

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN URDU CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOKS AT SECONDARY LEVELDr. Bushra Haleem^{*1}, Dr. Muhammad Saeed²

Original Article

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Abstract

The quality of education depends upon the quality and standard of the curriculum. It means that curriculum plays a vital role in an educational process. The purpose of this study was to find out the alignment between national curriculum (2006) and textbooks for Grades IX-X. For the alignment of curriculum and textbooks Rubric was adapted which was developed by Saeed (2014), the instrument was used with minor modification according to the nature of Urdu subject. The results of the study showed that the SLOs of Urdu textbooks were not fully aligned with the national curriculum. To some extent the exercises' questions were aligned with skills, standard, competencies and SLOs of national curriculum (2006) of Urdu for Grades IX-X. It was also observed that the exercises questions were focused on knowledge, comprehension and application level of Blooms taxonomy of cognitive domain. The study suggests that there is need for improvement to align the textbooks content and assessment exercises with national curriculum of Urdu for grade IX-X. Assessment plan of textbooks should be related to both, lower and higher cognitive level, i.e. analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This needs the special attention for textbook authors, teachers and trainers involved in the subject of Urdu at secondary level.

Keywords: National Curriculum, Urdu, Alignment, Textbook, IX-X Grade

Introduction

The progress and development of each country is dependent on its education system. Education is directly associated with the building of a nation. The curriculum document is considered to be the road map for the attainment of the national goals. For this purpose, the text books are developed in such a way that the contents presented in the books are aligned with curriculum document. If there is no alignment in the text books and curriculum document, it is difficult to achieve national goals to the desired extent which badly affect whole system of education. Even vitality of curriculum document is not ignored in the advanced countries, where teaching learning practices does not orbit around just textbooks. Ball and Cohen (1996) acknowledge that "commercially published curriculum" (textbooks are one example) is the most dominant tool in the process of teaching. Instructional material (textbooks) is tangible and in regular contrast to frameworks, objectives, assessments, and other mechanisms that seek to guide curriculum. They contain units, lessons and teaching methodologies for teachers along with activities for students. Curriculum materials are not only well settled to effect individual teacher's work but in contrast to many other innovations, textbooks are already "scaled up" and are a part of the routine of schools.

A textbook is an organized body of material useful for the formal study of a subject area. The development and maintenance of a useful textbook can be an open and collaborative

process. School textbooks pass on fundamental knowledge to the younger generation. Textbooks certainly serve as an important tool in transferring knowledge. This transfer of knowledge is not limited to merely conveying the information about a subject, but it also aims at developing the understanding of the subject. In the absence of any other widely available sources of information, the textbook also becomes the most important and often the only source of content and pedagogic information for the teacher. Textbooks are necessary to teach concepts, content and inculcate skills required by the curriculum (Mahmood & Saeed, 2011).

Curriculum alignment has got considerable significance among the educationists (Blank, Porter, Smithson, & Zeidner, 2007) because curriculum alignment is among basic factors that contribute to high performance of schools in the public examinations (Murphy, 2007, p. 75). Moreover, curriculum alignment also enhances students' learning (Kercheval, 2001; Zavadsky, 2006; McFadden, 2009). Therefore, classroom instruction as well as the educational resources must be aligned with curriculum (Kuhn & Rundle-Thiesle, 2009, p. 352).

Number of researches are conducted around the globe in recognition with the significance of this issue (Treistm, 1999; Rehman, 2004; Kulm, Lepionka, 2006; Mahmood, 2010, 2011; Dalim & Yusof, 2013) but as Nicholls rightly argued that methods for textbook research are under-consideration and in need of further research. The importance of such studies is conceivably vital mainly in the developing countries like Pakistan where textbooks are perpetually the supreme important mean for the teaching learning process. However, the current studies emphasis remains on the degree to which the assessments and educational standards are in synchronization.

The poor quality of textbooks is a major factor of students' low achievement in external examinations (Oakes & Saunders, 2002, p.3). The students perform well in external examination if the textbooks are aligned with the curriculum. For example, Singapore students' excellent performance in the international exams is thought to be due to the well aligned textbooks (Fan, 2010). In spite of widespread use of and dependence on the textbooks, the textbooks are not satisfactorily aligned with the standards (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2005; Edvantia, 2005).

While textbook publishers claim that they develop textbooks that are aligned with the curriculum (Sawchuk, 2012), the research does not support this claim (Schmidt et al., 2002). Moreover, the studies (e.g. American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2005; Edvantia, 2005) indicate that there may be gaps between the curriculum and the textbooks. Therefore, it is essential to know how much the textbooks taught in schools are aligned with curriculum. Some studies have been undertaken to analyze the textbooks taught in schools in Punjab. However, these studies have not analyzed textbooks in relation to curriculum up to students learning outcomes (SLOs) level, which is being employed in most of the developed countries of the world. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to analyze the alignment level of Urdu textbook with the curriculum at secondary level in Punjab. This study was different from all the above studies because it was conducted to investigate the alignment between national curriculum (2006), textbooks at secondary level in the subject of Urdu for grades IX-X.

