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**A CRITICAL STUDY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS IN THE  
SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM (2020) FOR PRIMARY LEVEL IN PAKISTAN**

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**Abstract**

This research critically investigates English Language Teaching methods and practices employed within the framework of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020, focusing on the primary grade level. This study aims to assess the efficacy of these methods in enhancing language acquisition among students in grades I-V and in achieving the broader goals of educational equity and standardization across the country. This research also evaluates the alignment of the Single National Curriculum with internationally recognized English Language Teaching frameworks to examine whether it equips students to meet global language competency standards. The findings of the study reveal that although the Single National Curriculum marks a significant advancement in standardizing English language education in Pakistan, there are critical gaps that need to be addressed. These include inconsistencies in teaching practices, especially in public schools, insufficient focus on essential language skills such as listening, and inadequate attention to teacher development opportunities. This research also delves into these practical challenges faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum in classrooms namely, resource constraints, lack of professional development, limited time, and the need for curriculum adaptation to local and global contexts. The study concludes that for the Single National Curriculum to fully realize its potential, there must be ongoing curriculum refinement, enhanced teacher

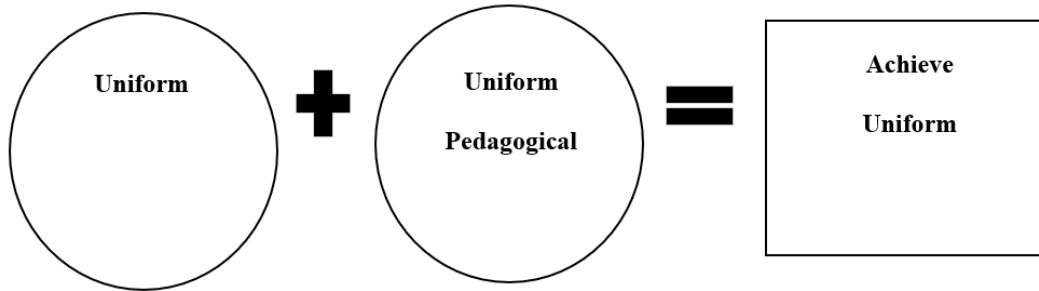
training, and the development of more contextually relevant educational resources. These steps are essential for aligning the Single National Curriculum more closely with international English Language Teaching standards and for ensuring that it effectively meets the diverse needs of Pakistan's primary school students, thereby fostering a more globally competitive and equitable education system.

**Keywords:** A Critical Study, English Language Teaching Methods, Single National Curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, education systems worldwide have been undergoing tremendous transformations to cater to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners. In Pakistan, the introduction of the Single National Curriculum is an effort to meet the international standards of the educational landscape. The Single National Curriculum aims to standardize and enhance the quality of education across the nation. The official Single National Curriculum 2020 document states the importance of high-quality education: “One system of Education for all, in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction, and a common platform of evaluation, so that all children have a fair and equitable opportunity to acquire a high-quality education, the creation of a single national curriculum is a step in the right direction” (Single National Curriculum 2020).

The Single National Curriculum, which was introduced in 2020, aimed to address the discrepancies in the educational system in Pakistan. The main motto of the curriculum was to establish a unified education that promotes high-standard literacy and competency in the English language. Curriculum developers of the Single National Curriculum have designed the curriculum to provide equal learning opportunities for all students irrespective of their socio-economic background. It recognizes the diverse educational and linguistic needs of students within Pakistan and focuses on equipping them with the skills for effective communication in social and academic contexts. Everyone has to agree on equal terms and should be willing to share uniform curriculum so that equal, quality and uniform learning outcomes can be achieved. According to Single National Curriculum, if the curriculum and teaching methodology is same for the entire nation only then same learning outcomes can be attained.



**Figure 1.**  
**Visual Representation of the Aim of the Single National Curriculum**

In order to make the curriculum effective, the stakeholders and curriculum developers have to focus on international standards of language learning, problem solving, critical thinking and creativity that are exactly the primary objectives of Single National Curriculum (Kalhor 2020).

However, a major problem with the education system of Pakistan is the three different types of educational institutes, government schools, private schools and madrassas. They have a big loophole in their approach to teaching language and its content. According to Afzal 2022, the lack of uniform curriculum is not the only problem with Pakistani education system, the major problem that needs to be addressed are the teaching methodologies and capabilities.

