



RESEARCH PAPER

Evaluating Primary-Level English Textbooks of Single National Curriculum through the Lens of Bloom's Taxonomy

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the application of Bloom's Taxonomy framework in categorising cognitive skills, as utilised in Single National Curriculum (SNC) English primary level textbooks. The current study employs qualitative method and content analysis as the selected approach for data analysis to obtain the robust results. The provided sample consists of primary-level textbooks that have been adopted in Federal Schools in accordance with the newly implemented Single National Curriculum Policy of 2021. The present study examines the sample of textbooks as per the Bloom's Taxonomy classification by using checklist. The results of the study indicate that textbooks examined consist of questions that primarily target lower order thinking abilities (LOTS), with around 89.8% of the items falling within this classification, while 10.2% represents to Higher Order Thinking skills (HOTS). The scope of the research study has been constrained to the cognitive domain as a result of time and resource constraints. It is recommended that SNC new English primary level curriculum should be student centered to focus on communicative competence, creativity and use of the language in day today business and the curriculum should be revised as per the needs of subject and learners. The representative from all provinces should be the part of the curriculum design in order to design the English textbooks as per the needs of the multilingual and multicultural second language learners.

KEYWORDS

Cognitive Domain, Intellectual Abilities, Single National Curriculum, Textbook, Bloom's Taxonomy

Introduction

English is considered an official language and has been taught as a compulsory subject from classes 1 to 12 per the national policy (Government of Pakistan, 2009). In order to address the needs of the modern age, the curriculum has been revised, keeping in view the emerging demands of the job market (Lashari, Umrani, & Buriro, 2021) and SDG goals and sustainable development (Toole, 2011). In Pakistan, students start reading from their textbooks, which are essential sources of learning the target language (Lashari, et al., 2018) and developing the attitudes and opinions for life.

Within the domain of education, the careful choice of instructional materials assumes a critical role in structuring the educational ideologies of future citizens. The instructional material teaching methods and assessments are the fundamental triangular approach to shape the learners' minds for future nation-building (Rehan, Abbas & Lashari,

2023). English language textbooks play a crucial role in language skills development and contribute to cognitive, linguistic, and cultural development. English is a language Franka and used in a globalised world. Integrating social, cultural, political, ecological, and economic realms with a growing connection is central to globalisation (Lakoff, 2004) and emerges from mass-mediated symbols, linguistic, visual, auditory, material, and realities.

Bloom's Taxonomy, an educational framework devised by Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues in 1956, continues to be a fundamental concept in educational psychology (Muhayimana, Kwizera, & Nyirahabimana, 2022). The framework systematically categorises cognitive abilities, encompassing a spectrum of cognitive functions spanning basic cognitive processes such as recall and comprehension to more advanced abilities such as critical analysis, assessment, and creative synthesis (Mansoor, 2023). Through the application of this taxonomy, the study aims to analyse English textbooks to evaluate the utilitarian purpose of the English textbooks. The significance of English as a worldwide lingua franca underscores the necessity of cultivating comprehensive language abilities that transcend mere memorisation (Lashari, Umrani & Buriro, 2021).

The curriculum is widely employed as a prevalent medium of formal education throughout various global contexts. According to Richards (2011), the curriculum is considered the fundamental cornerstone of an educational system. The components encompassed within this framework consist of the content and methods of student learning, the pedagogical approaches employed by teachers, the materials and resources utilised, and the modes and practices of assessment. Within the designed curriculum, textbooks possess the potential to effectively facilitate the dissemination of knowledge when they are meticulously crafted and curated to align with the genuine educational requirements of learners. On the other hand, if these decisions are executed without due diligence and fail to adhere to appropriate criteria, they may lack utility and prove ineffective (Forehand, 2005). According to Gallagher et al. (2012), the information in the English language textbook enables learners to develop a fervent perspective towards the global landscape, tolerance, and understanding of the culture and ways of life of L1 users through prose and poetry with curiosity (Wagner, 2008). In order to enhance understanding and facilitate the assimilation of information, it is essential to provide students with thought-provoking activities to make them communicative competent in the target language (Samejo, Lashari & Mahar, 2023).

