## "Social Cohesion and Peace: Exploring Teachers' Verdicts on Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Primary Schools"

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** The study intended to explore teachers' perceptions about the role of Single National Curriculum (SNC) in building social cohesion and peace among students.

**Methodology** Keeping in view the nature of the study phenomenology as research design was used under a qualitative approach. Private primary school teachers in tehsil Sargodha were the population of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from 25 teachers (N=25). Semi structured interview consisted of twenty (20) questions was used to get responses from the teachers. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and eventually, thematic analysis of the interview's text was used for analysis.

**Findings** The study found that implementation of the SNC was a good step to promote social cohesion and peace among students. Teachers' perception revealed that SNC is a multi-dimensional curriculum and has more religious philosophical reflections, which may have a great impact on students' behavior. Moreover, respondents believed that along with teaching content we have to play an important role in promoting social cohesion and peace by practicing moral lessons. Majority of the respondents reported that the SNC enhances critical thinking and builds friendships among students. The results showed that proper implementation of SNC in the private sector is still lacking.

**Recommendations** Hence, it was recommended that to achieve more social cohesion and peace through the initiative of SNC; Ministry of Education should work to implement it properly. It was also recommended that instead of focusing only on rote learning; teacher should engage students in activities which are given in the content of SNC to further promote social cohesion and peace among students.

## 1. Introduction

Curriculum is always a reflection of what people think, feel, believe, and do in every society. Curriculum preserves a society's cultural heritage and transmits it to future generations through appropriate teaching and learning situations. When choosing the contents of a subject, keep the principles of survival, interest, and utility in mind (Masood, 2017).

The SNC is one education system for all, in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and a common assessment platform, ensuring that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive a high quality education. One of the most significant benefits of having a SNC is the promotion of social equality. When fully implemented, all children will have an equitable access to a good education (Robert, 2020). National integration will be achieved through social cohesion at all levels. The SNC aims to instill in students values and principles such as tolerance, truthfulness, respect, honesty, peaceful coexistence, environmental awareness and human rights, care, democracy, global citizenship, sustainable development, personal care and safety (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2020). Social cohesion has been metaphorically defined as the "glue" that holds people and/or structures together (Kantzara, 2016). Historically, social cohesion was thought to be the result of various cultures and religion blending to form a nation with a common language and values. Assimilation and accommodation are now considered to be components of social cohesion. This means that all ethnic and religious groups are fully integrated, free to practice their religion and use their language in daily activities, and accepted as belonging to the same nation (Harsha & Wikramanayake, 2011).

Every human being, family, community, and nation wishes to live in peace. Everyone strives for peace in his or her own unique and best way (Iqbal, 2016). Education is linked to social cohesion because the goals of education and the training provided are related to preserving society for future generations (Kantzara, 2016). Education is an important tool for promoting social cohesion because it transmits knowledge and shapes people's attitudes toward diversity and change (Harsha & Wikramanayake, 2011).

A Single National Curriculum strives for religious neutrality by encouraging interfaith harmony and encounter by meeting the needs of students of minority faiths by educating them in accordance with their religious beliefs. Teachers play an important role in promoting concepts such as peace building and social cohesion. Social cohesion is the loose ties that bind individuals to each other and that influence their behavior. It equates to building solidarity and trust, inclusion, social capital, etc.

## Rationale of the Study

Different education systems were developed from the early days after the emergence of Pakistan. These systems all had very different curricula and methodologies that became one of the major causes of incoherence and segregation in the country. The people of Pakistan were unable to move together due to their diverse ethnicities, languages, and social classes. The literature available on social cohesion and peace among people that schools have the educational responsibility to prepare children for peaceful living in a heterogeneous society and claims that SNC at schools can enhance interpersonal relations and social cohesion (Smith et. al, 2020). Therefore, the study explores the teachers' verdicts on SNC at primary schools in Punjab, Pakistan, to see how teachers perceive this initiative taken by the

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government to bring social cohesion and peace in the diverse sects of Pakistan.

