

Alignment of Punjab Textbook Board's English Textbooks with the National Curriculum for English (2006): An Evaluative Study

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Abstract

In Pakistan, English language textbooks are considered the most authentic and useful material for language teaching and are expected to be designed by following the objectives stated in the National Curriculum for English, 2006. The federal government has complete control over designing and selecting the content of the books. Pakistani society has a religious, cultural and ethnic diversity that seeks a curriculum which promotes national identity and unity among various groups. As it is a developing country, where traditional methods and techniques are used to teach language, hence, it becomes necessary to minutely evaluate the teaching material. For this purpose, textbooks taught at intermediate-level English classes are evaluated following the objectives stated in the National Curriculum. The data has been taken from the four textbooks taught at HSSC in Punjab, Pakistan. This research employs a qualitative approach to analyse the exercises of various types of deviations and the objectives of the curriculum. The research argues that the textbook exercises are partially aligned with students' learning outcomes of benchmarks, standards and competencies mentioned in the National Curriculum. The study also suggests ways to synchronize the textbooks with the policy document which would ultimately improve the overall English language skills of the students.

Keywords: competency, standard, benchmark, SLOs

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Introduction

In Pakistan, English language textbooks are considered the most authentic and useful material for language teaching. They are expected to be designed following the objectives stated in the National Curriculum for English, 2006. Pakistani society has a religious, cultural and ethnic diversity and the objectives of teaching a curriculum are expected to promote a national identity and unity among various groups. This is also pointed out by Shoukat and Ghani (2015) suggest that “historically, the textbooks of English taught at higher secondary level in Punjab have remained under the control of political, religious and social ideologies”. The federal government has complete control over designing and selecting the content of the books. Therefore, the national agenda is promoted through these textbooks to bring cohesion to society. Shoukat and Ghani (2015) also state “Textbooks are meant to help nations to achieve their national goals, and strengthen their ideological foundations. Textbooks are the effective way of ruling the consciousness of people”.

As textbooks play a crucial role in developing the mindset of the learners through the content, therefore, require a very minute and careful selection of the content. Helm (1958) is of the view that “the textbook is a valuable source of information and the ideas it expresses may influence students' thinking; careful selection, therefore, is essential”. This careful selection has given leverage to the federal government in Pakistan to enhance its influence so much in designing and selecting the content of the textbooks which undermines the other important stakeholders and marginalizes to an extent just to accept and promote whatever has been designed and selected for them. This shows the significant control of the federal government and is pointed out by Naseem (2014) that “textbooks in Pakistan are often badly designed and badly produced by approved publishers. None of the key stakeholders (parents, teachers, school administrators, students, and/or publishers) have a say in the content of the textbook”.

The role of the federal government In designing the curriculum starts from the first education policy in the 1950s but it has increased over a period of time and taken the full control in all aspects deemed necessary to promote a national agenda synchronized with Islamization. Afzal (2015) states that “since the 1980s, historians and scholars have criticized Pakistan’s official curriculum and textbooks, have documented biases and historical errors in

them, and have argued that the books promote intolerance and bigotry". This increased role of the federal government has led to marginalizing the strata of society other than Sunni consciously or unconsciously. Giunchi (2007) states that from the perspective of national unity, curricular reform, by denying cultural diversity, has nurtured resentment and encouraged ethnic separatist forces. Denial of heterogeneity has also increased sectarian strife, as has been made evident by Shi'a protests in Gilgit since 2003 against the introduction of Sunni-orientated texts (Giunchi, 2007). The indoctrination of government schools, which cater to the lower middle class and the poor, is also likely to foster resentment against the Westernized elite and give it a religious slant

There are various functions of the textbooks such as the promotion of different ideologies such as hidden curriculum and the foremost is the achievement of intended objectives envisaged in the policy document. As Pakistan is a developing country, where the teachers use traditional methods and techniques to teach language, hence, it becomes necessary to minutely evaluate the teaching material from all angles. It is also stated by Shoukat and Ghani (2015) as:

The function of textbooks is to manifest the ideologies and philosophies of the curriculum. Textbooks influence a person's worldview, and the gravity of influence depends on the teacher how the teacher imparts the knowledge provided in the textbooks, and what method of teaching is acquired etc. In this regard, how a teacher perceives textbooks is the main factor on which the whole process of education depends. (Shoukat & Ghani, 2015, p. 275)

Apart from the role of a tool to project national identities and ideologies, the main focus of the National Curriculum, 2006, usually neglected, is to make the learners global citizens who can participate in world affairs as aware and thinking individuals instead of rote learners. Giunchi (2007) states as:

The ideological reorientation of Pakistani textbooks has had many adverse effects. From the perspective of national development, rather than promoting critical thinking and imparting knowledge and skills that are needed in an increasingly globalized economy, the Islamisation of the educational system has stultified creativity and promoted an uncritical and simplistic vision. (Giunchi, 2007, p. 378)

The curriculum is a vast spectrum which covers all the aspects of the learning process ranging from the classroom environment to the improvement in the non-academic environment. The focus of this study is to evaluate one aspect of the curriculum which is to see the alignment of the textbooks' exercises with the stated objectives of the National Curriculum. This point is further elaborated by Shoukat & Ghani (2015) who state that "to what extent, textbooks of English language are effective to transform curriculum guidelines into syllabus" (p. 275). Books play an important role in the education system. As stated by Carter (1987) "A textbook that is up to date, well written and accurate, and attractive is a powerful tool in bringing about change in the lives of students". Because of their importance, the governments of different countries pay special attention to designing the textbooks in terms of their objectives, content etc. As textbooks play a significant role, especially in language teaching classes, many governments conduct studies to see the alignment of the textbooks with the desired objectives. Revision of textbooks may bring positive changes in the overall language teaching environment, but it cannot guarantee to produce the desired results if it is not appropriately revised according to the parameters mentioned in the policy document.

