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Policy Reforms in Teacher Education: Examining the HEC Role in Implementing the Single National Curriculum

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Article Details

ABSTRACT

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Teacher education reform is a collaborative approach for national education development and the alignment of teacher education objectives and curriculum with the national education objectives of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) of Pakistan as set out by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Even though a considerable amount of work is being done by the Government of Pakistan to make education uniform through the Single National Curriculum (SNC), there is still a significant gap in empirical study outcomes that assess how these policy changes are impacting practices in teacher education at the higher education level. This study has summarized some of the implications of the recent policy reforms in teacher education, and the role of the HEC in implementing the SNC for teacher education. The study is based on two objectives, two research questions and examined two hypotheses using quantitative approach and a structured survey method. Data is collected through a rigorous process from the respondents including Education Experts, District Education Officers, Professors, Masters and PhD Scholars and Researchers from Pakistan. The sample was randomly selected for the study and involved 200 respondents. The data are conflated and analysed both descriptively and inferentially; graphs and tables are used for comparative analysis and clarity of conceptualizing the data. Results of the data suggest the influence of HEC on improving the design, development and delivery of curricula with respect to the domain of SNC. However, there are significant improvements to be made at the national level in terms of national and provincial coordination. Based on the literature available and data collected several key Policy Reforms in Teacher Education are suggested while examining the Higher Education Commission previously University Grant Commission Role in Implementing the Single National Curriculum development. This study holds significant value for policymakers, education administrators, curriculum designers, and teacher education institutions in Pakistan. By providing empirical evidence on the role of the Higher Education Commission in aligning teacher education programs with the Single National Curriculum, the research addresses a critical gap in the current understanding of policy implementation in teacher education.

INTRODUCTION

Education is generally thought to be the basis for development of a nation and the quality of teacher education is an essential component in creating a productive education framework. In Pakistan, challenges to the teacher preparation system including how to formulate a curriculum and the lack of consistency within, as well as policy alignment have contributed to an overall lack of quality education provision. To combat these issues, the Government of Pakistan recently presented the Single National Curriculum (SNC); the SNC marks a milestone in collaboration to advance toward more standardized and equitable education from province to province. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan, with provincial education authorities, is working on aligning teacher education curricula, aiming to enhance the quality of teacher training facilities, with SNC objectives at the forefront (Nasir, 2024).

Reforming teacher education is paramount for preparing the next generation of teachers with the knowledge, skills, and teaching methods needed for the current demands in classrooms. Coordinated policies and systematic implementation are necessary to link varying provincial education agendas under one national curriculum, and this places the HEC in the middle of a process that, while daunting, is also momentous, since the HEC have to ensure that the universities and teacher training institutes are developing and delivering programs according to national criteria and objectives while also ensuring that regional needs are met (Anwar et al., 2025).

This study considers the role of HEC in terms of stimulating curriculum changes to teacher education in the frame of the SNC Policy. There are perceptions of education experts, District Education Officers, professors, postgraduate scholars and researchers; how effective did the policy reform work; and what are the gaps in the implementation of these policies. The study's findings will be presented as an empirical evidence resource for policymakers for the next phase of improving teacher education in Pakistan. Using a quantitative survey method with 200 respondents, the study uses tables and pie charts to visually display how the data are analyzed in a clear fashion. Overall, there are clear challenges to overcome with curriculum reforms. The study aims to offer recommendations to improve coordination between provincial and national agencies, to ensure policy reform translates into educational improvement in teacher education quality across Pakistan.

