



RESEARCH PAPER

The Application of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) in BS English Language & Literature Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to explore the application of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4 Quality Education) in the BS English Language & Literature curriculum of the University of the Punjab. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) laid down by the United Nation (UN) General Assembly encapsulate the need of the present challenges without mocking the capacity of the stakeholders to cope up with the emergent needs of this century. The findings of this study helped to synthesise whether the BS-English curriculum is aligned with the 21st century skills for imparting the lifelong learning sustainability or not?. The study adopted the qualitative approach and used document analysis technique to evaluate the content of course books taught in BS-English Language & Literature Program at the University of the Punjab. A checklist was developed based on the SDG4 targets to analyse the course contents. The findings revealed that there is the need to review the BS-English Language & Literature curriculum in line with the SDG4 targets for imparting inclusive skills for sustainability in future with the incorporation of the 21st century skills in Pakistan.

KEYWORDS 21st Century Skills, BS English Curriculum, Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education

Introduction

Education is a fundamental and multi-disciplinary infrastructure of human capital that is basically an authentic engine for the development of any government. In Pakistani context, education is incorporated with the mechanistically reutilised series of traditional pedagogical instructional actions. It is not equipped with any practical domain to combat with the current emerging needs of both national and global precedents. This kind of education is not enunciated with the practical application and lifelong learning skills and does not fulfill the authenticity of the 21st century skills. For this reason, the United Nations (UN) presented Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these goals SDG4 plays a promising role in implementation, and outcomes of quality of education.

This study investigated how education according to SDG4 (Quality Education) can be adorned with the awareness of right curriculum pedagogy and discipline to infuse the concept of sustainability in both teachers' and students' life. It also attempts to highlight how English Language and Literature curriculum of BS four years program at the University of the Punjab corroborates with the 21st century skills on the constructive aligned pattern for administering the quality of education in higher education institutions. Khan et al. (2019) cited the view of the UN General Assembly (1987) that SDGs encapsulate the need of the present challenges without impairing the capacity of the stakeholders to

cope up with the emergent needs of this century. In connotative applications of this action plan, the vision of 2030 can also be highlighted through the practical and practicum parameters of exploring the applications of SDG4 (Quality Education) in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Moreover, this research will explore whether the BS-English curriculum prescribed by the University of the Punjab is imparting to the 21st century skills like cognitive skills, creativity, entrepreneurship, problem solving, media literacy, analytical skills, citizenship, leadership, technical skills and vocational skills to the students for promoting the agenda of SDG4 or not.

SDGs are the global agenda that are assimilated into national framework and policies through global approach. According to Brundtland Report (1987), SDGs (as cited by Khushik & Diemer, 2020) are referred to as the provision of development to the stakeholders at the exigency of the requirements with the dimension of talents and capacity of character building. SDGs are basically international global developed agenda that has been associated with 17 goals, 169 targets and 244 indicators (UNESCO, 2019). At the national level of Pakistan, representation, demonstration and national strategic framework of SDGs have been immersed with the Federal and Provincial political will. SDG4s are basically based on the holistic educational approach from global contextualisation to national standardisation. It comprises of 10 indicators: seven (07) points have laid the foundation of outcome scenarios and three (03) are based on the action plan for implementation. The primary aim of SDG4 is to bring peace, prosperity and right direction among Pakistani learners and teachers. The SDG4 aims to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2019, n.p.).

The targets of SDG4 (Quality Education) are as follows:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing

States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.

- By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States (UNESCO, 2019, p. 3).

Materials and Methods

This research was qualitative in nature and adopted the technique of document analysis for evaluating the content of course books taught in the BS-English Language & Literature program at the University of the Punjab to find out whether the curriculum is aligned with and facilitate in the application of SDG4 goals and targets with the incorporation of the 21st century skills or not. The sample size was 15 books. A checklist based on the SDG4 targets was developed to analyse the course contents. For the checklist of course content analysis, it is pertinent to postulate how much policy holders and curriculum disseminators reduce the barriers for skill advancements; and if the contents are helpful in promoting lifelong learning goals of SDG4 or not.