Furthermore, some argue that textbooks are not that important because they are superficial and unable to cover the diversified and broader needs of the users. Apart from this discussion, whether the textbooks are suitable or not for teaching a language, their importance cannot be undermined because of the consistency and systematicity they provide in the overall learning process. Genesee (2001) stated "Evaluation in TESOL settings is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information. This process enables us to make informed decisions through which student achievements will increase and educational programs will be more successful". Textbooks systematically help the language learning process. They also help the teacher to use ready-made material that could be tailored according to the needs analysis of the class. Polikoff (2015) states that textbooks affect students directly through daily use and indirectly through teachers' use of texts to guide instruction. There are three stages to undergo the material evaluation of the textbook as suggested by Ellis (1997), such as pre-use, in-use and post-use. Pre-use evaluation examines the future or potential performance of a textbook, in-use evaluation examines the currently used material, and post-use evaluation is reflective and is used after the textbooks have been used in a specific institution or situation.

The curriculum is not just a collection of books, rather it is a means to academic learning, based on physical, psychological and social activities. It can be called an umbrella term, which includes syllabi, intellectual growth, aims and objectives. It should be precise based on the needs of the learners and should by design measure the quality and effectiveness of the learning process. Saylor and Alexander (cited in Farooq, 1994) also supported these arguments, "The curriculum is the total of the school's efforts to influence learning, whether in the classroom, on the playground, or out of school" (p.25). In the light of facts stated above, there should not even be an iota of doubt to contend that curriculum holds a pivotal place in any educational system. Moreover, revision and assessment of the curriculum are important factors. By such measures, new inputs based on revision and assessment may be included to improve the teaching and learning process.

The curriculum is mostly prepared by the federal or provincial governments having standards, benchmarks and students' learning outcomes. Curriculum is mostly misunderstood with the syllabi that are comprised of books and reference material etc. It is not a collection of texts, instructions and guidelines to be followed as prescribed. Rather, in the broader perspective, it is an umbrella term that includes multiple activities, ranging from mental to physical, abstract to concrete and psychological to social grooming. Oliver (1965) is also of the opinion and states, Curriculum is something to be felt rather than something to be seen. Hence, curriculum is not only a set of learning and instructional material applied in an academic setting and gauging of these aspects a broader term that encompasses environment, teachers, syllabi, aims and objectives and the foremost aesthetic and intellectual development. It also covers the formal and informal aspects of learning that influence the studies and the practical life.

Curriculum is the systematic way of achieving the aims and objectives; hence, it can be considered as a backbone of any educational activity. Polikoff (2015) says that Curriculum materials may be among the most important influences on teacher. However, according to him, it is also important that the material provided to the teacher should be clear and easy to implement so that it may provide the intended outcomes. Polikoff (2015) further states that the theories of standards-based reform argue that teachers must receive clear and mutually reinforcing messages from standards, assessments, and curriculum materials about the content they should be teaching. He further pointed out that the weaknesses by which the

Curriculum is the not implemented completely is the non-alignment of the textbooks with the objectives of the document “a second likely contributor to weak standards implementation is the poor quality and alignment of textbooks and curriculum materials” (Hill, 2001; Spillane, 20). Polikoff (2015) is also of the view that textbooks affect students directly through daily use and indirectly through teachers' use of texts to guide instruction (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Large major cities of teachers and students use textbooks frequently (Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012), even in an era when curriculum materials are increasingly available online. To be sure, teachers do not passively implement textbooks as written—rather, teachers adapt them as they are implemented (e.g., Barr, 1988; Freeman & Porter, 1989; Remillard, 2005; Sosniak & Stodolsky, 1993). Nevertheless, textbooks affect what is taught and what students learn (Schmidt et al., 2001; Schmidt, Houang, & Cogan, 2002). In mathematics, in particular, topics that are not included in textbooks are unlikely to be taught (Stein, Remillard, & Smith, 20). Owing to its importance, a curriculum should have a vast spectrum and should cover all types of learning requirements of the students. It further elaborates that the content of schooling in all of its forms (written or unwritten) is called the curriculum. However, the content of the curriculum is usually decided by the state to fulfill the obvious and hidden agenda of the state. Usually, the hidden agenda which can be termed as inclusive curriculum’ or the politics of curriculum is not quite prominent, but it works in its way in shaping the minds of the students. He has further pointed out in the following lines:

In the US, and the most societies the public schools are the agents of the state, and the state is run by those in power, the definition of the state, whether it is secular or sacred, becomes the screening framework for what is eventually included and excluded in the school curriculum. (Smith, 1992, p.6)

Consequently, it is mainly the textbooks that impact language teaching and learning. Textbooks play an important role, especially in English language teaching and learning. These are the primary sources of learning. Therefore, they need to be revised and modified according to the changing needs and requirements. In Pakistan, the curriculum for English language grades I-XII was revised in 2005-06 with the intention to make it comparable with the international standards. It is important to evaluate that this basic source of learning is fulfilling the requirements of teachers,

students and the examiners. Therefore, the contents of textbooks should be modified, and if required, altered according to the new circumstances, needs and challenges.

The study could be significant as it would provide a better understanding of the textbooks taught at HSSC in the Punjab. It will also provide guidelines to address the existing flaws of the textbooks and synchronize them with the SLOs of the National Curriculum.

