

A Qualitative Study on Issues of English Curriculum Implementation at Higher Secondary Level Schools in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study was designed to explore the issues of English curriculum implementation at higher secondary level in Punjab. The study was qualitative in nature, and the sample was selected by using a purposive sampling technique that comprised 10 English teachers. One interview protocol named issues of English curriculum implementation was used to collect the data, and thematic analysis was applied to analyze the participants' interview transcripts. The interview protocol was also validated by experts. The results of the study showed that English teachers faced various issues of social and ethical development, ensuring the quality of the English language, the validity of curriculum, multiculturalism and textbook alignment with curriculum document. The results of the study suggested giving motivation to English teachers in order to apply effective communication skills in teaching the English language as well as to reduce issues by providing funds, facilitating English teachers and proper supervision of curriculum implementation of English subject.

Key Words: Issues, Curriculum, Implementation, Level

Introduction

Language is the proper and systematic way of communication among individuals. It is a tool with which a person connects with others in society. It proves effective to transfer a person's thought to another person (Ramanathan, 2005). A person understands and develops his relationship in society with the usage of language. Without it, it is difficult to understand others. State of mind is transferred into words by the natural mechanism of the language (Powell, 2005). A teaching-learning process becomes effective only by the effective use of the language. It enables students to organize their views and ideas into a pattern to communicate with others. Baken and Westrup (2000) stated that it gives opportunities to learners to lend a hand in developing their country. English has gained a dominating status and is considered a language of high prestige. It is not only useful for professionals and practitioners, but it is also measured as a symbol of honor, high authority, and social superiority (Menon, Rama, Lakshmi, & Bhat, 2007). People all over the world use English as a second language. According to Ramanathan (2005), the English language is a basic tool to launch our point of view in the world, which has become a major issue for English learners to present their point of view.

Curriculum implementation helps and makes it possible for teachers to practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabus and subjects at different stages in the educational process. It is a change process that involves helping the learners to acquire knowledge, skills or any other experiences included in the curriculum (Glathorn, 2016). English curriculum implementation refers to the implementation of the National Curriculum for the English Language. Its aim is to provide guidance to teachers for teaching English language skills. It wants to enable teachers and students to apply English language skills in learning and social setting (Djigunovic, 2006). In Pakistan, there are not enough opportunities for students to exercise English language skills in their environment for natural fluency. Therefore, a formal instructional setting is provided for them to learn and

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exercise language skills in the classroom by implementing the English language curriculum document ([Harmer, 2012](#)).

Teachers face issues during the implementation of the curriculum. These hinder achieving the objectives mentioned in the curriculum document. Issue means a problem or an unsettled matter that has no consensus of English teachers. It prolongs and demands serious mental efforts for a solution and remains consistent in nature. In Pakistan, the English teacher is facing a lot of issues regarding poor English language skills, less awareness of text types and less aligned English textbook with English curriculum document. The curriculum is operationalized by controlling such issues effectively and properly ([Ogar, Opoh, & Awhen, 2015](#)). It requires to act upon given guidelines in the English curriculum document for meeting its objectives and students' future needs ([Asebiomo, 2009](#)).

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to:

1. explore the issues faced by English teachers in English curriculum implementation at the higher secondary level

Research Questions

1. What are the issues in English curriculum implementation faced by English teachers at the higher secondary level?

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore issues faced by English teachers in English curriculum implementation at higher secondary level, and a qualitative survey method was used for this research. This approach was helpful in the present study to understand the views of teachers about issues in English curriculum implementation. Purposive sampling was applied to select the most representative sample to meet the purpose of this current study. In this study, the sample consists of 10 English Subject Specialist teachers at the higher secondary level to take interviews regarding issues of English curriculum implementation. The interviews were conducted, and the time duration of each interview is 45-60 minutes. The researchers recorded the interviews and transcribed these interviews into a written text with the help of thematic analysis. After transcribing the data, the researchers brackets the responses that are interesting. Then categories were developed because categories are the main grouping of key features of the text. The researcher studied the categories for thematic connection within them. Themes help in making sense of descriptive information, and then the researcher analyze the whole data.

