of the complexity of the reform.

#### *Leadership Adaptation*

The school leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa established transformational leadership, inspiring and motivating their staff about the adoption of the new curriculum with all challenges. This step also included the development of a vision for the SNC and the fostering of teacher efficacy so that they would feel respected, valued, and encouraged to take risks. Professional development was acted upon by the leaders, playing an important role for the teachers to have the right competencies and knowledge in running the SNC. Workshops, seminars and ongoing coaching sessions are important to improve the confidence and competence of teachers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Distributed

leadership, apart from transformational leadership also emerged in the SNC implementation. That method consisted of dividing leadership amongst multiple stakeholders including teachers, parents, and other community members. Collaborative decision-making was encouraged by school leaders, which ultimately fostered a deeper sense of ownership and commitment to the curriculum shifts. This collaboration was important as it supported the wide variety of needs of the school community and ensured that the implementation process empowered all stakeholders (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2008).

### *Implementation Challenges*

There had been challenges faced during the implementation of SNC which were certainly complicated ones. However, as expected resistance to change was a major barrier since most educators have been so used to conventional teaching method and were reluctant to embrace the new practices. Their resistance had been reduced by ongoing, open communication and engagement with school leaders who involved teachers in the planning and decisions making process; these steps helped assuage their fears as well build trust (Fullan, 2007). Constraints in terms of resources were also a major hurdle that had to be overcome. To compound things many of the schools in rural areas lacked necessary infrastructure, materials and tools to support such curriculum. The lack of funding for resources also prevented the full implementation and successful delivery of the SNC. These constraints were addressed through better strategic resource management and collaborative working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), providing additional funding and support (Davies & Davies, 2006). Another problem was the complexity of cultural diversity, which somewhat hindered new efforts to create a unified pattern in teaching practices across different regions. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a mix of people with different languages, ethnicities and cultures. Ensuring that the curriculum was relevant and accessible to students necessitated taking into account these cultural differences in a standardized way. School leaders facilitated development of

culturally responsive pedagogy that was respectful and reflective of the local context (Banks, 2015).

### *Overall Impact*

In spite of these hurdles, the SNC provided hope in a number of critical aspects. It was a major achievement as educational quality had become standardized all over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and being homogenized, the province provided more systematic teaching-learning followed by set of learning goals. In addition, better-quality teacher training programs resulted in higher quality instruction as teachers increased their capacity to use modern instructional techniques and competency-based education. The increased emphasis on critical thinking and skills within the SNC led to improved performance of students in standardized assessments. It was a step in the right direction moving toward an integrated, competency-based approach in education was seen as an advantage which corresponded to world educational trends and poised students with skills needed for future (Schmidt et al., 2017). The SNC intervention in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presented major challenges and required significant leadership adaptation.

Yet, one major finding was that SNC might be both for equalization in the quality of education and better teacher training for the achievement of students. The findings call for continuous support and collaboration from all professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders in an effort to drive forward the implementation of the curriculum successfully.

### *Application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model*

The findings also replicate the application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, which presented a structured framework for the successful management of the implementation process. The school leaders did succeed in creating a sense of urgency, formulating powerful coalitions, and developing a vision for the SNC. They communicated it consistently and

empowered broad-based action by addressing the stumbling blocks, and celebrated short-term wins to build momentum. In consolidating these gains and producing more change, leaders anchored these new approaches into the school culture to ensure the reforms would be sustained. Steps of the model were manifest in the strategic leadership and adaptive practices found, an indication of how structured it needs to be in educational reforms.

