



EVALUATION OF CAREER-RELATED EDUCATION IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS: THE POLICY IMPERATIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article intends to evaluate National Curriculum for English Language (Government of Pakistan, 2006) and selected textbooks for Grades V and X in order to determine the extent to which career related learning has been addressed. A case of Pakistan has been selected for this review. This procedure was undertaken to evaluate consistency, depth and breadth of information addressed with reference to career education. The review showed that curriculum has incorporated career-related information for Grade X in line with the National Education Policy (Ministry of Education Government of Pakistan, 2009) in far much comprehensive manner when compared to Grade V. Furthermore, career-related information has been addressed inadequately in the curriculum for these two educational levels when analyzed according to the career development framework (Law and Watts, 2003). Recommendations are made to impart career education through curriculum programming and interventions.

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Contribution/ Originality

This study documents procedures for critical analysis of career education through curriculum by analyzing depth and breadth of National Curriculum for English Language and related textbooks. The analysis was carried out in light of DOTS Framework. The framework proposes four main pillars for career education (self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision making and transitional skills) and thus enunciates key domains for career information and education. The study contributes in the literature by providing preliminary findings pertaining to career education in the contemporary context. Curriculum and textbooks pertaining to the Grades V and X were selected as they can be considered crucial educational and transitional stages.

1. INTRODUCTION

Importance of career education as one of the domains of career guidance is increasingly realized in almost all parts of the world. Our lives and progression revolve around career development which has increasingly emerged as the integral component in identity formation.

Significance of career education is globally well-established. Official web site of the Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2015 (<http://www.moe.gov.sg/>) focuses on both education and career development. In the United Kingdom, there is a drift of career education in curriculum with a keen focus on its linkages with students' personal and social development. Similarly, spectrum of career education in New Zealand is quite broad detailing information on increasing students' potential leading to outcomes for the whole nation (Career Education Benchmark, 2004). Last but not the least, report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (CEB, 2004) enlists names of the states such as Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and United Kingdom having a range of career education approaches through curriculum. All these examples indicate the increased scope of career education and predominantly is indicative of the increased scope of research and investigation in the same area.

The global trends and approaches have rightly impacted those of Asian Countries. For example, Japan has focused on career education vide legislation since 1947 when first definition on career guidance emerged in the curriculum. Above given review provides glaring evidence of the widespread approach on career education through curriculum which places pronounced importance on career education in curriculum.

Despite the amplified focus on career education by numerous States, it is correct to narrate that there is no singular and agreed upon definition of career education. Broadly it refers to all those activities which aid career development of the students in any educational institution. Review by Gothard *et al.* (2001) shows that careers education is multi-faceted and dynamic in nature, which incorporates aspirations of both the individuals and communities. Its depth and richness sometimes leads to ambiguity making the implementation of career education quite challenging especially for the developing countries.

Other reasons for the late emergence of career education in curriculum of the developing countries can be referred to their social and economic factors. Considering Pakistan a case study, Amin (2013) mentions prevalence of high poverty in Pakistan, where two third of the population lives below the poverty line. In such a situation, it will be accurate to articulate that technical and vocational education underscores more attention because of high drop-out and low literacy rates. Resultantly, the scope and implementation of career education is less likely to fall in the mainstream education and in the ambit of government's priority action areas. Thus, the pervasive approach of matching of individual traits, interests, personality and aptitude with the job type may not be considered as a predominant paradigm for career development of individuals. Furthermore, individuals are less likely to take proactive approach for career development and may prefer to peruse whatever opportunities available to them. This leads to the perusal of jobs rather than career and ultimately jobs remain a priority. Here job refers to activities which have short-term meaning, significance and outcomes whereas a career is a real source of life-long aspiration and direction for

any individual. Jobs are mainly source of income and not always a contributive factor in career development and life-satisfaction. Thus, limited socio-economic development of a country may restrict perceptions, aspirations and efforts of people leading towards attainment of jobs rather than career. Consequently, individuals may entail a passive approach in constructing their own career and the concept of career as a life-long progression may become redundant for many.

However, as a result of globalization, post-industrialized labor market, jobs and work trends have influenced the developing countries as well. Now, jobs market offers a mix of job types, which attracts both the mental and physical labor and demands enriching skills every day for effective enterprising. Globalization leads to a deep realization of interconnectedness between all the regions of the world for betterment and prosperity of individuals and society at large. With reference to [Watts \(2012\)](#) the definition of career has been widened in scope and meaning leading to its central role in steering our lives. Thus, no matter what the socio-economic and progressive state of Pakistan, there is emergence of various types of work opportunities and global competitiveness. It has become a culture offering a mix of industrial and mental labor opportunities and a region from where people even move abroad for better work opportunities. This trend leads to the significant importance of career education and the for continuous career development.