Results and Discussion

The curriculum is a social reflection and contributes to change the society, which is a tough task. Every individual in society has his own approach and nature. Same alike, the document of the English curriculum was developed by some experts according to their own mental approach and philosophy without focusing on the needs of society and students which represented different issues in English curriculum document. In the same way, there arise issues in curriculum implementation process by the side of English teachers that have their individual approaches and nature. In this reference, a study was conducted in Turkey which identified major issues of curriculum implementation by the usage of mind mapping. There was collected data from curriculum experts of future on their experiences and perceptions and related it to the global context in an integrated approach. The purpose of this study was only to highlight major issues in curriculum implementation to grip them effectively in time ([Dhanarajan, 2000](#)). Moreover, it is crucial to give reflection on issues to meet the decisions and objectives in a responsive curriculum. The current study focused on issues of English curriculum implementation in Pakistani perspective by focusing the English curriculum document which are almost the same in different context with different names in global perspectives.

English teachers play an important role in the implementation of the curriculum. Curriculum implementation requires teachers' sincere efforts, their professionalism, command on teaching and English language skills and their commitment. They face issues regarding this. This study provides a ground to fill the gaps between implemented curriculum and stated curriculum by highlighting issues of curriculum implementation. It provides help to curriculum concerned authorities and curriculum experts to align the curriculum with its elements. The success of English curriculum implementation highly depends upon controlling and tackling the issues of curriculum implementation with planning and policy making by the Government. So, it is important for Government, policy makers, curriculum wing as well as English teachers to understand and control the issues of English curriculum implementation at maximum level ([Adebile & Foluke, 2009](#)). This research provides confirmatory evidence that in Pakistan, English as a subject always remains a major concern for educational institutes. By providing empirical evidence to the curriculum developers, it makes them realized that better quality in the implementation of curriculum might enhance the quality and effectiveness of education as well as English language skills. Issues of English curriculum implementations with their different aspects were being discussed in a subsequent section.

Ensuring the Quality of the English Language

English teachers' quality remains a very important factor always to implement the curriculum successfully throughout Pakistan because the quality of the English Language depends upon the English teachers ([Richardson & Rodgers, 2001](#)). This factor remained under discussion in all educational plans and policies that showed the firm dedication of the Government to enhance the quality and competencies of English teachers, but no action was put into practice to control this factor ([Memon, 2007](#)). [Coleman \(2010\)](#) reports that Pakistani English teachers have a tendency to teach the English language through the medium of Urdu or a local language because probably their own competence in English is poor or because they have so little confidence in their own competence. The quality of English teachers demands their proper training to improve the quality of English curriculum implementation directly ([Iqbal, Hassan, & Ali, 2010](#)). There is a need to increase the recruitment of English teachers and involving stakeholders in the process of curriculum development and implementation, as well as conducting seminars to smooth the English curriculum implementation ([Dilshad, 2010](#)). In this study, teachers mentioned that the application of audiovisual aids, multimedia, teacher training and technology was also necessary for ensuring the quality of the English language. The English language was taught by traditional methods that did not create interest in students to learn it. According to them, the main issue was the traditional teaching methods the English teachers adopt, and it was affecting the quality of the English language. The results of the study endorsed the findings of [Abilasha and Ilankumaran \(2018\)](#) that the subject English was taught by adopting traditional teaching methods to meet the needs of English learners that is unfavorable to teach the English language. As a result, students did not show their interest in learning the English language ([McKinn, 2003](#)). They just took it as a source of passing exams that proved against the achievement of quality of the English language. The best technique of teaching was according to the situation and interest of students. They have also preferred a demonstration method for enhancing the quality of the English language.

In brief, the majority of English teachers highlighted the importance of the utilization of technology in the teaching and learning process of the English language. It was explored that it was necessary to change the syllabus of the English language to assure the quality of the English language. There was found problems like large classes, teaching literature, teaching methods and teachers' training that was proving as the hurdle in meeting the quality of the English language. Teachers were found less interested in maintaining the class environment supportive in order to enhance the quality of the English language.

English Language Development

The development of the English language is a more sensitive issue than course completion. Language development demanded prob-activities for the purpose of creating students' interest in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, dialogues and discussion session also proved helpful in developing language ([Akram & Qureshi, 2012](#)). It was also revealed by teachers that it was very necessary to maintain interaction with students throughout the session. Parents, too, play an important role in language development by creating a supportive environment for

the English language at home. By following such an environment, with the passage of time, the English language starts to develop as participants said that “we don’t introduce cultural and communicative activities in our classes. So, students don’t show interest in learning the English language. As the language demands natural flow that is possible in the natural environment.” It was observed that the environment is a great hurdle in learning and using English language skills. Teachers and students found clash in the school environment, domestic environment and societal environment ([Ahmad, Ahmad, Bukhari, & Bukhari, 2011](#)).