The researchers chose this topic because lot of researches have been done in other subjects like English, Mathematics, Chemistry and many other science subjects. But no research has been found on alignment between Urdu curriculum and textbooks at secondary level. Second reason to choose this topic was to find out the gaps between Urdu curriculum and textbook at

secondary level. Another reason to choose this topic was to check whether the exercises of textbooks measure the cognitive abilities of students which are required by curriculum. Furthermore, the researcher selected the subject of Urdu as being a compulsory subject from grade 1 to grade 12 and is also our national language.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to find out the alignment between Urdu national curriculum and textbooks at secondary level.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were as follows:

1. To what extent does the SLOs of Urdu textbooks are aligned with skills, standards, competencies and SLOs of the National Curriculum?
2. To what extent does the textbook's exercises are aligned with skills, standards, competencies and SLOs of the National Curriculum?
3. How far the textbook's exercises in the subject of Urdu truly assess students' cognitive abilities with reference to Blooms taxonomy?

Methodology

It was a qualitative study that focused on investigating the alignment between Urdu curriculum and textbooks at secondary level. The required information was obtained from primary sources. The following documents were analyzed along with review of other related literature:

1. National Curriculum of Urdu for Class IX-X, 2006 (Curriculum Wing, Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad).
2. Textbook of Urdu for Class IX-X published by Ilmi Kitab Khana, Lahore, approved by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, according to the National Curriculum 2006.

For the analysis of Curriculum Textbook Alignment Rubric was adapted which was developed by Saeed (2014), it was used to investigate the alignment between curriculum and textbooks of Urdu. It was also used to investigate the alignment between curriculum and textbook's exercises of Urdu. The instrument was used with minor modification according to the nature of Urdu subject. These instruments were validated through experts' opinion in the field of curriculum/material development and assessment experts, working at Institute of Education & Research, University of the Punjab.

Findings

This study was intended to investigate either the SLOs of textbooks are aligned with standards, skills, competencies and SLOs of curriculum or not, further it was analyzed that to what extent assessment questions of text books are aligned with SLOs, standards, skills and competencies of curriculum. Textbooks were also analyzed with reference to cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy, and which levels of cognitive domain are measured through these assessment questions. Major findings of the study are:

Curriculum-Textbook Alignment of 9th grade

Table 1: Alignment between textbook and curriculum

Key Aspect	Alignment Aspects	Alignment Proportion				Not Aligned %
		25%	50%	75%	100%	
Mutual Alignment of Standard, Competencies & SLOs	The SLOs given in the text book are aligned with standards, skills and competencies in the national curriculum document?	16				64
	The SLOs given in the text book are aligned with SLOs in the national curriculum document?	20				
Assessment of Student learning	The assessment questions are aligned with the SLOs of curriculum designed for the textbook.		39			23
	The assessment questions are aligned with standards, skills and competencies of curriculum document.		38			
	The textbook exercise questions assess student's lower cognitive abilities (knowledge, comprehension and application).				75	25
	The textbook exercise questions assess student's higher cognitive abilities (analysis, synthesis and evaluation).	25				75

Table shows that there were total 72 SLOs in Urdu textbook of grade IX. 12 SLOs were partially aligned with competencies given in national curriculum (2006). 14 SLOs were partially aligned with SLOs of national curriculum (2006). 46 SLOs were not aligned with SLOs of national

curriculum (2006). There is little alignment exist between textbooks SLOs and national curriculum (2006) in Urdu for grade IX. In Urdu textbook of grade IX, 226 exercise's questions were given at the end of the each chapter. In which 86 questions were aligned with SLOs, competencies, skills and standards given in national curriculum (2006) in Urdu for grade IX. 51 questions were aligned with SLOs given in national curriculum (2006). 38 questions were given at the end of curriculum. 51 questions were not aligned with skills, standards, competencies and SLOs. This shows that little alignment exist between textbooks' exercises and national curriculum (2006) in Urdu for grade IX. For Grades IX Textbooks' exercises were analyzed with reference to cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy. All question of each chapter of Textbooks' exercises of IX were of knowledge, comprehension and application level in regards to Bloom's taxonomy. To some extent the question belonged to other higher cognitive levels, i.e. analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This shows that Textbooks' exercises of IX grade just assess the lower cognitive levels in regards to Bloom's taxonomy.