Realizing a global focus on building the competencies of individuals to meet emerging needs, it is compelling to incorporate career education in curriculum and at all the educational levels. Holistic curriculum at school level develops core skills and therefore it is of great importance that it should address basic skills and aptitudes providing foundation for the advance ones. Thus, this article aims at reviewing National Curriculum for English Language and the selected English textbooks to determine the extent to which career education has been incorporated so far in the mainstream education at the primary and secondary educational levels. English curricula only for Grade V and X were reviewed which gives some idea of career education at primary and secondary levels of education. It is noteworthy that these two educational levels are important transitional levels and analysis of curricula pertaining to these levels is of crucial importance.

1.1. Curriculum, Career Education and Teacher Practices

It is noteworthy that the curriculum cannot be transferred to students without teacher's conscious effort. To magnify the positive impacts of such a directional effort, teachers receive pre-service and in-service trainings. Here comes an important role of teacher educators in streamlining the strategies for effective implementation of curriculum. Both literature and practice have shown the importance of curriculum to set national standards, which obviously carries a thorough impact on training teacher educators.

It can be rightly alleged that the interpretation and implementation of curriculum is mainly dependent upon teachers. [Norman \(2005\)](#) indicates that variations are quite possible when teachers interpret and implement curriculum. The variations in teacher interpretations may lead to the huge differences in imparting career education especially if curriculum doesn't set holistic and clear approach for student career development. Therefore, it can be said that documented curriculum has a potential to set national standards for all teachers and trainings. Therefore, if teacher educators are

trained on the national standards, there is a likelihood that the similar standards of teaching penetrate equally in all schools despite of urban and rural divide and in a subtle manner.

In light of afore given discussion, it is correct to state that learning is facilitated when its objectives are clearly set, methods for learning are devised and implemented, evaluation processes are set forth and learning is assessed to continue the cycle. Therefore, comprehensive addressal of career development in curriculum will yield positive influence on the practices and trainings of the teacher educators with regards to career education. Hence, addressing career information in the mainstream curriculum can lead to the effectual imparting of career education nationwide.

1.2. Career Education and Life-Skills Approach

With the increased focus on career for our life-long progression, importance of life -skills enters as the underpinning concept necessary for this life-long development. There are number of examples around the globe which show that career education and life-skills development are considered as the complementary domains, strengthening each other. Various States such as Iowa mention career education as beyond career search and employment skills because their perspective incorporates life-skills such as decision making (Iowa Department of Education, 2012). It is realized that life-skills education enhances career management skills and these life-skills are likely to influence well-being. Due to this, many of the projects/programs and professionals focus on life-skills and career education either simultaneously or on career development through life-skills education. However, it still requires empirical evidence supporting sufficiency and adequacy of life-skills education for career development, especially at the primary level.

National Education Policy (MEGP, 2009) emphasizes upon the mainstreaming of life-skills education in the curriculum. A focus on career guidance starts from the secondary school level as per the policy commitment whereas a focus on life-skills begins early. Career education through life-skills in curriculum might be a practical approach considering the shortage of teachers and lack of trainings to impart career education as a exclusive subject. However, it may entail limitations and thus its adequacy for career development becomes questionable. One of the prime reasons may be that career education focuses on clear and age related targets for the career development. The Victorian Curriculum Framework (Department of Education & Training Victoria, 2013) and The ACEG Framework (2012) provide excellent examples on such efforts. Therefore, rather than presuming career development through life skills at primary educational level, a clear and simultaneous focus on career education may magnify the positive impacts.

1.3. Models on Career Education in the Mainstream Education

Various countries have incorporated career education in the mainstream curriculum. In Thailand, career preparation and exposure to practical work has been addressed at the primary level (Barrow, 2014). The basic core curriculum clearly entails a focus on standard related preparation for the future careers (The Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008). National Council of Educational Research and Training (2005) of India clearly emphasizes upon career education through curriculum at various educational levels (p.125). Similarly, Ministry of Education New Zealand (2013) emphasizes upon the provision of appropriate career education and guidance for all

students during year 7 and above and also upon the career guidance for at risk students. Last but not the least, [Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority \(2013\)](#) has drafted the exclusive curriculum for careers education(years 9-10), which is thoroughly focused on work-related studies. These given examples clearly mark how numerous countries attempt to focus on career education in a well planned manner.

1.4. Purpose of Review

Evidences from various sources validate that career education in curriculum is a contested field. This demands outlining what effective school guidance curricula should cover.

Effective school guidance curricula should be (a) a comprehensive written program, (b) according to the developmental perspective, and (c) delivered by counselors and educators ([Brown and Trusty, 2005](#)). This recapitulates the dimensions necessary for effective career education at various educational levels.

