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RESEARCH PAPER

Insightful Perspectives about Effective Implementation of ESL Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistani Schools

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	The research paper has critically evaluated the draft document of ESL Single National Curriculum (SNC) to interpret the purpose of SNC for its successful implementation across the country. The study is qualitative in nature as content analysis method is used to explore the innovative aspects of SNC. It is evidently discussed that curriculum's fundamental justification is to infuse ethical, social and universal values in Pakistani learners with themes and subthemes such as, peace and social cohesion, ideology, religious tolerance, respect, equity and conflict resolution. It is surmised that ESL Single National Curriculum has planned to make use of technology to develop ESL literacy and competency in students. It is implied that the performance of ESL teachers will be evaluated using different evaluation models, such as, Guskey Model of Teacher Evaluation. The study recommends that outcomes of needs and situational analysis would be beneficial for successful implementation of SNC in Pakistani schools. The everyday activities and materials can be synthesized with SNC to improve creativity, reflection and autonomy in ESL learners and teachers.

Introduction

Pakistan is a multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic country. After independence in 1947, Government of Pakistan following the footsteps of British Colonialism in Indo-Pak subcontinent established the schools with diverse mediums of instruction that is, English medium schools (EMS), Urdu medium schools (UMS) and Vernacular medium schools (VMS) that have created unjust and inequitable classification in the country (Irfan, 2017, 2018, 2019). In order to eliminate the social injustice and economic disparity, the current government of Pakistan has decided to launch the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in Pakistani schools. The author has critically evaluated the zero draft of SNC for grades VI-VIII. She has designed the following model based on the zero draft of SNC.
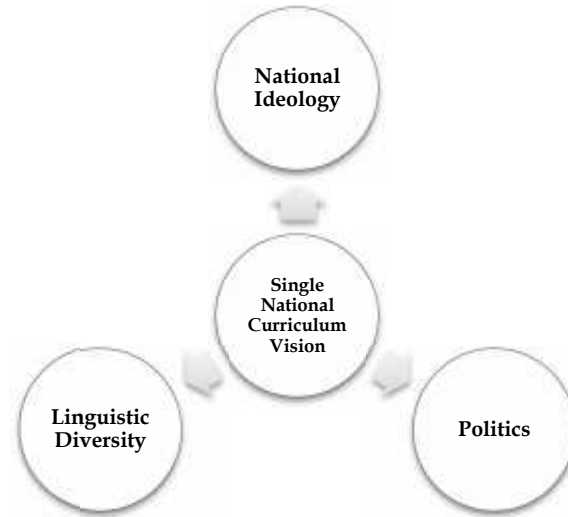
Figure 1 Propounded SNC Vision (Designed by Researcher)

Literature Review

English is the language of globalization as it is linked to technology with strong emphasis on modernisation and economic development of a country (Tsui and Tollefson, 2006). The internal and external pressures have shaped the position of English in political, social, educational and economic spheres which directly and indirectly transformed the role of English into a lingua franca. Lakoff (2004) believes that globalization is deeply related to assimilation of social, cultural, political, ecological and economic domains all over the world with a sense of expanding connectivity. It emerges out of words, images, sounds, mass mediated symbols, objects or activities. Crystal (2011) views that globalization of English means the spread of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) with inestimable users and uses across the world. He further writes that English is the language of science, technology, medicine, pop music and sports. English is referred to as International English (IE), Global English (GE), World English (WE), Common English (CE) and Continental English (CE).

Rahman (2009, p.10) believes that globalization has amplified the power of English in Pakistan because it leads to better employment opportunities. This objective has increased the demand for English medium of instruction (EMI) in schools, colleges and universities at the expense of indigenous languages. English is a compulsory subject in curricula of Pakistani institutions. Therefore, the goal of English language educators is to equip the students with the knowledge of global literacy and critical awareness (Kress, 2003).

Therefore, English is no longer an exclusive property of native speakers but a lingua franca among communities of local and international languages (Burns, 2005). To agree with Huntington (1996), p.61:

"*A lingua franca is a way of coping with linguistic and cultural differences, not a way of eliminating them. It is a tool for communication not a source of identity and community*".