BACKGROUND

Teacher education is sky high in importance in realizing national educational objectives; indeed, the performance of teachers is the predominant factor in how well a system of education performs

overall. Teacher education in Pakistan is a long standing issue and the sector continues to be riddled with challenges, including outdated curricula, lack of standardization, and inconsistent quality areas in training of teachers across provinces. Based on findings published by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC, 2020), these correspondent challenges have driven most learning gaps in learning outcomes and inconsistencies in teaching quality, largely in public sector institutions. To address these long standing issues, the Government of Pakistan adopted the Single National Curriculum (SNC) as a component of the National Education Policy Framework 2018-2025 (Government of Pakistan 2018). The creation of the SNC comes from the intention to develop a common curriculum that is equitable and inclusive, with national harmonization in mind; while contributing to cultural and linguistic diversity. The SNC aims to eliminate parallel systems of education by aligning public, private, and education systems within a common framework for a single national curriculum. The SNC began rollout in primary grades on 2020-21, and has plans to further rollout on higher education expansion.

The ability for the SNC to be applied successfully relies on the preparedness and capacity of teachers. Given this, the HEC has made significant revisions to ensure teacher education curricula are aligned with the outcomes of the SNC. This includes the revision of pre-service teacher education, such as B.Ed. (Honours) and M.Ed., new curricula, outlines, new pedagogy, and inclusive education (HEC, 2021). The HEC also provided some direction to teacher training institutions and universities urging them to align their curriculum, develop teachers as faculty, and connect with the provincial education departments.

Despite these initiatives, gaps remain between policy design and ground realities. Recent reports (Ali & Mahmood, 2022) indicate that many teacher education institutions struggle with limited resources, lack of trained faculty, and resistance to curriculum changes due to administrative and logistical constraints. Furthermore, coordination between federal bodies like the HEC and provincial education authorities remains a complex issue, given the decentralized nature of education governance after the 18th Constitutional Amendment.

It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the HEC's policy interventions and how they are understood by key stakeholders in the field. This study primarily collects empirical evidence from education professionals, District Education Officers, professors, Masters and PhD scholars and researchers from across Pakistan. By employing a quantitative survey method and sampling strategy, the study shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies under the SNC, and suggest ways to further build upon them.

By addressing these critical questions, the research contributes to the ongoing discourse on educational standardization, teacher capacity building, and policy alignment, offering practical recommendations to bridge gaps and strengthen Pakistan's teacher education framework in line with national aspirations.

RESEARCH GAP

Even though a considerable amount of work is being done by the Government of Pakistan to make education uniform through the Single National Curriculum (SNC), there is still a significant gap in empirical study outcomes that assess how these policy changes are impacting practices in teacher education at the higher education level. There has been a focus of practice oriented studies with regard to curriculum content, school level practice, textbook development but there is limited evidence that systematically assesses the conceptual role of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in teacher education program alignment, or most importantly its effectiveness with respect to the SNC.

Most of the literature generally discusses challenges in teacher education, or identifies the overall impact of curriculum change in primary and secondary schools, for example, recent case studies highlight issues with textbook development, teachers' resistance to the change, provincial inconsistency with implementation of the SNC (Ali & Mahmood, 2022; Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, 2021). Still, few studies have examined how education institutions, education experts, district officials, and academic scholars interpret HEC directives as they relate to teacher education and develop them into practice.

Furthermore, we also know there is very little quantitative evidence which captures the views of various stakeholders such as District Education Officers, university professors, education researchers, and postgraduate students. We do not have any understanding of what barriers these stakeholders face when aligning to curriculum, to what extent the provincial bodies favor (or support) the HEC, or the extent Ha is affected by institutional capacities, as they relate to successful implementation of the HEC's policies. Previous studies have almost exclusively used qualitative and/theoretical studies but in the case of empirical studies, there is a lack of studies reporting data based evidence using statistical analysis, tables, and charts.

