



Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020

Early Childhood Care and Education

**Comments by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)
for Consideration by the
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Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 - Early Childhood Care and Education

1. Introduction

The new Single National Curriculum (SNC) 2020 is specifically envisioned as a step towards a unified system of Education for all “in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment” to ensure equity and quality in education. As such, SNC is expected to raise the floor for quality of education provided, particularly in terms of content and substance of learning. By providing a unifying framework for education, the curriculum will attempt, over a period of time, to equalize education across all provinces and territories, across all levels of education. This includes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

This document put together by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) will examine the new ECCE curriculum provided in SNC, and compare it to the earlier 2007 National Curriculum along with the 2017 Punjab and 2018 Sindh ECE curriculums. The document will also examine how much does the new curriculum incorporate recent global research in Early Years. Since the making of the National ECE Curriculum 2007 13 years have elapsed and several new areas of evidence based best practice have emerged to inform the making of a new ECCE curriculum under the SNC initiative of the MoFE&PT in collaboration with the provinces and key stakeholders.

2. Framework for ECCE

a. Framework

The SNC places ECCE within the larger context of Education for All (EFA) goals and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4/4.2). The Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) also features as a key consideration in the curriculum’s design.

However, the SNC does not incorporate any additional insights from research into Early Years as it follows the same framework for ECCE as the 2017 Punjab ECE Curriculum, at times often matching it word-for-word. For instance, the six theories of development and learning deployed in the SNC have been copied directly from the interpretation offered in the 2017 Punjab Curriculum. These theories are as follows:

- Brain Development in Early Years
- Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development
- Vygotsky’s Theory of Sociocultural Development
- Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory of Child Development
- Erik Erikson’s Theory of Social Emotional Development
- Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The SNC document focuses on holistic development through a set of major domains that it considers central to early years development. These are as follows:

- Physical Development

- Social and Moral Development
- Emotional Development
- Language Development
- Cognitive Development

The domains are then further categorized into a set of competencies that every child is expected to acquire during their stay in ECCE classrooms. Each competency is accompanied by a set of Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs) and ideas for implementation.

b. Timeframe

Globally, the need for a 2-years progressive ECCE programme is duly recognized. A 2-year programme has enough space to cover a wide range of learning outcomes and prepare children for primary school. For instance, the recent Sindh ECE Curriculum has a 2-year plan for children in ECCE which covers a much wider range of learning outcomes as well as auxiliary ECCE components. There are separate competencies for children aged 3-4 and 4-5, encouraging a continuous updating of learning outcomes as children progress further into schooling. It allows for children to be part of an extended early years school system to ensure their familiarity and preparedness for future education while also allowing for teachers/service-providers to track their progress effectively.

While the SNC also recognizes the need for a 2-year programme, it does not explicitly specify it as mandatory. The curriculum is designed in a way to allow for both options (1 and 2 years) as per need. This method is understandable given the resource constraint some sub-regions face in providing ECCE for 2-years. However, it is possible that this might not raise the floor for ECCE learning across Pakistan, as some are allowed the option of just a 1-year ECE programme.

c. Executive Function

While the SNC covers a wide range of competencies and key learning areas for ECE, there is one noticeable omission— **executive function**. Recent studies demonstrate that executive function is a key part of early years growth and is crucial to child development and positive outcomes later on. There is no competency, learning outcome, or even a mention of executive function related skills including cognitive control, self-regulation, and work memory etc. Nor do any of the ELOs for other domains provide any specific step suited for the development of executive function skills in children. This is an important omission considering the theories the SNC curriculum builds upon do focus on these skills as does recent research, including that from Harvard’s Center on the Developing Child.

Similarly, globally developed tools for early years assessment including MELQO and IDELA have specifically developed categories for executive function. For instance, a 2018 [systems research study](#) on early years learning in Punjab adapted the global MELQO tools for localized adaptation and assessed 650+ children for various domains including executive function. The study found out major gaps in executive function learning for children.

d. Play-based learning and Parental Involvement

Closely related to the acquisition of executive function skills is the concept of play-based learning. As updated research [shows](#), play-based learning is *meaningful, iterative, joyful, socially interactive, and actively engaging* for children which enables the development of a wide range of skills. It starts at home but is ultimately built upon at the school, inside ECE classrooms. Moreover, it is highly recommended that play-based learning is not viewed as an isolated side-activity, but through a systems-lens where governments and schools develop it into a holistic, unified learning approach situated at the center of child development.