This research endeavors to seek answers of the following research question

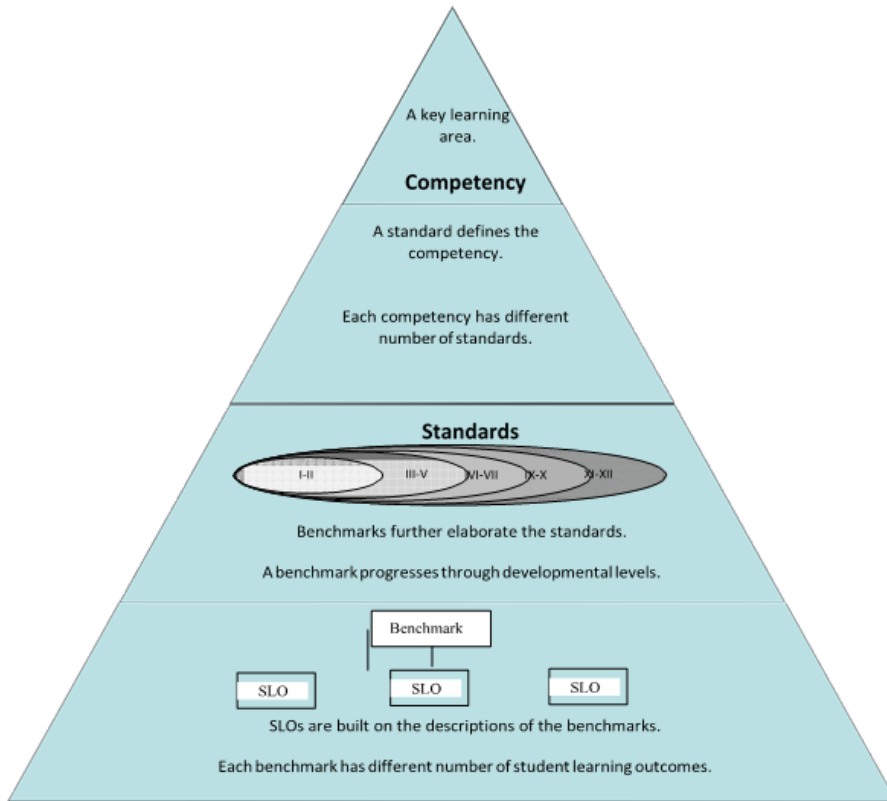
1. How far Intermediate English Textbooks (PTTB) are in alignment with National Curriculum for English (2006)?

Methodology

Punjab Textbook Board has published four books for the intermediate students. Two books: Book-1 (short stories) and Book-3 (plays and poems) are taught in Grade-11 whereas Book-2 (prose) and a Novel; MR. Chips are taught in Grade-12. The data has been taken from all the exercises of the four English textbooks taught at the Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) level in Punjab, Pakistan. The study has been delimited to see only the alignment of the exercises of the textbooks with the objectives of the National Curriculum for English, 2006. The analytical framework of the study is applied by the National Curriculum which has different competencies, standards and benchmarks and the exercises of the textbooks will be evaluated in the light of these competencies, standards and benchmarks. It is being evaluated by using the qualitative approach which can provide a framework for analysis and also encompasses summation and calculations involved in the analysis. The study suggests the ways to synchronize the textbooks with the policy document which would improve the overall English language skills of the students.

Figure 1

The Organization of the Curriculum Framework



(Adapted from “National Curriculum for English Language: Grades I – XII”, 2006: 6)

National Curriculum for English Language Grades I-XII, 2006 has set Competencies (Cs), Standards (Ss), Benchmarks (Bs) and Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Competency

A key learning area

Standards

These define the competency by specifying broadly the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students will acquire, should know and be able to do in a particular key learning area during twelve years of schooling.

Benchmarks

The benchmarks further elaborate the standards, indicating what the students will accomplish at the end of each of the five developmental levels to meet the standard. These provide at a glance, the continuum of the English language learning e.g., benchmarks for grades I and II define what the students will be able to do by the end of grade II.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

These are built on the descriptions of the benchmarks and describe what students will accomplish at the end of each grade.

Analysis

The data is taken from the exercises of all four textbooks of the Punjab Textbook Board taught at the Intermediate level. Exercises of each book will be evaluated separately. The focus of the study is to see whether the questions of the textbooks are aligned with the objectives of the Curriculum or not. The study will also see which competencies and questions based on those competencies are more prevalent in the exercises of the books. The analysis of the exercises shows various types of deviations from the objectives of the Curriculum.

Intermediate English Book-I (Short Stories)

This content of the textbook is maintained according to the National Curriculum. The textbook has been sanctioned by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore. Two experts have compiled it namely Mr Bashir Ahmad Chaudhary and Mr Qazi Sajjad Ahmad, edited by Mrs Shahida Rasool manuscript was finalized by Dr Mobeen Akhtar, graphics by Ms Aisha Waheed, Supervised by Mr. Safdir Hussain and layout by Mr Hafiz Inam-ul-Haq. The book consists of fifteen short stories. Foreign writers write twelve short stories, two by local authors and one short story is based on Folk Tale by an anonymous writer.

Types of Questions in the Book

Each story in the book consists of a reading passage and an exercise. Every lesson's exercise has more or less the same type of questions. For students' help, in reading notes sections, vocabulary items (15-20 items) from each passage are given with their general and contextual meanings. The objective type questions like multiple choice items, matching items, fill in the blanks, true/false, binary items and subjective type questions such as

sentence making, short answers in 100-150 words, punctuating the sentences and grammar-based exercises are given.

Intermediate English Book II (Modern Prose and Heroes)

This textbook is also based on the National Curriculum for English Language. The textbook has been sanctioned by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore. The content has been selected by Dr Mohammad Saddiq edited by Mrs S. M. Suleri, supervised by Safdir Hussain, manuscript finalized by Dr Mobeen Akhtar, graphics by Aisha Waheed and layout by Hafiz Inam-ul-Haq.

The book consists of sixteen lessons. Fifteen lessons are written by foreign writers and one by a local writer.

English Book III for Intermediate Classes (Plays and Poems)

This textbook is based on the National Curriculum. The textbook has been sanctioned by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore. It has been compiled by six experts namely Mr Rafiq Mahmood, Mr Bashir Ahmad Chaudhary, Mr Razi Abidi, Mr Qazi Sajjad Ahmad, Mr. Mian Muhammad Afzal and Mr. Shahid Imtiaz and supervised by Mr. Safdir Hussain. Its Director (Manuscripts) is Dr Mobeen Akhtar, layout is by Mr. Hafiz Inam-ul-Haq and the Deputy Director (Graphics)/Artist is Ms. Aisha Waheed.

The book consists of three plays and twenty poems. Foreign authors have written all the three plays. Thirteen poems are written by foreign authors and six by local and one poem is from Ecclesiastes, 3, 1-12.