In Pakistan, English has played a crucial role in education, politics and socio-economic infrastructure of the country (Mansoor, 2005, p.26). Mahboob (2009, p.179) explains that English has not been removed from its prestigious position for many reasons such as:

- *There is insufficient material produced in local languages to be used at all levels of education (dearth of corpus planning).*
- *There are no other politically neutral languages that can replace English.*
- *The religious parties do not have sufficient political power.*
- *The groups with economic, social, and political strength believe that English is essential for future development*
  The Coleman Report (2010, p.3) precisely states:

"*The British Council demonstrates its recognition of the importance that the Government of Pakistan attaches to English, as a tool for individual and national development, and its wishes to support the government in its desire to address the significant challenges that the country faces in the area of English language teaching and learning*".

It is observed that large-size classes, lack of resources, unmotivated and untrained teachers, fixed syllabus, forty minutes duration for English and external examination bodies in Pakistani act as prominent constraints (Irfan, 2018). Interestingly, Kamhi-Stein and Mahboob (2006) write that English teachers in Pakistan teach using Grammar Translation Method (GTM). They scarcely use English for communicative purposes in the classroom. The teaching faculty do not use English competently and students undergo language problems. Coleman's report (2010, p.17) also reinforces this dilemma:

"*Pakistani English teachers have a tendency to teach the 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*".

Richards (2011) believes that curriculum is the main pillar of an education system. It includes what and how students learn, teachers' pedagogy, resource materials and assessment modes and practices. The model presented below describes four ingredients of curriculum (see figure 2):
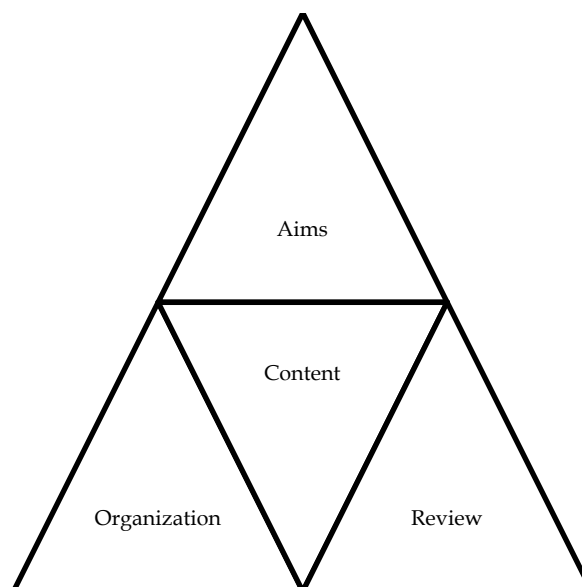
Aims

Content

Organization   Review

Figure 2 Aspects of English curriculum (Richards, 2011, p. 39)

Richards (2011) explains that effective curriculum development process comprises needs analysis, situational analysis, learning outcomes, organisation of course items, selection and preparation of teaching materials and evaluation of learners and teachers. The curriculum is prepared for learners, therefore, it is needed to gather information about learners' educational, social and cultural backgrounds to perceive their beliefs and learning styles. The purpose of curriculum is to enable the students to critically examine the existing order so that they can shape their roles in it. Richards (2011, p.52) further identifies the purposes of needs analysis for curriculum development in English language teaching:

- *to find out what language skills a learner needs in order to perform a particular role, such as university student*
- *to help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students*
- *to determine which students from a group are most in need of training in particular language skills*
- *to identify a change of direction that people in a reference group feel is important*
- *to identify a gap between what students are able to do and what they need to able to do*
- *to collect information about a particular problem learners are experiencing*

Nunan (1992, p.176) discusses:

"The effectiveness of a language program will be dictated as much by the attitudes and expectations of the learners as by the specifications of the official curriculum...learners have their own agendas in the language lessons they attend. These agendas, as much as the

teacher's objectives, determine what learners take from any given teaching/learning encounter".

Clark (1989, p.5) reflects:

"A language curriculum is a function of the interrelationships that hold between subject-specific concerns and other broader factors embracing socio-political and philosophical matters, educational value systems, theory and practice in curriculum design, teacher experiential wisdom and learner motivation. In order to understand the foreign language curriculum in any particular context it is therefore necessary to attempt to understand how all the various influences interrelate to give a particular shape to the planning and execution of the teaching/learning process".