While the SNC does include play as component of its plan and suggests play-based activities in its implementation suggestions for various ELOs, it does not provide any coherent framework for how, and if, play-based learning is to be undertaken at a large-scale, systematic level. The document cites Bennet’s 1997 research on early learning without adding anything from recent years. There is also a mention of low-cost, waste materials for play but no concomitant instructions for classroom settings and teacher training that deal with how to create enabling environments for play. It is possible that play-based learning, as a particular mode of pedagogy, is not necessarily a key priority area for the SNC. Like other components, the interpretation for play-based learning is taken directly from the 2017 Punjab curriculum, with no update.

Relatedly, there is no comprehensive plan and/or suggestive framework for involving parents in ECCE. While individual competencies and SLOs do involve parental engagement in a limited capacity, the document itself does not prioritize parental involvement and home-learning as a key component of early years learning. This is particularly a drawback in the post-COVID-19 situation, as school closures have underlined the importance of parental involvement in ensuring effective development outcomes for children. As the Human Capital Project and other researches show, there is a high possibility of human capital being

Going forward, planning for ECCE will have to incorporate play-based learning and parental involvement. There are also examples from civil society in Pakistan on how to design curriculums/learning plans involving play-based learning and how to engage parents.

e. Nurturing and Child Protection

As more and more [data](#) highlights the vulnerabilities young children face, it is important for education systems to explicitly identify child protection as a priority area. Similarly, child care and nurturing outside of school—equally important with regards to emotional growth, health and learning—has to be acknowledged as a fundamental component of a good ECCE program design. The SNC can serve as a good repository of the government’s view on this and the planning framework they envision for this component.

The Health, Hygiene and Safety domain provides multiple SLOs relevant to child safety including environmental safety and child security. However, there are limitations to how far

SNC has achieved this. The document itself does not mention child protection as a systematic process that involves caregivers, schools, and teachers. Furthermore, as is the case with parental involvement, there are no instructions for how nurturing and child care. On the other hand, nurturing appears as a major priority area in Sindh’s ECCE curriculum.

f. Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education has become a key priority area globally, particularly after the 2015 declaration of the SDGs. The theme for this year’s Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) was ‘Inclusion’. Pakistan itself has actively recognized the importance of inclusive education. Efforts are underway to ensure that the school systems are as inclusive as possible. There is also a growing recognition of the multiple dimensions of inclusion— ability, gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background, refugee status etc.

Within that context, the SNC highlights ways in which this can be achieved. For instance, in multiple ELOs, the SNC updates and improves the language of earlier curriculums by making them as inclusive for other religions as possible (as recorded in the next section). Particularly noteworthy is the second competency within the Personal, Social, and Emotional Development which encourages collaboration with others regardless of “any differences, such as, in gender, ability, culture, language and ethnicity.”

Similarly, in guidelines for learning materials development, SNC implores the developers to ensure that in the stories within the curriculum, minority characters (or differently abled) including girls are given agency and are seen taking initiative on their own. It asks developers to reconsider if there are stereotypical gender roles within the stories.

Nonetheless, one of the key dimensions of IE—integrated education for children with disabilities (CWDs)—is noticeably absent from SNC. Despite Pakistan’s commitments to SDG 4, including its 4.8 subgoal on inclusion, the curriculum does not deal with disability in early years in any systematic method. There is no information that can be gleaned from the document in either the competencies, teacher training, or classroom environment that would showcase government’s implementation plan for ensuring that CWDs in early years are provided quality education. This is despite the recent efforts by the governments in the provinces to update their sector plans and education policies to ensure inclusion.

g. Learning Environments

The SNC has a detailed section on creating positive and conducive learning environments in classroom, required competencies for ECCE teachers, and guidelines for learning materials development. This section is taken verbatim from the 2017 Punjab Curriculum. The section contains instructions and guidelines on:

- Creation on dedicated Learning Corners (GOSHAY) in classrooms such as:
 - i.□ Language Corner
 - ii.□ Library Corner
 - iii.□ Art Corner

- iv. □ Math Corner
- v. □ Science Corner
- vi. □ Home Corner
- □ Daily Routine for ECE Classrooms
- □ Guidelines for developing criterion of assessment including recordkeeping, progress tracking, and portfolio for children
- □ Key Competencies for ECCE teachers
- □ Guidelines for creating learning materials and teacher's guide book