## Statement of the Problem

The major issue in Pakistan is the three different education systems through which knowledge is disseminated: private schools, public schools and Madrassahs. There is a significant gap in terms of content between them, and SNC will help to bridge that gap by bringing equality across the country. People are debating the best time to implement SNC, but our best time was decades ago, or now. It is never too late to make a positive change, and transformation in any field involves various challenges and criticism. It is imperative that authorities invest in teacher training and tools that will provide guidance to private schools and educational institutions for the smooth implementation of this SNC (Ahmed, 2021). We must make this process smooth, simple, and accessible to every student and teacher involved in this learning process. The study was aimed to explore the teachers' verdicts on Single National Curriculum at primary schools of Punjab, Pakistan, to see how teachers perceive about this initiative taken by the government to bring social cohesion and peace in the diverse sects of Pakistan.

## 2. Literature Review

Every country in the world needs a good education system. Every country raises its youth by vigorously educating them on social, political, economic, and ideological issues. Due to lack of direction and weakness in Pakistan's education system, its citizens have been unable to grow and be guided on solid political and social foundations. The system is fragmented and oriented toward broad education, which does not produce skilled labor for the market. As a result, unemployment is increasing. This circumstance might increase the general public's perception of deprivation. As a

result, there is social instability on a cultural and political level. In addition, there aren't enough options for science and technology education. Students' ability to think critically, reason, and be creative is not being polished in this way (Ahmad, 2014).

In the past, Pakistan's textbooks were produced at the province level, while the curriculum was determined at the national level. Despite a recent constitutional amendment (the 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010) that transferred responsibility for education to the provinces, the central government has continued to establish curricula at the national level to ensure national coherence and uniformity. The Single National Curriculum is the name of this new curriculum (Gul, 2020). All children should have an equal opportunity to get an excellent education; hence the SNC is a single way of education for everyone that entails a single curriculum, a single teaching method, and a single platform for assessment. A step in that way is the SNC (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2021). The Ministry of Education recently introduced the Single National Curriculum, with the goal of uniting the country's children under the umbrella of a single curriculum. However, there is little evidence of what this curriculum, as envisioned by the government, will achieve. The curriculum will be implemented in three phases: in the first phase, it will be implemented for Grades 1-5 in the academic year 2021-22; in the second, for Grades 6-8 in 2022-23; and in its third phase, Grades 9-12 in 2023-24. For the first phase, the Federal government has directed all provinces except Sindh to implement the SNC in all public and private schools as well as in religious Madrasas (Ahmed, 2021).

*RQ1*. What is the role of Single National Curriculum in building social cohesion and peace?

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Curriculum is a key educational tool that actually shapes the overall structure (Tahir, 2020). It is morally and politically right to engage in teaching and teacher preparation for social equality and equitable. Along with the foundational goal of providing all children with rich learning opportunities, this also involves encouraging analytical reasoning in learners, showing concern for them, forming relationships with them, their family members, and communities, learning about their lives both outside and inside of the classroom, appreciating and leveraging the life experience they bringing into the classroom by creating learning relevant to their lives, and identifying and combating unfairness and unfairness. In order to fight for more just and fair life opportunities for all students, as well as at the individual and/or group levels engaging with and for different learners. Even though this is far from a comprehensive list, I believe it reflects the heart of what it teaches and how to teach for equality and social justice. Additionally, it shows that not all efforts to "meet the diverse learning needs" are inevitably motivated by the same philosophical viewpoints and that it is difficult to implement the profound changes at the personal or systemic levels required for such a depending on the concept of teacher development (Kaur, 2012).

*RQ2.* What are teachers' perspectives on the Single National Curriculum?