The primary goal of curriculum is academic rationalism that spins about intrinsic value and role of subject matter in the gradual growth of learner's humanism, intellect and rationality (Clark, 1989). Secondly, socioeconomic ideology vehemently stresses upon the economic needs of the society as a sound explanation for teaching of ESL. Thirdly, an effectively designed ESL curriculum develops critical awareness, self-reflection, critical thinking and learner strategies (Richards, 2011, p. 117). Fourthly, the goal of ESL curriculum is cultural pluralism that prepares learners for active participation in various unique cultures not merely of the dominant social and economic group (Burnett, 1998). Hornberger (1991, p. 222) emphasizes, "*cultural pluralism at school and in the community, and an integrated national society is based on the autonomy of cultural groups*". Lastly, social reconstructionism in ESL curriculum discusses the roles schools and learners can demonstrate to cope with the prevailing social injustice and inequality (Freire, 1972; Apple, 1986). Morris (1995, p.20) observes:

"The curriculum derived from this perspective focuses on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes which would create a world where people care about each other, the environment, and the distribution of wealth. Tolerance, the acceptance of diversity and peace would be encouraged".

Hence, it is suggested that ESL curriculum should be based on an understanding of present and long-term needs of learners and beliefs and ideologies of a society. In addition, curriculum developers in Pakistan should use Boleman and Deal Framework (1991) to overcome the existing flaws in curricula. The framework is given as follows:
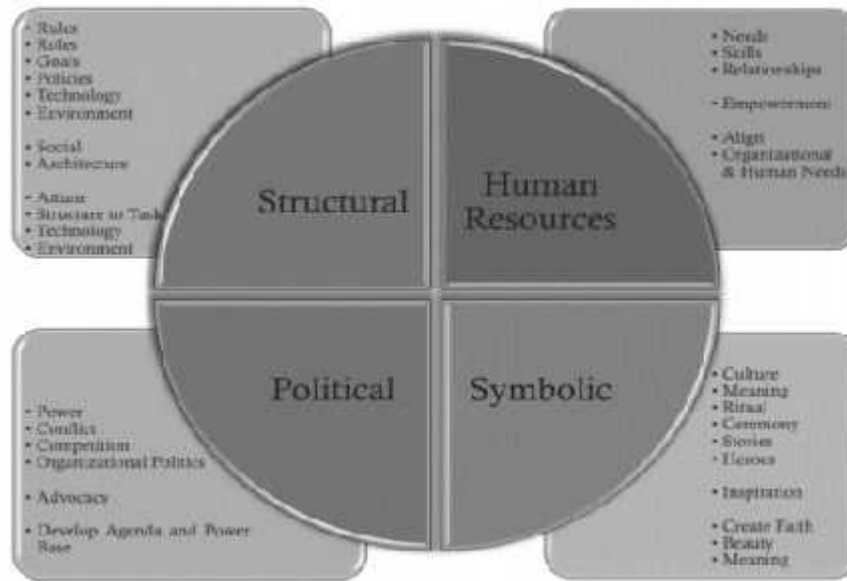
Figure 3. Boleman and Deal Framework (1991)

While discussing curriculum, it is also important to touch upon the development of language materials because students particularly in ESL or EFL settings undergo language problems. The development of language learning materials refers to all the processes used by practitioners such as, design, production, adaptation, exploitation, research and evaluation of learning and teaching materials (Tomlinson, 2012, p.144). Tomlinson (2008, p.4) has proposed the following principles of language learning materials:

- *the language experience needs to be contextualised and comprehensible*
- *the learner needs to be motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged*
- *the language and discourse features available for potential acquisition need to be salient, meaningful and frequently encountered*
- *the learner needs to achieve deep and multi-dimensional processing of the language*

Material and Methods

The researcher using content analysis method has critically evaluated the zero draft of English language Single National Curriculum (SNC) for grades 6-8. The selected research method is used to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1. What is the purpose of English language Single National Curriculum (SNC)?

RQ 2. What new aspects are incorporated in English language Single National Curriculum (SNC)?