In short, English language development required a supportive environment at school, in society and at home, as expressed by most English teachers. They gave importance to the role of teachers at schools and parents at home in developing the English language properly. It was revealed in this study that language development occurred in the continued process of learning at all levels. It could not be separated from any level and grade of education. Most teachers said to maintain the cultural and communicative activities in the classroom to develop the interest of their students in English language development. Age also did matter a lot in learning the language. They highlighted problems such as environmental and cultural problems, traditional examination system, unaligned syllabus of English language, teachers’ poor teaching styles and their motivation to students which were proving as a great hurdle in developing English language.

Immeasurability of Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Most of the participants expressed negative opinion about the achievement of student learning outcomes. The reasons of not measuring student learning outcomes were the examination system, teacher training, teaching methodology, culture and religion. Teachers were unaware of student learning outcomes. They were just teaching the course outline. They did not feel any need to study the curriculum of English language. Curriculum of English language presented ideal approach and this ideal approach has not been translated in English textbooks. This created gap in curriculum and textbook. There was not a culture of sharing and reading except textbook. Therefore, English learners were not achieving student learning outcomes properly. Even they do not know what is meant by student learning outcomes

Validity of Curriculum

English language skills were necessary for students to be recognized socially. This met the basic needs of our practical life and was necessary to communicate at the international level as well as to adorn with updated knowledge as it was a known fact that most knowledge had been translated into the English language all over the world. It gave us exposure and recognition nationally and internationally. One participant expresses her opinion that “English language skills are crucial to give protection to our economic status. But, language skills are not developed properly in our schools. There is not the negligence of teachers, but of the Government, which is not updating curriculum and teachers. Teachers are worried about how they can satisfy the basic requirements of English language learning.” The teachers expressed views about the validity of the curriculum of the English language. They said that the English language curriculum was not proving helpful to achieve its objectives. Teachers cannot implement the English language curriculum according to its requirements. They said that the “curriculum of the English language had not been developed realistically. What it claims that it is not possible to practice in our schools.” English language curriculum’s alignment with current needs showed its validity, but teachers express their views that it was not aligned with changing realities keeping in view students’ needs. As they said, “English language curriculum is not aligned with a textbook. It does not fulfil the needs of society, teachers and students.”

In brief, most teachers viewed that the curriculum was not aligned with the English textbook. So, they did not see it as valid for their students regarding teaching the English language. Need an analysis of students, teachers and society was not conducted before developing the curriculum document of the English language. English language skills required a practical approach and wanted correspondence of curriculum with English textbook. But, it was not explored by the teachers of the English language curriculum.

Absorption of Language from the Environment

Environment played an important role in learning of English language. Schools' created environment was adopted by students with the passage of time. Same, society's created environment had its worth. As participants express their opinion that students learn from their environment, but it rarely happens in our classes and schools. Other teachers respond that "parents of our students are mostly uneducated. They don't know how to develop a pleasant environment for the learning of their children. [Huang \(2004\)](#) said that teachers attracted students by applying teaching aids. A study conducted by [Morris and Scott \(2003\)](#) added that curriculum implementation failed because of not applying attractive teaching methods and A.V. aids properly. Students want innovation that is preserved by utilizing teaching-learning aids and methodology. [Spillane \(2004\)](#) pointed out that the teaching learning process demands a learning environment for curriculum implementation, and it is necessary to eradicate issues connected to teachers' teaching to succeed in the English curriculum implementation.

Some other reasons are identified that majority of English language curriculum teachers are untrained to teach and communicate effectively. They just go to the classroom, have an English textbook, teach and go without creating a learning environment and assessing the learning of their students. Teachers revealed that they had fewer opportunities to apply English language skills because they focus on completing the syllabus in time.

Generally, English teachers were not contented with the absorption of the English language from the environment. No teacher tried to create it. They just thought to complete the course outline in time and focus on exams to pass it successfully. The most repeated negative statement was the passive role of English teachers in creating an English language learning environment. They were not able to create a formal setting for it. They did not apply these skills in their routine lives. So, they were less efficient in using English language skills.