For this paper, National Curriculum for English Language ([Government of Pakistan, 2006](#)) was reviewed because this language contains rich information on life-skills and careers development and till date national curriculum influences all the textbook boards of Pakistan equally. Moreover, English curriculum provides adequate vocabulary, space and opportunities to cover career education and life-skills when compared to other school subjects. It is also noteworthy that teachers in of government schools in Pakistan mainly implement curriculum through textbooks. Considering the pertinent importance of curriculum, it crucial to review content and nature of career education covered in textbooks. Therefore, English textbooks of two varied grade levels (i.e., textbooks of Grade V and Grade X) were selected for the review. Textbooks of these two grades were selected because they serve as important transitional educational levels as they are linked to the transition to the secondary level and college level respectively.

DOTS Framework ([Law and Watts, 2003](#)) was identified as a conceptual framework appropriate for the purpose of evaluation of the curriculum and textbooks. This framework still holds a dominating position in career education and guidance. This framework has four components namely self-awareness, decision learning, opportunity awareness and transition learning and hence outlines main components that can be covered differently at various levels of development.

The National Curriculum for English Language ([GoP, 2006](#)) and the selected textbooks were reviewed with the following objectives;

1. To evaluate the extent to which National Curriculum for English Language addresses career information in light of DOTS Theory;
2. To determine the consistency between the National Curriculum for English Language and the selected textbooks of Grade V and X with reference to career education;
3. To determine if coverage of life-skills in the curriculum is adequate for career related-learning with reference to Grade V and Grade X students;
4. To determine how well the textbooks provide age-related career education at the crucial transitional phases; and

5. To provide recommendations for effective career education through the evaluation of the curriculum and the selected textbooks.

1.5. Procedure

National Curriculum for English Language (GoP, 2006) was selected for the review and evaluation because this language provides a rich vocabulary for careers and life-skills education. English curriculum for Grades V and X was analyzed only. To explore and investigate the current status of implementation of career education through the mainstream curriculum, English textbooks of Grades V and X were also analyzed. These textbooks included one of Grade V and two of Grade X. These textbooks are published in Lahore.

These particular textbooks were selected because Federal area and Punjab Province have a long history of education related interventions when compared to other areas of Pakistan, which is likely to result in a better status of career education in textbooks and also in line with the national curriculum. Hence it was expected that the review of these textbooks can provide valuable information regarding recent trends of careers education in the contemporary context.

The present researcher analyzed content of the selected curriculum and textbooks with reference to the information provided on career development under DOTS Framework. Therefore, the information pertaining to educational fields, employment, jobs, occupations, work-related roles and career development was analyzed according to the components of DOTS. This approach was taken because previous research supports DOTS Framework for the analysis of career development strategies in the mainstream curriculum (McIlveen *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, the themes and subthemes on life-skills were reviewed only at the curriculum level in order to analyze its role for effective career education.

2. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

2.1. Evaluation of National English Curriculum for Grade V and X

2.1.1. Review of National Curriculum for English Language, Grade V

Review of the National Curriculum for English Language for Grade V shows that it focuses on communication skills (pp: 50 -51) and appropriate ethical and social development so that students can participate in the global society (p: 63). These aspects of curriculum indirectly facilitate career development of students. However, such aspects of curriculum indicate the importance of teacher understanding for effective curriculum implementation mainly because of their broad nature. For example, a focus on ethical and social development in the curriculum provides benchmarks such as recognizing and practicing values and thus demands rigorous teachers' trainings for effective implementation. Themes and subthemes in the curriculum revolve around truthfulness, courage, respect, friendship, resolving quarrels, good study habits, good behavior, personal etiquettes, etc. An explicit focus on importance of knowing one's own strengths and interests and general decision making which forms the basis of effective educational and career-related transition and opportunity awareness seem to be inadequately addressed at this level. Therefore, a comprehensive focus on self-awareness and decision-making and their subsequent links to career development seems lacking in the English Curriculum for English Language of Grade V.

2.1.2. Review of National Curriculum for English Language, Grade X

The review of National Curriculum for English Language for Grade X shows that it focuses on developing life-skills and social competencies. The themes and subthemes revolve around building tolerance, simplicity, justice, handling of trust, self-discipline, respecting self and others, updating life-skills, dealing with change and understanding motivation. It explicitly focuses upon exploring career opportunities, understanding career/occupations under the theme of education and employability. Furthermore, the National Curriculum for English Language (GoP, 2006) again places due emphasis upon learning environment of the class for enhancing ethical and social development of children (p.119), which is a similar component proposed for the primary level (discussed in previous para).

On the basis of review it can be deduced that career education is better addressed for Grade X when compared to the Grade V level. It is noteworthy that the opportunity awareness and transitional skills at the secondary level need to be deeply embedded in building self-awareness and decision making skills at the primary level of education. Presently, this connection seems to be missing.