Results and Discussion

The document's vision emphasizes that English language is an important skill that is a prerequisite to develop "*responsible and self-motivated individuals*", enhances "*personality development*", "*global communication*", "*professional choices*" and creates "*tolerant and multicultural society*" (p.2). National Education Policy Framework (2018) intends to implement multilingual policy with an intensive focus on English as a second language (ESL). The curriculum's underlying rationale is to inculcate "*ethical, social and universal values*" with themes and subthemes such as, peace and social cohesion, ideology, religious tolerance, respect, equity and conflict resolution (p.3). The document also pinpoints that aims of English curriculum are "*Education for Sustainable Development*" (ESD) and "*Global Citizen Education*" (GCE) (p.3). However, there is scarcely any description about the historical status of English in Pakistan, English as an international language (EIL), English as a global language (EGL) and English as a lingua franca (EFL). It is suggested that the rationale of introductory chapter of Single National Curriculum (SNC) should revolve around the development of proficiency in ESL for grades VI-VIII. The statement "*English is considered as the most esteemed second language on socio-economic and political grounds*" (p.63) can be justifiably integrated with SNC vision.

The SNC draft propounds that it has embraced the "*holistic approach*" (p.3) and is "multidimensional" (p.3) with the inclusion of "*phonology, grammar, lexis, discourse, language functions and skills*" to promote the "*high standards of literacy and competency in English language*" (p.4) but is in a "*transitional phase*" (p.6). The title of competency "*formal and lexical aspects*" (p.5) is imprecise. The word formal should be replaced with words either "syntactical" or "grammatical" to develop more sense. It is observed that these aspects lead to two different standards 1 and 2. Standard 1 (p.30) is vocabulary building and figures of speech i.e. imagery, metaphors, personification etc. (p.30-31) and Standard 2 (p.32) is defined as grammar and structure with topics, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, tenses, phrases, clauses etc. (p. 32-40).

It is conspicuously noted that consistency in relation to concepts of "*writing skill*" (p.5) needs clarity regarding teaching and learning of diverse *genres* (p.102) of academic writing such as, "*expository, descriptive, narrative*" (p.94) and "*creative writing*" (p.97) e.g. poetry, drama, story etc.(p.51). English language curriculum looks imperfect without the titles of prominent foreign literary authors' works or Pakistani literature. More importantly, it is essential to distinguish teaching of academic writing from teaching of creative writing.
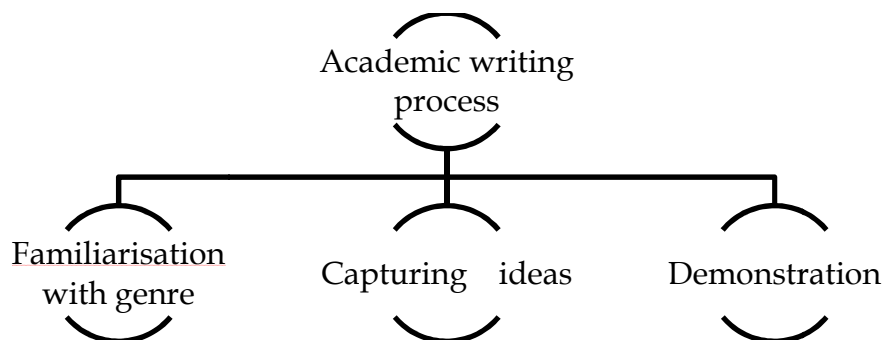
Academic writing
process

Familiarisation
with genre

Capturing   ideas

Demonstration

Figure 4. Example of Academic Writing Model (Designed by Researcher)

It is noted that English teachers should have *critical awareness*, *self-direction*, *reflective* and *analytical ability* and capacity for *attitudinal change* (p.105). A few more words can be added i.e. creativity, originality and motivation. Further, everyday activities such as, exploring social media, listening music, watching TV, playing video games, shopping etc. can be synthesized with SNC to develop autonomy in ESL learners and teachers. It is mentioned that performance of English teachers will be evaluated using different evaluation models, for instance, Guskey Model of Teacher Evaluation (p.106). This model has not been incorporated in the document to elucidate the concept of teacher evaluation to reader. The model is as follows:

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Change in
TEACHERS'
CLASSROOM
PRACTICES

