

EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL OF BISE SUKKUR

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the weaknesses of assessment criteria in respect to the proficiency in the English subject of grade XI & XII through examination papers conducted every year. The study is carried out to evaluate BISE Sukkur's annual question papers for the years 2013 to 2016. Following Bloom's learning taxonomy as a theoretical framework. The data has been collected from the hand book of National Curriculum Document (NCD) 2006 since the board refused to extend its Student Learning Objectives (SLO). The study is qualitative in nature. The descriptive qualitative analysis is used to interpret the data. The curriculum objectives and the issues regarding the nature of assessment have been studied and evaluated in the light of the NCD criteria. The findings of the present study explore that there is a dire need of developing the quality assessment in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes. The present way of assessment suffers from several drawbacks like assessing lower level skills and rote learning. The assessment methods have not been implemented practically to achieve learning outcomes.

Key words: *Assessment, Criteria, English Language, Examination, Outcome*

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1. Introduction

Evaluation and Assessment in teaching a language has a connection with objectives and performance. Assessment system is a practice to determine the course of action and proposes changes for the improvement or enhancement of the National Curriculum Development or policies. The assessment system works as change agent it assures the execution of the set objectives and offers feedback for the development. It is revealed through the results of various studies related Higher Secondary School Certificate of last five years of various boards that mostly the students fail in English. The real competence or actual educational accomplishment is not judged by the academic assessment in Pakistan. Even in Pakistani educational system, those are encouraged who can reproduce in a best way what they learn in a class and those are failed who cannot do that. According to Khan (2006) the whole educational system runs around exams. Rehmani (2003) expresses “Teachers teach for testing, rather than for learning. The examination system reinforces approaches to teaching that reward memorization, the more reproduction, the better and higher are the scores or marks awarded by the examiners” (p.3).

This study is an endeavor to measure whether the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and National Curriculum Document (NCD) are being met through the examination process and to propose necessary changes for the development of National Curriculum Development or policies concerned. It has been observed that most of the students fail in English subject in the results of HSSC (Higher Secondary School Certificate) in various educational boards including BISE Sukkur.

According to (Khan, 2006) the academic assessment in Pakistan does not assess the real proficiency educational accomplishments of the students. The educational system of Pakistan supports to reproduce what the students learn in class, he crams and reproduce the same content of books and fails those who do not reproduce cramming and try to produce their own. It has been observed that the whole educational system runs around exams.

The English teacher is bound to teach according to the syllabus designed by the concerned BISE and the question papers of English subject are repeated off and on by the board. In this situation it is impossible to achieve the set criteria of Education Ministry (MoE, 2009) that the performance of student is to be based on assessing competence of the student in a specialized area where a language teacher is bound to implement both the tests i.e. summative and formative in order to achieve the outcomes.

Districts i.e. Sukkur, Ghotki, Khairpur and Naushahro Feroze come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Sukkur. The Board follows the syllabus of Sindh Text Book Board (STBB), Hyderabad at higher secondary level. In English subject poetry, novel, drama, lessons, grammar and composition are taught. As far as the examination system of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Sukkur is concern, it conducts exams annually.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the current study is to investigate whether the curriculum objectives meets the set assessment criteria in the examination papers. For the purpose, four years question papers were collected to assess them accordingly.

3. Research Questions

1. Is the concerned curriculum assessment reflected in the Examination papers?
2. Do the examination papers reflect equal importance to four language skills?

4. Research Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature. Data was collected from National Curriculum Document for grade XI-XII (owing to non-availability of SLO's of BISE Sukkur). Text books of Novel, Drama, Poetry and Lessons are taught at intermediate level. The researcher takes four years' examination papers (2013 to 2016) of English of BISE Sukkur for assessment following Bloom's learning taxonomy as a theoretical framework. The examination papers were reviewed using desk review approach. The papers use variety of questions to assess students' performance, such as multiple choice questions (MCQs), constructed response questions (CRQs) and extended response questions (ERQs). The collected data is interpreted descriptively. The study is conducted to evaluate the required learning outcomes set by the National Curriculum for English language testing through examination papers in order to measure whether the examination fulfils the outcome criteria of the students in question.

5. Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Critical Analysis of Curriculum Objectives

According to Educational Policy (2009) all the examination boards may have SLO's, likewise, Board of Intermediate Secondary Education Sukkur (BISE) is also supposed to have SLO (document) which is compiled from National Curriculum Document, on the basis of which examination papers are set. The

researcher approached the BISE Sukkur for SLO but unfortunately the board regretted of having such document. The objectives defined in National curriculum Document (MoE, 2006, p.120-142) are based on fixed criterion. The curriculum document focuses on the four skills of language i.e. listening, reading writing and speaking. The four skills are preferred equally and integrated through thematic approached. The Curriculum Document focuses reading for pleasure, intelligible pronunciation, reading comprehension, critical and analytical approaches, through an organized text. The curriculum discourages cramming or rote learning so that they may develop their critical and analytical thinking at intermediate level.

