# Analyzing Alignment of Grade-V Islamic Studies Textbook Published by the Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board (PCTB) with the Objectives of Single National Curriculum (SNC)

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#### Abstract

This study was conducted to assess if the Islamic Studies textbook of grade V published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore was aligned with the objectives of teaching Islamic Studies as outlined in the Single National Curriculum (SNC). The qualitative study was conducted by considering the objectives of teaching Islamic studies as outlined in SNC and whether the Islamic Studies textbook of grade V published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore succeeds in achieving those objectives. The analysis was done by using two instruments after the literature review. The first instrument is called the Curriculum-Textbook (CT) alignment checklist and considers the contents of the Islamic Studies textbook published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore book on four basic parameters. The second instrument is called the Curriculum-Textbook Alignment Rubric (C-T Alignment Rubric) which considered the contents of a Grade V Islamic Studies textbook published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore on a wide range of parameters. The results of the study revealed that the Islamic Studies textbook of grade V was generally aligned with the objectives of teaching Islamic Studies as outlined in the SNC. However, the textbook did not adequately address one

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of the core objectives of the SNC: to promote social inclusiveness and religious harmony. It is recommended that future editions of the textbook should incorporate these fundamental objectives of SNC to create an inclusive and tolerant society which was one of the primary objectives of the Single National Curriculum (SNC).

*Keywords:* alignment, goals, and objectives of SNC, Islamic Studies book, Single National Curriculum (SNC)

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#### Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in the socio-economic development of any country (Mahmood, 2010). In the present era, education also helps in strengthening the ideological foundations of the nation. Every state sets different national objectives for its education system (Bloom, 1956). These objectives are prepared to keep in view social, religious, regional, and global obligations. To achieve these national goals, a curriculum document is prepared which serves as the guiding document for educationists (Panezai, 2019). This curriculum document outlines the contents and topics for each subject which should be made part of the textbook. It also highlights teaching strategies and methodologies which should be used to impart intended knowledge among students. For example, the National Education Policy (2017) served as a visionary document that was prepared after considering the national objective of the state.

All the textbooks that are taught at the basic level of education are made keeping in view the broad guidelines set forth by the curriculum policy document. If there is no alignment between textbooks and curriculum documents, the ability to achieve national objectives will be hampered (Panezai, 2019). The concept of a Single National Curriculum (2021) was conceived with the objective of "one nation, one curriculum". The curriculum document of Islamic Studies in SNC (2021) was designed after a thorough analysis of the syllabi of 2006 and 2017. The government of Pakistan gave the mandate to the Ministry of Education to design national education policies for Pakistan which clearly state the objectives of education in Pakistan. All the education policies which are formed subsequently should consider national education objectives.

In most countries around the world, basic education is the sole responsibility of the state. However, Pakistan is unique in its characteristics where the state is unable to provide basic education to all its children through public schools. According to UNICEF, there are 22.8 million out-of-school children in Pakistan between the age of 5 to 16 (Giving Every Child Right to Education, 2022).

To cater to ever increasing demand for education due to the population explosion, the state of Pakistan supported the growth of private schools in the country. As a result, the concept of private schools is very prevalent in the country. These private schools are usually backed by publishing companies that publish their textbook. Till 2021, all private schools were free to use their textbooks which suited their ideas of the school. This created a national divide in the state of Pakistan. To take care of this national divide, the state of Pakistan made it compulsory for all publishers to follow the national curriculum document for publishing or printing their textbooks. Such a policy document was issued in the year 2020 under the name of "Single National Curriculum "and disseminated to all stakeholders so that textbooks could be prepared to keep in view the guidelines set forth by the parent document.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The study aims to highlight the gaps between the objectives of teaching Islamic studies, as outlined in the Single National Curriculum (SNC), and the Islamic Studies textbook of Grade V published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB). The findings of this study can serve as a basis for evaluating the Grade-V Islamic Studies textbook, and future improvements may be made while considering the recommendations from this research study.