However, aside from the implementation of the teacher's guide, the section does not provide any detailed steps or mechanisms for how to undertake all the instructions provided. Moreover, the section does not include any new insights gained from the implementation experience of provinces, particularly Punjab and Sindh. This effectively sidelines any possible learnings that could've been gleaned from ECCE service-provision already in place by the government. Additionally, the curriculum does not provide any additional instructions for how non-government service-providers are to incorporate these instructions into their ECCE systems.

h. Medium of Instruction and Localization

SNC upgrades over previous curriculums with regards to mother tongue. The language and literacy competencies are explicitly specified to be taught in the child's mother tongue, with gradual transition into Urdu and English. However, in its larger framework, the SNC still prioritizes Urdu and English as the language a child has to eventually shift towards. When it comes to writing and recognizing text, there is no explicit instruction to use mother language. The only options provided for are English and Urdu. The global importance of English and the national importance of Urdu as a mode of communication makes this prioritization seem reasonable. Nevertheless, this seems to be incoherent with the global consensus on the important of mother tongue in aiding child development in early years.

There are also no coordinated instructions for material development in mother tongue/local languages to be used for teaching. There is, however, clear instructions on printing teaching materials in Urdu. Similarly, the process of localization of the material is left up to the teachers without any concomitant instructions/guidelines on how to undertake this. It is possible that this process would lead to wide divergences in the overall teaching of ECCE and thus affect standards of learning dependent on resources, time, and provider capacities.

i. Intersectoral Coordination

There is an increased element of multi-dimensionality in ECCE as multiple sectors come together to provide the best care for children. This would necessitate active engagement from multiple stakeholders including health and nutrition service-providers, civil society, policy researchers, and international development institutions.

The SNC recognizes this and there are multiple competencies designed to incorporate assistance from other stakeholders such as the Health and Hygiene instructions on

introducing children to Lady Health Workers—one of the most important front-line personnel involved with child care.

3. Mapping Competencies:

A mapping exercise of competencies between the three curriculums—SNC, Punjab 2017, and National Curriculum 2006 – demonstrates that SNC builds up on the work of earlier two. Most competencies and ELOs are listed ad-verbatim from 2017 Punjab curriculum. However, there are a few cases where the SNC updates the competency requirements and ELOs.

The table below summarizes the mapping.

a. Personal, Social, and Emotional Development

The SNC updates significantly on the required competencies for this domain, while most of the ELOs remain the same.

- It upgrades the language for competency 1 by adding “positive sense of self-identity” as a key part of learning.
- As previously mentioned, it adds an inclusive element to competencies 2 and 3 by specifying differences in gender, ability, culture, language and ethnicity as something children should be aware of and respect and appreciate.
- The domain also has two additional competencies on citizenship and ethical values (honesty, inner accountability, social justice etc.)
- However, it does not have any explicit SLO related to prejudice and/or discrimination.

Personal, Social, and Emotional Development			
Single National Curriculum 2020	National Curriculum 2006	Punjab ECCE Curriculum 2017	Sindh ECCE Curriculum 2018 (contains competencies for both 3-4 and 4-5 years)
Children will develop an understanding of their likes, dislikes, strengths, emotions and self-grooming, decision making and problem-solving skills. Children will further enhance their positive sense of self-identity and see themselves as capable learners.	Children will develop an understanding of their likes, dislikes, strengths, and emotions.	Children will develop an understanding of their likes, dislikes, strengths, emotions and self-grooming.	Children will develop an understanding of their likes, dislikes, strengths, emotions and perspectives and will welcome differences.

Children will be willing to share and work in collaboration with their peers, teachers, family members and neighbors, regardless of any differences, such as, in gender, ability, culture, language and ethnicity.	Children will be willing to share and work in collaboration with their peers, teachers, family and neighbors.	Children will be willing to share and work in collaboration with their peers, teachers, family and neighbors regardless of gender.	Children will be willing to share and work in collaboration with their peers, teachers, family and neighbors.
Children will learn about and appreciate their heritage and culture and develop acceptance, respect and appreciation for the diversity of cultures and languages.	Children will develop an appreciation for the diversity of people around them.	Children will develop an appreciation for the diversity of people around them.	Children will honor diversity and will be willing to collaborate and live in peace and harmony.
Children will develop an understanding of their own religious values and practices as well as respect for others' religious values and practices, with acceptance and appreciation for the differences that exist.	Children will be aware of their own religion and basic religious values and practices.	Children will develop an understanding of their own religious values and practices as well as the appreciation, respect and acceptance for others' religious values and practices	Children will be aware of their own religion and that of others. Children will recognize unfairness in ideas and develop the self-confidence to stand up for themselves and others against prejudice and discrimination.
Children will demonstrate a sense of responsibility for self and others in class, school, home and neighborhood.	Children will demonstrate a sense of responsibility for self and others in class, school, home and neighborhoods.	Children will demonstrate a sense of responsibility for self and others in class, school, home and neighborhood.	Children will demonstrate a sense of responsibility for self and others in class, school, home and neighborhoods.
N/A	Children will learn about and appreciate heritage and culture of their own family, their peers and neighbours.	Children will learn about and appreciate heritage and culture of their own family, their peers and neighbours.	Children will learn about and appreciate heritage and culture of their own family, their peers and neighbours.