Change in
STUDENT
LEARNING
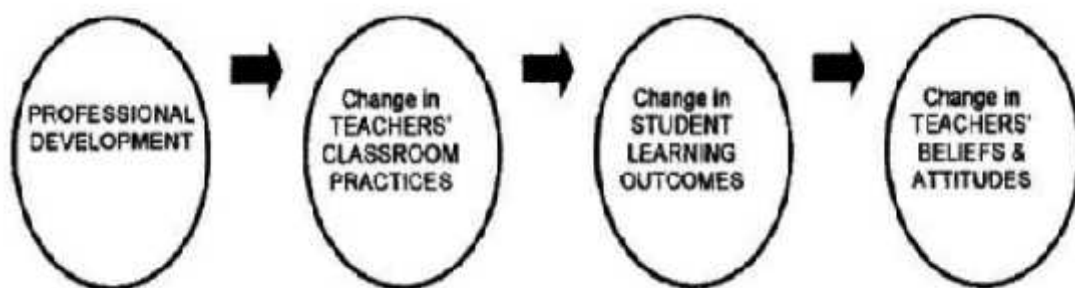OUTCOMES

Change in
TEACHERS'
BELIEFS &
ATTITUDES

Figure 5. Guskey Model of Teacher Evaluation (2002, p.383)

The head teachers, mentors and subject specialists involved with monitoring, observation and evaluation of English teachers should also get mandatory training for putting into action judicious appraisal measures. The assessment procedures require the detailed explanation especially regarding the comparison of ability of students in one school with another school, making students independent and critical learners through self and peer assessment, ensuring qualities of a good test e.g. validity, reliability, practicality and objectivity and wash back effect (harmful and beneficial) (p.75-92).

Interestingly, a comprehensive section is included about using audio visual aids and digital resources for teaching ESL (p.73-74). At the same time, it is written, "*learning materials are not easily available in some teaching-learning contexts*" (p.93). It is

the demand of an effective curriculum model that "needs and situational analysis" of the whole country should be carried out before the launch of Single National Curriculum (SNC). The availability of fundamental resources is indispensable for teaching especially oral communication competency comprising listening and speaking skills.

It is further interpreted from SNC document that:

- The document must be meticulously edited specially in relation to rephrasing of certain vague sentences, omission of grammatical errors and usage of accurate mechanics of writing i.e. appropriate placement of punctuation and so on. Citations are embedded within the text of the document but the list of references is excluded.
- In Pakistan, English is taught as a second language (ESL) not as a foreign language (EFL). Therefore, the term EFL should be omitted (p.105).
- It is advisable to include a section about the consistent use of "Standard Englishes" such as, Standard American English (StAmE) and Standard British English (StBrE) especially with regards to learning of pronunciation and spellings. This phenomenon is a source of errors and confusion for learners.
- It is necessary to include a section on adoption and implementation of procedures for incorporation of changes based on piloting and feedback of English SNC (Grades VI-VIII).
- The speaking skill criteria has excluded marks for pronunciation (p.85) and essay writing criteria has not taken into account planning stage (p.90).

Conclusions

To conclude, underlying rationale of English language SNC is to inculcate ethical, cultural, social and universal values in learners regarding the multilingual and multicultural policy of the country. The focus of curriculum is on lifelong learning and continuing transformation of learners into global citizens of the world. SNC intends to develop the high standards of literacy and competency through holistic approach of English language teaching. English teachers need intensive training to have criticality and autonomy for acquiring attitudinal change. SNC aspires to use general technological devices to develop ESL learners' written and oral communicative ability.

Recommendations

The research recommends:

- SNC developers can have reliance on Boleman and Deal Framework (see figure 3) to overcome the existing shortcomings in curricula.

- Members of English language curriculum review committee (VI-VIII) should be from all provinces of Pakistan not only from Islamabad/Rawalpindi (see p.107 of SNC zero draft).
- The outcomes of needs and situational survey of ESL learners and teachers across the country should be considered for effective implementation of SNC.
- ESL teachers should be trained to adopt and implement assessment measures competently.
- Everyday activities can be used to enhance creativity and autonomy in ESL learners and teachers.
- It is pertinent to differentiate explicitly teaching of academic writing from teaching creative writing in SNC.

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