

# Religious Content in Single National Curriculum and Suddle Commission's Report

## Issue Brief

### In a nutshell

A prominent initiative, among many positive measures taken by the Government of Pakistan in recent times, has been the development of a Single National Curriculum (SNC) for all regions and social classes of the country. After two-year long consultations and hard work, the first phase of the SNC is in the process of being implemented countrywide. Meanwhile, a one-member commission constituted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan on minority issues has submitted its report to the apex court. Along with other recommendations, the commission has also suggested that the Islamic content present in the textbooks of various subjects should be confined to the subject of Islamiyat only. In the following pages, these recommendations have been analyzed with respect to their socio-legal implications. It has been suggested that instead of making unsuccessful efforts to eradicate or suppress social diversity, we need to move in a direction where we may teach our young generation how to mutually live and respect each other despite differences. It will help the different classes to know more about those outside their own circles and also to respect their distinctions and identities. This brief consists of six parts. After an introduction in the first part, the second part presents the progress made towards a SNC. The third part deals with the vision, objectives, key considerations and implementation plan of the SNC as announced by the respective authorities. Part four briefly explains the context and progress of proceedings in the Supreme Court. Part five outlines the structure, report and recommendations of the one-member commission set up by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The final part of the brief consists of analysis and commentary in which the recommendations of the one-member commission are compared with the proposed content of the SNC and practical suggestions have been given.

## 1. Introduction

- Despite the universally acknowledged importance of education in national life, the education sector in Pakistan suffers from several problems. Confusion and adhocism seem to dominate every aspect of the sector, be it the vision of education, planning and policy, or implementation and allocation of resources. And the problem relates to both the quantitative and qualitative aspects. A key problem in this list concerns the uniform system and curriculum of education.
- In this context, it is noteworthy that one of the things that the present government paid special attention to as soon as it came to power was the determination of plans and measures for a 'uniform curriculum'. Bringing uniformity in the educational curriculum was extremely challenging due to the fact that education is now a provincial subject after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. What made the matter even more complex was the existence of at least half a dozen types of educational institutions in the country, each of which commands emotional attachment and interest of certain groups in the society.
- On the other hand, there is a deep link between the curriculum and the assessment system but even in this respect there is no uniformity in the country. In this backdrop, it was not possible to take all segments and stakeholders of the field of education aboard, consult them and make the consultation process fruitful without a major and step-by-step exercise. As a result, the consultation process under the supervision of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFEPT) had to face many ups and downs but the exercise has finally reached the first stage where a uniform curriculum and model books have been approved for classes I-V and it will soon be implemented [in the next academic year that will start in August 2021 due to Covid].
- Meanwhile, on March 31, 2021, the report of the one-member Shoaib Suddle Commission on Minorities was submitted to the Supreme Court. The report caused a stir in the smooth environment of developments for SNC. On issues related to the newly developed SNC for classes I-V, the

Commission's report, in a nutshell, recommends that anything related to Islamic teachings should be taught only under the subject of Islamic Studies. Syllabus and textbooks of Urdu, English and General Knowledge/Social Studies should not contain any Islamic content.

- On the basis of this report, the Punjab Government's Human Rights Department directed the Punjab Textbook Board to remove all Islamic contents from the proposed new textbooks [especially Urdu and English], except from the subject of Islamic Studies. Naturally, there was an immediate reaction from various quarters. On the other hand, it transpired that this letter [directive] of Punjab Human Rights Department was issued without the approval of the cabinet and had clearly preempted any decision by the Supreme Court in this case. Therefore, it was against the rules of business and technically wrong. Another important point highlighted was that as per the rules and regulations, no religious content can be included or removed from the textbooks in Punjab without a nod from the joint board of scholars. This letter has now been withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>
- However, the Commission's report submitted to the Supreme Court and the letter issued by the Human Rights Department of the Punjab Government has caused tension and uncertainty about the future of the exercise for preparation of a SNC, which was otherwise going on in a very smooth and consensus manner. There is no doubt that this situation has the potential of sabotaging an extraordinary effort for preparation of SNC. This situation also goes against the spirit of national solidarity and even against the interests of religious minorities in the country.