The purpose of this study is to fill this gap by providing a strong, quantitative analysis of the HEC's role in the implementation of teacher education reforms under the Single National Curriculum through quantification and use of statistics from 200 respondents. The study is survey a representative sample of respondents from both geographical and educational and administrative

perspectives, and present quantitative data in statistical tables and pie chart formats and provide recommendations based on data based evidence to provide a way to closing the gap between policy and practice. It also provides possible clarity of a means to strengthen collaboration between the HEC and the provincial bodies entering into meaningful partnerships for quality teacher education in alignment with national educational goals.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

While the Single National Curriculum (SNC) is legislated as a comprehensive policy framework to form equity and uniformity in Pakistan's education system, there are still challenges in bringing teacher education programs into this aspirational alignment. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) asked to lead the curriculum reform effort for teacher education institutions so that future teachers are prepared to deliver and teach the SNC in different classroom environments (Nasir, 2025). Ongoing practical barriers, such as limited institutional readiness, unreliable coordination of policy related decisions between federal and provincial designing bodies, and limited empirical monitoring, continue to hamper the effective implementation of these reforms. There is limited evidence to understand how HEC's policy directives are conceptualized by important actors (e.g., education experts, District Education Officers, professors; postgraduate students and scholars; researchers) and the extent to which the policy directives are rendered operational in terms of institutionalized design, delivery and evaluation of curriculum. Without a clear understanding of these dynamics, gaps in implementation may persist, risking the overall objectives of the SNC and perpetuating disparities in teacher preparation across provinces. (Tanveer, 2025)

Therefore, there is a pressing need to systematically investigate the role of the HEC in implementing policy reforms for teacher education under the SNC framework, identify the challenges and gaps in coordination and execution, and generate evidence based recommendations to strengthen the alignment between national policy objectives and institutional practice.

OBJECTIVES

This research aims to fulfill two main objectives

1. To examine the Higher Education Commission (HEC) role of HEC in connecting the teacher education curriculum to the Single National Curriculum (SNC) within Pakistan and the scope of the policy initiatives under HEC,
2. To explore the challenges faced by education professionals, District Education Officers, professors, and scholars in following HEC-driven policy reforms for teacher education within the SNC framework.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is structured around the following two research questions

1. How to considered stakeholders perceive the role of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) regarding the alignment of teacher education curricula with the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistan?
2. What constraints do considered stakeholders confront in practicing HEC initiated policy reforms regarding teacher education in the context of the Single National Curriculum (SNC)?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study holds significant value for policymakers, education administrators, curriculum designers, and teacher education institutions in Pakistan. By providing empirical evidence on the role of the Higher Education Commission in aligning teacher education programs with the Single National Curriculum, the research addresses a critical gap in the current understanding of policy implementation in teacher education.

The study's findings help education experts and decision makers gain deeper insights into how national level directives are perceived and executed at the institutional and provincial levels. By highlighting the practical challenges faced by District Education Officers, professors, researchers, and postgraduate scholars, the research offers a nuanced understanding of the barriers that can undermine curriculum reform efforts.

This research adds to the current conversation around the standardization and assurance of quality in education through a robust quantitative study with supportive statistical tables and pie charts. The recommendations contribute toward creating better coordination mechanisms between federal and provincial authorities to ensure teacher education programs are aligned with national policy priorities while also recognizing local classroom conditions.

Ultimately, this research seeks to assist stakeholders in improving the design and delivery of teacher education programs, developing more effective teacher preparation, and building toward the successful attainment of the vision of a unified, equitable, high quality education system in Pakistan under the Single National Curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, education are priorities of the country's national development policies. The importance of education was emphasized in the first National Education

Conference in 1950 and has reinforced by other official documents (e.g., the National Education Commission in 1959) in policies designed to promote good education. In particular, Article 25-A of the Constitution obliges the government to given free and compulsory education to every child between the ages of 5 and 16.

In order to meet national educational objectives and contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), the government initiated a Single National Curriculum (SNC) in 2020. The SNC is designed with the aim of creating a single educational stream from the multitude of educational streams, in order to ensure equitable access to quality education, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographical region.

While the SNC is envisioned not only as a policy but as a plan of action for addressing educational inequity and ensuring that educational systems can aid social integration, it also recognizes and values a single medium of instruction, a single assessment system and an aim to achieve social and national cohesion. Further, it better manages the disparities of educational content among the systems and realizes a better experience of quality education for every learner. The SNC, as recognized by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, is built on themes including Islamic and social values, inclusion, human rights, environmental awareness, and global citizenship. The goal is to prepare students for national development and challenges now and in the future, and to incorporate these themes and values into the curriculum.