Intermediate English Book-4: GOODBYE, MR.CHIPS

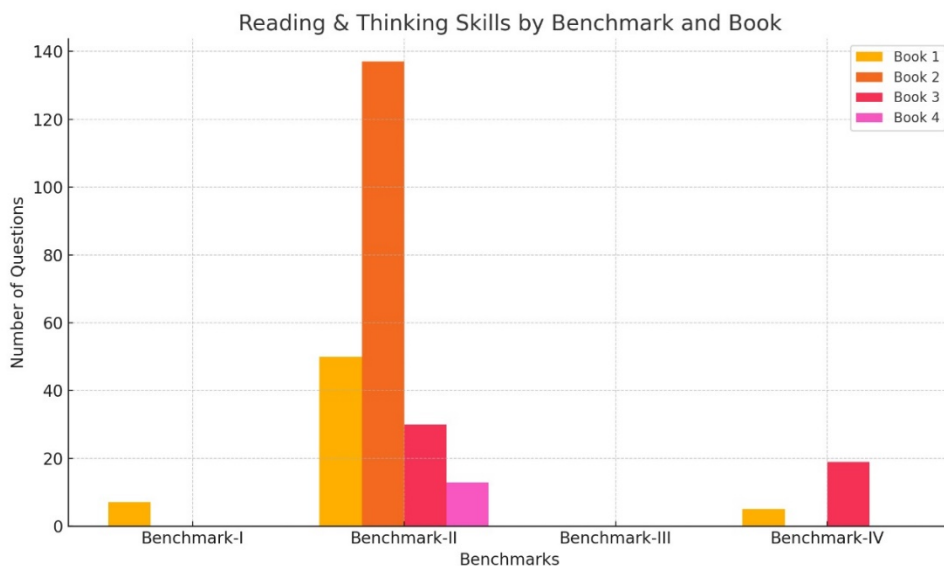
The textbook is a novelette written by James Hilton, corrected by National Review Committee for College Textbooks and edited by Muhammad Kalimuddin. The novelette is fifty pages and has eighteen chapters. Every chapter has a main idea which is linked to the core thought/main theme of the novelette. An exercise is given at the end of the novelette. The exercise consists of a list of thirty-one glossary items with their contextual meanings, main theme, descriptions of the different characters and thirteen questions at the end of the textbook.

Competency-1 Reading and Thinking Skills

The first competency in the National Curriculum is for the improvement of reading and thinking skills among the students.

Figure 2

Reading and Thinking Skills by Benchmark and Book



The SLOs at Competency 1, Standard -1; Benchmark-1 clearly state that the students would be able to “learn strategies to identify the main theme, supporting detail, topic sentence, cohesive device and the overall structure of the reading passage” (p.120). Apart from the inclusion of suggested themes, overall topics and relevant grammatical structures, the data analysis shows that Book-1 contains questions significant for the improvement of important reading comprehension skills, their sub-skills and different language functions related to C-1, S-1, and B-1. Although their frequency is low according to the number of lessons, out of fifteen exercises only six have questions pertaining to the SLOs. However, they are framed as per the guidelines mentioned in the policy document. Whereas Books 2, 3 and 4 do not contain any questions related to these SLOs.

Benchmark two requires analysis, synthesis and evaluation of events, issues, ideas and viewpoints, applying reading comprehension and thinking strategies. The SLOs at B 2, require the learners to apply pre-reading strategies, skimming, and critical thinking; while reading, summary skills,

post-reading and finding signposts and keywords to understand the questions. Figure 1 shows that every exercise of Book 1 contains a minimum of 03 questions. Subjective questions with sub-items are asked from a few aspects of B-2 like “scan to answer short questions” (p.121) such as “Why did Norma consider the tone and attitude of Mr Steward offensive?” (Book 1, p.9). The exercises also ask two objective-type questions with sub-items i.e., multiple-choice questions and mark the statements as true or false from the same benchmarks. Every exercise in Book 2 has questions related to the SLOs and most of the exercises in Book 3 also contain questions pertaining to the SLOs. Book 4 also has thirteen questions based on the reading SLOs but actually are for improving writing skills Overall the SLOs are related to improving reading comprehension skills, but questions are primarily concerned the improvement of writing skills.

The Student Learning Outcomes at Competency 1, Standard-1, Benchmark III require students to analyze and synthesize information from a visual cue or a graphic organizer to summarize, highlighting the key areas and main trends but not a single question is asked in the exercises of all the four books. It can be assumed that it may break the linchpin necessary for the students to improve their reading skills from one level to an advanced level by following these benchmarks.

Benchmark IV requires students to use study skills, encyclopedias, library skills and textual aids. 06 exercises in Book 1 contain making sentences based on the given words. Book 3 exercises have specific glossary parts which define words according to their contextual meanings. These SLOs are comprehensive in the sense to use additional resources to understand the text but only plenty of vocabulary items with definitions are provided for understanding the contextual vocabulary and the rest of the SLOs are neglected in the book. Book-2 and Book-4 both do not contain any questions pertaining to the SLOs.

Competency one, Standard 2, Benchmark I asks the learners to make predictions, analyze stories, recognize the author’s point of view, discuss the themes and evaluate the use of figurative language in the poems. Thirteen exercises in Book 1 contain detailed questions with sub-items related to themes, sub-ideas and about the characters and their feelings. These sorts of short questions can help in a better understanding of the text. Book 2 and Book 4 do not have any specific questions based on these SLOs.

Book 3 contains 09 questions related to rhyming whereas the SLOs are about alliteration.

The analysis of the content has revealed that the comprehension questions are related to the text, however, the exercises are based on questions without proper guidelines which makes the learners dependent on the individual instructor/teacher to execute the process of an important part of a language learning, reading comprehension on its own. Similarly, there are no charts, tables, diagrams, footnotes or glossaries which would help in better understanding of the text. Factual accounts are present in the lessons but mostly the reading passages are limited to narratives based on short stories. Straightforward questions are asked in the lessons. The answers to these types of questions can be given by just restating the facts which are already present in the text. Hence, these types of questions could not improve the reading comprehension skills in the real sense. (Book 11, pp.9-10). The steps like pre-reading, while-reading and after-reading given in Competency-1 and its various standards and benchmarks are missing in the exercises. The essential strategies such as skimming, scanning and summary skills necessary to find out the main theme and specific information from the text are also missing from the exercises.

It may be safely assumed that advancement in reading comprehension may not be achieved without applying the above-stated SLOs. Overall, it may be concluded that the reading comprehension questions have considerable weaknesses.