In this context, this issue brief is an attempt to understand the facts with a view to ascertain a better course of action in the current scenario.

In the first part, the progress regarding SNC has been presented. The second part explains in detail the background of the proceedings currently taking place in the Supreme Court. The last part presents an analysis of and comment on the whole situation.

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of principle, it should also be investigated as to why and how this letter was issued when the matter is still with the apex court and it has not given a verdict yet.

## 2. The Single National Curriculum: Progress so far

After determining the vision and key considerations [given ahead] of the SNC, the project had four major phases, namely curriculum development, textbook preparation, development of teacher training modules, and development of framework for assessment.

1. It was decided that after pre-one, first three classes at primary level will have five subjects – English, Mathematics, Urdu, Islamic Studies and General Knowledge – while General Science and Social Studies will be added in the fourth and fifth grades.
2. Learning objectives and benchmarks for each subject were determined. Key components of each subject along with the main topics and subtopics, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and proposed curricular activities for each class from one to five have been explained separately.
3. Key questions and guidelines that teachers have to observe during teaching and assessment of a subject have also been explained.
4. Guiding principles have been suggested for textbook authors. Provinces and their relevant textbook boards have been given the authority to get their textbooks authored/published by the author/publisher of their choice. However, the author will ensure that no content is included in the text that might be considered against Pakistan, any religion, or hateful in any sense.
5. The MoFEPT has prepared a model textbook for every subject and for every level.
6. As far as the medium of instruction is concerned, it has also been made clear that from first to fifth grades the medium of instruction will be Urdu or local languages. However, the textbooks of Mathematics and General Science will be in English. Educational institutions will be free to decide the medium of instruction for these two subjects.
7. New academic year will start from August 2021. New curriculum and new textbooks will formally be introduced at that time.
8. Zero draft for the curriculum of grades VI-VIII has been prepared. It will be given final shape in the coming days.
9. Teacher training modules have been prepared. They will also be published and distributed among the provinces and regions in due course.
10. Assessment framework is also being developed. However, it has been made clear that there will be a separate book for non-Muslim students for their religious education. They will not have to study the textbook of Islamic Studies, nor will they be assessed on it. Similarly, if any other subject contains Islamic material, non-Muslim students will not be assessed in exams on that content.

## 3. Single National Curriculum (SNC): Vision and Objectives<sup>2</sup>

### Vision

One system of education for all in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and a common platform for assessment so that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education. Single National Curriculum is a step in that direction.

### Objectives

One system of education for all in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment which will ensure:

- All children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education
- Social cohesion and national integration
- Alleviation of disparities in education content across the multiple streams
- Equal opportunities for upward social mobility
- Equity in education

<sup>2</sup> Please visit the website of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for details:  
<http://www.mofept.gov.pk/ProjectDetail/MzkyNDc2MjMtY2VjYy00ZDA4LTk5OTUtNzUyNDI3ZWZmZnN2Rm#:~:text=One%20system%20of%20Education%20for,a%20step%20in%20that%20direction.>



- Holistic development of children in the light of emerging international trends and local aspirations
- Smooth inter-provincial mobility of teachers and students

### Key Considerations

The development of SNC is driven by the following key considerations:

- Teachings of Quran and Sunnah
- Vision of the Quaid and Iqbal
- Constitutional framework
- National policies, aspirations and standards
- Alignment with the goals and targets of SDG-4
- Emerging international trends in teaching, learning and assessment
- Outcomes based approach
- Focus on values, life skills and inclusive education
- Respect and appreciation for different cultures and religions in local and global context

- Promotion of intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, emotional, social and physical development of learners
- Move away from rote learning and focus on project, inquiry and activity based learning
- Development of 21st century skills including analytical, critical and creative thinking.
- Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Alignment with Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