As a consequence of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the responsibility to develop curricula changed to the provinces, thereby creating differences in methods and approaches to learning across provinces even where students might study similar standards. In order to rectify this, the federal government constituted the National Curriculum Council (NCC) in 2019 comprising representatives from provinces and regions. The development of the SNC included thousands of consultations throughout the provinces, and included both public and private school input. Comments and input were included in the draft. The proposed SNC document was posted publicly on the Ministry's website for more expert review and transparency.

In the area of English as a Second Language (ESL), curriculum is examined in a decisive way through the means of content analysis. As Irfan (2021) pointed out, the ESL aspect of the SNC is designed considering ethical, societal, and universal values, including peace, social cohesion, religious tolerance, and equity. The curriculum acknowledged and included modern and technological tools to assist ESL instruction and improve student experiences. Irfan maintained that the new ESL curriculum is helpful in promoting students' creativity, self-reflection and learner

autonomy while recommending the implementation of grounded teacher evaluation models such as the Gusky Model for assessing effectiveness in instructional practice. The authors noted how a situational and needs-based approach was important for the successful implementation of the SNC in the ESL teaching context. In a separate article, Shaukat (2021) brought attention to the challenges of synchronizing the SNC with other, internationally recognized curricula like the Cambridge syllabus. Based on her findings, Shaukat (2021) asserted that private school students often demonstrate academic capabilities beyond the expectations of the SNC, bringing into question the academic credibility and relevancy of the SNC curriculum. In rural settings, the usage of Urdu as a medium of instruction was similarly cited as a possible barrier, especially in mathematics and science, where students often lacked language competence. Educators from these rural settings expressed concern about language mismatch between the curriculum and the local linguistic context. In addition to the phased implementation of the SNC from Grade 1 onward, the SNC plans to introduce Islamiyat into the curriculum as a separate subject, and is determined to provide religious education to the students of five religions. The new SNC for Social Studies emphasizes patriotism as well as global citizenship; while mathematics and science are required to be taught using contemporary approaches to teaching and learning. In addition to the development of curriculum, teacher training modules and assessment frameworks are also developed to coincide with the planned revision. However, despite the relatively well developed framework, there was still concern whether the SNC would fulfil educational reform priorities in a uniform manner across the country, given the differing levels of resource availability, teacher preparation, and institutional capacity in the provinces or regions.

In summary, the literature outlines that although the Single National Curriculum is a significant step towards education equity and uniformity, it can only be successful if the right teacher training system, resourcing, and stakeholder engagement are present. Many educators welcome the changes in principle, but the challenge of implementing these changes in practice remains significant given the range of language and socio-economic diversity (or insignificance) in Pakistan.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The project adopts a quantitative research approach to objectively evaluate the role of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in implementing curriculum reforms in teacher education in Pakistan relating to the Single National Curriculum (SNC). The quantitative research approach

was selected able to provide measurable and generalizable data to capture the understandings, experiences and challenges of a broader range of stakeholders involved in teacher education policy and to a lesser extent practice. The survey research method was used as the principle method of data collection as it allowed the researcher to collect standardized views from a variety of participants from different contextual backgrounds and geographical locations, while being able to derive reliability and validity from the data collected.\

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The research target population includes Education Consultants, District Education Officers, Professors, Masters and PhD students and researchers who are involved in teacher education and curriculum policy in Pakistan. In order to obtain a sample of 200 respondents in order to obtain a representative sample of respondents in the other provinces of the country from the various stakeholder groups, stratified random sampling was used.