Competency-2 Writing Skills

The Students' Learning Outcomes at Competency 2, Standard 1 state that the students would be able to learn how to develop "own writing by identifying audience and purpose, use a variety of pre-writing strategies, analyze an essay to identify the general subject, main idea, key ideas, supporting details and transitional devices, and how to write an essay on a general subject by following certain steps". The SLOs mentioned at this level provide basic steps important for learners to improve their writing skills but the Figure 2 shows that writing questions related to C-2, S-1; B-1 or the part of these SLOs are not asked in the exercises of all the four books.

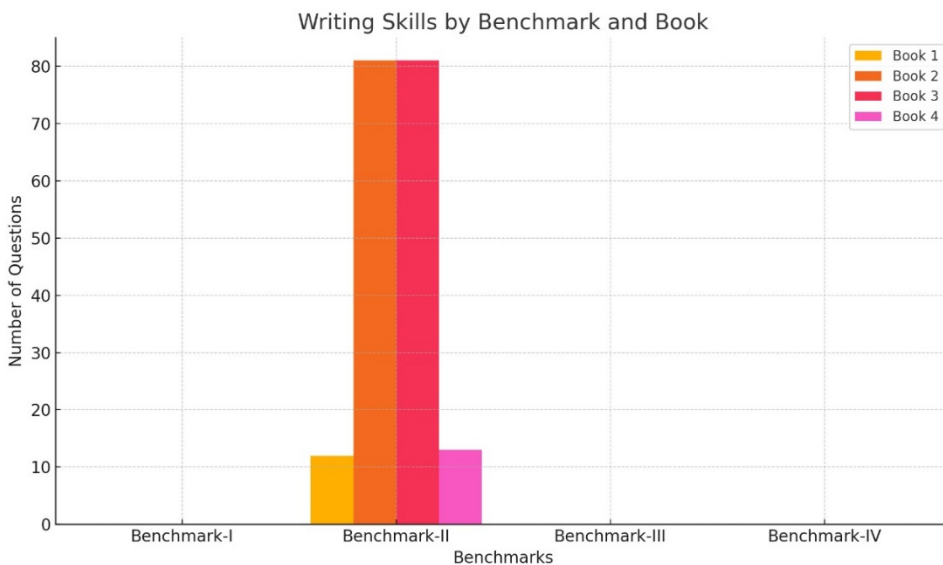
The SLOs at Competency 2, Standard, Benchmark II envisage that the students should learn how to "write expository, persuasive, analytical essays, research reports, and extended narratives for multiple purposes and

audiences. Additionally, the SLOs require students to analyze to use in their own writing, features of an expository composition, write an extended narrative incident, develop a persuasive/argumentative essay, and draft a research report in order to improve their writing skills. The Figure 2 shows all the exercises of the four books have questions related to specific SLOs of Competency 2, Standard 1, Benchmark II such as one writing question (100-150 words) with sub items from each lesson is asked. For example, the following question is based on the specific SLOs mentioned in the Curriculum.

- Lesson 01, Q.04: Write a note on the character of Arthur (Book 1, p. 9)

Figure 3

Writing Skills by Benchmark and Book



This shows that questions are related to very specific SLOs and rest of the important SLOs pertaining to report writing or argumentative writing are totally neglected in the exercises. Only argumentative or persuasive types of writing are substituted with writing a note questions. Another thing is that the SLOs asked in reading competency are also applicable to writing questions of the exercises. This may be a flaw in the demarcation of the

SLOs or it could be intentionally done in the Curriculum so that the students may learn better while integrating the reading and writing skills.

The Students Learning Outcomes at Competency 2, Standard-1, Benchmarks III and IV are very much essential in learning the writing skills such as plan, draft and revise writing, proofread and edit their own to an extent which are necessary for business communication and also necessary for attaining jobs in the markets. Figure 2 depicts that notwithstanding the importance of these skills, no question is added to the exercises the books.

Competency-3 Oral Communication Skills

The SLOs require students to evaluate and use expressions for various functions and co-functions. Because of the importance of speaking in communication, the speaking tasks should be flexible and deal with real language. But the analysis of the exercises shows that there is a single question with sub-item related to this competency in Book-3 which requires the students to identify speaker who said the specific lines in the play. This is only about recalling the information stated in the text. Moreover, Book-1, 2 and 4 do not have questions related to these SLOs. The advanced level communication skills mentioned at B-2 are also important for learners to demonstrate through formal talks, individual oral presentations and job interviews, the social and academic conventions and dynamics to communicate information/ ideas. The SLOs state that by going through this benchmark, the students will be able to demonstrate heightened awareness of conventions and dynamics of group discussion and interaction, demonstrate use of appropriate conventions to give a job interview, create and deliver group/class presentations on various themes, problems and issues, evaluate to comment orally on the presentation of peers against a pre-developed student/teacher criteria. But, again, the Figure 3 illustrates that only one exercise in Book-3 has a question for discussion with six sub-questions and all the other books have not a single question pertaining to these SLOs.

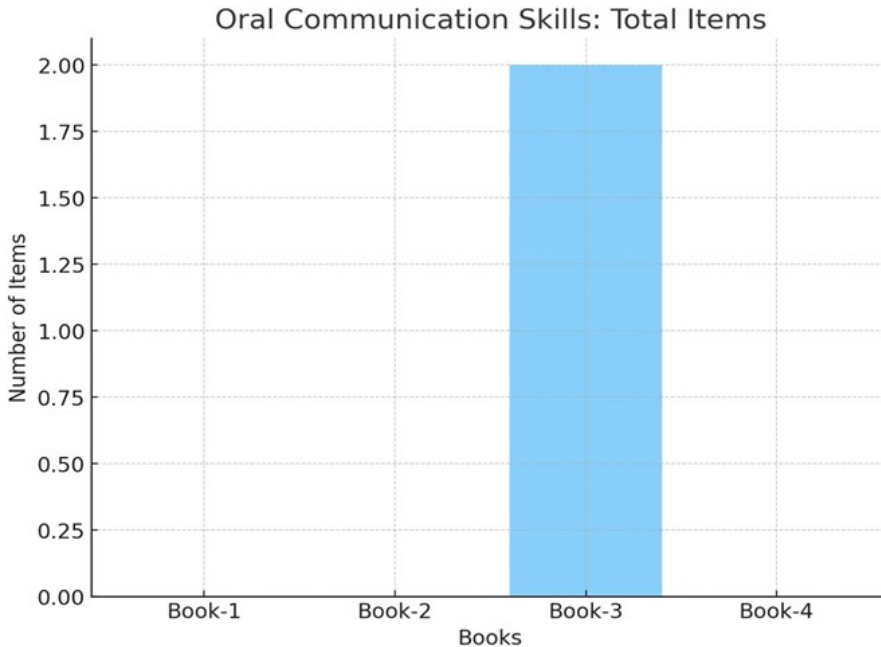
II. Questions for discussion.