Education is linked to social cohesion because the goals of education and the training provided are related to preserving society for future generations (Kantzara, 2016). Education is an important tool for promoting social cohesion because it transmits knowledge and shapes people's attitudes toward diversity and change (Harsha & Wikramanayake, 2011). Because of its role in transmitting knowledge and attitudes to individuals to assist them in dealing with change and diversity, education is regarded as a critical tool in the promotion of social cohesion. Education is responsible for the development of a civilized society as well as instilling moral and ethical values in individuals, which aids in the development of a healthy society that is deeply committed to the human rights principles. This has obvious consequences for the overall school curriculum, textbooks, teacher attitudes, and how students learn (Harsha & Wikramanayake, 2011). Education can contribute to social cohesion in four ways: (a) by teaching students the fundamental principles of what it means to be a good citizen and the consequences of failing to follow those principles; (b) by providing students with an experience consistent with these principles that bringing them closer to those of different ethnicity and background; (c) by providing equal opportunities to all students and (d) by providing students with a shared understanding of citizenship (Heyneman, 2010). When all members of a society have the same rights and privileges, there is a greater sense of unity, solidarity and comradeship, which leads to a greater commitment to achieving common goals (Harsha & Wikramanayake, 2011).

All human civilizations desire peace, initially as the lack of violence and thereafter as peace that is equitable, just, and compassionate. Education is the primary means through which ideas are handed down from one generation to the next, and the quality of education affects what the community becomes, as was already mentioned (Musyoka-Kamere, 2020). Because interruption and battle, which are products of human existence, start with a thought in people's minds, it is in people's minds that defense of peace must be built. Peace is the final nation for all human societies. Therefore, education has the potential to advance this preferred state (Musyoka-Kamere, 2020).

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*RQ3.* How to link social cohesion and peace with curriculum?

The programmed emphasizes a few requirements to guarantee an acceptable syllabus. The first and most important requirement is that a curriculum should be created with the needs of students in mind. Paradoxically, this is the primary factor that is overlooked while constructing a curriculum (Nayyar, 2020). Every teacher who teaches the course adheres rigidly to the same syllabus, oblivious to the fact that each student has a unique history and collection of skills and expertise. They all have distinct needs, so forcing them to pursue the same curriculum is unfair. The organizations should permit the educators to make the changes needed to the syllabus in tune with the requirements of the students. The second need is that the learner's prior knowledge and learning context should be considered in the curriculum. Since no consideration is given to the needs and experiences of the learners, this criterion, like the previous one, is not fulfilled. The third factor concentrates on the learner's developmental phase as it relates to the cognitive, practical, and sensorimotor areas. Only the last requirement—that the content should be geared toward achieving the goals—is adhered to, and even that is not strictly. There are several contradictions in the idea that having a uniform curriculum can foster a sense of national identity. Numerous instances exist of "countries having various curricula, perhaps even ones that differ from school to school, and still a strong sense of shared nationhood" (Nayyar, 2020).

*RQ4.* How do teachers play the role for promoting social cohesion and Peace through Single National Curriculum?

## 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on a 'peace and social justice' framework for researching education systems (Novelli & Smith 2015),

which provides a distinctive focus on the role of education in promoting peace, social cohesion and sustainable development from a '4R's perspective', linking the analytical dimensions of Redistribution, Recognition, Representation and Reconciliation.
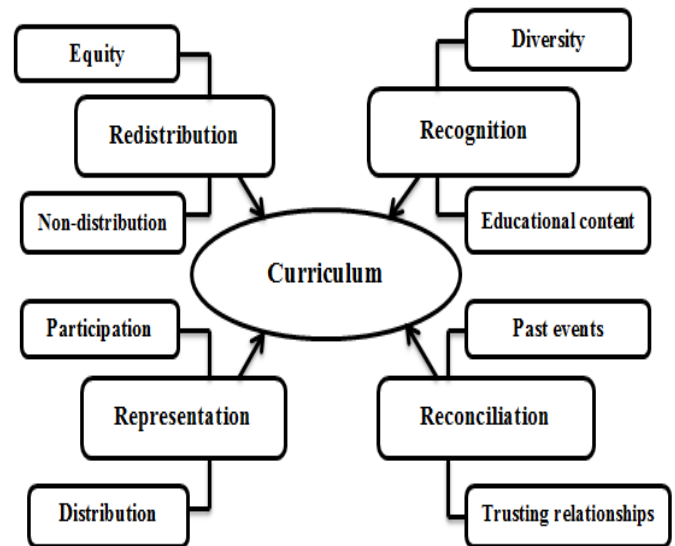


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

## 3. Methodology

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative method. Keeping in view the nature of the study phenomenology as research design was used.