Children will use common courtesy expressions like greetings, please, welcome, thank you, sorry, excuse me.	N/A	Children will use common courtesy expressions like greetings, please, thank you, sorry, excuse me.	N/A
Children will learn and develop a sense of citizenship.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Children will develop and demonstrate ethical and moral values such as honesty, inner accountability, social justice, empathy, compassion and respect.	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Children will develop a unique sense of identity and honor their own uniqueness and that of others
N/A	N/A	N/A	Children will be aware of and display social skills in play and other contexts

a. Language and Literacy

The language domain for SNC follows up on the same competencies and ELOs offered in earlier curriculums.

Language and Literacy			
Single National Curriculum 2020	National Curriculum 2007	Punjab ECCE Curriculum 2017	Sindh ECCE Curriculum 2018 (contains competencies for both 3-4 and 4-5 years)
Children will engage confidently with others using language in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes and contexts.	Children will engage in conversation with others and talk confidently about matters of immediate and personal interest.	Children will engage in conversation with others and talk confidently about matters of immediate and personal interest.	Children will engage in conversation with others and talk confidently about matters of immediate and personal interest.
Children will describe objects, events and their plans for the day.	Children will describe objects, events and their plans for the day.	Children will describe objects, events and their plans for the day.	Children will describe objects, every day, events and their plans for the day. Children will express their needs, feelings, ideas, opinions, and preferences.

Children will enjoy listening to stories and poems/rhymes and make up their own stories and rhymes.	Children will enjoy listening to stories and poems/rhymes and make up their own stories and rhymes.	Children will enjoy listening to stories and poems/rhymes and make up their own stories and rhymes.	Children will enjoy listening to stories and poems/rhymes and make up their own stories and rhymes.
Children will enjoy age appropriate books and handle them carefully.	Children will enjoy books and handle them carefully.	Children will enjoy age appropriate books and handle them carefully.	
Children will understand how books are organized.	Children will understand how books are organized.	Children will understand how books are organized.	Children will understand how to follow books in different languages and how a book is organized. Children will read simple words and identify text by reading books.
Children will recognize letters and familiar words in simple texts.	Children will recognize letters and familiar words in simple texts.	Children will recognize letters and familiar words in simple texts.	Children will recognize letters and familiar words in simple texts.
Children will use pictures, symbols and familiar letters and words to communicate meaning, show awareness of some (symbols, letters and words), for the different purposes of writing.	Children will use pictures, symbols and familiar letters to communicate meaning, show awareness of some of the different purposes of writing.	Children will use pictures, symbols and familiar letters and words to communicate meaning, show awareness of some (symbols, letters and words), for the different purposes of writing.	Children will use pictures, symbols and familiar letters and words to communicate to express their creativity and imagination. Children will write to communicate meaning, showing an awareness of some of the different purposes of writing.
			Children will read simple text, recognize familiar words from the text and making rhyming words.

b. Basic Mathematical Concepts

While the SNC follows the same set of competencies as earlier curriculums, in a couple of cases it significantly downgrades the ELOs.

- The expected understanding for quantity is shifted from 0-100 in Punjab Curriculum to 0-50 in SNC. The ELOs are updated accordingly.