1. "Do you think it is right to allow Clay to believe that there is a pearl in the oyster? Explain briefly" (p.49, Book-3). Although the six questions are designed to sharpen the analytical skills, but their frequency is very low which could be counterproductive if it does not have consistency. Oral communication skills are altogether ignored in the textbook. No

guidelines/drills, strategies or SLOs are given in the books to be practiced or learnt by the students.

Figure 4

Questions of Oral Communication Skills related to S-1, B-1, B-II



Competency-4: Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language

The SLOs at this benchmark state that the students will be able to use the pronunciation key to pronounce words with developing accuracy, recognize silent letters in words and pronounce them with developing accuracy, recognize silent letters in words and pronounce them with developing accuracy, recognize, pronounce and represent primary and secondary stress in words with the help of a dictionary, recognize and use varying intonation patterns as aids in spoken and written discourse. The Figure 4 shows that not a single oral activity or written guidelines for improving the pronunciation of the students are given in all the books.

The SLOs at Competency 4, Standard-2, Benchmark-1 state the students will learn how to use appropriate vocabulary and correct spelling in their own writing, use the knowledge of literal and figurative meaning,

grammatical gender and syntax to translate passages from English to Urdu. Book-1 has twenty-one vocabulary items which include explanation of vocabulary in context and phrasal verbs, all exercises of Book-2 have word explanations, Books-3 has twenty-one items of vocabulary explanation and Book-4 has thirty-one contextual vocabulary explanations. Although the lessons in the books have considerable number of vocabulary items, in reality such a large number of unfamiliar and difficult lexis can make the textbooks boring or difficult and hamper acquisition of the target language. Meaning of these vocabulary items is given in their contextual usage but there are no guidelines or strategies e.g., how to learn a vocabulary item such as from basic sounds, from prefixes and suffixes, synonymous and connotative use of a word etc. Moreover, the lessons may become dense to some learners since they are overloaded with texts and difficult vocabulary items. Likewise, the books under study do not have any formal methods or strategies for the tutors or the learners to translate a passage from English to Urdu.

The SLOs at Competency 4, Standard 3, Benchmark 1 state that the students will learn Noun, Noun Phrases and Clauses, Pronoun, Articles, Verbs and Verb Phrases, Tenses, Adjectives and Adjective Phrases and Clauses, Adverbs and Adverbials, Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases, and Transitional Devices. The Figure 4 illustrates that Book-1 has nineteen grammar questions which include only usage of verbs and preposition, and Book-3 has only 02 questions of use of preposition. Book-2 and Book-4 do not have a single question related to grammar. For example,

Lesson 01; Q.06 is: Use the correct forms of verbs given in the brackets e.g., Norma (unlock) the door, and (go) into the apartment; 05 sub-items,

According to the policy document, the students will learn all parts of speech, tenses, use of articles and transitional devices but the data shows that questions are asked from only two aspects of the SLOs at this level that are; verbs and prepositions and the rest of the SLOs and their sub-clauses are totally neglected. The SLOs at B-2 require students to apply rules of capitalization wherever applicable, illustrate use of all punctuation marks wherever applicable, recognize and rectify faulty punctuation in given passages and own work, recognize and use comma to mark a dependent word or word group that breaks the continuity of the sentence, recognize and use colon between two independent groups not joined by a connecting word, when the first group points forward to the second, recognize and use

semicolon, recognize and use quotation marks to enclose titles of published works and titles of their subdivisions, recognize and use hyphen to indicate the division of a word at the end of a line, recognize and use dash to mark a parenthesis or apposition to give strong emphasis, to mark off a contrasting or summarizing statement, recognize and use parenthesis (Square Brackets) to enclose explanation, comment or criticism inserted by someone other than the person quoted, recognize and use omission marks or ellipses to signify the omission or deletion of letters or words in sentences.

Twelve exercises of Book 1 have one question each pertaining to use of punctuation marks and Book 3 has 02 questions of punctuation. Book 2 and Book 4 do not have any question of punctuation. Lesson 01 Q.07 is Punctuate the following lines “Mr. steward... scope”. It is a known fact that punctuation marks are very important in understanding a message in reading a text and for conveying a message through writing. Because of its significance, the policy document comprehensively explains and guides through the SLOs in detail. The analysis of the exercises states that exercises have a question of punctuation, however, that question only demands a basic level understanding of punctuation and is also based only on a few sentences (02-03) which are barely sufficient for the learners to understand the complexities of composition without rigorous practice and in-depth knowledge of punctuation marks.

