



## Focusing Curriculum Alignment to Enhance Student Learning Outcomes: Implications for English Language Teachers at Secondary Level

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**Abstract:** This study was aimed to know the perception of secondary school English language teachers regarding curriculum alignment pattern between three components; written SLOs documented in the National Curriculum 2006, teaching practices, and assessment techniques. A qualitative research design was used and 20 English language teachers from the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad were selected. Due to the saturation point only 12 participants ( $M=7$ ,  $F=5$ ) were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed, categorized and then thematically analyzed. Three main themes and eight sub-themes emerged. The main themes stressed the need to Understand curriculum alignment in terms of the English language, focus curriculum alignment at the instructional level, and align assessment with given student learning outcomes. It was found that teachers are not trained in using written curriculum document. Additionally, it was reported that equal representation was not given to four areas of language i.e., writing, speaking, listening and reading. It was, therefore, recommended that teacher training programs may be initiated to train teacher on the use of written curriculum documents and help them understand the importance of written curriculum with classroom teaching and assessments. Moreover, it is suggested to provide adequate resources to the teachers for effective implementation of written curriculum and enhancement of students learning outcomes.

**Key Words:** Curriculum Alignment, Student Learning, Instructions, Teaching English Language, Testing English Language

### Introduction

The daily Pakistan global on July 9' 2018 reported an article with the title, "CSS result: Ample evidence that our education system stifles creativity" calls for a clear understanding of curriculum development, its articulation, its implementation, and assessment procedures prevalent in the educational system of Pakistan. The National Curriculum for Pakistan 2006, the designed textbooks, and the assessment practices need analysis to understand the

complex relation among these three areas. It needs to be understood whether the textbooks used as instructional tools are aligned with the National Curriculum for Pakistan 2006- the written document. Similarly, whether the assessment techniques and tools meet the standards provided by the National Curriculum. Biggs (2002) affirms that in an assimilated system of education, all three components; curriculum, teaching learning activities, and assessments are integrated to enhance student learning outcomes. On

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contrary, a weak educational system fails to integrate all components, in which only 'academic' students can use higher cognitive skills (Biggs, 2002). Moreover, when educational systems and schools within them lack integration, it results in 'slack' between the individual school and the system (English, 2008; English 2012).

At the classroom level, teachers often struggle with the question of achieving higher grades at the SSC and HSSC level. This result - oriented approach focused on lower order thinking skills rather than on the cognitive development of students as defined by Bloom's Taxonomy. The students are unable to advance through inquisitive and problem -solving approaches due to classroom instruction, which is bound to textbooks and fixed summative examination criteria rather the pragmatic potential in the learning abilities of students. The Daily Pakistan Global (2018) reported the opinion of Naeem Ahmed Qazi,

Unfortunately, when it comes to the practical application of knowledge learned by students in Pakistan, it's revealed that what earned them the highest grades in SSC and HSSC exams were mere words and phrases, not concept ...Under the prevalent circumstances, the hopes of FPSC appear both unrealistic and unjust as expecting a coherent, well-organized, and logical response from candidates educated in absence of cultivation of critical thinking, grammar- enriching pedagogy, integration of modern linguistics, dexterous development in social sciences and business studies, concept-context methodology, general and domain-specific creativity is indubitably impractical.

Ultimately, it results in developing a habit of cramming, restlessness among students, and escape from studies. Seeking solutions for these problems on basis of curriculum alignment provided the base for this study.

However, the present research study will principally focus English language teaching and learning activities, the curriculum, and the summative assessments at the secondary school level in Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad. For this purpose, the study and analysis of English Language Standards

provided in the National Curriculum for English 2006, the prescribed textbooks along with classroom instructions, and assessments by the authorized boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education will be focused. Moreover, problems, prospects, and implications of the concept of curriculum alignment will be focused.