### Phases of Single National Curriculum

Single National Curriculum is being developed in three phases:

**Phase I:** Development of SNC and textbooks Pre I-V (March 2021)

**Phase II:** Development of SNC and textbooks VI-VIII (March 2022)

**Phase III:** Development of SNC and textbooks IX-XII (March 2023)

## 4. Proceedings in the Supreme Court: Context and Progress

- **May 9, 2018:** A petition was filed in the Supreme Court by Jillani & Co. The petition was related to a *suo moto* case of 2014<sup>3</sup> to plead that the decision of the case (PLD 2014 SC 699)<sup>4</sup> should be implemented. Paragraph 37 of the judgment contained eight directives for the government.<sup>5</sup> In this context, the present status regarding each of these instructions was explained in the petition with reference to the implementation of the decision.
- In the petition, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [through Dr. Mehdi Hassan], Center for Social Justice [through Peter Jacob] and Cecil and Iris Foundation [through Ms. Michelle Chaudhry,

Central President of the Foundation] were named as the petitioners.

- In the 16-page long petition, the Federation of Pakistan was made party through ten different ministries/departments. These include the ministries of Education, Interior, Human Rights, Religious Affairs, Legal Affairs, Planning and Development, and Information in addition to PEMRA, provincial textbook boards and authorities and provincial home departments.

The petition referred to the following direction regarding curriculum development mentioned in the 2014 verdict:

<sup>3</sup> The law firm Jillani & Co is run by Mr. Saqib Jillani, son of the former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Tasadduq Hussain Jillani, who had taken the said *suo moto* action and had given the judgment.

<sup>4</sup> The above mentioned *suo motu* was taken by the Supreme Court after a suicide attack on a church in Peshawar on 22 September 2013, and threats to the Kalash as well as Ismaili communities in Chitral.

<sup>5</sup> The order required the federal government to set up a task force for developing a strategy on religious tolerance, revision of curriculum for promoting a culture of tolerance, a special quota for minorities in the federal and provincial services, action against hate speech, the establishment of a national council for minorities, and a special force for the protection of the worship places of the minorities.

*“Appropriate Curricula be developed at school and college levels to promote a culture of religious and social tolerance.”*

It also referred to a UN Declaration of 1981 saying:

In 1981, in one of its seminal declarations, the United Nations resolved that:

*“The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in the spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among people, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talent should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.”* (UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief).

Referring to implementation of the Supreme Court’s direction on curriculum development, the petition mentioned that:

- Usually provincial governments (and textbook board) did not take interest in implementation of the Supreme Court’s instructions.
- The textbooks still contain hate-based content. Change, if any, is in form and medium, and not in substance.
- Reviewing province-wise performance, it was mentioned that the situation of implementation at federal level and in KPK is the worst. Some ad hoc steps have been taken in Punjab and Sindh but they are not satisfactory in any way. It is only Balochistan which has taken few sincere and serious steps in this regard.

It was pleaded in the petition that the federal and provincial ministries of education should be summoned, asked to respond and directed that:

- Hate-based material against religious minorities should be identified in all textbooks and should be removed immediately.
- In light of the rights guaranteed in provisions 20, 22(1), (2), and (3) of the Constitution, religious freedom and religious impartiality should be ensured in its letter and spirit in the entire education system from planning to implementation.

It was also indicated that the whole matter is also the title of another case (CMA 5171) pending in the Supreme Court.

- **Progress on the Petition:** One month after the petition was received, the Supreme Court passed an order [on June 11, 2018] that the federal and provincial governments should submit their reports within 15 days regarding how much they had complied with the instructions given in paragraph 37 of 2014 *suo moto* case.