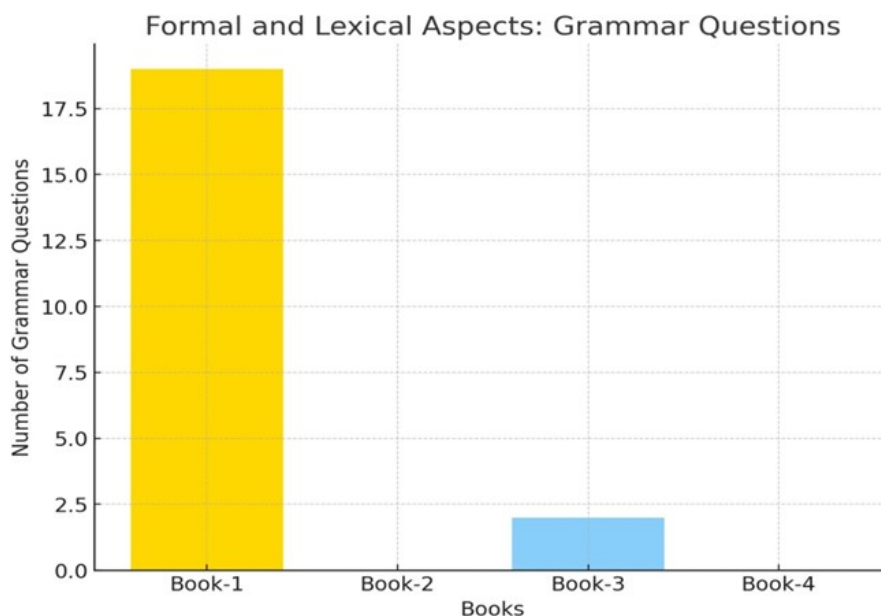
The SLOs at Competency 4, Standard 3, Benchmark 3 require the students to learn the sentence structures, types of sentences, use active and passive voice appropriately in speech and writing according to the required communicative function”. The Figure 4 reveals that the Book-1 has 05 questions and Book-3 has 01 question to make sentences on the given words and phrasal verbs. Whereas Book-2 and Book-3 are without any such type of activities. Some exercise has question pertaining to narration such as: Lesson 01; Q.08 is Write down the following lines in indirect narration e.g. “Don’t you want to know about it?” the salesperson asked the customer (04 sub-items). The SLOs at this level are important in a sense that for increased effectiveness in communication, learners should clearly understand the differences among different types of sentences. Further, they should “use active and passive voices and direct and indirect speech appropriately in their written and oral communication”, according to the requirements.

Overall, we may say that the importance of grammar is evident in the policy document but in practice only limited aspects of grammar are asked

in the exercises which can barely fulfill the requirements of the students. It is also worth mentioning that there is no grammar book for learners to do in-depth study of concepts mentioned in the Curriculum.

Figure 5

Single Oral Activity for Improving the Pronunciation of the Students



Competency-5: Appropriate Ethical and Social Skills

C-5; S-1 states that all students will develop ethical and social attributes and values relevant in a multicultural, civilized society.

S-1; B-1 are meant to recognize and practice values and attributes such as tolerance, humanism, patience, equity, justice, honesty, empathy, etc., relevant for peaceful coexistence between individuals, groups and nations.

B-2 states that the students will develop and portray through actions, a sense of importance of individual worth; simultaneously valuing diversity and equality among people”. Benchmark III requires students to understand and evaluate contemporary social, economic and scientific developments/ issues so as to participate in the global society as aware and thinking individuals.

Table 1*Values and Questions related to the Ignored Content in Four Books*

Competency	Book-1	Book-2	Book-3	Book-4
Standard-1				
Benchmark-I				
Benchmark-II				
Benchmark-III				
Total Items				

The policy document requires the textbooks developers to add the above-mentioned themes in the textbooks, which may bring cohesion in the society. For this purpose, the content related to these themes is reflecting in the Book-1 and conforms to the Curriculum. There are a few lessons which mostly reflect the above-mentioned themes. Theme of tolerance in “Thank you, Ma’am” (Book 11, p.25). Empathy in “God be Praised” (Book 11, p.79). However, the close analysis of the contents reveals the otherwise situation.

The SLOs at C-5; S-1, B-I state that the students will learn to recognize and practice values like tolerance, humanism, patience, equity, justice, honesty and empathy. The book contains information related to general topics in the form of prose and success stories of the famous men of the world through their biographical stories. Table 1.0 depicts that the values and the questions related to these values are totally ignored in the content as well as in the exercises of the book. A non-inclusive pattern is followed in this competency by not including those aspects which may bring harmony and tolerance in the behavior of students. As we know that tolerance and harmony are themes of every curriculum, they must be included in our textbooks. Pakistan is a diverse country in terms of its culture and faith. Although majority of the people belong to same religion Islam, a considerable number of minorities are living across the country. According to the Constitution of Pakistan, these minorities enjoy equal status in the country. In the Curriculum, it is mentioned that it should cater to the needs of learners belonging to any religion. Moreover, to create

harmony in our society and to achieve social cohesion, the topics related to humanism, kindness and simplicity may be taken from the sacred personalities of the other religions and be included in the book. This would give confidence and adoption to the people belonging to other religions. On the other hand, the Muslim majority students would also get awareness about diversified nature of our society and other religious figures. However, the analysis of the book shows that lessons do not contain messages that can promote cohesion in a society.

C-5, S-1 B-2 states that the students would develop and portray through actions, a sense of importance of individual worth; simultaneously valuing diversity and equality among people. This book contains fourteen lessons by male writers and 02 by female writers, which highlights the gender discrimination in selection of lessons. The lessons completely ignore the existence of females. The names of the lessons denote male like “Why Boys Fail in Colleges” (Book 2, p. 13) and “The Man who was a Hospital” (Book 2 p.32). Even the characters in the lessons are masculine and there is no female character in the whole book. Even in the second part of the book which contains the stories of the heroes, not a single character is female. The questions also contain gender-biased pronouns rather than gender-neutral pronouns.

C-5, S-1, B-3 states that the learners will understand and evaluate contemporary social, economic and scientific developments/ issues so as to participate in the global society as aware and thinking individuals. It is good that material is taken from prose which could fulfill the requirement of the students to get familiarize with a variety of texts. But the material selected for the book is quite outdated as the lessons related to modern prose and the heroes are from the 19th or 20th centuries. The world has become a global village and many advancements have taken place in the field of humanities, medicine, astronomy or any current discipline. However, the content of the lessons is restricted to basics. For instance, the Lesson “*Using a Scientific Method*” provides very basic level information, which could be relevant to the society forty or fifty years back but now people know more about such topics because of easy access to internet and computer. Even the Heroes are taken from the previous century, which may not keep the interest of the students. Up-to-date and contemporary subject matters may arise the interest of the learners who can correlate the content with their present scenarios.