## **5.2 Implications of the Findings**

The findings have significant implications for educational policy and practice. Policymakers must provide an adequate curriculum delivery support by investing more in educational resources, and establishing appropriate professional development training programs to empower teachers. Policies should also stress that the curriculum be regularly evaluated and adjusted, in recognition of changing needs. School leaders need to practice adaptive leadership skills of flexibility, collaboration and a demonstrative application of an ongoing improvement disposition. School leaders must manage strategic resourcing, creating an enabling environment for teachers and active engagement with the community. Teacher training needs to be continued and to context-based, covering contemporary pedagogies as well as competency-based education. Moreover, the role of communities in effecting educational reforms is vital. Engaging parents, local organizations and community leaders to build partnerships is very important for the schools as this ensures that all stakeholders have a vested interest in the educational process.

## **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

Although this study offers significant novel information, it is crucial to admit some limitations in the study. The use of qualitative data through online and virtual interviews likely restricted the depth of interactions and responsiveness probing that would be possible with

face-to-face access. Moreover, the use of self-reported data might have led to biases such as social desirability bias. Furthermore, the study was confined to public schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, so the findings may not be generalizable fully on other regions with different socio-economic and cultural contexts.

## **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

The identified gaps should be addressed in future research, which can build on the findings of this study. Further research could potentially look at the impact of different leadership strategies in similar schools' context within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and contextualize this discourse around how cultural and socioeconomic factors effect curriculum implementation. The study calls for longitudinal studies on the SNC to probe into its long-term impact on education, measuring changes in student performance, teacher effectiveness and overall school improvement over time. Comparative studies with other regions or countries enable a wider scope, which can facilitate identifying common and diverging issues around curriculum reform in different educational settings.

## **5.5 Final Thoughts**

Upon reflection, the current research is evidence that the SNC implementation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a significant initiative if it strives to fulfil the objective of educational quality and equity for all. The results underlined adaptive leadership, comprehensive teacher development, and community advocacy to deal with any challenge which might emerge out of the curriculum reform process. Work on SNC is in the process of evolution, and the efforts that educators can make to evolve this model will always mandate an ongoing commitment by all stakeholders involving educators, policymakers, and community leaders. Finally, through long-

term commitment and innovation in educational practice and policy, there lies immense potential for the SNC to drastically reform education within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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## APPENDIX

### Data Collection Instruments

#### Semi-Structured Interview Guide for School Leadership

##### Introduction to the Interview

*Greetings and Self-Introduction:*

Hello, my name is.....

*Purpose of the Interview:*

The purpose of this interview is to collect valuable data for my thesis, which focuses on exploring the ongoing impact and status of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan. Having been a teacher in Pakistan for five years, including during the initial implementation phase of the SNC, I have a deep interest in understanding how these changes are being managed and perceived now.

*Assurance of Confidentiality:*

I want to assure you that all responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. No personal identifiers will be included in my thesis or any related publications. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

*Consent for Recording:*

For accuracy and to aid in the analysis of our conversation, I would like to record this interview. Do I have your permission to proceed with recording our discussion?

#### **Section 1: Perception and Adaptation of Leadership Roles (Addresses Research Question 1)**

1. Can you describe how your leadership role has evolved with the implementation of the SNC in your school?
2. What specific aspects of the SNC have required you to adapt or change your leadership approach?
3. How do you perceive the role of school leadership in ensuring the successful implementation of the SNC?

#### **Section 2: Challenges in Implementing the SNC (Addresses Research Question 2)**

1. What are the most significant challenges you have faced in implementing the SNC in your school?
2. How do these challenges differ from those faced before the implementation of the SNC?
3. In what ways do you think these challenges vary across different school settings within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

#### **Section 3: Leadership Strategies and Interventions (Addresses Research Question 3)**

1. Can you describe any specific strategies or interventions you have employed to overcome the challenges associated with the SNC?

2. How do you involve teachers and other staff in the implementation process and in overcoming these challenges?
  3. What role does community engagement play in your strategy for implementing the SNC?
- ❖ Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't covered, particularly concerning leadership strategies, challenges, or the overall impact of the SNC on education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

## **Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Teachers**

### **Section 1: Validation of Leadership and Implementation Practices**

#### **Principal's Leadership Validation:**

1. Based on what you know, how accurately does the principal's description of leadership role changes reflect what you've observed in the school?
2. Can you provide any examples that either support or contradict the principal's statements about adapting to the Single National Curriculum (SNC)?