### Statement of Problem

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English language is the official language of Pakistan but has the status of a second language. Coping with the demands of the international market, the curricula for major disciplines such as; Mathematics, Science, Social Studies are also taught in the English Language in addition to English as a subject. To convey content knowledge of various disciplines bilingual methods (English and Urdu) used in public schools of Pakistan. However, during students try to memorize the content knowledge. Which challenges the teaching methodologies of the English Language as a discipline. Therefore, it captured the attention of researchers to analyze the curriculum of the English Language taught at the Secondary level to understand the complexity of the problem. Consequently, the researchers centered the attention on English language teaching and learning curriculum and activities that require apt analysis to enhance content knowledge and content vocabulary. Therefore, it was needed to assess the alignment pattern of English Language and teaching methodologies to be evaluated to promote critical thinking skills among secondary school English Language learners as mentioned in National Curriculum.

### Rationale

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There were the following reasons to carry out this research study.

- Firstly, to achieve the desired results from targeted objectives and aims in the national document, it is necessary to ensure alignment between its components such as; written curriculum, instructions, and assessments. That is why; the current study helped

researchers to understand the strength of the curricular matrix of Pakistan and identify the areas that required attention for improvement.

- Secondly, the study provided policy makers a fresh outlook to redesign policies regarding curriculum.
- Thirdly, the current study highlighted the importance of curriculum alignment to classroom teachers to get desired results given in the national curriculum.
- Fourthly, the current study highlighted the importance of curriculum alignment to boards for achieving targets given in the national curriculum.

### Significance of the Study

The current research study is a significant addition to the literature of curriculum planning, development, implementation, and monitoring process. Because it identified the significant areas in the curriculum where improvement is needed. Moreover, it directly or indirectly involved all stakeholders to understand the importance of curriculum alignment to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Furthermore, due to the qualitative approach, the respondents were more reflective in their responses that helped them and the researchers to understand the alignment pattern in the curriculum to run the system effective and result oriented.

### Objectives of the Study

- To explore the understanding level of teachers on curriculum alignment in terms of the English language at the secondary school level.
- To know the practices of English Language teachers on addressing curriculum alignment during instructions at the secondary school level.
- To recognize practices of English Language teachers on addressing curriculum alignment for assessments at the secondary school level.
- To identify areas of the curriculum matrix that requires alignment of

teaching learning activities (taught curriculum), and assessment (tested curriculum) criteria with the National Curriculum 2006 (written curriculum).

- To seek possible solutions for achieving curriculum alignment for English language curriculum at the secondary school level (i.e., the alignment of a curriculum matrix).

### Research Questions

#### Main Research Question

1. What is the understanding level of teachers on curriculum alignment in terms of English language at the secondary school level?

#### Subsidiary Questions

- i. What are the practices and concerns of English Language teachers to address curriculum alignment during instructions at the secondary school level?
- ii. What are the practices and barriers for English Language teachers to address curriculum alignment for assessment at the secondary school level?
- iii. What are possible solutions to achieve curriculum alignment for the English language curriculum at the secondary school level?

### Delimitation of the Study

Due to limited time and resources this study was delimited to the Tarnol sector. And teachers from schools affiliated with FDE in Tarnol Sector were interviewed only.

### Literature Review

#### Alignment in an Educational System

Baker (2004), while emphasizing the need for “Aligning Curriculum, Standards, and Assessments: Fulfilling the Promise of School Reforms” articulated various metaphor for the word alignment rather simply narrating the dictionary meaning of the term. According to Baker (2004) the term 'Alignment' refers to

Congruence. And states that congruence in any system means a match among performance standards, instructions, and assessment with control on conditions such as; physical, geographical, and emotional states to avoid risks and mitigations of congruence. Alignment as a model of set of Consequences is another metaphor inferred for the term. As a set of consequences, alignment refers to an agreement between standards, performance levels, and measurements with a defined pattern for rubrics. Alignment as Bridge was debated as a connector between the standards and assessments and vice versa. Whereas Alignment as Gravitational Pull refers to elements that hold together the standards, teaching learning activities and measurement tasks. Those elements according to Baker (2002) are 'cross-curricular skills, that are problem-solving skills, communication, knowledge acquisition and understanding, and metacognition. Bloom's taxonomy also explains the cognitive domain of knowledge in an orderly arrangement to achieve the learning outcomes designed in a performance standard Bloom, Baker, (2004) concludes, the constant changes in the world also affect alignment patterns in an educational system. Therefore, to keep a system aligned, there should have a clear conceptual understanding of the cognitive requirements and the demands of communal interests.