## 3.1 Population and Sampling

Population of the study comprised of private primary schools' teachers that were delimited to Sargodha tehsil only. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data for the research. All the teachers of private primary schools were the sample of the population of this study. Due to saturation of the interviews, the researcher interviewed 25 teachers.

## 3.2 Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol for data collection. For the validation of instrument

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opinions were sought from five experts. These five experts were PhD in the subject of Education with sufficient academic and research experience.

### 3.3 Conceptual Framework
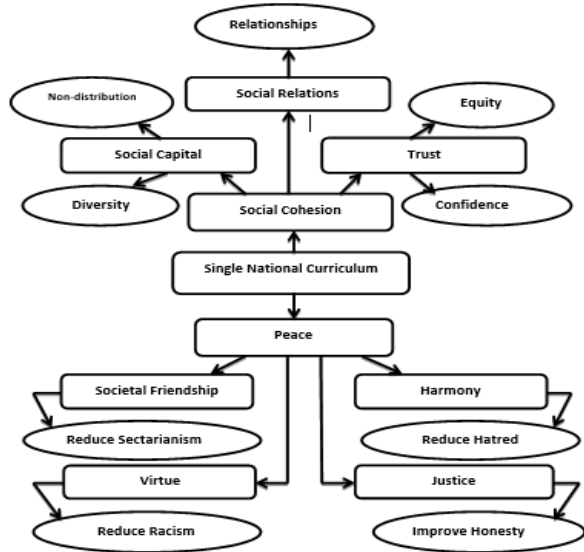


### 4. Analysis of Data

**Table 1:** *Themes and categories of this Study*

| Sr. # | Themes | Categories |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Circumstances of SNC | Studying same curriculum<br>Detailed contents<br>Faithful implementation |
| 2. | Curriculum Flexibility | SNC teaches rights and responsibilities of others in detail.<br>SNC is multi-dimensional curriculum. |
| 3. | Religious Content | Great impact with Islamic teaching.<br>Students come closer to religion. |
| 4. | Enhancing Critical Thinking | Curriculum changes the thinking of students.<br>Through addition of moral lessons. |
| 5. | Building Friendship | Addition of more activities.<br>Environment change. |
| 6. | Differentiation | Every curriculum is an obstacle to sectarianism.<br>SNC eliminates difference between all institutions.<br>Previous curriculum was based on favoritism of some political |

| | | leaders. |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |

Table 1 shows the themes and their categories. The themes are categorized in correlation to the 20 interview questions, which were supported by evidence from the participants' responses (N=25).

### Theme no.1: Circumstances of SNC

The first theme derived from the school teachers' responses as "Circumstances of SNC" is given in the following table 2.

*RQ1.* What is the role of Single National Curriculum in building social cohesion and peace?

**Table 2:** *Responses of Teachers about the "Circumstances of SNC"*

| Sr.# | Categories | Teacher ID | $f(n)$ | Percentage in Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Detailed contents | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 | 22 | 88% |
| 2. | Studying same curriculum | 1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24 | 17 | 68% |
| 3. | After faithful implementation | 1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25 | 12 | 48% |

Table 2 reflects the first theme incorporated 3 categories which are "detailed contents", "studying same curriculum", and "after faithful implementation". The above theme had been produced by viewing frequencies and percentages about the circumstances of SNC from the responses of the private primary school teachers.