The checklist columns were organised keeping in front the SDG4 targets. The checklist consists of fourteen columns. Column one records the Year a specific course is taught in and course code, column two records the subject title, and column three records course contents. Columns four and five are aimed at recording observations regarding creativity, entrepreneurship, and communication skills. Columns six to ten are based on team work and collaborative tasks, problem solving and conflict resolution, critical thinking, citizenship, and leadership. Columns eleven to fourteen are associated with observing the analytical skills, self-management, media and information literacy, and technical and vocational areas. The researcher analysed the contents of all the subjects taught and recorded the observations in the checklist against the criteria outlined in the fourteen columns of the checklist.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Book No.	Entrepreneurship	Communication skills	Team work And Collaborative tasks	Problem solving And Conflict resolution	Critical thinking	Citizenship	Leadership	Analytical skills	Self-management	Media and information literacy	Technical and vocational areas
Book 1	No	No (depends upon the pedagogical strata)	No	No	Partially yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 2	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 3	No	Partially yes but depends upon the teaching methodology	Based on the teachers' assignments and presentation	No	Partially yes as it has previous ages description	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 4	No	Yes	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 5	No	Yes but major focus on reading and writing skills and grammar is over emphasized	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 6	No	Yes but major focus on reading and writing skills and grammar is over emphasized	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

Book 7	Yes	Writing skill is over emphasized	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	Yes to some extent	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 8	No	Yes reading skills at the priority onl	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 9	No	Reading and descriptive writings only	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 10	No	Reading and writing skills only	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 11	No	Descriptive reading and writing on the pre requisite sets	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 12	No	Reading and writing only	Depends on the pedagogical strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 13	Yes	Yes	Depends On The Pedagogical Strategies	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Book 14	Yes	Yes	Depends On The Pedagogical Strategies	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Only Technical
Book 15	No	Yes	Depends On The Pedagogical Strategies	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

Findings

- The three skills of creativity, cognitivity, and analytical skills exist in all the course contents. As far as communication skills are concerned, these do not have an eclectic approach. Although the communication skills are interrelated, yet these are not interdisciplinary and sometimes it seems that these skills are strictly compartmentalised.
- Some language course contents like Book 1, course 201-English-III (Advance Communication Skills), where writing skills aspect is over-emphasised, it has some scope of problem solving approach. But it is simulated unintentionally. It has not been designed under the stimulation of SDG4 with the incorporation of the 21st century skills. The concept of entrepreneurship can also be observed, but it is not technical.
- Team work and collaborative tasks is also included, but its regime part is overshadowed by the teaching strategies that how much teacher may assign group work, group presentation and assignments whether it is the part of the literature and language. In Book 1, code III-English compulsory for the first semester, grammatical area is over-emphasised and reiterated.
- In the Book 2, code 212-English-IV (English for Practical Aims), technical area along with the media literacy is merged as it has professional correspondence and job interviews. It is based on the lifelong learning skills. But again it depends upon the activities that are not based on the pragmatic connotations, and on the exposure of the real life communicative activities that how much the students are indulged in it. Entrepreneurship and technical advancement can also be included in the course content of Book 3, code ENG-222-English-IV (Business Communication-II). If it is included in its true application, teachers can train students professionally through real

life exposure. It will help to align with the 21st century skills for enhancing the agenda of SDG4.