Basic Mathematical Concepts			
Single National Curriculum 2020	National Curriculum 2007	Punjab ECCE Curriculum 2017	Sindh ECCE Curriculum 2018 (contains competencies for both 3-4 and 4-5 years)
Children will develop basic logical, critical, creative and problem-solving skills by demonstrating an understanding of the different attributes of objects (such as color, size, weight and texture) and match, sequence, sort and classify objects based on one/two attributes.	Children will demonstrate an understanding of the different attributes of objects, such as color, size, weight and texture, and match, sequence and classify objects based on one/two attributes. They will also engage in pattern-seeking and pattern-making using different attributes of objects.	Children will develop basic logical, critical, creative and problem-solving skills by demonstrating an understanding of the different attributes of objects, such as color, size, weight and texture, and match, sequence and classify objects based on one/two attributes.	Children will demonstrate an understanding of the different attributes of objects, such as color, size, weight and texture, and match, sequence and classify objects based on one/two attributes. They will also engage in pattern-seeking and pattern-making using different attributes of objects.
Children will develop a basic understanding of quantity, counting up to 50 and simple number operations of 0-9.	Children will develop a basic understanding of quantity, counting from 0-9 and of simple number operations.	Children will develop a basic understanding of quantity, counting up to 100 and simple number operations of 0-9.	Children will develop an understanding of quantity, counting up to 100 and simple number operations.
Children will recognize basic geometrical shapes and the position of objects in relation to each other and surroundings	Children will recognize basic geometrical shapes and the position of objects in relation to each other.	Children will recognize basic geometrical shapes and the position of objects in relation to each other.	Children will recognize basic geometrical shapes and the position of objects in relation to each other.
Children will develop an understanding of measurement.	Children will develop an understanding of measurement.	Children will develop an understanding of measurement.	Children will develop an understanding of measurement.
N/A	N/A	N/A	Children will develop and understanding of handling data.

c. World Around Us

The SNC develops significantly this domain.

- There is an additional competency and subsequent ELOs on recognizing the difference between living and non-living things.
- There is an additional competency on the introduction to uses of basic types of technology. Given the increased prevalence of tech-based learning, particularly after COVID-19, this is an important competency to have and is accompanied by a set of ELOs. However, there is no indication for how this competency could successfully be implemented in practice.

World Around Us			
Single National Curriculum 2020	National Curriculum 2007	Punjab ECCE Curriculum 2017	Sindh ECCE Curriculum 2018 (contains competencies for both 3-4 and 4-5 years)
Children will develop an understanding of how families are important and talk about their family history.	Children will develop an understanding of how families are important.	Children will develop an understanding of how families are important and talk about their family history.	Children will develop an understanding of how families are important.
Children will develop an understanding of the people and places around them.	Children will develop an understanding of the people and places around them.	Children will develop an understanding of the people and places around them.	Children will develop an understanding of their surroundings including people and places around them.
Children will recognize the differences between living and non-living things.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Children will recognize the plants and animals in their environment and explore their basic features and habitat.	Children will recognize the plants and animals in their environment and explore their basic features and habitat.	Children will recognize the plants and animals in their environment and explore their basic features and habitat.	Children will recognize the plants and animals in their environment and explore their basic features and habitat. Children will develop an understanding of the plants and animals and the need to care for and respect the environment.

Children will observe the weather and develop understanding of the seasons and their significance to people.	Children will observe the weather and develop an understanding of the seasons and their significance to people.	Children will observe the weather and develop an understanding of the seasons and their significance to people.	Children will observe the weather and develop an understanding of the seasons and their significance to people.
Children will develop a caring attitude towards the environment.	Children will develop a caring attitude towards the environment.	Children will develop a caring attitude towards the environment.	Children will demonstrate an understanding of natural and built environment and develop a caring attitude towards the environment.
Children will recognize and identify natural resources and physical features of Earth.	N/A	Children will recognize and identify natural resources and physical features of Earth.	Children will demonstrate an understanding of natural and built environment and develop a caring attitude towards the environment.
Children will be able to explore and use basic types of technology.	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	Children will develop an understanding of how people contribute to their communities in different ways.
N/A	N/A	N/A	Children will develop an understanding of their rights and responsibilities in order to participate in society.
N/A	N/A	N/A	Children will demonstrate an awareness that people in society are interdependent on each other, and that rights and duties should be upheld.

d. Physical Development and Health, Hygiene and Safety

Given the onset of COVID-19 and increased understanding of the crucial domain of physical development for children, the range of competencies to be achieved in SNC has to be wide and holistic. However, while the SNC follows the same competencies and ELOs and 2017 Punjab, it does not add anything new.