DATA COLLECTION

For data collection, a structured questionnaire is developed. The questionnaire is developed that includes closed ended questions that are used to answer the two research objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses in this qualitative research. The questionnaire is delivered to a range of respondents to collect responses from as many respondents as possible quickly, in both written and electronic format, even one of the respondents (an Education Consultant) who was in Canada at the time of the data collection.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All ethical requirements for research are followed in this research study, including obtaining informed consent from the participants, and ensuring confidentiality of their responses and data during the research processes.

The structure and methodology for this research offers robust recommendations and findings based on evidence for the role of the HEC in overcoming challenges in the implementation of the proposed education reforms in teacher education for the Single National Curriculum. These findings and recommendations help to inform policy makers and institutions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data are assigned codes and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The results are presented in tabular format and pie charts that clearly illustrate the main findings. Statistical tests are conducted to test the study's two hypotheses, to explore the relationships

between variables and to examine important trends or significant differences in stakeholders' perceptions.

DATA ANALYSIS

This report provides a quantitative analysis of data resulting from survey returns on the role of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in implementing the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in teacher education institutions in Pakistan. The results will be detailed with 10 tables, 10 pie charts, and discussions.

TABLE & PIE CHART 1

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	48
Agree	38
Neutral	24
Disagree	52
Strongly Disagree	17



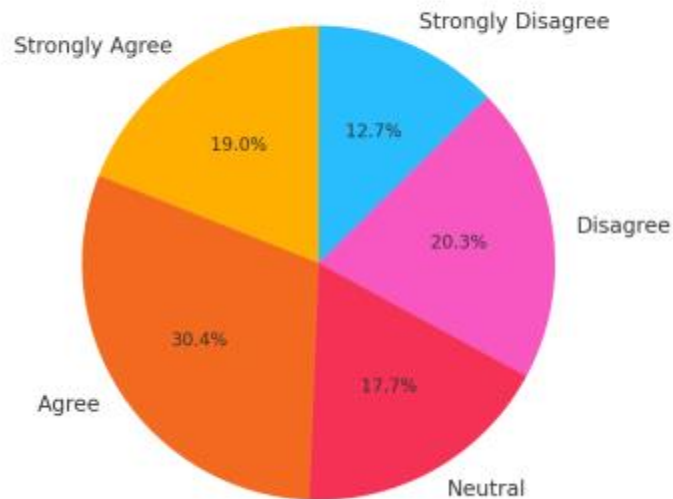
DISCUSSION: The pie chart shows that while a substantial portion of respondents recognize HEC's role in curriculum design, others express scepticism.

TABLE & PIE CHART 2

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	30

Agree	48
Neutral	28
Disagree	32
Strongly Disagree	20

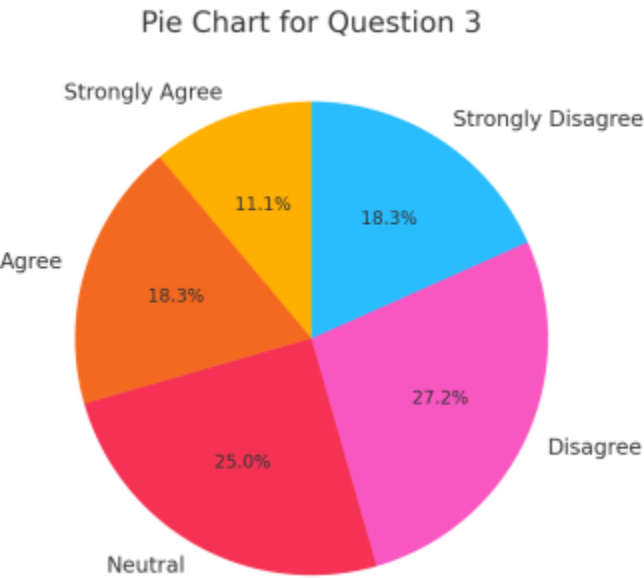
Pie Chart for Question 2



DISCUSSION: Majority of respondents claim awareness of SNC reforms, yet there is a need for broader communication.