The Curriculum gives guidelines for the textbook developers to embed these age-old golden traits in the textbooks that can bring cohesion in the society. The analysis of the lessons shows that these themes are visible at few places in the content of the lessons like:

The play shows that the people of the 20th century are still in the beginning of their civilization as compared to those of the planets of the other solar systems. The man of the future will be free from hatred and violence, and feel a sense of pride in the service of humanity. (Book III, p.26)

The next Benchmark II refers to develop and portray through actions, a sense of importance of individual worth; simultaneously valuing diversity and equality among people. The theme of the third lesson presents a different situation:

The rich at the upper level get a golden chance first and whatever remain trickles down to the people at the level beneath. (Book III, p.53)

This benchmark calls for equality and diversity among the people. However, even in the selection of lessons, the book negates this idea. Out of twenty-three lessons, seventeen are written by authors from the US, Wales or European background. Only one poem is by Rumi from Iran and four are by local authors Allama Iqbal, Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi, Sachal Sarmast and Bullah Shah.

The last Benchmark III of this Competency requires that the learners should understand and evaluate contemporary social, economic and scientific developments/ issues so as to participate in the global society as aware and thinking individuals. The analysis of the content shows that the Book-3 is completely lacking in these themes. The contents of the lessons are void of social and economic developments. Likewise, the learners hardly find any material related to scientific developments and current scientific topics in the book. The theme of class division is indirectly stated in the theme of different poems, but it again depends on the teacher to interpret it accordingly. The whole book does not even contain any questions which could directly address these themes. The textbook is based on discrimination while representing the genders. The book has three plays and twenty poems, and all writers are males. The analysis shows that the representation of females is ignored advertently or inadvertently in the book, which is a total negation of the Curriculum that underlines the

importance of gender equality. Further, the Curriculum also describes the importance of environmental education in its major as well as in sub-themes. The book contains poems which are linked to environment such as “*The Rain*” and “*Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry Now*” but the researcher could hardly find a single question in the whole book which could give awareness to students about this very crucial matter i.e., environmental issue.

Book-4, the novelette, has different themes, which may teach ethical and social attributes and values to the students. After reading the novel, the students with the help of teachers may comprehend these values and could co-relate these social values with their cultures. The novel also talks about modernity and conservatism through its characters i.e., Mr. Chips and Mr. Ralston. The novel has many themes which talk about patriotism, harmony and co-existence. However, the exercise of the novel does not have any written or oral questions related to these themes. Consequently, this competency is entirely dependent on the tutor to inculcate the appropriate ethical and social skills amongst the students.

Discussion

The analysis of the content has revealed that the comprehension questions are related to text, however, the exercises are based on questions without proper guidelines which make the learners dependent on the individual instructor/teacher to execute the process of important part of a language learning, reading comprehension on its own. Similarly, there are no charts, tables, diagrams, footnotes or glossaries which would help in better understanding of the text. Factual accounts are present in the lessons but mostly the reading passages are limited to narratives based on short stories. Straight forward questions are asked in the lessons. The answers to these types of questions can be given by just restating the facts which are already present in the text. Hence, these types of questions could not improve the reading comprehension skills in the real sense. (Book 11, pp.9-10). The steps like pre-reading, while-reading and after-reading given in Competency-1 and its various standards and benchmarks are missing in the exercises. The essential strategies such as skimming, scanning and summary skills necessary to find out the main theme and specific information from the text are also missing from the exercises.

It may be safely assumed that advancement in reading comprehension may not be achieved without applying the above-stated SLOs. Overall, it may be concluded that the reading comprehension questions have considerable weaknesses.

It can be presumed that the students' writing skills can be improved to some extent through the above mentioned questions. But it is pertinent to mention here that the textbooks under study are without instructions which can be helpful to attempt and practice composition writing. The book is without teaching manuals and guidance about different sorts of writings and only specimens are given which help students rote learning and pass the exams. Finally, we can say that the writing SLOs if followed properly may bring considerable changes in the writing of the learners; however, the

The oral communication skills of the students are all dependent on the tutor/teacher. This gives leverage to the tutors whether to include oral communication practice sessions in their classes. The reason for not practicing oral communication skills is that the teachers are not fluent in English which results in neglecting this skill. Another major reason for lack of practice of oral skills amongst the students is the examination pattern. The questions for the exams are taken from the textbooks and not from the curriculum. Mostly the question papers are based on the exercises taken from the lessons and in the exercises there is not a single activity for oral communication, whereas, the Curriculum has emphasized the need for teaching and testing of oral skills. To overcome the problems in this competency, Oral Communication, a viva voce or oral test may be included in the examinations subject to allocation of appropriate resources and proper training of the concerned teachers in language teaching.

Conclusion

The textbooks cover a wide range of topics that discuss a variety of issues and happenings from different perspectives but more topics to the contemporary world can be added to the syllabi. Apart from the themes, the content also has certain weaknesses in terms of its functional aspects. The content and the exercises allow students to cram the content of the lessons rather than learning the language. The question items may help students perform well in their summative assessments but do not help them to improve the language. The content of the textbooks could be modified

according to the requirements, age-groups and understanding levels of students by incorporating the above-stated concerns.

The objective of this study is to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the exercises of textbooks with reference to the National Curriculum for English and suggest synchronizing the textbooks exercises with the objectives of the policy document. The textbooks are provided in the schools on the promise that they include all aims of the curriculum and there is no need to provide the document to the schools. The research has clearly demonstrated that there are obvious shortcomings in the textbooks while delivering the aims and objectives of the Curriculum. It is quite evident from the analysis of the textbooks in the light of the Curriculum. The Students' Learning Outcomes are mentioned in all five competencies i.e., reading, writing, speaking, lexical and grammar and ethical aspects of learning. It is obvious from the data analysis that there are huge inconsistencies in the textbooks of the province even the fact that the Curriculum is there for complete guidance and directions. The textbooks used in the province are replete with exercises of reading and writing competencies and have mostly questions related to grammar and vocabulary and vice versa. After thorough analysis of the exercises, it was found that mostly reading, writing and grammatical aspects of the language are given weightage, whereas the oral communication skills are completely neglected. The researcher may find hardly any oral activity in all four textbooks of Punjab. One reason can be the examination patterns in which mostly reading and writing skills are evaluated in board exams. This practice may promote teaching to assessment rather than teaching to learn the language.

The researcher has investigated and identified a gap by systematically looking at the practice and the policy document and has tried to fill the gap. Moreover, this research could be further continued by the future researchers by analyzing anomalies in textbooks in terms of their contents, teaching and eventually assessments carried out by the Boards in the annual exams.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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