Additionally, the Supreme Court also ordered the Constitutional Appeal (No. 62 of 2017) to be clubbed to this case. While later another Constitutional Appeal (No. 63 of 2017) was also clubbed to the same case. Both these petitions were related to minority affairs but they had no link with education or curriculum. The progress in the hearings is briefly mentioned chronologically:

- **November 21, 2019:** The court was told that Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan had submitted their reports but Sindh and Islamabad Capital Territory had asked for some more time. The court gave another three weeks to both the units for report submission.
- **February 19, 2020:** A few other directions given in the 2014 *suo moto* order came under discussion at this hearing. But there was no discussion on education and curriculum.
- **October 15, 2020:** Nothing considerable happened at the hearing except that the secretaries of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs were directed to come up with complete details at the next hearing (on 23 October) about how much their respective ministries had acted upon the Supreme Court’s orders, and what benefit had the minority community received from such actions.
- **October 23, 2020:** Secretary Ministry of Education Ms. Farah Hameed Khan and Joint Education Advisor (JEA) Mr. Muhammad Rafiq Tahir were present in the court. The Secretary Education (as well as Secretary Religious Affairs) reassured the court to cooperate with the Shoaib Suddle Commission in order to fully comply with the Supreme Court’s orders.
- **January 5, 2021:** A major part of the hearing revolved around the report that the one-member Commission had submitted with reference to



another case, CMA No. 12 of 2021. The case was related to the demolition of a temple in District Karak of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Second part of the hearing was related to the Evacuee Trust Property Board, during which the Chairman Evacuee Trust Property Board answered questions and described details regarding the maintenance and safety of the evacuee property. Nothing concerning education was included in the hearing.

- **February 8, 2021:** The Supreme Court recorded an observation while referring to Saqib Jillani's petition that the Federal Ministry of Education had developed a Single National Curriculum which does not comply with the requirements of Article 22. Therefore, a report should be furnished by the MoFEPT prior to putting this curriculum in force so that arrangements could be made to meet the requirements of Article 22. The court directed the Secretary MoFEPT to submit a report at the next hearing.
- **February 15, 2021:** The report submitted by the Ministry of Education was deemed unsatisfactory by the Supreme Court. The court also expressed

anger on its issuance with the signatures of a Deputy Director [Literacy]. It was ordered that a new report with signatures of the Secretary Education should be submitted within two weeks and the Secretary MoFEPT should herself be present at the next hearing.

- **March 31, 2021:** Mohiyuddin Wani, Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Education, was present in the court. The court expressed extreme dissatisfaction over the report submitted by the Ministry of Education about SNC and observed that implementation had not been undertaken on the Supreme Court judgment dated June 19, 2014, despite the passage of several years, which clearly showed a lack of will with reference to SNC. The Supreme Court construed it as an apparent lack of capacity and capability in this respect. It also expressed concern that the work that should have taken merely one year has not been completed even after several years.

In this context, the court gave a final directive to the Secretary of Education to be present in person at the next hearing and report that the task [of SNC] has successfully been achieved.

## 5. One-Member Commission and its Report

- Meanwhile [in January 2018] the Supreme Court set up a one-member Commission to monitor and follow up the implementation of the 2014 decision. Saqib Jillani Advocate, Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani and an Additional Advocate General were appointed to assist and facilitate the Commission comprising Dr Shoaib Suddle while Peter Jacob was appointed as Special Adviser to the Commission.<sup>6</sup> One must recall that Saqib Jillani and Peter Jacob are among those who had filed the above petition in the Supreme Court.
- A report by the Shoaib Suddle Commission was submitted to the Supreme Court on March 30, 2021. According to the covering letter attached to this report, this is the eighth report by the Commission regarding the implementation of the decision of the Supreme Court. Nearly half of this 19 pages long report relates to education and curriculum. A significant part also relates to statements from the Constitution of Pakistan and

various international commissions and declarations. [The remaining half is related to other instructions given in the decision, and not the curriculum, and is, therefore, not a subject for this brief at this time.