#### **Literature Review**

Numerous studies have been conducted by different researchers, analyzing the alignment between the national education policy and textbooks of various subjects. For instance, Saeed and Rashid (2014) analyzed the alignment of the chemistry textbook with the curriculum document and recommended certain improvements to upgrade its quality. Similarly, Hashmi, Hussain, and Shoaib (2018) conducted a similar study on the mathematics textbook for grade VIII and found that it was well aligned with the national education policy (2013). Khurshid and Ahmed (2017) also analyzed the biology textbook in line with the curriculum document. However, no study was available in the textbook of Islamic Studies. This gap was identified,

leading to a conscious effort to check the alignment of the Grade-V Islamic Studies textbook with the goals of SNC (2021).

Pakistan is a developing country that allocates 2.5 percent of its GDP to education (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2021). Historically, education has been one of the most debated topics in Pakistan, but the required objectives have not been fully achieved. Various successive governments have made efforts to raise the level of education, as Pakistan is a signatory of the sustainable development goals (Sustainable Development Goals, 2022) and needs to improve the quality and quantity of its education. One crucial factor in enhancing the quality of education is focusing on the content of different textbooks.

Curriculum development has been significantly emphasized in Pakistan, and historically, different political regimes have used the curriculum to serve their agendas. During the Zia era, the Islamization of textbooks in Pakistan was conducted to achieve specific objectives (Hussain, 2009), influenced by Western superpowers. However, after the West achieved its objectives, Pakistan faced challenges dealing with religious extremism, sectarianism, and violence.

Soon after 9/11, which changed the course of history, Pakistan came under strict scrutiny to curb tendencies of violence and religious extremism (Gul, 2004). The intent to mold the curriculum as per the desires of Western superpowers faced strict resistance from religious leaders within the country, resulting in the government's inability to reform its curriculum. However, the APS attack (Afzal, 2014), involving the massacre of young school children in Peshawar, jolted the entire nation, renewing a sense of commitment among policymakers to give a more inclusive and moderate touch to the curriculum. Yet not much progress could be made in this regard.

Curriculum reform has been included in the election manifestos of many political organizations, including the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) (https://www.insaf.pk/content/manifesto, 2018), which emphasized a strategic level shift in education with a strong focus on the curriculum. As part of this effort, PTI coined the term Single National Curriculum (SNC, 2021), aiming to conceive one curriculum and medium of instruction for all students in Pakistan to reduce the socio-economic divide and create a more inclusive society. The basic objective of the Single National Curriculum is to provide a uniform system of education, including the medium of instruction, curriculum, and assessment methods, to promote national integrity and social cohesion among the masses.

The following were the major objectives of SNC (2021):

- Every child has the right to access a fair and equal opportunity for high-quality education.
- Education plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion and national integration.
- Efforts to reduce educational content disparities between the public and private sectors are essential.
- Providing every student with a fair and equal opportunity for upward social mobility is crucial.
- Equity in education is a fundamental principle that needs to be upheld.
- Ensuring the all-inclusive development of children in line with international trends and state objectives is a priority.
- Facilitating social and community connections among teachers and students from different provinces is important for a cohesive education system.

The following were the key considerations of the Single National Curriculum (2021):

- Quran and Sunnah teachings
- o Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal vision
- Constitutional framework
- o National Policies, Aspirations, and National Standards
- Alignment with the goals & targets of Sustainable Developmental Goals-4
- Latest international trends in teaching, learning & assessment.
- $\circ$  An approach toward learning which is based on outcomes.
- Focus on Values, Life Skills Based, and Inclusive Education
- Respect & appreciation for diverse cultures & Religions in the local and global contexts
- Promotion of intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, emotional, social, and physical development of learners

- Move away from rote memorization and focus on Project, Inquiry, and Activity Based Learning
- Development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills including Analytical, Critical, and Creative Thinking.
- Use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT)
- Alignment with Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)"

In addition to broad guidelines for overall curriculum development, specific objectives were prepared for teaching Islamic Studies. The content of the Grade V textbook published by the Punjab Curriculum & Textbook Board (PCTB) was selected to achieve these objectives. The following are the objectives.

- Students will be able to state the basic beliefs of Islam.
- Students will be able to identify the five pillars of Islam and their significance.
- Students will be able to recite the Holy Quran with Tajweed and understand its meaning.
- Students will be able to identify the main themes of the Quran and explain how the Quran can be applied to their own lives.
- Students will be able to demonstrate good moral character in daily life.
- Students will be able to appreciate the contributions of Muslim scholars and thinkers throughout history.
- Students will be able to love their homeland, promote national unity and security, and protect ideological borders.
- Students will be able to adopt good morals in daily life, such as service to people, brotherhood and equality, patience and tolerance, discipline, truthfulness, modesty, keeping promises, forgiveness, and tolerance.
- Students will be able to avoid all forms of immoral behavior, such as wasteful spending, pride and arrogance, display, and hypocrisy.
- Students will be able to establish national unity by overcoming linguistic, regional, provincial, religious, and sectarian thinking.