Leitzel, Thomas, Vogler, and Daniel (1994) analyzed curriculum alignment with three dimensions naming; Planning to delivery (curriculum), delivery to evaluation (instructions), and planning to evaluation (assessment). Although, this triad is the conscious congruence of these three educational elements, however, research studies treat them as separate entities. Therefore, there is a need to align planned and tested curricula with 'unity of instruction' for the effectiveness of curricula and better learning outcomes. Moreover, it was found the tests conducted by teachers promoted memorization and the lack of teachers' skills to evaluate criterion-referenced tests creates a gap between the instructional practices and measurements.

## Status of Curriculum Alignment in Pakistan

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In Pakistan, curriculum alignment has suffered due to some challenges present in the alignment of content in the textbooks, its manner of implementation, and assessment strategies. Khalid (2010) states that National Curriculum as a written document is developed by Curriculum Wing, Islamabad. Curriculum Wing further assigns the task to develop each province's own textbooks according to the standards of the National Curriculum. Then, the Federal Curriculum Wing authorizes provinces to implement and monitor the curriculum process along with the recommendation to establish Provincial Councils for Educational Development (Ministry of Education, 1998). Malik (2007), however, finds this decentralized system has failed to be effective due to unjust political and legal empowerment, lack of decision-making skills, centralized fiscal policy, lack of capacity building measures, inability to implement and monitor curriculum process and negligible accountability at the local level. Therefore, it reflects that the curriculum implementation and monitoring process suffers due to the non-availability of resources, poor infrastructure, and lack of participation and communication among various stakeholders.

Mahmood (2012) ascertains that with such limited resources, the textbook is the only tool used as instructional material in classrooms that is developed by The Curriculum Wing, Islamabad with its sister organizations. This fact is also highlighted by the Green Paper on Textbook and Learning Materials by the Ministry of Education: "The textbook is the only available learning material in most schools. Additional materials like teaching aids, supplementary reading materials, and school libraries are virtually non-existent" (Government of Pakistan, 2006, P.2). Therefore, the textbook is the mainstream written document that crystallizes curriculum standards, and it has a significant impact on classroom instructions, learning behaviors and assessment of students.

Mahmood (2012) found that the textbook lack proper content coverage of national standards and experience misalignment with the standards. Mahmood (2012) observed that misalignment of the textbooks is due to inconsistent textbook evaluation process in the country resulting either from the inefficiency of the Curriculum Wing to convey clear ideas about the development of cognitive skills or the lack of abilities of the review committees to address the standards as demanded by the curriculum. Additionally, they do not focus on the criteria of content coverage required by the National Curriculum to review and approve textbooks. According to Mahmood (2012), this problem could be resolved through the introduction of multiple textbooks, developing competition, and providing guidelines to textbook writers, curriculum reviewers, and publishers.

When one glances at the next step in the process, one realizes similar misalignment problems are found within the assessment system. Thomas (2012) asserts that the formal assessment system in Pakistan influences teachers to emphasize the completion of the syllabi rather than to assess the knowledge and skills of students; whereas teachers tend to spend more time on a few parts of syllabus instead of adopting the student-centered assessment strategies that requires time for its preparation and conduction. Contrary to rote learning, the actual purpose of assessments stresses the holistic development of students (Thomas, 2012)

Accordingly, when Mahmood (2012) found that the, "textbook for the subject of Science do not cover the scope of contents mentioned in the curriculum." (p.24) depicts the misalignment of textbook with standards. Similarly, Rehmani (2012) asserts teaching as 'teaching to test' that results in rote learning rather than questioning things and solving problems due to the quality of curriculum and manner of delivery of curriculum (Aziz, Bloom, Humair, Jimenez, Rozenberg, Sathar, 2014). Consequently, it reflects a misalignment between the standards and instructions, and a

misalignment between the instructions and assessments.

## Theoretical Framework

The current research study is based on Fenwick W. English's theory of curriculum alignment to explore alignment between curriculum standards, classroom instructions, and formal and informal measurements taken for the English language at the secondary level.