2.2. Consistency between the Curriculum and Textbooks to Impart Career Education

2.2.1. Review of Textbook, Grade V

Review of Grade V English Textbook of Punjab Textbook Board (Kiyani and Najib, 2013) revealed that it covers various life-skills such as listening to others, conflict resolution, importance of truthfulness and dealing with emergency. The textbook also provides information about various professions such as teacher, scientist and lawyer. However, text on career education was found as inadequate because information about variety of professions seems to be missing. Moreover, exclusive chapter on good study habits was not incorporated in the textbook and this was found as inconsistent with the National Curriculum for English Language (GoP, 2006). The textbook seems to be inadequate for career education which primarily reflects limitations in the National Curriculum for English Language with reference to career education.

2.2.2. Review of Textbook, Grade X

A review of the English Textbook of Grade X published by the Punjab Textbook Board (Afzal *et al.*, 2013) shows that it provides career education by highlighting role of teachers, role of drugs in spoiling one's work and career and the importance of earning livelihood with honesty. The textbook provides meaningful information regarding career but still does not cater for transitional needs of the children in accordance to their age. Children are supposed to select major subjects after Grade X which impacts their career choice. In this connection, information on various subjects and their linkages with different careers can be valuable for them. This shows lack of consistency between the themes addressed in the curriculum and content covered in the textbook.

Another English Textbook of Grade X published by the Caravan Book House, Lahore (Kiyani, 2013) provides a complete and interesting chapter on selecting a right career. This chapter links various subjects with careers and also links career choice with peace and satisfaction. Insertion of this chapter in the textbook provides a good example of career education. It can be concluded that

opportunity awareness at the secondary level is inadequately supported by self-awareness at both primary and secondary levels and this primarily is deep rooted in the gaps identified within the curriculum.

Afore given review shows gaps in textbooks with regards to careers education which can be referred mainly to the gaps in curriculum. Learning about selection of right career at the secondary level has a strong foundation in knowing one's own skills and interests for various occupations at the preliminary levels, which needs to be addressed both in English curriculum and textbooks and in a sequential and comprehensive manner.

2.2.3. Career Education through Life-Skills Approach

Review of the curriculum shows that life-skills education for Grade V and X revolve around taking/handling responsibility, organizing personal belongings, good behavior, practicing personal etiquettes, curiosity and learning, sports and sportsmanship, updating life skills, dealing with change and understanding motivation. The review shows that these life-skills cannot be considered adequate as they do not fully address the domains set by DOTS model in a comprehensive manner. Thus, we cannot assume that life-skills addressed in the curriculum are adequate to facilitate career development of students.

2.3. Age-Related Approach to Career Education

Afore given review shows that age-specific focus on career education is inadequate because the four pillars of career development theory (Law and Watts, 2003) have not been focused in a well-balanced manner through curriculum especially for Grade V students. This argument is derived by the review of National Curriculum for English Language (Grades V & X) and the selected textbooks English textbooks published in Lahore.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This review provides certain recommendations for careers education, which can be useful especially for the developing countries. Following recommendations can be envisaged on the basis of review.

- Career education should be incorporated in the curriculum according to the career development frameworks. For that it can address the four key components of DOTS Framework especially in the beginning of crystallizing career education.
- Career education should be consistently offered during all the educational stages with depth and breadth.
- National education policy should clearly emphasize importance of career education for all the educational levels and according to the career development models and frameworks.
- Teachers should be extensively trained on career development of students along with focusing on ethical and social development of students.
- Career education promised by curriculum should be adequately supported by the textbooks and teachers' pedagogical strategies.

- Curriculum should be reviewed by a group of experts in order to address main pillars of career development within the mainstream curriculum.
- School-based and hidden (informal) curriculum should be investigated because review of the national curriculum is not adequate to comment on the existing status of career education.

4. LIMITATIONS

The review presented in this article has serious limitations because selected curriculum and textbooks have been reviewed to map out career education. Therefore, curriculum devised for all subjects and relevant textbooks should be reviewed in order to derive comprehensive information on the existing status of careers education in the mainstream curriculum. Additionally, interviews with teachers can also provide detailed and on ground information regarding the implementation issues. Another limitation is that the review was carried out only by the researcher and this may evoke the chances of biasness. In this connection, it is suggested that such a review should be carried out by a committee of experts to put forth valid and reliable information.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper provides findings with special reference to the existing status of career education in a selected curriculum. Findings indicate the need for serious thoughts and strategies for career education in order to meet the aims of National Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2009) which aim at ensuring equal educational opportunities, raising personal responsibilities and participation in productive activities and to enable individuals to contribute in national economies while earning their livelihood honestly.

The strategy utilized for this review can be adopted by other contexts to determine the extent to which curriculum addresses career-related information according to the career development framework and according to the developmental needs of students.

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