- It was observed in Book 4, code ENG-304-Journalistic Discourse (Semester V) that it is beneficial and close enough to almost all of the 21st century skills for triggering the agenda of SDG4. It has social interaction aspect both nationally and globally. It has the scope of writing journals as an entrepreneurship, media literacy, and technicality and has leadership and independency too. It can also be explored on the aligned parameters of the SDG4 if it is involved in the field work. It would be interesting and helpful for the exploration of future orientation and lifelong learning skills. Moreover, it also has the scope of educational communicative interaction.
- Research Methodology under the course code 405 (Book 5) is based on the research oriented tasks and problem solving. Apart from the cognitive, creative and analytical domain, it also has the scope for entrepreneurship, media literacy and technical domain.
- Book 6, code 407-Pakistani Literature includes Pakistani novels, stories and poetry and has unintentional indication of citizenship through the fusion of Pakistani cultural interaction. Book 7, course code 408-Teaching of Literature has an indirect conceptualisation of entrepreneurship, and a gentle concept of leadership. It also has the area of technical criteria. But all these domains are infused not on the base of the 21st century skills, but these are the part of BS-English curriculum without any strict plans.
- Book 8, course code 409-Research Project is the extension of course code 405. It gives an indication of technical writing. Book 9, code 316-Discourse Analysis is the basic foundation of journalistic discourse, and visionary discourse. It is contributory to the 21st century skills for enhancing the quality of education.
- Book 10, course code ENG-412-*TESOL-1 English Language skills*, is the superior course for promoting the agenda of SDG4 with the incorporation of 21st century skills. Except leadership and citizenship, all the skills are an integral part of this course. Book 11, code ENG-417-*TESOL 11 – Syllabus and Materials Education and Design* is the extension of the course code ENG-412 (Book 10).
- Book 12, code 413-*Language and Gender* also enhances creativity and cognitivity and also promotes one of the agenda of SDG4. Book 13, code ENG-414-*Language Culture and Identity* triggers the concept of citizenship, and socio and cultural interaction. Book 14, code ENG-415-*Introduction to Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* gives the exposure of the technical domain for fulfilling the emergent needs. Book 15, code ENG-410-*Research Prospects in Applied Linguistics* is the extension of the course code ENG-415 (Book 14). It focuses on research skills.

The analysis of the observations made about the course contents of BS-English Language & Literature through the checklist led to drawing the following key findings:

- Course content of BS English curriculum has been developed idealistically while including the political, social, creative and cognitive aspects.
- Although some skills have been focused unconsciously (like creativity, cognition, communication skills and analytical approach) in the curriculum, however these have a less promising role according to the agenda of SDG4.
- Pragmatic and connotative relevant activities are not designed for better implementation.
- Collaborative activities are connected with reading and writing exposure, not for communicative competence.

- Technical and vocational area is narrowly disseminated.
- The role of entrepreneurship has a narrow margin in the curriculum.
- Some course contents are based on rote memorisation and creativity is suppressed.
- Research oriented and inquiry based task is only reserved for the Seventh and Eighth semesters.
- Descriptive analysis is over-focused.
- Practical and field work, and conflict resolution for life-based exposure is not adhered to.

Conclusion

The study findings revealed that mostly the course content of BS-English curriculum is based on the over-emphasised skills of reading and writing. Communicative competency is there but is limited and without any real-life, pragmatic and connotative activities. EyeRIS software was recommended to be used in the classrooms in order to improve learners' speaking and oral skills (Javed et al., 2020). Practically with the field work, exposure for both professional grooming and job-entrepreneurship was found to be restricted in the BS-English curriculum. Mostly the technical and vocational areas are ignored, that is the emergent needs of the students. Mostly the course content of BS-English curriculum has been idealised, but the practicality in terms of the implementation is not fully possible. Teaching pedagogical modes, electric methodology and research work are demanded for SDG4 to incorporate the 21st century skills. It is recommended that the activities should be based on the real life experiences for students' professional grooming and character building for quality of education. Technical and vocational training should be made the part of BS-English curriculum for job entrepreneurship. There is the need to review the curriculum under the surveillance of SDG4 targets for imparting inclusive skills for sustainability in future with the incorporation of the 21st century skills in Pakistan. Baig et al. (2019, 2020, 2021) also stressed incorporating SDGS in English Curriculum. Haris (2017) recommended introduction of distance education in the 21st century skills. Similarly, Baig et al. (2020) stressed on incorporating ethics and moral values in English Curriculum. Likewise, Zaidi et al. (2020, 2021) proposed to take steps for bringing about change in English education in Pakistan.

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