In the domain of curriculum development, most recent research studies are inspired by the theory of curriculum alignment (English, 1992; Leitzel, Thomas, Vogler, & Daniel, 1994; English, 2010; Squire, 2012) also termed as alignment triangle (Savard & Cotton, 1982). Curriculum alignment means that the curriculum used as classroom instructions must align with the curriculum standards and assessments (Squires, 2012). However, what is meant by curriculum? What is the structure of the curriculum for which alignment has been addressed? English (1992) describes the curriculum as a matrix of three components: the written, the taught, and the tested, which provides the framework for assessing curriculum alignment. As described in the figure below, the written curriculum can more clearly viewed as the curriculum standards and/or textbooks, the taught curriculum is composed of classroom instructions and lesson plans, and the curriculum- embedded test and standardized tests reflect the tested curriculum (Squires, 2012). This curriculum matrix seeks the link between three categories of curriculum; written curriculum, instructional curriculum, and assessments.

## The Curriculum Matrix

These three categories of curriculum generate the concept of the curriculum alignment for assessing student learning outcomes. The content of classroom instructions or textbooks (taught curriculum) does not suffice for achieving the specific learning outcome determined by the National Curriculum. According to the curriculum matrix, there needs to be an alignment between the written, the taught, and the tested curriculum that is the



classroom instructions must reflect the curriculum standards and the assessment must be align with the written curriculum and classroom instructions.

Therefore, curriculum alignment specifies the balance between three categories of curriculum, such as the curriculum standards for English IX, which the National Curriculum (2006) states, "All students will read and analyze literary text to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and to relate their own experiences to those of common humanity as depicted in literature." The alignment between the three categories demands that the standards must be aligned with instructional material (the taught curriculum) and assessment (the tested curriculum). Consequently, students will be assessed by asking them to, "analyze short stories, poems, and essays; make connections between literary texts and their own lives" (National Curriculum, 2006). Therefore, curriculum alignment requires that the classroom instructions must be aligned with the curriculum standards and student learning outcomes. In this standard "analyze" and "apply" levels in the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy are addressed which need the classroom instructions and the assessment strategies to focus the desired student learning outcomes on the given standard.

The alignment of the curriculum matrix encourages the integration of these three components of the curriculum for achieving the desired learning outcomes; hence, it also reflects the "integrated nature of teaching and learning" (Gareis & Grant, 2008, p.4). Rehmani (2012) also finds assessment processes connected to teaching and learning. Clark, Stow, Ruebling, and Kayona (2006) states the importance of content standards (written curriculum) for achieving improved student learning outcomes. Subsequently, learning outcomes depend on written standards, classroom instructions and assessment, and the alignment between the three components of the curriculum results in effective teaching and reflects successful learning that is learning in the defined direction. Learning in defined direction also emphasizes, "The curricular

priorities of a country-whether reflected by content standards, textbooks, or teacher behavior\_ are reflected to the profile of achievement gains across the topics for that country" (Schmidt, McKnight, Houang, Wang, Wiley, Cogan and Wolfe, 2001, p.261).

## Research Methodology

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The Researchers adopted the qualitative research design. The researchers obtained a permission letter from the Federal Directorate of Education and FDE issued a letter to the Researchers and allow them to conduct a study in the Tarnol sector. The population of the study consists of all schools of the Tarnol Sector of the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad. So, all the Secondary school English language teachers of Sector Tarnol was the population of the study. The researchers with the help of field experts developed an interview protocol consisting of 14 question mainly distributed in three main areas. The interview protocol was validated by two professors. Consent was obtained from each participant. Upon consent from respondents the researchers started interviewing the participants. Initially, 20 English language teachers were purposively and conveniently selected as a sample for the study. When the researcher interviewed 10 participants, the researchers start getting similar responses for the participants and hence only 12 teachers (M=7, F=5) were interviewed. The researchers personally visited each school and requested the head to allow them for data collection. Upon permission, the researchers started interviewing the participants and recorded their response as well upon their consent. The researcher also took notes and points.

## Data Analysis

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Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a technique of analyzing qualitative data. This consist of steps which are: Familiarization with the data by listening to the audio tapes again and the data then the recorded tapes were transcribed after transcription initial codes were identified and the ultimately themes and subthemes were

developed upon developing and reviewing the themes the initial write-up was done. A total of three (3) main themes and eight (08) subthemes emerged during thematic analysis. These themes were then analyzed.

### Understanding Curriculum Alignment in Terms of English Language

Under the first category which is of understanding curriculum alignment in terms of language, 4 sub-themes were emerged during thematic analysis.