The curriculum change process is more of a “one-way mechanism” in Pakistan. Only a selected institution designs and implements it in schools. There is no apparent role of teachers, students or any other stakeholder in this process. Teacher’s role is to implement the designed curriculum in classroom without proper guidelines, instruction or training and no particular interest is seen about curriculum changes (Priestley 2010). Additionally, an incongruity in pedagogical methodologies and learners’ desired outcomes are also obvious. Complexities that occur while modifying curriculums can also elevate teacher’s apprehensions

regarding its completion and implementation. The role of teachers is ignored most of the time in the curriculum development process which is the reason that curriculum change might not be effective (Wallace & Priestley 2011). In most of the times, the role of the teachers in the curriculum development process is ignored, and that is why curriculum change might not be effective.

The place of critical insights which teachers can bring to the forefront is very well recognizable, and for this purpose, the Single National Curriculum has incorporated feedback from educators so that it may turn out to be relevant and practical. This would work out only by empowering them, that is, by providing adequate training and resources to deliver it effectively. Feeling the contribution of valuing and putting in place the contribution of teachers has been therefore tried in combining their inputs for designing of the curriculum framework by the Single National Curriculum as a step toward an educationally more effective and responsive mechanism. That would increase the chances of effective implementation and ownership and commitment amongst practicing teachers, provided the same is instituted, and this in effect would enhance the quality of delivery in the classrooms with regard to the students. The role of the teacher is ignored most of the time in the curriculum development process, and that is why curriculum change might not be effective (Wallace & Priestley, 2011). The single national curriculum also acquaints one with the role of the teacher in adopting and implementing. Curriculum developers are really alive to the fact that, much as this is a change, critical insights are brought to the table by the teacher. That explains why the Single National Curriculum has considered feedback from educators to make sure that this curriculum is relevant and constructive. It tries to equip teachers with the necessary training and resources to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The Single National Curriculum respects the potential contribution of the teaching profession and attempts to make the educational framework responsive and effective. It is an inclusion that can potentially raise the probability of correct implementation and indulge in teachers a feeling of commitment and ownership, hence improving the quality of education for students. The Single National Curriculum is also designed in a way to engage students and enhance creative skills and analytical thinking. Various modern learning activities and innovative teaching methods to cater to growing demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century learner are added to the curriculum. The following is a table representation of guidelines for the Single National Curriculum for grades I-V:

**Table 1.**  
**Guidelines for SNC in Grades I-V**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
Constructing a circuit from scratch	Assists students in becoming creative learners	Experimental learning technique
Role play, experiment of creating something, e.g. (build your own constitution)	Learning through taking charge and experimenting	Student-centered learning
Games based learning	Increases analytical rational thinking skills	Shared, cooperative and interactive learning
Inquiry and Questioning	Enhances evaluation and logical skills	Inquiry based learning
Task-based learning	Learn how to become autonomous learners	Active and autonomous learning
Debate and discussions	Helps process information rather than just receiving it	Communicative learning
Observation	Enhances the skill of passive learning	Teacher-centered learning

The different activities and methodologies mentioned in the Single National Curriculum guidelines are to help teachers in implementing it in classroom. Different activities based on different teaching methods can be seen throughout the textbooks to increase learning outcomes and foster rational thinking skills, creativity, and novelty. Therefore, the Single National Curriculum aims to shift the center of education from rote memorization to developing the necessary 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **English Language Teaching Methods in the Single National Curriculum**

The Single National Curriculum English for Primary implements an inclusive style of learning by integrating the four language skills seamlessly into the curriculum. It uses activities like role plays, simulations, storytelling and other interactive techniques to engage students in a better way. It therefore aims at giving students practical skills with which they can learn to use a language within various contexts. It aims to align with international standard of English language teaching by incorporating Communicative Language Teaching and Student-Centered approaches. In addition to various interactive activities, professional development practices, student learning outcomes, and standard benchmarks for proper language acquisition are featured in the curriculum.

### **Interactive Teaching Techniques**

The Single National Curriculum advocates for interactive methods such as group discussions and cooperative tasks that are meant to boost student participation and interest. Multimedia resources and technology is used in classrooms to make learning a lively and active process. The integrated teaching techniques aim to shift the traditional rote learning techniques into more active

and interesting learning, where students participate in using the language meaningfully.

### **Focus on Communicative Competence**

The Single National Curriculum lays great emphasis on developing the ability of students to use English in everyday life events. Activities are intended to develop both oral and body communication skills with a focus on functional language, for example, salutations, requests and daily conversations. This is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), which give priority to the efficiency of communication rather than grammatical accuracy.