### Theme no.2 Curriculum Flexibility

The second theme emerged from the school teachers' responses as "curriculum flexibility" is given in the following table 3.

*RQ2.* What are teachers' perspectives on the Single National Curriculum?

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**Table 3:** *Responses of Teachers about the Curriculum Flexibility*

| Sr.# | Categories | Respondent ID | f(n) | Percentage in Sample |
|------|-----------|---------------|------|---------------------|
| 1. | SNC teaches rights and responsibilities of others (teachers, classmates, and neighbors) in detail. | 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22 | 17 | 68% |
| 2. | SNC is a multi-dimensional curriculum. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25 | 16 | 64% |

Table 3 reflects the second theme, which is divided into two (2) categories which are "SNC teaches rights and responsibilities of others (teachers, classmates, and neighbors) in detail" and "SNC is multi-dimensional curriculum". The above theme has been produced by viewing frequencies and percentages of the curriculum flexibility from the responses of the school teachers.

**Theme no.3 Religious content**

The third theme emerged from the school teachers' responses as "religious content" is given in the following table 4.
*RQ2*. What are teachers' perspectives on the Single National Curriculum?

**Table 4:** *Responses of Teachers about the Religious content*

| Sr.# | Categories | Respondent ID | f(n) | Percentage in Sample |
|------|-----------|---------------|------|---------------------|
| 1. | Great impact with Islamic teaching. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 | 25 | 100% |
| 2. | Students come closer to religion | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25 | 19 | 76% |

Table 4 shows the third theme incorporated two (2) categories, which are "great impact with Islamic teaching" and "students come closer to religion". The above theme has been produced by viewing frequencies and percentages of the religious content in SNC.

**Theme no.4 Enhancing Critical Thinking**

The fourth theme emerged from the school teachers' responses as "Enhancing critical thinking" is given in the following table 5.
*RQ3*. How to link social cohesion and peace with curriculum?

**Table 5:** *Responses of Teachers about the enhancing critical thinking*

| Sr.# | Categories | Respondent ID | f(n) | Percentage in Sample |
|------|-----------|---------------|------|---------------------|
| 1. | Curriculum changes the thinking of students. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 | 24 | 96% |
| 2. | Through addition of moral lessons. | 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 24 | 13 | 52% |

Table 5 shows the forth theme incorporated two (2) categories, which are "curriculum changes the thinking of students" and "through addition of moral lessons. The above theme has been produced by viewing frequencies and percentages of the enhancing critical thinking.

**Theme no.5 Building Friendship**

The fifth theme emerged from the school teachers' responses as "building friendship" is given in the following table 6.
*RQ3*. How to link social cohesion and peace with curriculum?

**Table 6:** *Responses of Teachers about the Building Friendship*

| Sr.# | Categories | Respondent ID | f(n) | Percentage in Sample |
|------|-----------|---------------|------|---------------------|
| 1. | Addition of more activities. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25 | 15 | 60% |
| 2. | Environmental change. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 17, 18, 23 | 12 | 48% |

Table 6 reflects the fifth theme incorporated four (4) categories, which are "addition of more activities" and "environmental change". The above theme has been produced by viewing frequencies and

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percentages of the building friendship in SNC.

## Theme no.6 Differentiation

The sixth and the last theme derived from the school teachers' responses as "differentiation" is given in the following table 7.

*RQ4.* How do teachers play the role for promoting social cohesion and Peace through Single National Curriculum?

### Table 7: *Responses of Teachers about the Differentiation*

| Sr.# | Categories | Respondent ID | *f*(n) | Percentage in Sample |
|------|-----------|---------------|--------|----------------------|
| 1. | SNC eliminates difference between all institutions. | 1, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 | 15 | 60% |
| 2. | Every curriculum is an obstacle to sectarianism. | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25 | 14 | 56% |
| 3. | Previous curriculum was based on favoritism of some political leaders. | 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, 25 | 12 | 48% |

Table 7 shows the sixth theme incorporated three (3) categories, which are "SNC eliminates differences between all institutions", "every curriculum is an obstacle to sectarianism", and "previous curriculum was based on favoritism of some political leaders. The above theme has been produced by viewing frequencies and percentages of teachers' points of view about differentiation.