#### Need of Written Curriculum in Schools

While asking about the general perception of English language teachers regarding the need and understanding of written curriculum, nearly all the respondent mentioned that a written curriculum is very much important for teachers. Like, one respondent said that a written curriculum is vital for a teacher and mentioned,

For the English language curriculum, an English language teacher is highly needed because it provides foundations for the formulation of SLO's that are prerequisites for all type of syllabus. Furthermore, a thorough understanding of curriculum is mandatory as it encompass all aspects of the English language pertinent to spoken and written.

Similarly, another respondent mentioned that "there is dire need of written curriculum and its understanding for English language teachers in our country..." he further added that "...Written curriculum is the best curriculum in our country ..." and the respondent mentioned about lack of training of teacher and said;

"...but unluckily, our teachers including us are not guided enough or trained how to teach the written content and hence enable our students to think critically and analytically be able to solve problems of their practical life..."

Another respondent in the same manner by mentioning the importance of a written curriculum for English language teachers said "I think the curriculum can be termed as road map..." what we are supposed to do are clearly

mentioned in the written curriculum all we need to do is to train our teachers in aligning the curriculum the respondent also mentioned that "...there is very dire need of this alignment and need that there must be alignment between written curriculum and what is happening in the class...". Additionally, another respondent by mentioning the need of a written curriculum said that "written curriculum outlines all of the aims of education..."

### Addressing Four Language Competencies

By response to the question that how four language competencies be taught and assessed to fulfill criteria of curriculum alignment a large number of respondent mentioned their views that these four language skills should be taught and assessed accordingly for maximum output of students and most of the respondent mentioned that all the four competencies are equally important for example one respondent mentioned "...these skills as basic skills in learning English language..." in response to "how these competencies should be taught?" the participant said "...There should be grammar translation method, direct method should be used to teach basic language skills..." in addition to this the participant also mentioned that "...There should be grammar translation method, direct method should be used to teach basic language skills..." on the other hand the participant also talked about issue of lack of training and said "...The main problem is with the staff that they are not trained and polished for this and they switch from one language to another..." the participant talked about lack of curriculum alignment and added that "...We are doing totally different things while assessing our students learning and we don't look at what there is given in the curriculum..."

In the same manner, participant no 4 stressed activities for teaching and assessing four language competencies and mentioned that "...Four skills should be taught through activities and assessed accordingly..." the participant also focused on the role of the

student and said "... There should be maximum involvement of the students in class and assessed by the teachers through interaction...". Respondent no 5 mentioned a very valid point and said that "...Reading and writing both skills are fulfilled to the best level but speaking and listening both have lack of material and motivation..."

### **Flexibility of Curriculum**

Regarding the flexibility of the national curriculum, some of the respondents were of the view that the curriculum is flexible to be implemented and assessed while some of them still shows concerns. For example, respondent no 1 said "...No, the National curriculum of Pakistan is not flexible enough to implement in the classroom and it is not easy for assessment..." by further adding to his statement he mentioned that "...the very first reason is that in the classroom English is taught as a subject and not as a language skill. Communication aspect of language is ignored...". Similarly, another respondent in the same manner mentioned that "...There are many flaws in the national curriculum of Pakistan and hence it is not flexible enough to be implemented in classroom...". On the other hand, most of the respondent were of the opposite view and according to their perceptions the curriculum was flexible and for this many respondents mentioned their views. For example, respondent no 2 said talked about the lack of teachers training;

I think the curriculum is the best aid at the secondary level but unluckily the teachers are not guided enough to make the written curriculum flexible...teachers just focus on board exam and assessment. Secondly, we have a very short time in formative and summative assessment can't be made properly.

Similarly, respondent no 3 while talking about the flexibility of curriculum said "...Yes, the curriculum is flexible enough to be implemented..." the participant also talked about developing students' skills and said "...There must be some drills incorporated to develop basic skills of the students...". Most of the respondent were of the view that the

curriculum is flexible and good enough to be implemented respondent no 6 mentioned that "...I think the written curriculum is not very rigid, it needs improvement but still not very rigid it can be implemented in the classroom and it is easy for both formative and summative assessment..."