Curriculum-Textbook Alignment of 10th grade

Table 2: Alignment between textbook and curriculum

Key Aspect	Alignment Aspects	Alignment Proportion				Not Aligned %
		25%	50%	75%	100%	
Mutual Alignment of Standard, Competencies & SLOs	The SLOs given in the text book are aligned with standards, skills and competencies in the national curriculum document?	8				60
	The SLOs given in the text book are aligned with SLOs in the national curriculum document?		32			
Assessment of Student learning	The assessment questions are aligned with the SLOs of curriculum designed for the textbook.		27			22
	The assessment questions are aligned with standards, skills and competencies of curriculum document.				51	
	The textbook exercise questions assess student's lower cognitive abilities (knowledge, comprehension and application).				75	25
	The textbook exercise questions assess student's higher cognitive abilities (analysis, synthesis and evaluation).	25				75

Table shows that there were total 101 SLOs in Urdu textbook of grade X. Only 1 SLO was partially aligned with Standards given in national curriculum (2006). 7 SLOs were partially aligned with competencies given in national curriculum (2006). 30 SLOs were partially aligned with SLOs of national curriculum (2006). 61 SLOs were not aligned with SLOs of national curriculum (2006). Only 2 questions were fully aligned with SLOs given in national curriculum. There is little alignment existing between textbooks and national curriculum (2006) in Urdu for grade X. In Urdu textbook of grade X, 233 exercise's questions were given at the end of the each chapter. In which 62 questions were aligned with SLOs given in national curriculum (2006) in Urdu for grade IX. 72 questions were aligned with skills, standards, competencies and SLOs given in national curriculum (2006). 48 questions were given at the end of curriculum. 51 questions were not aligned with skills, standards, competencies and SLOs. This shows that little alignment exists between textbooks' exercises and national curriculum (2006) in Urdu for grade X. For Grade X Textbooks' exercises were analyzed with reference to Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain. All question of each chapter of Textbooks' exercisesX were of knowledge, comprehension and application level in regards to Bloom's taxonomy. To some extent the question belonged to other higher cognitive levels, i.e. analysis, synthesis and evaluation. This shows that Textbooks' exercisesX just assess the lower cognitive levels in regards to Bloom's taxonomy.

Discussion

In this research it is evident that little alignment exists between national curriculum and textbooks of Urdu for grades IX-X. SLOs of textbooks were partially aligned with SLOs of national curriculum. Some of the exercises questions were partially aligned with SLOs and competencies. Little alignment exists between exercises questions and curriculum SLOs. All exercises questions were of knowledge, comprehension and application in regards to Bloom's taxonomy. To some extent the questions were belonged to analysis, synthesis and evaluation level.

The present research has supported several researches in worldwide. Numbers of studies have been conducted universally to indicate the alignment between the curriculum document and the relevant textbooks (Kulm, Roseman, & Treistm, 1999; Lepionka, 2006; McCluskey, 2006; Rehman, 2004; Mahmood, 2010, 2011; Dalim & Yusof, 2013. The results of this study were prompting for more investigation as they identified weak alignment in almost 50% of the secondary level textbooks even in higher grades (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2007). The studies (e.g. American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2005; Edvantia, 2005) indicate that there may be gaps between the curriculum and the textbooks. Research identifies that there was little alignment between the curriculum contents and textbooks and assessments (Sqires, 2005).

Conclusion

According to research findings, it is concluded that the SLOs of the textbooks were partially aligned with standards, rational, competencies and SLOs of curriculum in grade IX. Most of the SLOs were not aligned with any standards, rational, competencies and SLOs of curriculum in the subject of Urdu for grade IX. In grade X, SLOs of the textbooks were partially aligned with standards, rational, competencies and SLOs of curriculum, Most of the SLOs were not aligned with any standards, rational, competencies and SLOs of curriculum in the subject of Urdu for grade X. It showed that little alignment exist between SLOs of textbooks and national curriculum (2006) for grades IX-X.

During alignment of textbook exercises with standards competencies and SLOs of curriculum in grade IX. It is found that most of the exercises's questions were partially aligned with standards, competencies and SLOs of curriculum in grade IX. In the alignment of textbook exercises with standards, competencies and SLOs of curriculum in grade X. Almost same result has been found that most of the exercises questions were partially aligned with standards, rational, competencies and SLOs of curriculum in grade X. It seemed that little alignment exists between textbook exercises and national curriculum (2006). After the analysis of exercise's questions revealed that all questions were of knowledge, comprehension and application level in regards to Bloom's taxonomy. To some extent the question belonged to other higher cognitive levels, i.e. analysis, synthesis and evaluation level.

Recommendations

The results of the study point out some direct and indirect implications.

1. SLOs and assessment plan of the textbooks should be aligned with curriculum SLOs.
2. Assessment plan of textbooks should be related to both, lower and higher cognitive level, i.e. analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
3. The Punjab curriculum authority should make sure that textbooks are written according to the curriculum.
4. Punjab Curriculum Authority may ensure the alignment of textbooks with curriculum before issuing NOC to the textbooks.

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