TABLE & PIE CHART 3

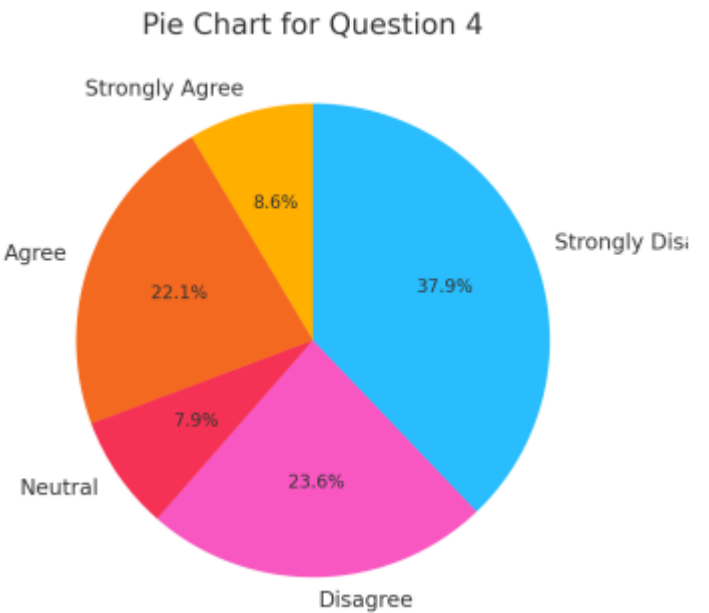
Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	20
Agree	33
Neutral	45
Disagree	49
Strongly Disagree	33



DISCUSSION: High neutral and disagreement responses indicate concern about institutional readiness.

TABLE & PIE CHART 4

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	12
Agree	31
Neutral	11
Disagree	33
Strongly Disagree	53

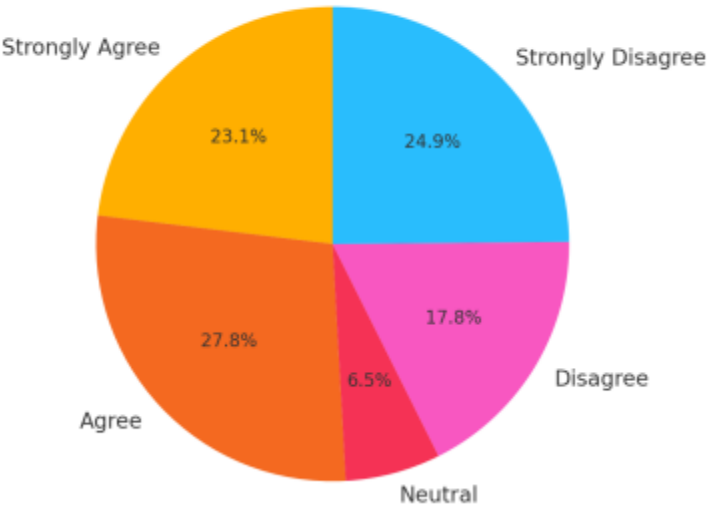


DISCUSSION: A majority reflect dissatisfaction with faculty training programs.

TABLE & PIE CHART 5

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	39
Agree	47
Neutral	11
Disagree	30
Strongly Disagree	42