- According to the report, the Commission had contacted the Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood. In follow-up, it had also held a meeting with the Federal Education Secretary Farah Hamid Khan and Joint Education Advisor Muhammad Rafiq Tahir on November 12, 2020. The Secretary had assured that the curriculum will be based on consensus. According to the report, the Commission had held another meeting with Mr. Rafiq Tahir on February 4, 2020, in which he had apprised the Commission that the syllabus for the first to fifth grades will be put in place in March 2021, and the concerns of the minorities had already been fully catered in this curriculum. He

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/426217-dr-suddle-commission-meets-on-minorities-rights>.

also assured that the ministry would take complete care of any further issue that might crop up. However, the Commission did not agree with the opinion of Mr. Rafiq Tahir.

- In its report, the Commission has identified all topics that are based on Islamic teachings in the Urdu, English and General Knowledge curriculum prepared for classes I to V under SNC. More prominently, the Urdu books have been indicated to carry Hamd and Na'at, while the presentation of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a role model in English textbooks has been identified. Similarly, the mention of the rightly-guided caliphs and other Islamic personalities to

explain moral qualities [like patience, kindness towards children] has also been found objectionable. In the same spirit, the discussions about the recipients of the highest military award of Pakistan (Nishan-e-Haider) in the textbook of English has also been objected to. In the book of General Knowledge, the selection of events from Islamic history to promote compassion and forgiveness have also been identified for omission.

- For each of these topics, the Commission has distinctly commented to suggest alternatives. If, however, there is no particular alternative, all such things are suggested for inclusion in the curriculum of Islamic studies. [See Annexure 1]

## 6. Analysis

These details suggest that the ongoing proceedings in the Supreme Court and the exercise undertaken by the Education Ministry for SNC relate to each other in subject matter, but each of them is the result of two separate processes.

The Supreme Court's decision in 2014 was related to the omission of any hate-based content in textbooks of any level. While the main target in the work done by the Ministry of Education for SNC is to put in place a uniform system and new curriculum, which had essentially replaced all previous textbooks. Moreover, the current process of curriculum development has been completed just for classes up to the fifth grade.

The first and the foremost concern regards the structure and procedures of the one-member Commission. Saqib Jilani and Peter Jacob, two of the people appointed to assist the Commission, are themselves plaintiffs in the petition filed in the Supreme Court. Irrespective of the legitimacy of such appointments, how objective can the Commission be with this team? On the other hand, the Commission has not arranged any public hearing on this very important and sensitive issue of national significance to know the different points of view for reaching a balanced conclusion.

The one-member Commission does not appear to have consulted even the National Commission for Minorities (NCM). Thus when the report of the Commission became public, the NCM Chairperson

Chela Ram Kewlani expressed complete disagreement with this report.<sup>7</sup> The Council of Islamic Ideology, after a detailed review, has also rejected this report in clear opposition to its recommendations.<sup>8</sup>

Of course it should be ensured that there is nothing derogatory in the SNC, not merely against the minorities, but against anyone. When seen in this context, the 'Key Considerations' in the development of SNC [given above] have clearly stated such an approach.

- On the other hand, the topics that have been marked as objectionable in the Suddle Commission report are in no way based on hate speech [See Annexure 1]. In fact, it is safe to say that there is nothing based on hate in the curriculum scheme and textbooks that have so far been made available.

On the contrary, SNC clearly includes all the values and themes that were required in the Supreme Court's decision. On the other hand, as initially mentioned, it has clearly been provided that the course content that is based on Islamic teachings is neither essential for the non-Muslim students nor will they be assessed with respect to them. This is in accordance with the protection mentioned in Article 22 (1) of the Constitution. As a positive move, the MoFEPT has prepared a separate book for minorities instead of Islamiyat.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/823724-single-curriculum-ncm-in-complete-disagreement-with-one-man-body-report>

<sup>8</sup> [https://jang.com.pk/amp/919053?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://jang.com.pk/amp/919053?__twitter_impression=true)