Physical Development and Health, Hygiene and Safety			
Single National Curriculum 2020	National Curriculum 2007	Punjab ECCE Curriculum 2017	Sindh ECCE Curriculum 2018 (contains competencies for both 3-4 and 4-5 years)
Children will develop a sense of balance, agility and coordination.	Children will develop a sense of balance, agility and coordination.	Children will develop a sense of balance, agility and coordination.	Children will develop a sense of balance, agility and coordination.
Children will have increased hand-eye coordination and the ability to handle tools and materials effectively.	Children will have increased hand-eye coordination and the ability to handle tools and materials effectively.	Children will have increased hand-eye coordination and the ability to handle tools and materials effectively.	Children will have increased hand-eye coordination and the ability to handle tools and materials effectively.
Children will develop sensory motor skills.	N/A	Children will develop sensory motor skills.	N/A
Children will develop an understanding of the importance of healthy, safe, and hygienic practices.	Children will develop an understanding of the importance of safe, hygienic practices.	Children will develop an understanding of the importance of safe, hygienic practices.	Children will develop an understanding of the importance of safe, hygienic practices.
Children will develop an understanding of personal safety and security.	N/A	Children will develop an understanding of personal safety and security.	N/A

e. Creative/Visual Arts

Similar to the physical and health domain, the creative/visual arts also follow the same competencies and ELOs set by earlier curriculum. This is a particularly missed opportunity considering how far creative arts domain can match with the concept of play-based learning.

Creative/Visual Arts			
Single National Curriculum 2020	National Curriculum 2007	Punjab ECCE Curriculum 2017	Sindh ECCE Curriculum 2018 (contains competencies for both 3-4 and 4-5 years)
Children will express themselves through the use of drawings and colors.	Children will express themselves through the use of drawing and colors.	Children will express themselves through the use of drawing and colors.	Children will express themselves through the use of drawing and coloring.
Children will work with a variety of low cost and no cost/waste material to create craft project of their choice.	Children will work with a variety of low cost and waste material to create craft project of their choice.	Children will work with a variety of low cost and waste material to create craft project of their choice.	Children will work with a variety of low cost and waste material to create craft projects of their choice.
Children will experiment with a variety of materials to represent their observations and imagination, in the form of models/sculptures.	Children will experiment with a variety of materials to represent their observations and imagination, in the form of models/sculptures.	Children will experiment with a variety of materials to represent their observations and imagination, in the form of models/sculptures.	Children will experiment with a variety of materials to represent their observations and imaginations, in the form of models/sculptures.
Children will experiment with a variety of materials to represent their observations and imagination, in the form of models/sculptures.	Children will learn the skills for collage work and printing and use these in a variety of ways to create their own art pieces and patterns developing their fine motor skills.	Children will learn the skills for collage work and printing and use these in a variety of ways to create their own art pieces and patterns developing their fine motor skills.	Children will learn the skills for collage work and printing and use these in a variety of ways to create their own art pieces and patterns.
Children will observe, practice and explore various techniques of folding, cutting, pasting, tearing and weaving paper to make objects and patterns.	Children will observe, practice and explore various techniques of folding, cutting, pasting, tearing and weaving paper to make objects and patterns.	Children will observe, practice and explore various techniques of folding, cutting, pasting, tearing and weaving paper to make objects and patterns.	Children will observe, practice and explore various techniques of folding, cutting, pasting, tearing and weaving paper to make objects and patterns.

Children will listen to, identify and appreciate a variety of sound patterns, rhythms and rhymes as a form of expression.	Children will listen to, identify and appreciate a variety of sound patterns, rhythms and rhymes as a form of expression.	Children will listen to, identify and appreciate a variety of sound patterns, rhythms and rhymes as a form of expression.	Children will listen to and identify a variety of sound patterns and create their own rhythm and rhymes for poems.
Children will participate with increasing confidence in a variety of dramatic play activities to express themselves.	Children will participate with increasing confidence in a variety of dramatic play activities to express themselves.	Children will participate with increasing confidence in a variety of dramatic play activities to express themselves.	Children will participate with increasing confidence in a variety of dramatic play activities to express themselves.

4. Conclusion and Next Steps /Recommendations

It is to be acknowledged that the SNC ECCE curriculum 2020 draws upon NC ECE 2000 and also the provincial curricula. Further more the decision to share the SNC-ECCE 2020 with public for comments and inputs is also noteworthy and inclusive. For ITA it is privilege to be sharing some ideas for consideration on the basis of comparative research across key documents of ECCE. ITA remains deeply invested in foundational learning.

Overall, the SNC for Early Years is designed to set a high floor for quality of ECCE in Pakistan across all territories and aid in equalizing education.. There are certainly steps that the government can take in furthering this ambition and ensuring that the goals laid therein are achieved.