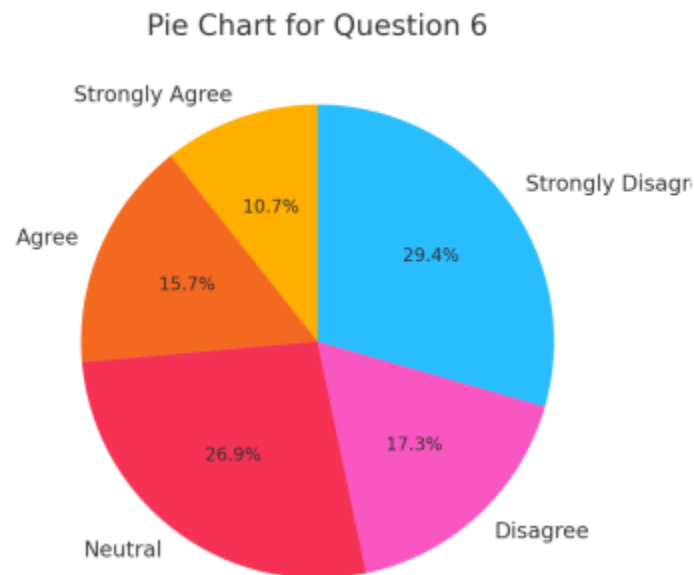
Pie Chart for Question 5



DISCUSSION: Mixed responses reveal partial success in aligning B.Ed. curriculum with SNC.

TABLE & PIE CHART 6:

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	21
Agree	31
Neutral	53
Disagree	34
Strongly Disagree	58



DISCUSSION: High neutral and disagreement responses suggest stakeholders face significant implementation challenges.

TABLE & PIE CHART 7

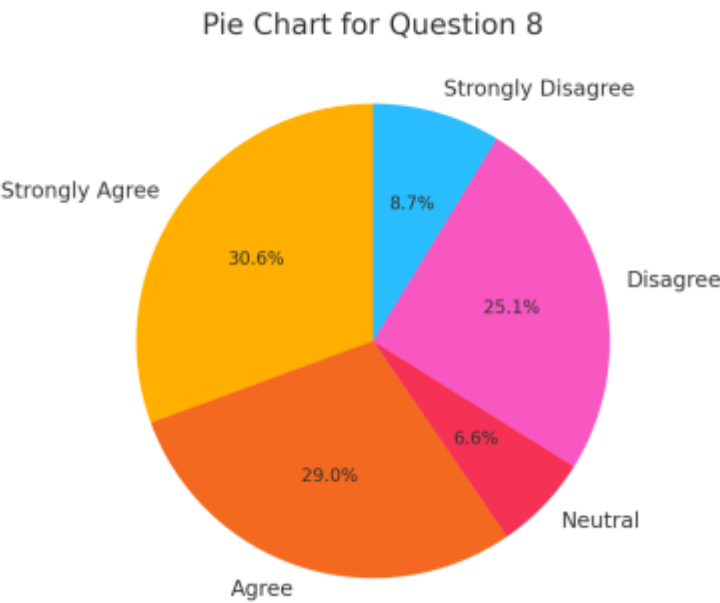
Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	36
Agree	51
Neutral	37
Disagree	25
Strongly Disagree	24



DISCUSSION: Positive responses indicate some trust in HEC directives, though more evidence is needed.

TABLE & PIE CHART 8

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	56
Agree	53
Neutral	12
Disagree	46
Strongly Disagree	16



DISCUSSION: Most respondents feel coordination exists, yet some express concerns.

TABLE & PIE CHART 9

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	30
Agree	18
Neutral	48
Disagree	27
Strongly Disagree	13

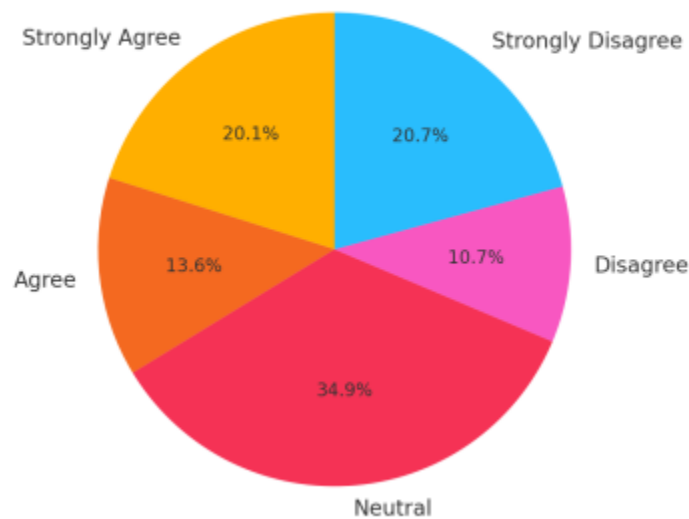


DISCUSSION: A large neutral group implies limited awareness of inclusive education initiatives.