### **Curriculum Alignment at the Instructional Level**

#### **Curriculum Document or SLO's s**

While inquiring about whether the teachers use a written curriculum or just focus on the SLO's given at each, some of the respondent were of the view that they use curriculum while most of them mentioned different reasons of not using the curriculum document. For example, participant no 1 said "...I don't follow the written curriculum document for English language teaching completely. However, SLO's are being focused mentioned in each unit ..." the participant further talked about a lack of understanding of the curriculum document and mentioned that "...The reason for not following written document is lack of understanding of basic competencies and standards given in curriculum...". Similarly, another participant was of the similar view that "...Difficult to look at the written document. Ground realities are totally different because in local setup it is impossible to align and look at the written document..."

One respondent mentioned about the unavailability of the written curriculum at school and said "...Written curriculum document is not available in every school. If it is, I think it is not in the knowledge of every teacher..." the participant further added that "...on the other hand SLOs are present in the written form in the start of every lesson of the textbook so there are focused and followed..."

On the other hand, some of the respondent mentioned that they follow the written curriculum. One respondent said "...yes I follow the written document for teaching the English language. For teaching the English language every teacher, I think follow the written curriculum along with SLO given in each unit..."



## Activities and AV AIDS

While responding to the question “What are the daily activities/ instructional aids that help you ensure curriculum alignment with teaching and assessment?” most of the participant mentioned about using AV aids and making group of students are some helpful activities. For example, one respondent mentioned that “...The daily activities include reading writing comprehension speaking in the classroom...” additionally he mentioned that “...the teacher delivers a lecture and then questions are asked to assess the student ability to speak and comprehend the given topic...”. Similarly, respondent no 3 talked about AV aids and relate AV aid and multimedia with not only objective achievement but also talked about making the class interesting he said “...Av aid should be used to achieve your objectives multimedia should be used to make class interesting and purposeful...”. Additionally, one participant while talking about AV aids mentioned that “...lesson planning, additional notes are some of the tools which can help...” the participant also shows the concern of unavailability of laptops and said, “.....laptop should be available for teachers because due to financial constraints, I cannot manage...”.

In addition to AV aids, most of the participants mentioned that grouping students, reading, and writing can also be helpful activity. One participant mentioned “...classroom discussion and group activities are very helpful for me to ensure curriculum alignment with teaching and assessment...” he further added that written and oral test can also be beneficial.

## Overcrowded Classes, Less Time and a Lack of Resources

While talking about difficulties they face while aligning curriculum, most of the participants mentioned that they must deal to with overcrowded classrooms and time allocated for dealing with class is not enough. For example, on respondent mentioned that “...Every teacher in the classroom wants to inculcate learning among students but time shortage, syllabus and overcrowded classroom are hindrances in

achieving objectives...” similarly, another respondent in the same manner mentioned that “...Strengthen of student's class-wise in the public school is much more the activity based on the individual perfection and improvement mostly are not possible to practice...”. Additionally, there are other difficulties as well. Most of the respondents mentioned that lack of resources is also an issue for example one respondent mentioned that “...we do not have proper resources like instructional aids...” similarly, another respondent mentioned the same and said “...the one challenge may be the lack of resources we don't have that required infrastructure...”. One respondent while taking about lack of resources, said that we only focus on the book and not on other resources and the respondent said that the unavailability of the internet has led us to focus on a book only and comprehensively mentioned

we have less resources such authentic and non-authentic literature for teaching English Language at secondary level usually we are using textbook and I think we should have resources such as internet multimedia and other AV aids to assess our teaching to cater all the language skills specially communication skill because I feel as a teacher it is important to have sufficient or enough resources for teaching any language and as for as time is concerned, the time which is given to us is not enough for communication skill it just focuses on comprehension which is also based on the given or the prescribed textbook and content is also assessed from that so time is major constraint and more time should be allocated for teaching and assessing a target language and as far as training teachers don't have the opportunity to learn according to their needs such as curriculum is not in the hands of teacher they are just using textbook for teaching English language and I think must be able to use curriculum for matching it with teaching and assessment.