### **Integrated Skills Development**

While in previous curricula in Pakistan, reading, writing, speaking and listening were treated as separate areas of language development, the Single National Curriculum integrates these four language skills together. This connection between all four skills enables learners to understand how different parts of language are related. In the syllabus of primary, there are various activities added, such as comprehension after reading, followed by group discussions or essay writing practices, where multiple skills are combined.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

The Single National Curriculum integrates Communicative language teaching by insisting on relevant communication and interaction within the classroom. Activities are designed as to include simulations of situations from real life, and students get to learn language use in its natural contexts. Interviews conducted with teachers revealed that although this incorporation of communicative language teaching is a positive move, it is not uniformly implemented.

Additionally, most teachers are not appropriately conversant with the principles of communicative language teaching and need further training and technical assistance on how to integrate such methods into their teaching which will take much effort, time, and practice for teachers, parents, students, curriculum developers, institutes, and the government.

### **Student-Centered Approaches**

There are different approaches to teaching and pedagogy (Putri, 2024). The most well-known are the student-centered and teacher-centered approaches. The Single National Curriculum emphasizes its goal of providing quality and equal education, which can be achieved through a Learner-centered approach. It intends to encourage autonomy and independence by making the learner responsible for his own learning by imparting skills and schemata required to meet specific performance requirements. Harrington and Debruler (2019) explained the attributes of student-centered learning as:

- Choice
- Voice
- Teacher observation
- Competency-based progress

Since students are treated as independent bodies, they have choice and voice. This means that students can make their own choices regarding learning and can independently discuss their opinions. Teachers play a role as monitors and observers and guide students according to their needs. Additionally, as it is competency-based progressive learning it admits that all learners are different and everyone progresses differently while learning at their own pace.

Activities like think-pair, jigsaw reading and concept mapping are included in various chapters in primary grade textbooks to increase active learning and give

the charge to students in the classrooms. It also allows for learner autonomy while including active participation. This includes opportunities for choice regarding one's learning, taking responsibility for progress, and using formative assessment techniques by teachers providing ongoing feedback and support for learning in changing classroom practice accordingly. Though the learner-centered approaches are very beneficial, teachers tend to face challenges in large, overcrowded classrooms. Individual student needs and personalized feedback were found to be quite difficult to handle, pointing to smaller class sizes and more teacher training in differential instructions as ways to address this.

### **Assessment Methods**

The Single National Curriculum has included both formative and summative assessments, which are designed to comprehensively reflect student progress in language ability. There is, however, a requirement to give more explicit guidance on how to carry out effective formative assessment.

There is a need for further training and support concerning formative assessment techniques, pointing out that traditional assessment formats of several decades' standing may not catch the fullness of students' communicative competencies. Perhaps a shift towards more performance-based assessments can start to get a more accurate measure of students' language abilities.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **A General Overview of the Single National Curriculum for English Primary**

In terms of objectives, aims, goals, and Student Learning Outcomes, Single National Curriculum stands out from the previous English Language Curricula in Pakistan. In the table below, a general overview of objectives, goals, aims and student learning outcomes is presented:

#### **A Critical Study of English Language Teaching Methods...**

**Table 2.**  
**A General Overview of Objectives, Goals, Aims & SLOs of SNC 2020 Primary English**

Aspect	Single National Curriculum for Primary English
<b>Objectives</b>	Provide all students with access to quality education in the English language learning
	Foster linguistic and communicative competence among diverse linguistic backgrounds
	Promote national and cultural literacy while appreciating the English language and literature
<b>Aims</b>	Standardize English language education across Pakistan
	Develop students' proficiency in speaking, reading, listening, and writing in English
	Align English language education with national goals and promote national cohesion
<b>Goals</b>	Equip students with necessary language skills for academic success and social participation
	Cultivate the ability to critically think, effectively communicate and become creative
	Prepare students for global citizenship and engagement
<b>SLOs</b>	Become proficient in language skill tasks aligned with national standards
	Comprehend and produce written and spoken discourse appropriate for age/grade
	Development of language skills for effective communication in various contexts

The Single National Curriculum for English Primary takes a balanced approach to language learning and teaching thought engaging and interactive language teaching methods. The official document states that it embraced “a holistic approach” and is “multidimensional” with the inclusion of “phonology, grammar, lexis, discourse, language functions and skills” to promote the “high standards of literacy and competency in English language” but is in a “transitional phase”.

Below is a table chart that provides a general overview between various aspects of the Single National Curriculum English for Primary:

**Table 3.**  
**A General Overview of Various Aspects of SNC Primary English**

Aspect	Single National Curriculum English Primary
Approach to language teaching	Emphasis on communicative approach
Curriculum structure	Comprehensive, structured
Learning objectives	Aligned with national education goals
Language skills covered	4 language skills (reading, writing, speaking listening)
Integration of language skills	Integrated approach
Assessment	Formative and summative
Textbooks and resources	Textbooks approved by national educational authorities
Teacher training and support	National teacher training programs
Alignment with international standards	Aligned with national education standards
Cultural content	Includes local cultural content
Flexibility and adaptability	Designed for flexibility to accommodate local needs

The table above gives an overview of the approaches, content, style, and other aspects of the Single National Curriculum English for Primary.