Tailoring textbooks to align with a child's cognitive capacities has become a significant component of educational instruction (Samejo, Lashari & Mahar, 2023). The implementation of a single national curriculum has become a prominent subject of discussion in the field of education in recent times (Irfan, 2021). In addition, the significance of generating textbooks catering to students' cognitive demands has further enhanced the importance of educational institutions. The selection of this particular range, encompassing 1st grade through 5th grade, is intended to evaluate the textbook through the lens of Bloom's taxonomy. The stage of primary school instruction holds significant importance (Samejo, Lashari & Mahar, 2023) as it serves as a critical juncture where children begin to determine their future areas of interest. The study is significant because it analyses the English textbooks of the primary level.

Literature Review

The inclusion of critical thinking, crisis preparedness, desirable moral values, problem-solving skills, positive affect, mutual respect, and other relevant qualities ought to be integrated into the curriculum across all academic disciplines within the educational system (Káčovský et al., 2022; Samejo, Lashari & Mahar, 2023). Moreover, as Cruz (2004)

stated, using examination questions is a significant method for assessing cognitive skills. Moreover, according to Abdelhadi (2001), examinations hold significance in assessing students' academic progress as they offer a comprehensive understanding of students' abilities and levels of engagement. According to Al-Sarairh (2011), a collection of criteria, including objectivity, reliability, consistency, and additional secondary characteristics, are of utmost importance.

Standards for English from Grade One - Five

Learning standards encompass concise and comprehensive elucidations of the knowledge and skills students are expected to comprehend and demonstrate at a specific stage in their educational journey (Rehman, Lashari & Abbas, 2023). The ESL curriculum aims to foster cultural pluralism, enabling learners to actively engage in diverse cultures beyond the dominant social and economic group (Burnett, 1998). The significance of cultural pluralism within educational institutions and the broader community, asserting that establishing an integrated national society relies on the autonomy granted to various cultural groupings (Hornberger, 1991).

Standards for Quality Education in National Curriculum Document

The quality of education is assessed based on various factors within the school system, including the qualifications of teachers, the number of students in each class, the teaching methods employed, the availability of learning materials, the curriculum followed, and the resources and facilities necessary for the functioning and maintenance of the school. Consequently, the evaluation of educational performance is based on the inputs. According to the National Education Policy of 2017, the resulting output will exhibit favourable characteristics if the inputs are high quality. When considering various factors, it can be observed that selecting instructional approaches that cater to the needs of students and prioritise their learning experiences can significantly influence their academic performance (Mahmood, 2006).

According to Ashraf (2016), the evaluation revealed that English language instructors lack adequate training as language educators. The educational strategy fails to adequately address language-related concerns (Lashari, Umrani & Buriro, 2021). According to Teevno (2011), several factors contribute to the ineffectiveness of learning English as a second language. According to a comprehensive global survey conducted in 89 countries on assessments and English teacher training, it was found that language educators lack sufficient training in English instruction (Emery, 2012). Emery's (2012) study reveals that the issue under investigation is not limited to a specific country or region but has a global presence. Based on the findings of Ahmad, Ahmed, Bukhari, and Bukhari (2011), it has been observed that students enrolled in public schools have greater challenges in attaining competency in English as a second language compared to their peers at government-operated educational institutions.

Bloom's Taxonomy and Textbook Analysis

Bloom's taxonomy is essential for classifying learners' cognitive skills. One of the essential studies conducted during the 1999-2000 academic year, Agha (2004) employed Bloom's Taxonomy as a framework to evaluate the English language textbook challenges encountered by eighth-grade students in Palestine. A total of 2,904 queries from four different books were assessed and contrasted utilising Bloom's Taxonomy. The analysis results indicated that the books examined predominantly contained lower-level questions.

Alharbi (2015) conducted a study that examined the composition and distribution of the sample used in the research. The sample consisted of 20 English language teachers responsible for instructing students in grades 6 to 9 within the western region of the United Arab Emirates. According to the statistics, all teachers employed knowledge-based questions, whereas 45 per cent% integrated questions and 65 per cent %

In their study, Riazi and Mosalnejad (2010) examined the utilisation of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives in Iranian senior secondary school English language textbooks. The prevalence of lower-order cognitive abilities was more pervasive across all academic disciplines compared to higher-level cognitive capacities. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there was a significant difference in the levels of the Taxonomy between senior high schools and pre-university textbooks. Specifically, the textbook used in the pre-university setting incorporated particular high-order learning objectives well in advance. Asghar and Al-Bargi (2014) conducted research to identify the inquiries posed by primary-level English teachers during classroom interactions. They further categorised these inquiries, totalling 664, into different sorts and levels. The study included 19 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors responsible for teaching primary school courses in the state education system in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, during the first quarter of the 2006-2007 academic year. The educators implemented a categorisation system consisting of four inquiries, wherein queries requiring memorisation garnered the highest proportion (63.25 per cent), while questions of a specific nature received the minor proportion (3.01 per cent).