Interestingly, one other respondent talked about the social condition of student and mentioned that social condition can also be a hurdle he said, “...as far as this area is concerned the students are from a very poor background, and after schools, the students go

to bazar for earning their livelihood and share the economic burden with their parents..." the participant also confirmed this fact by quoting the example of his own students and said "... We have some students here that they don't even change their uniform and straightway go to their working place and work till 12 mid- night so how can we meet the demands of curriculum...". On the other hand, few of the respondent mentioned about poor training of the teacher.

### **Aligning Curriculum, a Tool to Achieve Objectives**

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In response to a question whether curriculum alignment helps in achieving objectives, most of the respondents mentioned that curriculum alignment helps in achieving objectives for example one respondent mentioned that "...Curriculum alignment helps us effectively achieve the objectives because before teaching, we clearly understand our basic aims and objectives after completing lessons so the teacher can focus on specific objectives while delivering the lecture..." the participant further added that we get to know what's right to do and what should be used in order to achieve SLO's. In the same manner, other respondent mentioned that "...if we are moving in the right way hopefully, we will reach our destination soon so if we look at the curriculum and align these things then surely, we will be able to achieve the objectives...". Another respondent while talking about the importance of curriculum alignment said "...Curriculum alignment is very effective in achieving objectives. It makes the teacher aware of the objectives and of the methods that will help them achieve objectives...". One respondent mentioned about its importance for both teacher and student and said "...curriculum alignment is crucial in realizing learning guarantee students achieving their learning goals it is a set of key needed by students as well teachers too..."

### **Curriculum Alignment and Assessment**

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#### **All Competencies Should be Assessed**

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While asking about whether what language

competency should be focused to assessed at the secondary level, most of the respondents were of the view that all competencies should be focused for optimum learning of the students. One respondent mentioned that "...I think at secondary level students must be able to read and write well..." he further added about activities for developing language skills "...they could be asked to tell about their likes and dislikes they might have a dialogue with their partners. Role play and speech contest, easy writing contest should be organized to assess their proficiency in language skills..." similarly, another respondent was of the same view and said "...all four skills of language should be assessed for optimum learning of the students at secondary level..." another respondent mentioned about bringing about a connection in these four competencies and the respondent named this connection as equilibrium and said "...Student comprehension, vocabulary listening speaking reading and writing skills should be assessed at the same time. Equilibrium of all these skills must be part of the assessment...". Another respondent talked about improving the assessment criteria and said "...as far as the assessment of English language at secondary school level is concerned I am of the opinion that there is need to improve the quality of assessment to full fill the desire learning outcomes..." the respondent criticized the old methods of assessment and mentioned "...Moreover methods of assessment have not been shifted from theory to performance in Pakistan..."

### **Writing and Memorization Only**

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While talking about whether all competencies and skills of language are assessed to ensure curriculum alignment, nearly all the respondent mentioned that they don't assess all the competencies and skills of language for example participants while talking about the traditional exam system of Pakistan mentioned that "...Only writing and memory of student is assessed in the assessment system of Pakistan so students and teachers both are interested and taking care of only the written material that is being practiced in the exercise of

textbook...” one respondent mentioned that “...in our system we only assess writing and memorization of students in board exam and there is no such criteria for assessing the speaking and listening...” another respondent, in the same manner, mentioned that “...all language skills need to be assessed to ensure curriculum alignment but our system only focuses on memorization only...”

From the above views one can conclude that our traditional system focuses only on the exam and they stress on only those areas which is supposed to be assessed and they don't go beyond it. One respondent talked about the priority of our examination system and said that we only focus on memorization of some facts and the student is supposed to reproduce those facts on a piece of paper and then they are promoted to the next class without focusing on all competencies hence there is no weightage given to speaking and listening in the exam and we as part of traditional system focus only on things important for exams only.

### **Focused Textbook only for Assessment**

While inquiring whether the teacher focus on textbook only to select content for testing or Standards given in the national curriculum, nearly all the respondent presented their views and it was found that majority of them focus only on the textbook. For example one respondent mentioned that “...In the test for assessment some questions are related to English language standards of English, for example, comprehensions passage or questions related to the lexical part of English but mostly the assessments focus the textbooks, essays and letter at secondary level...” similarly another respondent while talking about content selection said that they use the book only for testing students and the respondent criticized the typical system of memorization and rote learning and said “...textbook is the only main stream document from where contents are selected for testing. Our assessment is mainly based on rote learning...” another respondent while showing their views of using textbook only for selecting content interestingly said “...Content is taken from the exercise of

textbook any other material unseen is consider in justice to the students....”.