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- Students will be able to establish a national identity by dedicating themselves to the spirit of tolerance, and patience and to be able to consider the followers of other religions as well as others.
- Students will be able to be aware of national and international responsibilities and play the role of a responsible citizen.
- Students will be able to take pride in the glorious past of Muslims and make great Muslim figures as a beacon for them.
- Students will be able to believe that Islam is a universal religion and a complete code of life for every sphere of life.
- Students will be able to use modern science and technology in the light of Islamic teachings.
- Students will be able to make positive and appropriate use of modern tools and means of communication.
- Students will be able to understand the importance of knowledge and awaken the spirit of research, reflection, prudence, and research.
- Students will be able to understand the contemporary trends of the present age from an Islamic perspective and find solutions to their problems.
- Students will be able to understand the true spirit of Pakistan in the light of the Quran and Sunnah and play an active role in making the Kingdom of Pakistan an Islamic welfare state.
- Students will be able to take care of their mental and physical health by keeping in mind the principles of hygiene in the light of the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah.
- Students will be able to participate in activities such as cleaning, tree planting, and water conservation campaigns while understanding the benefits and protection of the natural environment.
- Students will be able to build individual, family, and social life according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah without being affected by cultural invasions that conflict with Islamic values and traditions.

### **Research Objective**

Keeping in view the goals of the Single National Curriculum (2021), the following is the objective for this research work:

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• To explore the alignment between the objectives of teaching Islamic Studies as outlined in the Single National Curriculum (2021) and the textbook of Islamic Studies of Grade V published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board

# **Research Question**

The following is the research question:

• Are the objectives of teaching Islamic Studies as outlined in the Single National Curriculum (2021) and textbook of Islamic Studies of Grade V published by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board aligned with each other?

# **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study was qualitative in nature and focused on assessing the available documents. The research is based on content analysis and the following documents were carefully examined throughout the course of this study:

- 1. National Curriculum of Islamic Studies for Grade V, Ministry of Education Government of Pakistan, Islamabad
- 2. Textbook of Islamic Studies for Grade V published by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore.

# Instrumentation

The instruments which have been used for this study were developed by Saeed and Rashid (2013) for one of their research projects titled "Alignment between Chemistry Curriculum and Textbooks at Secondary Level". These instruments were named as:

- 1. Curriculum-Textbook Alignment Rubric (C-T Alignment Rubric) (Saeed & Rashid, 2013).
- 2. Curriculum-Textbook Alignment Checklist (C-T Alignment Checklist) (Saeed & Rashid, 2013).

These instruments were designed after a review of similar studies (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 2005; Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2007). They were validated through the opinions of experts in the field of curriculum/material development and training at the Institute of Education & Research, University of Punjab.

The first instrument, i.e., the C-T Alignment Checklist, is a fourpoint scale that assesses the alignment of the textbook with the national curriculum. It includes items about the best practices around the globe for alignment procedures.

The second instrument named C-T Alignment Rubric is a more detailed instrument that assesses the alignment of the textbook at three levels: macro, micro, and chapter-wise. The macro-level assessment examines the physical features of the textbook, such as typography and balance of units/chapters. The micro-level assessment checks the alignment of the objectives of teaching Islamic studies as outlined in the national curriculum with the content of the textbook. The chapter-wise assessment analyzes the textbook in detail to gauge its alignment with the specific objectives.

#### **Content Analysis and Findings**

The first instrument i.e., C-T Alignment Checklist was a four-point scale. This scale focused on four basic points i.e., objectives, content, learning activities, and assessment which needed to be considered for checking the alignment of objectives of teaching Islamic Studies as outlined in the Single National Curriculum (2021) with the textbook.

#### i. **Objectives**

The textbook partially addressed the objectives of the single national curriculum but fell short in certain areas, particularly objective numbers 10 and 11. These objectives aimed at promoting inclusivity, respect for other religions, and addressing sectarianism.