The lower performance of pupils in South Africa's educational system is commonly attributed to teachers' inadequate instructional methods in imparting knowledge to students (Adunola, 2011). In order to achieve the intended educational outcomes, educators often delve into various levels of Bloom's taxonomy, with a particular focus on lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS).

Regrettably, the scarcity of English language educators who possess expertise in the field has consistently emerged as a key challenge in Pakistan (Shamim, 2008; Aslam et al., 2010; Nawab, 2012). A report by an everyday society on curricular changes and reading material (2003), an undertaking by the Pakistan-based Institute for Sustainable Development Policy, properly raised genuine deficiencies in showing the English language. The main downside is that the prospectuses overlooked theoretical, activity-pressed, and genuine materials that permit pupils to examine essential mindfulness among respondents. Furthermore, muddled and non-operational instructive practices methodologies block the support of premium and comprehension among students.

This raises the question of whether English educators in Pakistan mean to coordinate the methodology towards fundamental English abilities or show English in portions. Along these lines, this examination expects to research what sort of guidance methods and exercises English instructors use in their classes at the college level and how much educators open understudies to different language abilities as far as best practices.

Bloom's Taxonomy Classification of Cognitive Domain

A taxonomy known as Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Outcomes, developed in 1956 by Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom and his colleagues Frost, Hill, Englehart, and Krathwol, is an innovative concept in establishing assessment, grading, and curriculum. The taxonomy comprises three phases: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation were the subcategories of the Cognitive Domain. Woolfolk (2005) asserts that learners engage in actions from all three realms in their everyday lives, sometimes simultaneously. When learners engage in

writing (psychomotor activity), they also engage in remembering (cognitive activity), and they also exhibit effective behaviour (emotional responses to the tasks or activities).

According to Bloom's taxonomy, the cognitive domain has six main stages: knowledge, comprehension, application (lower-level cognition), analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (higher-level cognition). Bloom's taxonomy was selected because it has been widely implemented to analyse textbooks.

Material and Methods

The study uses a qualitative approach by adopting the content analysis of the English textbooks. The items were analysed well to analyse the textbooks contents. The results were presented in percentile and graphs by using simple percentile and Microsoft excel for the clarification of the results. This approach of data analysis is very common in textbook analysis. Shank (2002) Denzen and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research methods as a way to inquire about and interpret the subject matter. Many attempts have been made to characterise subjective research in sociologies. The study sample is a Single National Curriculum based Primary English Textbooks implemented in the new session 2021. This method examines a textbook's questions to see whether they serve the intended goal. The subcategories of relevant lower-order thinking abilities or higher-order thinking skills were created by comparing the content and question items in the exercises to determine the relevance of the questions with the content. The taxonomy's existing and unidentified domains were found.

Results

The vision outlined in the text highlights the significance of higher-order thinking skills development and English language proficiency as a fundamental requirement for cultivating responsible and self-motivated individuals. It also underscores its role in fostering personality development, facilitating global communication, enabling career opportunities, and fostering a tolerant and multicultural society. The National Education Policy Framework (2018) aims to incorporate a multilingual approach, particularly emphasising English as a second language (ESL).

Table 1

Results of English Textbook Analysis through the Lens of Bloom's Taxonomy				
Grade	Total Chapters	Total number of Questions	LOTS	HOTS
1	11	124	116	8
2	12	94	71	25
3	11	110	100	10
4	13	140	126	14
5	14	157	143	14
Grand Total	61	626	556	70

The Table 1 results are interesting. The items analysis was quantified and analysed item by item in each book chapter. The results are represented in graph form to understand the data set clearly.

Analysis of SNC Grade One English Textbook

The SNC English Book-1 comprises a total of eleven chapters. These chapters have exercises with one hundred twenty-four questions in total. The exercise-based questions were given at the end of each chapter. The items were analysed based on a lower-order and

higher-order thinking skills checklist. By analysing the items, it was observed that one hundred sixteen items were related to lower-order thinking skills, and fifty-eight were higher-order thinking skills. This shows that the exercise-based questions were primarily based on lower-order thinking rather than higher-order thinking skills.