#### **Implementation Challenges Validation:**

3. The principal described certain challenges in implementing the SNC. From your perspective, how accurate is this depiction? Are there any additional challenges you've noticed that the principal did not mention?

#### **Strategy and Involvement Validation:**

4. The principal mentioned specific strategies used to overcome SNC implementation challenges. Have you observed these strategies in action? How involved are teachers and other staff in these strategies?

### **Section 2: Cross-Examination of School Environment Impact**

#### **Impact on Teaching and Learning:**

1. Reflecting on the principal's remarks on the SNC's impact on school settings, how does this align with your experience in the classroom?
2. How have these changes affected your teaching practices and interactions with students?

#### **Community Engagement Validation:**

3. The principal discussed the role of community engagement in implementing the SNC. From your experience, what has been the nature and effectiveness of this engagement?

## Urdu Translation

نیم ساختہ انٹرویو گائیڈ برائے اسکول قیادت

تعارف برائے انٹرویو

خوش آمدید اور خود کا تعارف

السلام علیکم، میرا نام ---- ہے۔

انٹرویو کا مقصد

اس انٹرویو کا مقصد میرے تھیسس کے لیے اہم ڈیٹا جمع کرنا ہے جس کا فوکس پاکستان میں سنگل نیشنل کریکولم کے جاری اثرات اور صورتحال پر ہے۔ میں نے پاکستان میں پانچ سال تک بطور استاد خدمات انجام دی (SNC) کے ابتدائی نفاذ کا دور بھی شامل ہے۔ اس وجہ سے، میں ان تبدیلیوں کو کیسے مینج کیا جا رہا SNC ہیں، جن میں ہے اور انہیں کس طرح محسوس کیا جا رہا ہے، سمجھنے میں گہری دلچسپی رکھتا ہوں۔

رازداری کی یقین دہانی

میں آپ کو یقین دلانا چاہتا ہوں کہ تمام جوابات کو رازداری کے ساتھ رکھا جائے گا اور کسی بھی ذاتی شناختی معلومات کو میرے تھیسس یا کسی متعلقہ اشاعت میں شامل نہیں کیا جائے گا۔ آپ کی شمولیت رضا کارانہ ہے اور آپ کسی بھی وقت بغیر کسی نتائج کے انٹرویو سے دستبردار ہو سکتے ہیں۔

ریکارڈنگ کی اجازت

ہماری گفتگو کی درستگی اور تجزیہ میں مدد کے لیے، میں اس انٹرویو کو ریکارڈ کرنا چاہتا ہوں۔ کیا مجھے ہماری گفتگو کو ریکارڈ کرنے کی اجازت ہے؟

**حصہ 1: قیادت کے کردار کی تشریح اور تطبیق (پہلے تحقیقی سوال کا پتہ چلانا)**

کے کن SNC کے نفاذ کے ساتھ کیسے تبدیل ہوا ہے؟ SNC کیا آپ بیان کر سکتے ہیں کہ آپ کا قیادت کا کردار مخصوص پہلوؤں نے آپ کو اپنی قیادت کی حکمت عملی کو تبدیل یا اپنانے کی ضرورت دی ہے؟ آپ اسکول قیادت کے کامیاب نفاذ میں کیسے دیکھتے ہیں؟ SNC کے کردار کو

**حصہ 2: SNC کے نفاذ میں چیلنجز (دوسرے تحقیقی سوال کا پتہ چلانا)**

کے نفاذ سے پہلے والے SNC کے نفاذ میں آپ کے سامنے سب سے بڑے چیلنجز کیا ہیں؟ یہ چیلنجز SNC چیلنجز سے کیسے مختلف ہیں؟ آپ کے خیال میں یہ چیلنجز خیبر پختونخوا کے مختلف اسکول سیٹنگز میں کیسے مختلف ہوتے ہیں؟