During evaluations of the four-year papers of English subjects from 2013 to 2016, the examination papers designed assess only two skills i.e. reading and writing unlike the curriculum (2006) that instructs to assess all the four skills following an integration approach. Thus, the objectives of the National curriculum have not been fulfilled.

5.2 Analyses of Assessment Scheme for Setting Question Papers at Intermediate level

Table 1
Details of English Paper Part I Sukkur Board 2016

S.N	A* Question No.	R	W	G	V
	Marks				
1	Twenty MCQs taken from the text (Eng-I Text, Poetry, drama) 20		W		
2	Short answered questions taken from (Eng-I Text, Poetry, drama) 50		W		
3	Write an application to the chairman 10 BISE Sukkur requesting him for the post of Computer operator		W		
	Or				
	Write a story on the Moral “As you sow so shall you reap”.		W		
4.	Write an essay on My Favorite book. 10		W		
	Or				
	Write a character sketch on: (a) Albert (b) Mrs. Meldon.		W		
5	Do as directed 05			G	

6 Translation
05

R

NOTE: W=Writing, R=Reading, G=Grammar, V=Vocabulary

Analyses of Assessment Scheme for Setting Question Papers at Intermediate level

Table 2
Details of English Paper Part II Sukkur Board 2016

S.NO	Question NO.	W	R	G	V
1	Fifteen MCQs taken from the text 20 (Eng-II Text, Poetry & Novel)	W			
2	Fifteen Short answered questions taken from 50 (Eng-II Text, Poetry & Novel)	W			
3	Write an essay on value of discipline 10	W			
	Or				
	Write a critical appreciation on the lines from Ulysses.	W			
4	Write a summary on Pakistan and the Modern world 10	W			
	Or				
	Write a character sketch on: Black Michal	W			
5	Précis writing 10	W			

NOTE: W=Writing, R=Reading, G=Grammar, V=Vocabulary

Table 3
HSSC Examination, Allocation of 100 Marks for English Paper part I

Board Exam. Translation (years)	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading & writing	Listening & speaking
2013 05%	05%	00 %	90%	00%
2014 05%	05%	00 %	90%	00%
2015 05%	05%	00 %	90%	00%
2016 05%	05%	00 %	90%	00%

Table 4
HSSC Examination, Allocation of 100 Marks for English Paper part II

Board Exam. Translation (years)	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading & writing	Listening & speaking
2013 00%	00%	00 %	100%	00%
2014 00%	00%	00 %	100%	00%
2015 00%	00%	00 %	100%	00%
2016 00%	00%	00 %	100%	00%

Table 5
HSSC Examination Repetition of Questions in English Paper part I

BISE Sukkur Examination	2013	2014	2015	2016
SECTION- B				
Short answers From book I	Briken head drill The UNO The hostile witness Pak. Zindabad Science & Scientists Letters	Pak. Zindabad The UNO The Airplane The English language	Pak. Zindabad The UNO Science & Scientist The Wolf of Cernogratz The English Language The Hostile Witness	Birkenhead Drill The UNO My Bank Account The Aeroplane The English Language Science & Scientists
Short answer from English Verse	Incident of French Camp. Under Green Wood Tree. The Abbot of Canterbury.	Under Green Wood Tree The Abbot of Canterbury Upon West- Minster Bridge Incident of French Camp Abu Bin Adhem	The Charac- ter of Happy Life The Abbot of Canterbury The Deserted Village Lucy Gray The Lay of Last Minstrel	Under the Greenwood Tree Upon West- Minster Brige The Abbot of Canterbury The Incident of French Camp
Short answers from Drama	The Progress . The Count's Revenge.	The Progress The Count's Revenge	The Progress The Count's Revenge	The Progress The Count's Revenge
SECTION- C				
Application/ Story Writing	Application for free-ship/ Do Good have good	Application to Municipal Computer Oprt. Committee/ All that Glitters Is not gold	Application for Leave Unite we Stand Divided we Fall	Application for the Post of As You so, Shall You Reap
Essay writing/ Char. Sketch	My Favorite Poet/ Mrs. Meldon/	My favorite Hobby/	My 1 st Day at College	My Favorite Book

	Alber	Count of Monte-Cristo, Mrs. Medon	Count of Morcerf, Prof Henry Corrie	Albert, Mrs Meldon.
Do as Directed/ Translation (Sindhi/Urdu Urdu to Eng.)	Changed Sentence Changed Sentence	Changed Sentence Changed Sentence	Changed Sentences Changed Sentences	Changed Sentences Changed Sentence