Analysis of Grade-2 English Textbook

The SNC English grade two book contains twelve chapters. All chapters were having mentioned the exercises and questions. It was observed that there were ninety-five questions in total in the book. By analysing them as per the checklist, it was observed that seventy-one items were related to lower-order thinking skills, and twenty-four were higher-order thinking skills, which means that half of the total questions were based on lower-order thinking skills.

Analysis of Grade-3 English Textbook

The grade three English textbook contains eleven chapters. After analysing all the chapters, it was observed that there are one hundred ten questions for learners based on the chapters. Item analysis observation found that one hundred items were related to lower order thinking skills and ten items represented higher-order thinking skills, which reveals that the questions were based on higher-order thinking skills.

Analysis of Grade-4 English Textbook

The grade four English textbook contains eleven chapters, comprising one hundred forty questions in total. Among these questions, after analysing items, it was found that one hundred and twenty-six items were related to lower order thinking skills, and fourteen were higher order thinking skills, which reveals that the grade 4 English textbook lacks implementation of higher order thinking skills among learners.

Analysis of Grade-5 English Textbook

The grade five English textbook contains a total of eleven chapters. These eleven chapters comprise one hundred and fifty-seven questions in total. One hundred and forty-three items were related to lower-order thinking skills, and fourteen were higher-order thinking skills.

The activities exercised are designed based on the reading material, and questions concerning grammar are offered to be answered based on that reading. It appears there are two contents at once: the lesson's content and the exercises' content, both of which call for in-depth reading.

Discussion

The study results show that a total of 626 questions were examined and classified into groups corresponding to the Cognitive Domains of higher and lower-order thinking skills. Out of all of them, 556 were classified as having lower-order thinking skills, including knowledge and understanding, making up 88.817% of the total. There were 70 items in application and synthesis, which makes up 11.18% of the total sample of the results. In contrast, 88.81% represent lower-order thinking skills related to knowledge and comprehension. The lower-order thinking skills have been focused more on the English textbooks at the primary level, while higher-order thinking skills have received the minimum attention in the textbooks. The data presented above, which demonstrates the

uneven distribution of items among the sublevels of the cognitive domain, can be added to this.

The study results show that the distribution of question items within each sub-level of the cognitive domain does not represent a well-balanced approach to curriculum design, which can ensure cognitive and linguistic development. The content focused more on lower-order thinking skills, which is a matter of concern.

The goal of the current study was to uncover the areas of the English textbook understudy that needed improvement. While the textbook was evaluated, it was commonly noted that the content was insufficient for students to acquire and practice English language skills, notably higher-order thinking skills and communicative competency. The study results show that there is a need for a complete review and revisions to the textbook's development. As a result, it is advised that textbook authors adapt and update their works in light of the English Curriculum.

Conclusion

There is never a vacuum in which a textbook or course book is developed. Before compiling any textbook, it is the compilers', authors', and editors' primary responsibility to create content that can accomplish the goals of the curriculum and cater to the needs of the students. The English curriculum aims to develop students' ability to think critically, to become independent, lifelong learners, be engaged citizens and global citizens.

According to the Single National Curriculum in Pakistan, there is a shortage of research on textbook evaluation against the backdrop of standards, benchmarks, and SLOs. The curriculum aspires to make learners perpetual learners who would acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for developing personal, social, emotional, linguistic, ideological, and psychological growth to become global citizens. SLOs are incredibly efficient and meet the moment's needs, but they are not successfully implemented into textbooks, and learners are not centred around the textbook to develop their cognitive and affective domains.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the composition of the English language curriculum review committee (grades I-V) include representatives from all provinces of Pakistan rather than being limited to individuals from Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

It is imperative to take into account the findings of needs and situational surveys conducted among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and teachers nationwide in order to ensure the successful implementation of the Standardized National Curriculum (SNC) and invite feedback and criticism from all stakeholders to improve the curriculum as per the need of the learners and cognitive development of the learners as well.

It is recommended that the English textbooks are not designed per the centred activities but rather grammar and reading-based activities, which will not help develop the learner's communicative competency. It has been observed that the SNC English curriculum is made like a hasty decision to adopt and implement, which will impact long-lasting. It is recommended that classroom activities should be designed focusing on the creativity and imagination of faculty development and autonomy among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners.

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