- **Utilizing Recent Research in Early Years:** Considering the scope of its ambition, SNC needs to add a lot of new insights in content and approaches for early years. Currently, it builds upon and at times simply follows, the frameworks developed by and competencies set previously in Punjab and Sindh ECE curriculums. There is also a glaring lack of insight from recent research in early years, particularly in two areas:
 1. *Executive function:* Recent research has conclusively demonstrated the significance of executive function in early years growth. These include competencies related but not limited to cognitive control, self-regulation, and work memory etc. Incorporating these competencies into the curriculum is crucial to child development and positive outcomes later on.
 2. *Play-based learning:* As updated research [shows](#), play-based learning is *meaningful, iterative, joyful, socially interactive, and actively engaging* for children which enables the development of a wide range of skills. Thus, there is a strong necessity to incorporate it into the curriculum as a central component and merely as an isolated side-activity. There are also examples from civil society in Pakistan on how to design curriculums/learning plans involving play-based learning and how to engage parents.

- **Inclusive Education:** Inclusive Education has become a key priority area globally with a growing recognition of the multiple dimensions of inclusion— ability, gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background, refugee status etc. While the SNC highlights ways in which IE can be achieved, one of the key dimensions of IE— integrated education for children with disabilities (CWDs)—is noticeably absent from SNC. There is thus a need to incorporate lessons from the provincial curriculums and education policies developed throughout the country.
- **Medium of Instruction and Localization:** SNC certainly upgrades over previous curriculums with regards to mother tongue. However, in its larger framework, the SNC still prioritizes Urdu and English as the language a child has to eventually shift towards. Therefore, it is important to have coordinated instructions for material development and pedagogical mechanism in mother tongue/local languages to be used for teaching. This is an essential step in order to ensure institutionalization of local language teaching within the various provinces of Pakistan and to facilitate improved learning standards universally.
- **Nurturing and Child Protection:** Child care and nurturing outside of school—equally important with regards to emotional growth, health and learning—has to be acknowledged as a fundamental component of a good ECCE program design. The SNC can serve as a good repository of the government’s view on this and the planning framework they envision for this component. However, the document itself does not mention child protection as a systematic process that involves caregivers, schools, and teachers. The government can integrate nurturing and child protection into the curriculum.
- **Implementation Mechanisms and Timeframe:** Along with this, the SNC has to incorporate lessons from the provincial ECCE systems where these ideas are to eventually be implemented. The lack of any comprehensive, holistic implementation guidelines also undercut any efficacy the SNC might have. Globally, the need for a 2-years progressive ECCE programme is duly recognized. A 2-year programme has enough space to cover a wide range of learning outcomes and prepare children for primary school, such as in Sindh. While the SNC also recognizes the need for a 2-year programme, it does not explicitly specify it as mandatory. However, to raise the floor for ECCE learning across Pakistan, a 2-year programme would be much more conducive.

Thank you

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Annex

Language and Literacy Recommendations

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Introduction

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) is a step in the right direction from the perspective of educational equity. The effort of the government in this direction is laudable. As a literacy specialist who has worked in both the low- and high- income education sector for over 8 years, my recommendations come from the lens of a practitioner who would like to see the SNC work out for all income groups and schooling systems by following global best practices in education. This brief focuses on some observations in the current ECCE and Grades 1-5 English document, and hopes to address the structural irregularities therein through recommendations for content as well as implementation.

Observations

The Language and Literacy sections of the current released government ECCE and Grades 1 - 5 documents provide guidance on language development but do not provide a clear structure in literacy development. Following are some observations seen in these documents that need to be worked on:

1. The process of reading is best viewed as a progression from simpler to more complex underlying skills. This progression is absent from the document.
2. The ECCE document provides some mention of emergent literacy skills like handling books and directionality of print (competency 5) and some phonological awareness skills like rhyming, alliteration, syllable segmentation (competency 3) in the early childhood setting, the correct sequence of these skills has not been identified.
3. The ECCE document also misses an essential stage of reading which is phonemic awareness development, or the ability to hear, identify and manipulate smallest unit of sounds in language. Together, phonological and phonemic awareness are key reading skills which are established prerequisites for later reading prowess.