It is important to understand that if Muslim students of Pakistan are to be equipped with the values mentioned in the Supreme Court's decision, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and those personalities are the most influential whom Muslims regard as role models. To imagine that these values can be effectively promoted in Pakistani society by ignoring these personalities is a flawed approach. On the contrary, it would be more helpful to add more such content in order to achieve the pronounced objectives of the apex court. Besides, articles 2, 2-A, and 31 of the Constitution do not merely require teaching of Islam as a religion but to also shape the individual and collective lives of Pakistani Muslims according to the basic principles and concepts of Islam. Members of every religion and sect have additionally been provided with the right to establish and operate their separate educational institutions under Article 20-B of the Constitution. Article 31, which requires the State to take steps to promote the Islamic way of life, is included in the Principles of Policy, which are to be observed by every organ and authority of the State [Article 29], and which have been acknowledged to provide 'purposive interpretation' to the fundamental rights given in the Constitution.<sup>9</sup>

- Although each country has its own circumstances and realities, and it is important to consider the local context rather than adopting one country's strategy in another country, but it cannot be ignored that even in a secular state like the USA, there is a rift between the government institutions and various segments of society regarding the role of religion in educational institutions and curriculum. According to a report by the PEW Research Center, the conflict sometimes takes on a particularly unpleasant turn. If the secular background and centuries of state sponsorship for liberalism has not persuaded American society to exclude religion and religious teachings from educational institutions, how can this idea succeed in Pakistan where not only the majority of the people are Muslims and demonstrate their love for Islam but also the Constitution is grounded in Islam.
- If the minorities living in Pakistan are to be given an effective role in decision making and in various administrative positions in Pakistan, it is essential that they get the necessary exposure to the

religious beliefs, tendencies and emotions of the 97% of the population. In this context, Justice A.R. Cornelius, and more recently Justice Rana Bhagwan Das, are the personalities to be kept in mind, whose observance of these qualities and higher character not only earned them respect not only in Pakistan's policymaking circles, but also in academic and public circles.

It is true that excluding a student from the class while a particular subject is being taught constitutes discrimination, but the identities of students as Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Sikh are a reality. Should religious harmony mean concealment of the religious affiliations of a person? In fact, there are so many manifestations in everyday life with reference to worship, festivals and lifestyles that any attempt to destroy identity in the name of discrimination will be artificial and will give birth to new complications.

Distinctions are part of human identity and symbolize diversity in human life. Instead of eliminating them, it is important to focus on developing the human attitudes to live together despite being different. The SNC has provided such an approach in its guiding principles.

There is no denying that for the development of a student's personality, the whole process of education should constitute an organic whole and all the values that need to be inculcated in students may be transferred better when all teachers, subjects, learning material, school environment and other institutions in the society guide in the same direction. Confining the value-related content in a single subject of Islamiyat and making all other content 'value free', or conflicting with other values being taught, may only confuse a child's personality, not develop it. Another aspect is that Islamiyat, as a subject is loaded so heavily that it becomes an unwanted subject for students.

- This issue is not merely based on principles; it has practical implications. The non-Muslim population in Pakistan is around 3% and they do not belong to a single religion. In this proportion of Muslims (around 97%) and non-Muslims (around 3%), a class generally comprises all Muslim students. There are certain settlements where non-Muslims live in large numbers, a class in such areas might have several non-Muslim students or even constitute a majority in the

<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Ahmad Pansota vs Federation of Pakistan 2020 PLD 229 LHC





classroom. The Commission has painted a painful picture of a student being excluded from a class, but how many such instances might there be to form the basis of key policy decisions. There are exceptions in every field of life. Exceptions and discrimination should always be regarded as two separate concepts.