Table 6**HSSC Examination Repetition of Questions in English Paper part II**

BISE Sukkur Examination	2013	2014	2015	2016
<u>SECTION- B</u>				
Short answers From book I	20 Minutes with Mrs. Oakentub The Day the Dam Broke Pak. & the Modern World Act III of the Silver Box The Devoted Friend	20 Minutes with Mrs. Oakentubb Reflections on the Re-awakening East The Day the Dam Broke Pak & the Modern World Act III of the Silver Box My Devoted Friend	20 minutes with Mrs. Oakentubb My Devoted Friend Pak. & the Modern World Act III of the Silver Box The World as I See it Spaceship One	20 Minutes with Pak. & the Modern World The Devoted Friend Act III of the Silver Box An Astronomer's view of the
Universe		Silver Box My Devoted Friend		
Short answer from English Verse	The Man of Life Upright Lines from Ulysses Samson Agonistes	The Seven ages of Man The Man of Life upright Samson Agonistes	Say not the Struggle naught Availth Samson Ulysses Solitary	The Man of Life Upright The Solitary Reaper Say not the Struggle naught
availth	An Elegy Written in Churchyard Solitary Reaper	The Solitary Reaper Music When Soft Voices Die	Reaper An Elegy Written in a country Churchyard	The Seven Ages of Man
Short answers from Novel	The Prisoner of Zenda.	Prisoner of Zenda	Prisoner of Zenda	Prisoner of Zenda

SECTION- B

Essay Writing/ Critical Appreciation	Duties of a Student OR Lines from Ulysses	My Aim in Life OR Say not the Naught Availth	Women Place in the Modern World OR Solitary Reaper	The Value of Discipline OR Lines from Ulysses
Summary/ Character OR Sketch	Spaceship One OR Madame De-Mauban	The World as I See it OR Rudolf Elphberg	Act III of Silver Box OR Princess Flavia	Pak. & the Modern World Blake Michael
Précis Writing	Changed Text	Changed Text	Changed Text	Précis Text

6. Findings

This research comes up with the findings that the setting of question papers is based on the SLO's but unfortunately the researchers even approached many times could not find the specific SLO's of BISE Sukkur. Consequently, SLO's defined in the National Curriculum Document were taken as a model and it was found that question papers partially fulfill the set criteria. After the analysis of four years question papers of subject English from 2013 to 2016 of HSC-I & HSC-II, the researchers have come to know that the papers are divided in three sections. Section A is consisting of short answer questions, section B is comprised of long answered questions and section C is comprised of MCQs. It is found that 70% question paper is comprised of text and 30% grammar.

The findings suggest that the exam papers focus low-order learning and mostly assess students' memory rather than assessing their critical thinking. The findings contradict the standards required for the National Curriculum for English (Curriculum, 2006), which sets a high standard for students in Grades XI & XII. According to the National Curriculum 2009, students in these grades are expected to develop analytical, synthesis and evaluative skills in different competencies of English. However, the exams only focus on memory. Since the comprehension is an important part of English language, it is also found that the papers lack in assessing comprehension of the students. Since the grammar is the basic structure of any language and it is found that the papers have less focus in assessing grammar. It is also found that the emphasis on vocabulary and punctuation is paid the least.

The question papers in question asks questions from the content which are easily answered by the students. The questions neither involve critical thinking nor analytical thinking. Almost the items are repeated which the candidates reproduce after cramming the content. This situation hinders their creativity and advancement to their learning. The findings suggest that the existing examination pattern assesses 90% reading and writing skills and the remaining 10% translations and grammar giving 5% each portion. The other two important skills that are listening and speaking skills are altogether ignored.

6.1 Repetition of Items

The study finds that a significant number of items are repeated in the examination papers of grade XI & XII. It was found that around 30% of items were repeated as it is, without any change, 22 % with minor changes, and 48 % with significant change. Over all 52 % items were repeated after every year.

7. Conclusion

It is concluded from the results that there is clear difference between the suggested and implemented assessment criteria at higher secondary level. The English language question papers do not meet the standards set by the curriculum which measure the language skills of intermediate students. According to the National Curriculum 2009, students in these grades are supposed to develop analytical, synthesis and evaluative competencies in English. Though, the exams only focus on memory and comprehension, which have serious effects on students' performance. The question papers do not measure the four basic language skills i.e. listening, reading, speaking and writing. It focuses only on writing and reading skills which the students can easily achieve through rote learning, whereas the other two skills i.e. listening and speaking are totally ignored. Consequently, the existing paper pattern does not fulfill the required objectives of the students. This situation alarms that the progress of our students cannot be measured with the world where the students at intermediate level criticize and analyze the content. Furthermore, it is found that questions were frequently repeated in the examination papers of four years (2013-2016) of this study which suggest the influence of these question and encourage cramming.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings presented above, it is suggested that the four basic language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and speaking should be given equal concern in order to measure the proficiency level at HSSC level. The examination question paper should assess listening, speaking, reading and writing equally. The textbooks required to be revised according of the National Curriculum Document.

Refresher courses must be called for the question paper setters to provide them exposure of modern trends in language proficiency measurement. Further research studies must be carried on to measure the worth of the textbooks and their relation with question papers and language proficiency throughout the country.

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