## 5. Conclusion & Discussion

It was concluded that the majority of the teachers responded that the topics were developed in a SNC and explained the benefits and drawbacks of each, which promotes social cohesion and peace among students. Most of the teachers highlighted the major differences between SNC and the previous curriculum, as it is vastly superior to the previous curriculum and it distinguishes between what is good and what is bad. The results showed that the SNC would bring equality, students would become friends, relationships would improve, and racism would be eliminated. Most of the teachers perceived that SNC is a multi-dimensional curriculum as many activities are carried out in this curriculum and topics are clearer than before. The results showed that SNC has more religious content, and students are benefiting from this. The results showed that the previous curriculum did not contain any material that supported extremism, as each curriculum acted as a barrier to sectarianism and was anti-racist. A SNC eliminates sectarianism and racism and brings equality. Teachers were very optimistic that SNC would bring uniformity to Pakistan's education system, but it will take time as students are somewhat familiar with the content. They believed that SNC would advance education in the future.

Analysis of the data revealed that a Single National Curriculum would bring equality, students would behave well with each other by reading the same curriculum, relationships would improve, and racism would end. Therefore, social cohesion would increase. As verified by Khan (2016) in her study "Role of Education in Building Social Cohesion," reported that compared to selective educational systems, comprehensive educational systems place a greater emphasis on promoting equality of education. Social cohesiveness and education are closely related. Education prepares people to protect society for future generations. Education has an impact on social cohesiveness and helps to sustain social order. One of the key tools that affects student academic progress and improves society as well as social cohesion is education, which is accessible to many. The education system must be improved to satisfy the demands of the population and raise academic accomplishment. Thus, it will provide them with the chance to live in harmony throughout the nation, which will affect social cohesiveness.

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In the analysis of the data, most of the teachers responded that the previous curriculum did not contain any material that supported extremism. They believe that every curriculum is an obstacle to sectarianism and have been anti-racism. Most of teachers believe that public and private institutions cannot be equal, so they do not enroll their children in public schools because a SNC does not accommodate them equally, as they are very different and very competitive in terms of activities, teaching methods, etc., as verified by Saba Iqbal (2022) in her study "Teacher's perceptions about Single National Curriculum: An enquiry of primary school teachers in Lahore". It is reported that the SNC is one of the new government of Pakistan's educational advancements. The SNC's goal is to implement a uniform education system across the country and eliminate social inequality. By introducing uniform content, and medium of instruction, and assessment procedures, SNC aims to bring tolerance, conflict resolution, responsible citizenship, and equality to all Pakistani institutes.

Analysis of the data revealed that the SNC changes the thinking and ideas of the students. When the curriculum is taught in all institutions the same, the complexity of inequality among students will be eliminated. Most of the teachers perceived that SNC is a multi-dimensional curriculum as many activities are carried out in this curriculum and topics are clearer than before. As verified by the "Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (2021)," it was reported that SNC prioritizes the growth of analytical, critical, and creative thinking by adopting a more activity-based approach to learning as opposed to traditional, teacher-centric instruction. The possible reason for this might be that the SNC covers many activities. It is an activity-based curriculum.

## 6. Recommendations

Findings and conclusions drawn from the data analysis of the study, following recommendations should be made:

1. The Ministry of Education should work on proper implementation of SNC in private schools.
2. The teachers should engage students into activities which are given in SNC to promote social cohesion and peace.
3. Schools may organize activities in assemblies by asking students to teach morals on stage.
4. There may be an educational workshop for the parents of the students to reduce external factors impact on students which are becoming hurdle to achieve social cohesion and peace.
5. Teachers should be trained in accordance with the new SNC content to enable them to teach and organize activities and improved teaching learning practices.

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