- Implementation of Article 22 of the Constitution is undoubtedly necessary and an appropriate way for it has already been provided in the SNC. This implementation should, however, be mindful of the fact that the Preamble of the Constitution (by virtue of Article 2-A) and other provisions of the Constitution that hold the State responsible for promoting Islamic injunctions are as much sacred. It is up to the decision and policy makers to ensure a balanced implementation of all these provisions.
- The one-member Commission has also objected to the inclusion of Hamd and Na'at in Urdu textbooks. One must, however, understand that teaching of Urdu as a subject does not merely concern the language but also introduces the students to the literature present in this language. Hamd and Na'at are important genres in Urdu poetry, in which not only Muslims but also non-Muslim poets have contributed a lot.<sup>10</sup> How can they be excluded from Urdu literature and made a part of Islamiyat as such? On the other hand, classical English poet John Milton's long religious poem "Paradise Lost" is part of the syllabus in many systems. Shall this and other such verses be removed from the teaching of English for being religious in nature?
- In General Knowledge of Grade III, an incident from the Holy Prophet's life has been quoted as an example of forgiveness and kindness. The one-member Commission has also raised objection to this example and as an alternate, it has recommended that incidences from three major religions should be quoted instead of only from Islam. However, the Commission has not clarified how these examples will be taught to the students of other religious minorities living in Pakistan like Sikhs, Parsis and Hindus. It would again be a

biased approach to ask these students to leave the classroom while such lessons are being taught.

- For the subject of English, SNC has proposed 21 themes for grades I-III. These themes have a diverse variety including social manners, storytelling, poems, sports, recreation, local and national festivals, etc. Only one among these 21 themes is based on the portrayal of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) as a role model. It is very unfortunate that the one-member Commission has accepted the positive variety of other themes and has only raised objection to the theme which is very basic and essential in the moral, ethical and social training of the 96% of students.
- There is no doubt that incidences of intolerance and hate-based crimes in society continue to be reported. But generalizing these incidents can never be a recipe for success of any reformation. In this case, there is a need to better understand the facts on a scientific basis, in how many cases the incidents are really related to religious hatred and when they come to light as a result of bad governance in the country. It is also a fact that instances of injustice and violent crimes are not confined to religious minorities. The factors for division in society range from individual to local to international levels. If the strategy is comprehensive in character, every step taken to actualize it will have a complementing effect. A single step in a specific dimension of life does not guarantee a solution to the problem.
- Another aspect that should not be ignored is that the diversity in Pakistan is an asset for the country. This diversity is multi-layered. Neither is the 3% minority population homogenous in religion and color, nor obviously is the 97% majority without diversity. In order to prevent this diversity from causing division and conflict, these diverse groups need to be brought closer through strengthened communication between their members and leadership. This will make them more familiar with each other, and not strangers.
- Another closely connected aspect of the phenomenon is that despite the huge potential of

<sup>10</sup> Among the contemporary poets who have significantly contributed to poetry in tribute of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) is the former chief justice of Pakistan, Rana Bhagwan Das. His Na'ats were published in a religious journal *Ā'īnah* for a long time, and is also part of the book "Ghair Muslim Shu'arā ka Na'atiya Kalaam" compiled by Dr. Izhar Ahmad Gulzar.

law to train and develop human behaviors, the law is only effective when it enjoys acceptance at the public level. Any law that is put into force merely through 'command' can never bring sustainable results.

- It is common knowledge that certain lobbies are active in the country with the agenda of de-Islamization of the identity and education of the society. These lobbies operate with foreign support and funding. In this context, issues raised with reference to curriculum at this time are part

of a larger debate in which every such person is and should be interested who has any concern with Pakistan's distinct identity and its future.

Though single curriculum is a subject of education, it is also being proceeded in the Supreme Court. The matter, therefore, needs attention to its constitutional and legal dimensions as well. In this regard, a panel of legal experts interested in a uniform curriculum, essentials based on Islamic teachings and national unity and harmony should also move forward to become a party to the proceedings.