Use of English Language in a Social Context

Most teachers claimed regarding the usage of the English language in a social context that there were not conducted activities on the application of the English language in a social context. They felt the need for it but did not make an effort to make it practical. There was not given opportunities in this regard. So, they remained passive. As they said, "we don't teach English to meet our students' future, social and individual needs, although this was beneficial for them for their future placement.

To summarize, English teachers expressed that their instructional activities were not aligned with students' societal needs. Their teaching was not proving beneficial for meeting their job needs. They were keenly interested in completing the syllabus of English in time to succeed their students in exams. They did not focus on any other activity to make their students practice and for their future placement. In addition, examination system was carrying on traditional style and papers were developed theoretical rather than practical. All respondents agreed to change the syllabus of English subject to make it more effective for students in future and they stressed on making their students more practical.

Ethical and Social Development and Cultural Bounds

In English language curriculum there was given a short material on ethical and social development of students. As teachers revealed that, "there was less material on students' social and ethical development in English textbook. Our English language textbooks not introducing our culture values to our students and we are making them liberal minded students." It was explored that English language textbooks were introducing European culture to our students. Society represented a culture which was translated in books. Culture was related to ideology that is connected to language. It was very necessary to protect and develop ethics and social values of our culture with its proper representation in English language textbooks. Because it impact was seen that students as well as teachers started to give less importance to their own culture. They portrayed themselves as liberal ones that affected the ethical and social development of English learners ([A-Rahman & Hardman, 2014](#)).

The role of cultural and national bounds has an important role in teaching of English language. But these are not made supportive in teaching learning process. It requires strategical approach to align it with English textbook teaching. But it was not so. English textbook just represented literature, and literature did not promote the national and cultural features as a whole. English teachers were also not promoting it because of the constraint of

time and less awareness of the English language curriculum that was becoming a hurdle in the learning of the English language. Moreover, the curriculum of the English language was not aligned with the requirements of our culture and nation.

Purposeful Reading

English teachers were found less motivated to develop the spirit of reading text purposefully in their students. They read the text to complete the exercises given at the end of each chapter of the English textbook. Teachers did not apply any strategy for their students to make them targeted. They taught literature that included poetry, fiction, novel and dramas, but they could not be able to inculcate the spirit of seeking knowledge, ideas, information, enjoyment and cues to apply them in the practical lives of their students. Most of the teachers said that “Our students read the text for the sake of covering syllabus just. They don’t want to do more than it.” Teachers, too, read the English textbook less purposefully and only want to succeed their students in examinations. They were unable to relate their reading with any other situation.

It was found that English learners were less productive in the application of English language skills.

English Language Skills (Listening, Speaking, Writing, Reading)

English teachers were not adopting any strategy to enhance and sharpen the oral communication of their students. All teachers expressed that they did not use any practice and strategy to enhance the oral communication of their students. This element is completely ignored in English language textbooks. That’s why students were passive listener in classrooms and less participative in the teaching and learning process of the English language. There was not conduct, no practice or rehearsal for boosting up their communication and listening skill. Students were being taught in Punjabi accent, and there was not adopted the original accent of the English language. Moreover, the syllabus of the English language is not up to the mark in the context of English language skills. There was not any portion of listening and speaking skills. Teachers stated that “there is no portion of it in the syllabus of the English language. Then how our students could be able to be sharp in listening skill”. There is a depiction of just literature in the English textbook that was proving as a great issue as English teachers expressed.

Most of the teachers expressed that they focused on writing skill to succeed their students in exams. They did not arrange any practice for their spoken skill. They said, “Even we don’t speak in the English language with our students, and while speaking, we too feel hesitation. But, for writing skill, we give exercises on essay writing and precise writing.” Some other respondents supported the opinion of their colleague and additioned in it by revealing, “We also commit practice of letter writing. We say our students to write the given passage by understanding.” They said that sometime they assigned them to answer the questions followed by a comprehensive paragraph.

Shortly, the curriculum of English language did not represent material on the students’ preparation of expressing their point of view. In English textbook, literature was taught and teachers did not relate it with our routine lives. It was impossible to reach real life situations by reading the English language curriculum. The system of education was just focusing on writing skill as there was given the material on essay writing, precise writing, application writing and letter writing. It had ignored the other three skills of the English language that were much worthy for students to present their point of view. The English language curriculum was not aligned to the English language skills, and the reflection of it was the textbook of English language.