In terms of inclusivity, the Islamic Studies book did not focus on respecting other religions or acknowledging their existence, limiting students' exposure to diversity. The emphasis remained on a rigid interpretation of Islam, neglecting the importance of appreciating and understanding other belief systems.

The author of the textbook did not mention names of other religions which could have given students the ability to relate directly. The word used in the text has always been "other religions." This does not allow students to relate to real-world situations and as a result, they see religion only through their interpretations.

Another key objective of the single national curriculum was to encourage critical thinking and analysis, moving away from rote memorization. However, the Islamic Studies textbook failed to motivate students to think critically and relate Islamic teachings to real-world issues. The writer missed an opportunity to engage students intellectually and encourage them to apply Islamic principles to contemporary challenges.

#### ii. Textbook content

The textbook contents were completely in line with specific guidelines set forth for designing the curriculum of Islamic Studies. However, the content did not do justice to the overall objectives of SNC which wanted to promote social cohesion and national integrity. Islamic Studies being a fundamental textbook should have included more content to promote religious tolerance, social cohesion, and national integrity. A similar study was undertaken in the UAE to check tolerance in religious textbooks and the results revealed that teaching tolerance in religious books helps to reduce extremist mindset (Alhashmi, Bakali, & Baroud, 2020).

Moreover, Khoirunisa, Suryaman, and Yanto (2021) argue that Indonesian EFL textbooks used for moral education in ELT do include pictorial representations alongside the textual content. The researchers found that these pictorial aids play a crucial role in helping students to better relate to the values of tolerance and social integration, making it easier for them to understand and apply these principles in their daily lives (Khoirunisa et al, 2021) further emphasize that incorporating such visual elements in educational materials for kids significantly enhances their ability to adopt these values. However, no such pictorial depictions were found in the textbook of Islamic Studies published by PCTB.

#### iii. Learning activities

Learning activities enhance the interest of students in learning (Reid,2007). Although In the Islamic Studies textbook, learning activities have been outlined at the end of each chapter, however, the quality of these learning activities is far from ideal. Learning activities were only limited to classroom activity and did not give teachers or students leverage to take these activities outside the classroom. This deprives the intellectual upbringing of students where they will be unable to relate Islamic teachings to daily life activities.

### iv. Assessment of students' learning

After a thorough analysis of the contents of all chapters, it was revealed that assessment methods focused only on measuring the lower cognitive abilities of its students and did not cater to higher learning cognitive abilities as they failed to appeal to the creative and analytical abilities of students. All the questions that were mentioned in the exercise primarily assessed the memory of the student and did not assess the higher-order thinking ability of the student.

The second instrument was named as C-T Alignment Rubric. To further check the alignment of the goals of SNC, the textbook of grade V was cross-checked with a second instrument as well and the results are as follows:

### 1. Physical features

Although the physical features of a textbook do not play a direct role in the achievement of the objectives of SNC, it is still important to create a level of interest for students. Here it should be commended that Significant effort was made by the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board to improve the physical look of the textbook of Islamic Studies and the book impresses on its feel. However, the quality of the page and the quality of binding is something that can still be improved.

### 2. Chapter/Unit Division

In the latest document for SNC, two chapters were added which have significantly increased the volume of content. The book consisted of seven sections which consisted of a total number of twenty-eight chapters. Considering that the first four chapters are meant for the Nazra Quran and would take a significant amount of time for kids to learn by heart, limited time is left for students to sufficiently understand as well as perform activities in the remaining number of chapters. Following table 1 is the breakdown of the chapter page-wise.

Table 1

Breakdown of the chapter page-wise for Grade V Islamic Studies book Chapter Number Length of Chapter

Chapter Number	Length of Chapter
Chapter 1	9 Pages
Chapter 2	14 Pages
Chapter 3	20 Pages
Chapter 4	6 Pages
Chapter 5	6 Pages
Chapter 6	10 Pages
Chapter 7	7 Pages

The size of the book also feels bigger than usual. In future updates, it is recommended that volume, as well as size, should be reduced to have effective learning and focus on quantity may be reduced.

# 3. Curriculum Linkage

To check curriculum linkages, the curriculum document of Islamic Studies was analyzed in detail. The curriculum document outlined topics that are supposed to be taught to students. Following Table 2 is the list of topics.