### **The Effectiveness of Key English Language Teaching Strategies in the Single National Curriculum**

Some key English language teaching strategies and techniques such as interactive teaching, collaborative learning, and observations are an integral part of the Single National Curriculum. Today's learning environment has transformed from an instructional to a more learning paradigm (Khalid 2021). Hence, the curriculum adopts some key strategies of English language teaching that have

### **A Critical Study of English Language Teaching Methods...**

become essential in making students effective communicators of the English language.

### **Communicative Competence**

In the Single National Curriculum, there is a strong focus on developing students' ability to use English in real-life situations. The goal is to equip them with the practical language skills they need to communicate effectively. Various activities, such as role plays and debates are included in the curriculum to enhance communicative competence in students.

### **Role-Plays and Simulations**

Role-plays and simulations are a major activities found in the book chapters of the Single National Curriculum. It gives students opportunities to practice using English in realistic scenarios. These activities help them sharpen their speaking and listening skills while gaining confidence in everyday situations.

Teachers have found that role-plays and simulations are effective in improving students' communicative competence. However, they have also pointed out that careful planning and support are necessary for these activities to succeed. To enhance their effectiveness, the Single National Curriculum provides teachers with more resources and training on how to design and implement these activities.

### **Discussions and Debates**

The Single National Curriculum aims to encourage critical thinking and verbal communication skills through activities like discussions and debates. These exercises give students a chance to express their opinions, listen to others, and engage in meaningful conversations. The teachers have noted that discussions and debates are effective in developing students' oral skills that are listening and speaking. However, they were also quick to highlight the issues they encounter

while managing activities in classes. Despite the challenges, most teachers are positive about the usage and impact of these activities on the class.

### **Interactive Teaching Methods**

It is important to engage students in learning which is exactly what the Single National Curriculum advocates. It utilizes interactive teaching methodologies such as collaborative learning, experiential learning and use of technology to enhance learning outcomes.

Interactive teaching methodologies such as group work, task-based learning, and peer interactions give students a new engaging way to learn. However, this methodology might not be suitable for schools that belong to a poor economic background. Most public schools in Pakistan do not have enough resources, time, or teaching staff to carry out several activities or use technology in classrooms.

### **Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative learning is an experience in learning that teaches students to be mindful of others and respect others' work. The Single National Curriculum recognizes this need for empathy among students and makes collaborative learning a crucial aspect. It encourages group work, peer interactions as key strategies of English language learning. There are several activities for students to work together and achieve common goals.

According to teachers, group work and collaborative learning tend to be beneficial. However, there are certain challenges, especially for public school teachers in Pakistan, in terms of managing and ensuring equal contributions from all students. To address these concerns of teachers, the Single National Curriculum provides training on effective group strategies so that teachers can create an environment that supports collaboration. But still, issues like lack of resources,

time constraints, improper teacher training and such are hindering its effectiveness.

While the Single National Curriculum has taken measures to ensure equal learning opportunities for every student, there are some big challenges in its implementation that need to be taken in consideration on a national level.

### **Use of Technology**

In the Single National Curriculum, the use of technology is highly encouraged in the classroom. The curriculum integrates multimedia resources like videos and audio to engage students and enhance language learning.

Teachers have found out that using technology is beneficial in engaging students and enhancing learning, but not all schools and staff have equal opportunities to access it. Especially in rural areas and public schools.

### **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessments are included in the Single National Curriculum to support student learning. Formative assessment techniques, such as quizzes. Peer assessments and feedback are constantly given to increase engagement between students.

### **Ongoing Feedback**

Teachers observed that feedback provides students with necessary support they need to become better learners of language. It helps them make progress. However, giving ongoing regular feedback to each student requires time and attention which might become difficult in large classrooms. Effective formative assessment techniques can be learnt through training and resources that can help teachers manage students.

### **Peer Assessment**

The Single National Curriculum encourages the use of peer assessment methods. Single National Curriculum aims to provide students with the ability to develop problem solving skills and critical thinking skills to evaluate their own as well as others' work. In the Single National Curriculum most peer assessment activities give opportunity to students to provide and receive feedback on their speaking and writing tasks. Some teachers noted that it promotes reflective learning and improves language skills. However, there is a need to make students better at giving constructive feedback which can be fulfilled by providing training and resources on effective peer assessment techniques.