All respondents expressed that the English textbook was only providing writing skill to students. Rest English language skills were ignored badly, and these were not given importance due to the examination system. They said, “In our English textbook, there was not given any related material on listening, speaking and reading skills except writing skill.”

A study conducted by [Shamim \(2007\)](#) supported the study strongly and said that English teachers had a poor grip upon English language skills in Pakistan. They just adopted the grammar translation method to teach the English textbook ([Vavrus, 2002](#)). There was not focused on listening, speaking, writing and reading skills appropriately in implementing the English curriculum. Moreover, learners were not given opportunities to apply English language skills in the classroom ([Taylor, 2002](#)). Feedback was not given to students on oral

communication and written tasks to spirit them up for participation in the classroom. Teachers adopt poor teaching methodology to teach language skills and use ineffective assessment skills for these skills (Kausar & Akhtar, 2013). In such a situation, no objective is achieved of English curriculum implementation that shows the importance of teacher training, refresher courses and attractive incentives for English teachers to succeed in the implementation of the English curriculum.

Teachers were revealed that social skills are related to cultural activities which have not been given in the textbook of English.” The teacher’s opinion on the alignment of the National curriculum of English language, 2006, with the English textbook is the curriculum of English is aligned with the English textbook. But there was no alignment between the syllabus and curriculum of the English language. In brief, it was found out that the curriculum of the English language was not aligned with the textbook of English. English textbook was an essential resource for learning English language skills. Therefore, its alignment with the English language curriculum, its comprehension and addition in it with material on English language skills is necessary to meet the objectives of the National Curriculum of English language. This was felt necessary to give all types of text in the textbook to prepare English learners for representing themselves according to different situations (Asghar & Butt, 2018). It was also explored that English teachers’ trainings and refresher courses were made compulsory to get aware of the curriculum of the English language as well as to meet the current needs of students to learn the English language.

As a result of the qualitative analysis of participants, it was explored that English teachers faced issues in English curriculum implementation. More specifically, they pointed out that English language skills were not paid attention to during English curriculum implementation in classes. Without need analysis of the document of the curriculum, it is implemented and hoped to achieve its objectives (Patton, 2002). In addition, the English textbook is not aligned with the curriculum document. Curriculum of English claims for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; whereas English textbook presents literature only. There has not been focused English language skills. This gap creates issues which represents the zone of English curriculum implementation in its true nature (McGrath, 2006). Curriculum needs true implementation spirit with all relevant guidelines covering content stated in the curriculum document to fulfill students’ requirements. Alignment is necessary between recommended and implemented curriculum. Developed and planned curricula fail when there is no plan to incorporate them into the schools’ educational program (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014).

So, it is concluded that this study clearly highlights the need to re-examine the procedure and strategies of English curriculum implementation, English teachers’ training, governmental policies, reorganize the curriculum experts’ team, English textbook content, text and material selection, the validity of curriculum, measurability of student learning outcomes and creating its relevance with students needs through its organization, teachers’ curriculum document and its implementation, re-enforcing monitoring and assessment system, digital language lab provision, teaching-learning resources provision and removing issues occurred in teaching and learning the English language skills. The analysis revealed that even after getting twelve years of education, students are not able to speak English and write in the English language. They are unable to articulate English language skills. They just emphasize the application of grammatical rules. As it is a known fact, English has an impact on the identity of students. Therefore, it is very important for English teachers, curriculum experts, developers and designers to understand how English plays its crucial role in meeting students’ basic needs and their recognition in society nationally and internationally. So, it is better for Government, curriculum wing, textbook boards and English teachers to focus on the English curriculum implementation and plan to grip the occurred issues of English curriculum implementation effectively.

Recommendations

1. Schools should arrange workshops and seminars on the importance of study variable, specifically on English curriculum implementation, in order to educate teachers, school heads and policymakers to become aware of issues in English curriculum implementation at the higher secondary level. This awareness helps them in implementing the English curriculum properly, which reduces teachers’

problems that will improve the overall performance of the teachers, students and schools and make it a health institute.

2. Curriculum planners and school management and administration should share and discuss the policies regarding English curriculum implementation in teachers', heads', staff's and in concerned stakeholders' meetings because the proper implementation of English curriculum in schools is a combined effort rather than an individual activity.

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