4. In the ECCE document, recognition of letters and sounds (grapheme-phoneme correspondences) has taken precedence over the oral blending and segmenting skills mentioned above which are staples of a strong early childhood program (competency 6). The teaching of letters visually through flashcards is best reserved till after the oral sound skills are secure.
5. As we move to the Grades 1-5 English document, the lack of structure becomes more pronounced. The highest stage of reading which is simple letter-sound correspondences in the ECCE document moves directly into reading comprehension and critical thinking in the Grades 1-5 document (competency 2).
6. An important step of the reading process in Grades 1/2 which is higher-level word recognition is lost. Without an in-depth understanding of complex spelling patterns, learners are unable to decode complex words. These complex patterns are to be taught beginning Grade 1 and cemented by the end of Grade 2 via word work and analysis.
7. A key step in the reading process - Fluency - is also not addressed in the document. If students are not reading with speed, accuracy and intonation (the main skills in fluency) they are unable to process the cognitive load of comprehension. Fluency is not only linked with better comprehension, but also with improved student motivation which is a key consideration for English Language Learners (ELLs).

Recommendations

Reading is a complex cognitive, psycholinguistic and social activity which is grounded in developmental skills relating to attention, memory, language and motivation. A good reader needs to have an understanding of the alphabetic principle, an awareness that reading is about meaning, and sufficient fluency in reading.

In the earlier grades (preschool to grade 2) the focus is on allowing children to 'learn to read.' This process is a step-by-step progression moving from the oral awareness of sound systems to developing automatised fluency in reading and beginning to comprehend different levels of text. In grades 3 and above, the focus shifts to 'reading to learn.' From here on, students begin acquiring knowledge from texts and applying that knowledge in various ways. It is essential that a

reading programme respect and make room for this shift from learning to read to reading to learn.

It is recommended that the government facilitate the teaching of reading through a guidance document that explains a phased approach to the teaching of phonic knowledge and skills. This document should ideally cover:

- **Systematic, Synthetic Phonics:** The document should follow a systematic, synthetic approach to teaching phonics in line with the current research on the topic. Systematic means following a clear progression of sounds. Synthetic means beginning with individual phonemes and moving on to digraphs, alternative spellings and within word patterns.
- **Phased Approach:** Clear phases for the teaching of reading beginning from the most basic pre-literacy and oral skills to reading comprehension. Each phase should be allotted an expected timeline and move from adult-led activities to independent reading. A series of activities for each phase should be included in the document.
- **Word Work:** The program should provide detailed instruction on word analysis ranging from alphabetic to within word patterns, syllables, affixes and derivational relations.
- **Fluency:** The program should spend sufficient time on fluency development of young readers before it introduces comprehension-based activities. Sight words and sound patterns should lead to easily decodable fluency passages for each sound or sound pattern taught. Speed, accuracy and intonation of these passages should be assessed regularly.
- **Sequence:** Each phase should follow a clear teaching sequence of recap, teach, practice, apply, and assess. Assessments and core criteria should be provided to all teachers and they should be well-versed in identifying

In addition to the above content, the master trainers who provide training for implementing such a program should focus on the following aspects:

- **Teacher Training + Classroom Coaching:** Master trainers should be trained in the entire reading process across grades preschool to grade 5. Having literacy specialists in each school would be helpful. These trainers/specialists should have an understanding of literacy development and understand their role in

optimising it. A critical component in preparing these teachers is supervised, relevant clinical experience, providing ongoing coaching, and feedback, so that they develop their skills to apply their knowledge in practice.

- **Fidelity:** It is essential that teachers maintain fidelity to a clear reading curriculum. The reading curriculums for Phonics can be selected based on assessment criteria. As long as the reading program is explicit, systematic and synthetic and is used with high fidelity, consistently, the name of the program does not matter. Teachers should not switch programs in the middle.
- **Multisensory Approach:** Rather than use flashcards and worksheets, teachers should be given the tools to develop fun and engaging ways to teach literacy. Motivation is a key element when considering the ability and desire to read in earlier grades.
- **Assessment and Screening:** It is essential that assessment and screening is built into the reading programs taught. Regular screening for incremental phonics knowledge, tracking progress and frequent assessments can identify problem areas and help target them. In addition, they can also help identify learning difficulties.
- **Phonics supplemented with language and literacy-rich environments:** The first or default approach to teaching reading as suggested by research is Phonics. It should be the only approach emerging readers should use. Using other cueing strategies like picture reading or sight reading may confuse early readers. However, schools should incorporate age-appropriate, high quality literature to provide access to rich language and content in these books. Thus, students are exposed not only to basic phonic readers, but also richer texts that are above their independent reading levels.