The analysis of Single National Curriculum English for Primary grades reveals that a strong emphasis on communicative language teaching, interactive teaching, collaborative learning and student-centered approaches. While the curriculum has many features that align with international standards of English language teaching especially the Cambridge Primary ESL Curriculum, it was found out through the interviews of teachers that the implementation of the curriculum is still in question. Moreover, there are various major areas of improvement such as teacher support and training, formative assessments and provision of resources. It has made significant strides in incorporating modern English Language Teaching methods that align with international learning standards. However, its success depends on effective implementation and support provided to teachers and students alike.

### **Critical Issues in the Single National Curriculum for English Primary**

The following are some of the critical issues found in the Single National Curriculum for English Primary. These aspects are crucial for the learners and teachers of 21<sup>st</sup> century at a foundational level. However, their absence represents the need for further updates and reforms throughout the curriculum

### **A Critical Study of English Language Teaching Methods...**

### **Structured Advancement**

The structured development is one of the advantages that fully supports teachers and students with a suitable path to follow. However, the Single National Curriculum does not include such specific progression steps, and where teachers cannot recognize how their learners grow over time or plan lessons accordingly.

### **Cultural and Contextual Relevance**

The Single National Curriculum mainly deals with local culture and situations, making it relevant to immediate student needs and limits their exposure to worldwide outlooks. Incorporating more diverse cultural content could enhance students' global and intercultural competence.

### **Support for Teachers**

The Single National Curriculum lacks in providing rich teacher support although has a comprehensive framework. A number of teachers wanted a more practical steer with ideas and tools to help them deliver the curriculum effectively. The professional development opportunities, especially those that influence the infrastructure of interactive and communicative pedagogy, are pivotal in the successful implementation of the Single National Curriculum.

### **Global Competence**

National identity and unity are the focal areas of the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan. It has a locus standi of national values, cultural heritage, and also value beyond the nation. The Single National Curriculum aims to increase students' English language proficiency for global competitiveness, but it focuses more on linguistic abilities than holistic international preparedness. It tends to use local examples and context most of the time, thus not allowing them to see different global perspectives. Secondly, the Single National Curriculum puts

attention towards moral and ethical instruction within a national framework rather than universal codes of ethics.

### **Evidence-Based Practices**

The Single National Curriculum is based on government-run research and consultations with educational experts, though the scale or level of integration can differ as well. Teacher professional development is also provided (again, typically with a focus on evidence-based approaches), but perhaps not as clearly or consistently as compared to the Cambridge curriculum.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this research emphasized the importance of a comprehensive and effectively implemented English Language Teaching method within the Single National Curriculum. Since this research specifically catered to the primary education sector, it was found that the Single National Curriculum has made significant strides in standardizing the English language curriculum by using benchmarks, student learning outcomes, and competency standards throughout the primary grades.

The disparity between the curriculum and its practical implementation is a significant challenge that was found out while conducting this research. While the Single National Curriculum aims to incorporate modern English Language Teaching methods such as communicative competence and collaborative learning, the effectiveness of these strategies is highly compromised by limited teacher training and insufficient resources. Through the interview with teachers, it was found out that there seemed to be a big gap between the curriculum's intentions and the actual classroom learning experience. Teachers struggled to implement these practices and methods in the classrooms largely due to inadequate professional

development. There is a pressing need for comprehensive professional development and resource allocation that provide teachers with necessary skills and tools to implement the Single National Curriculum's modern English Language Teaching strategies successfully.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of contextualizing the curriculum to better reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students in Pakistan. The Single National Curriculum, while drawing on international English Language Teaching frameworks, must be adapted to the local context to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. This includes the development of teaching materials and approaches that resonate with students' lived experiences and address their specific linguistic needs. Without such contextualization, the curriculum risks alienating students and failing to engage them meaningfully in the learning process.

As the educational landscape is constantly evolving so are the developments in the English Language Teaching practices, so in order to address the emerging challenges and to reflect new developments the Single National Curriculum needs to be regularly updated.

Taking everything into account, the Single National Curriculum managed to represent a critical step forward in standardizing and improving the English Language education in Pakistan particularly at the primary level, achieving its full potential requires recognizing identified gaps and addressing those gaps immediately. By enhancing teacher training, focusing on essential language skills, contextualizing the curriculum, and committing to ongoing evaluation, Pakistan can develop a more effective and equitable English language education system. This will not only better prepare students for academic and professional success but also contribute to the broader goal of educational equity across the country,

enabling all students to benefit from high-quality English Language education regardless of their background or location.

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