**حصہ 3: قیادت کی حکمت عملی اور مداخلتیں (تیسرے تحقیقی سوال کا پتہ چلانا)**

کے چیلنجز پر قابو پانے کے SNC کیا آپ کوئی مخصوص حکمت عملی یا مداخلت بیان کر سکتے ہیں جو آپ نے لیے استعمال کی ہیں؟ آپ اساتذہ اور دیگر عملے کو نفاذ کے عمل میں اور ان چیلنجز پر قابو پانے میں کیسے شامل کے نفاذ کی حکمت عملی میں کمیونٹی کی شمولیت کا کیا کردار ہے؟ SNC کرتے ہیں؟

## Pashto Translation

د ښوونځي مشرتابه لپاره نیمه جوړ شوی مرکي لارښود

د مرکي پېژندنه

ښه راغلاست او ځان پېژندنه

السلام علیکم، زما نوم ----- دی.

د مرکي هدف

په اړه (SNC) د دې مرکي هدف زما د تیسیس لپاره مهم معلومات راټولول دي چې په پاکستان کې د واحد ملي نصاب د روان اغیز او وضعیت څېړنه کوي. ما په پاکستان کې د پنځو کلونو لپاره د ښوونځي په توګه کار کړی دی، په کوم د پیل پړاو هم شامل دی. له دې امله، زه په دې پوهه کې ډیر دلچسپي لرم چې څنګه دا بدلونونه SNC کې چې د مدیریت کیري او څنګه احساس کیري.

د محرمیت ډاډ

زه غواړم تاسو ته ډاډ ورکړم چې ټول ځوابونه به محرم او نامعلوم وساتل شي. هیڅ شخصي پېژندونکي معلومات به زما په تیسیس یا کوم اړوند خپرونو کې شامل نه وي. ستاسو ګډون رضاکارانه دی او تاسو کولی شئ په هر وخت کې پرته له کومې پایلې مرکي څخه وتلی شئ.

د ثبتولو اجازه

زموږ د خبرو د درستی او تحلیل کې د مرستې لپاره، زه غواړم دا مرکه ثبت کړم. ایا زه ستاسو د خبرو ثبتولو اجازه لرم؟

**برخه 1: د مشرتابه رولونو تفسیر او تعدیل (د لومړي تحقیقي سوال پته کول)**

کوم SNC د پلي کولو سره بدل شوی دی؟ د SNC ایا تاسو کولی شئ تشریح کړئ چې ستاسو د مشرتابه رول څنګه د ځانګړي اړخونه تاسو ته اړ ایستل چې خپل مشرتابه چلند بدل یا تطبیق کړئ؟ تاسو د ښوونځي مشرتابه رول څنګه بریالی پلي کول یقیني کوي؟ SNC گورئ چې د

**کې د پلي کولو ستونزې (د دویم تحقیقي سوال پته کول) SNC برخه 2: په**

د پلي کولو SNC په پلي کولو کې کومې تر ټولو لویې ستونزې دي؟ دا ستونزې د SNC په ستاسو په ښوونځي کې د مخکې موجودو ستونزو څخه څنګه توپیر لري؟ تاسو څنګه فکر کوئ چې دا ستونزې د خیر پښتونخوا په مختلفو ښوونځي سینټینګونو کې څنګه توپیر لري؟

**برخه 3: د مشرتابه ستراتیژي او مداخلتونه (د دریم تحقیقي سوال پته کول)**

د ستونزو د حل لپاره کارولې دي؟ SNC ایا تاسو کولی شئ کوم ځانګړي ستراتیژي یا مداخلت بیان کړئ چې تاسو د کې SNC تاسو ښوونځي او نور کارکوونکي په پلي کولو کې او د دې ستونزو په حلولو کې څنګه شامل کوئ؟ په ستاسو د ستراتیژي په پلي کولو کې د ټولني ګډون څه رول لري؟