Research & Analysis:

**Khalid Rahman**

Institute of Policy Studies

For queries:

**Syed Nadeem Farhat**

Senior Research Officer

nadeem@ips.net.pk | www.ips.org.pk

## Annexure 1\*

### English

Sr. No	Subject of SNC/Model Textbook	Relevant provision in the context of Article 22 of the Constitution	Chapter/Pages	Comments/Suggested course of action
1	SNC English (Grade 1 to 5)	Role Models Prophet Muhammad Rasoolullah (PBUH)  Male/female personalities from the Islamic/world history, civilian awardees of Nishan-e-Haider	Chapter 4/ Pages 60	Prophet Muhammad Rasoolullah (PBUH) is the highest and the most holy/important personality for all Muslims. As non-Muslims are not required to follow Islamic teachings, this topic should not be there in the subject of English, which is required to be taught compulsorily to all students- Muslims and non-Muslims  It is suggested that this topic should be included in the dedicated subject of Islamiyat only.
2	Model textbook, Grade 3	Kindness to children Have you ever read about the kindness of the Rasoolullah ﷺ حَاتَمُ التَّيْبِيِّينَ؟ Do you know that the Rasoolullah ﷺ is the role model for us all?	Unit 4/ Pages 35, 36, 37 & 38	Prophet Muhammad Rasoolullah (peace be upon him) is the highest and the most holy/important personality for all Muslims. As the subject falls within Islamic teachings, it should not be compulsory for non-Muslim students.  This being a necessary topic for every Muslim, it is suggested that it should be included in the dedicated subject of Islamiyat only.
3	Model text book for Grade 4	Great Caliphs of Islam	Unit 1/ Pages 1,2,3,4,6,7,12,50	In the context of Article 22, since after Prophet Muhammad Rasoolullah (peace be upon him), the great caliphs of Islam are the most revered personalities for Muslims. However, as the subject falls within Islamic teachings, it should not be compulsory/required for non-Muslim students.
4	Model textbook for Grade 5	Patience	2,3,5,6,98	In the context of Article 22, references to the Islamic historical personalities need to be moved to the Islamiyat subject.

\* This annexure has been taken from the One-Member Commission's report submitted to the Supreme Court of Pakistan [Pages 7-9]. The Commission has raised objection on the religious content in the textbooks of English, Urdu and General Knowledge on the basis that it is against the Article 22 of the Constitution.

## Urdu

Sr. No	Subject of SNC/Mode Textbook	Relevant provision in the context of Article 22 of the Constitution	Chapter/Pages	Comments/Suggested course of action
1	SNC Urdu (Grade 1 to 5)	Haamd and Na'at as part of suggested topics and themes.	Pages 47,52,54,58	Since these topics are not related to the teaching of Urdu language or literature, these should be appropriately included in the dedicated subject of Islamiyat only.
2	Model textbook under SNC for Grade 2	Naat, topic on Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)	Pages 1,3,9,11,14,15,16,17,18,19 and 69	Ibid
3	Model textbook under SNC for Grade 3	Naat and Haamd topics and other religious references	Pages 1,2,3,7,8,9 to 19, 21,30,31,33,35, 58,59,64,65,84,85,94, 96 to 100, 104, 112, 114, 146 and 147	Ibid
4	Model textbook under SNC for Grade 4	Naat and Haamd topics and other religious references	Pages 1, 10, 12, 14, 15 to 20, 28, 33, 54, 80, 82, 83, 103 to 109, 140, 141, and 142	Ibid
5	Model textbook under SNC for Grade 4	Naat and Haamd topics and other religious references for Muslims	Pages 1, 4, 6 to 15, 17, 20, 31, 33, 38, 58, 74, 94, 129, 135, 136 and 151	Ibid

## General Knowledge

Sr. No	Subject of SNC/Mode Textbook	Relevant provision in the context of Article 22 of the Constitution	Chapter/Pages	Comments/Suggested course of action
1	SNC-Single National Curriculum (Grade 1 to 3)	Narration of incidents relating to forgiveness	Page 39	3 alternate options are recommended: either (1) references to forgiveness and kindness are inserted from the Prophets of the 3 major world religions, or (2) this topic is moved to the Islamiyat subject, or (3) inclusion of stories of foregiveness by famous non-religious personalities, e.g. Queen Razia Sultana.