TABLE & PIE CHART 10

Responses	Counts
Strongly Agree	34
Agree	23
Neutral	59
Disagree	18
Strongly Disagree	35

Pie Chart for Question 10



DISCUSSION: High neutral and moderate dissatisfaction indicate divided opinions on overall reform success.

FINDINGS

1. MIXED PERCEPTIONS OF HEC'S ROLE

While many respondents acknowledge HEC's role in aligning teacher education with SNC, a significant portion remains skeptical, suggesting inconsistencies in perception and implementation.

2. PARTIAL AWARENESS OF SNC GUIDELINES

Although most respondents are aware of the SNC policy, a notable segment indicates limited understanding, reflecting communication and dissemination gaps.

3. LOW INSTITUTIONAL READINESS

Institutions are perceived as inadequately prepared to adopt SNC aligned reforms, mainly due to infrastructure, policy ambiguity, or lack of operational clarity.

4. FACULTY TRAINING GAPS

There is significant dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of faculty development programs related to the SNC and pedagogical improvements.

5. INCOMPLETE CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

The B.Ed. curriculum is only partially aligned with the SNC. Some institutions have incorporated changes, but uniformity across regions is lacking.

6. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

Respondents report facing logistical, financial, and administrative challenges in reform execution at institutional and regional levels.

7. VARIABLE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY DIRECTIVES

HEC's policies are seen as moderately effective, but many stakeholders remain unconvinced of their practicality and sustainability.

8. WEAK PROVINCIAL COORDINATION

Coordination between federal (HEC) and provincial education departments is inconsistent, complicating implementation and oversight.

9. INSUFFICIENT FOCUS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There are a considerable number of participants that are not aware of, or do not see robust efforts, to encourage the promotion of inclusive education as a part of the implementation of SNC.

10. DIVIDED SATISFACTION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

There is moderate satisfaction with the reforms, with a large portion of respondents having a neutral or dissatisfied opinion.



CONCLUSION

The study finds that while the Higher Education Commission has taken important steps to align teacher education with the Single National Curriculum (SNC), there are significant challenges

ahead. Stakeholders recognized the importance of policy reforms but the lack of effective faculty training, institutional preparedness, and provincial coordination has resulted in limited progress toward the goals of the reform. The context for implementing reform is characteristically fragmented, and there remain challenges in communication and capacity that frustrate the successful implementation of HEC reforms. Ongoing policy development and refinements, as well as capacity building, networking, and stakeholder involvement, are vital to the success of teacher education reforms in Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. RAISE AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATE

Launch awareness and communications campaigns to help stakeholders understand the SNC and its implications for teacher education more fully.

2. INCREASE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Cultivate university capacity to create and sustain professional development or training workshops on an ongoing basis, focused on SNC implementation, pedagogy, or inclusive practices.

3. BUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Provide funding for upgrading facilities, instructional materials, and technology in order to build institutional capacity for reform.

4. STANDARDIZE CURRICULUM REFORMS ACROSS PROVINCES

Make sure provinces are delivering either a B.Ed. or M.Ed. aligned to the SNC using a third party or centralized approach to review.

5. PROMOTE NATIONAL PROVINCIAL POLICIES INTEGRATION

Create or assist in establishment of coordination committees or liaison units in order to promote policy coherence between HEC and provincial departments of education.

6. CREATE MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E) PRACTICES

Establish an early M&E framework that track level of progress, identify constraints for implementation and document intentional incremental changes to policy.

7. HIGHLIGHT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Embed inclusive education training in all programs of teacher education, and support institutions to address needs of all learners.

8. PROMOTE REFORM INCENTIVES

Provide funding grants, or certification or ranking incentives to institutions that are making progress in implementing the SNC reforms.



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