From the above analysis one can conclude that the majority of sample participants use only textbook for selecting content for assessment and they don't focus on the standards of the English language given at the national curriculum.

### **English: A Second Language**

The respondent mentioned about some hurdles which they face during teaching the English language. There were multiple views recorded regarding obstacles to teaching English language. The majority of them talked about English as a second language and one respondent mentioned that “...We are non-native English language speakers so that is one of the main hurdles/obstacles in achieving the curriculum alignment. Additionally, the respondent mentioned that we have linguistic burden as well we have students from multiple languages and family background is not supportive and at the school level, we don't have authentic and non-authentic literature we don't have magazine, newspapers. In the same manner another respondent was also of the same view and shows the concern of language as a hurdle in teaching English language the respondent mentioned that “...First of all, English is not our mother language GTM is also an obstacle because lack of the direct method makes both students and teachers confused in doing translation...” the respondent further added about the ill system of our examination and said “.... The total focus is on the good handwriting and written material. Nothing is done to improve the other three skills, vocabulary and comprehension etc..” . Similarly, one another participant mentioned that we don't give weightage to the speaking and listening skills because these skills are not assessed the respondent mentioned that “...speaking and listening skills are not assessed at our board exam at the secondary level. So the teacher can't focus on these skills due to lengthy syllabus overcrowded classrooms, restrained time and limited resources for teaching...”

## **Findings and Recommendations**

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Based on the data analysis of the emerged themes, the following findings were drawn.

Firstly, it was found that teachers regarded curriculum as an important document for making their teaching effective and to achieve the objectives. The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, (2009), also indicates curriculum as a basic and most important element of education which ensures the quality in education. Similarly, while highlighting the importance of curriculum (Chikumbu, & Makamur, 2000, p.8), stated that all the elements in education including learner, teacher, assessment and teaching approaches all are linked to the curriculum and all factors are drive by the curriculum. The curriculum is the action plan that creates unity among all the elements.

It is found that curriculum alignment with instruction and assessment helps to achieve objectives. According to Smith (2012), the harmonization among assessment, instruction, and curriculum make it easy to achieve the targets because it provides a pathway to work systematically.

It was found that our teachers are not trained so that they may use written curriculum document. The teacher should have better understanding about the curriculum its usage and the teacher should be able to deliver the curriculum effectively.

The data analysis also revealed that the alignment of curriculum and quality of assessment is also get effected by overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and lack of time. These elements are affecting the effectiveness of assessment and teaching, which declines the quality of performance in particular subjects. Additionally, the four skills areas are different in nature so they need different kind of approaches but the weight should be given to all skills.

The thematic analysis revealed that there was no equal representation for the four areas, speaking, listening, writing, and hearing. It was found that listening and speaking are not prioritizing in our assessment system all these

four skills are equally important for language development, so these four areas need equal input. According to (Stern, 1992), language skills can be taught separately, it is important to teach the four skills of language systematically and all language areas should be equally highlighted.

From the response of respondents, it was found that the English subject is taught as content which focuses on memorization, skills, and concepts are ignored. Hina, (2008, pp. 96-97) also stated that the examination system in Pakistan encourages rote memorization rather than conceptual learning, the examinations do not focus on major concepts, skills of students and major concepts of the curriculum.

It was found that there is no availability of other resources like a magazine, tape recorders, and newspapers. According to the research participants/teachers such resources are essential for teaching of English because to teach the skills of listening, speaking hearing and writing they require multiple ways and resources. Pun (2013), mentioned that usage of multimedia and technology creates a conducive and attractive learning environment.

## **Recommendations**

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On the basis of the findings and data analysis the following recommendations are made.

1. The teachers should be fully trained so they will become able to use the written document of curriculum and follow it during teaching and assessment of particular subjects.
2. While teaching and assessing English teacher should equally focus the four areas of English.
3. Proper time should be allocated for teaching of all skills and equal time should be divided. The classroom period should be appropriately.
4. Resources should be provided for the teachers and required AV aids should be provided.
5. The main focus of English subject should be linguistic skills rather than memorization.

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