Table 2

Breakdown of the topics for Grade V Islamic Studies book

	Chapter Number	Topics
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Chapter 1	Quran & Hadith
Chapter 2	Faith and Religious Practices
Chapter 3	Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
Chapter 4	Behaviors and Manners
Chapter 5	Social Matters and Dealings
Chapter 6	Prophets
Chapter 7	Islamic Teachings and Present-
	day Needs

The difficulty level of topics gradually increased in every class. It also helped students to build on the knowledge they had gathered in their previous class.

#### 4. Specific objectives

The concept of SNC was conceived to promote the idea of social cohesion and national unity. However, the book fell short of its fundamental aim as it did not promote the idea of diversity and inclusiveness in society since there was no mention of different sects that existed within Islam. In none of the books, the idea was promoted that different people may have different interpretations of Islamic teachings. And as a good Muslim, every person should respect differences of opinion. Furthermore, Islam teaches us to have respect for other religions as well as followers of the religion. However, no such ideas were promoted by any of the books.

#### 5. Instructional plan and assessment activities

The book of Islamic Studies for Grade V did not mention any instructional plan for teacher to conduct their lectures. All the text within the chapter is given in a descriptive form with no instructions for the teacher. Keeping in view the lengthy size of the book, if adding an instruction plan within the same book is not possible, a separate handbook may have been issued for the guidance of teachers.

### 6. Irrelevant topics in the textbooks

During the evaluation of the Islamic Studies textbook for Grade V published by PCTB, a comprehensive assessment was conducted to determine the presence of irrelevant topics. It is noteworthy that the textbooks strictly adhered to the guidelines prescribed for the Islamic Studies curriculum. As a result, no irrelevant subjects were identified, and all the content included in the textbooks remained in alignment with the prescribed guidelines.

### 7. Relevance of assessment activities with the learning goals

A thorough analysis was conducted to assess the relevance of all the assessment activities to the intended student learning objectives. The aim was to ensure that the assessment methods employed were effectively aligned with the goals of student learning. The results of this analysis revealed that the assessment activities were found to be in synchronization with the learning objectives, affirming their appropriateness in gauging students' progress and achievement.

# 8. Connection between general and specific objectives

A major misalignment was found between the general objectives of SNC and the specific content of the Islamic Studies book. One of the objectives of SNC was to promote tolerance for other sects and religions and to help students think above their differences. However, the book of Islamic Studies did not sufficiently touch these topics which were one of the major objectives of SNC. This has been explained sufficiently through other instruments as well.

# Recommendations

The Single National Curriculum (SNC) of 2021 was a commendable step towards the goal of "one nation, one curriculum," with the primary objective of promoting social cohesion and national integration. However, upon closer examination of the Grade-V Islamic Studies textbook, it becomes evident that it falls short of achieving this fundamental goal. The textbook does not effectively promote the idea of coexistence with individuals from diverse religious, sectarian, regional, and value-based backgrounds. To address these concerns, it is strongly recommended that the updated version of the Islamic Studies textbook emphasize the principles of peaceful coexistence and respect for differences of opinion. These values are vital for fostering social cohesion and national integrity. Additionally, incorporating more content to promote concepts of religious harmony, while acknowledging different sects of Islam and encouraging students to respect the beliefs of others, regardless of their religion, sect, or values, is essential.

Furthermore, the textbook should give greater emphasis to the activities suggested at the end of each chapter. Adopting a more practical approach to the content through meaningful activities will enhance the students' learning experience.

An important aspect missing in the Grade-5 Islamic Studies textbook published by PCTB is the use of pictorial representation to illustrate different values being taught. Including images of children dressed in various attires, representing diverse social and cultural backgrounds, would have been an excellent opportunity to enhance understanding and appreciation for diversity. Regrettably, this potential was overlooked.

Additionally, there is room for improvement in the quality of the textbook's binding. Many students found it necessary to get the bookbinding re-done to ensure its usability throughout the academic year. To further support teachers in creating a meaningful learning environment, it is recommended that an additional handbook be prepared, outlining an instructional plan and assessment activities. This handbook would assist teachers in effectively preparing their lessons and conducting assessments during class hours.

By addressing these suggestions and shortcomings, the Islamic Studies textbook can better achieve its objectives and contribute to a more inclusive and cohesive society, fostering respect for all individuals and their diverse beliefs.

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