Developing Curriculum and Designing Syllabus in Teaching of English as Second Language

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Abstract: *Teaching a language involves two basic instructional strategies, one is Syllabus and the other is curriculum. Both these two aspects compromise instructional activities. The former term 'syllabus,' is an outline and summary of topics that are to be covered in an education course while setting the onward responsibilities of instructor. A teacher can make syllabus built on the curriculum. Curriculum is a comprehensiveconceptthat covers the complete program or frame of knowledge the students shall obtain. It also includes a general account of the teaching program. In a nutshell, curriculum is the general statement about the teaching program and syllabus is about what actually happens in the classroom. A curriculum is well-designed if it directly impacts teaching-learning process and enhances greater positive effects. It should be designed with students in mind to increase students' success to make it an effective curriculum. A teacher needs to learn the basics of this fundamental skill and he must know how to walk through the essential steps. This article presents functions of syllabus and how a curriculum is developed considering the aim of language teaching with the special focusof English language. The paper also discusses some problems met in the enactment of syllabus and curriculum.*

Keywords: Syllabus, Curriculum, Instructional Activities, Curriculum Design

1. Introduction

English as a language is taught in classrooms in such a way that it causes a loss of competence in students' mastery of the English. Thus, it may be called an 'unfortunate' condition for the teaching and learning process of the English language at most of the Arab universities. In addition, it is also unfortunate that these universities do not manage to provide proper curriculum-syllabus strategy to enhance learning and development in students. In India, syllabus-curriculum strategy suffers also. Neena Dash & M. Dashhighlight this fact in their book*Teaching English as an Additional Language* as:

> Government of India and State governments are shouting for the improvement of English language teaching and the standard of achievements of students, but no grant has yet been provided to schools to set up language laboratory. Only some private organizations have shown some interest to set up a language laboratory in the schools managed by them. (140)

Here, in this paper, the researcher restricts and focuses only in the effort of making a good and acceptable planning for the improvement of the syllabus-curriculum strategy while considering the fact how it influences teaching-learning process of students. Bailey and Damerow in their book, *Teaching and Learning English in the Arabic-Speaking World* write in theforeword:

> …conviction about three things became clear to me: (1) investment in education is the best investment for the future; (2) research is crucial for the development of a knowledge-based economy; and (3) a high standard of proficiency in English is a critical requirement for effective education and for access to, and utilization of, new knowledge and new technology… there are many barriers to knowledge- Social, cultural, economic, geographic, and even political- but that the biggest challenge is language barrier. (x)

Thus, the most reasonable thing to do for the researcher to make it meaningful is the attentiveness in developing astandard syllabus that compliments curriculum strategy, which in turn focuses on developing language skills. The most important character in such a syllabus would be that it passes through the stages that are recommended by experts.

Strategic PointsRegarding Syllabus
1) Many universities provide a challengingselection of courses, majors and extracurricular opportunities, but immediate accounts show that many undergraduates do not feel that the material conveyed in their readings and lectures has much relevance to their lives. Such feelings suggest either that the courses do not in fact contribute much to the ultimate goals that a university or college claims to value or that instructors or teachers are not taking necessary care to explain the larger aims of their courses. For example, speaking is not given importance in most of syllabi. NadhimObaid Hussein writes in his paper, "*Arab Learners' Problems in Learning English Language: A Teacher Perspective*":

> Because speaking skill is the only skill that is not included in the exams, it is given less teaching emphasis. The focus is mainly on teaching reading and writing besides grammar and vocabulary. Although the teaching of speaking can be integrated into other skills like reading and writing, teachers

think that time is insufficient to do that, and priority is given to other skills rather than speaking because they are included in theexam and speaking is not. (2)

2) Other studies suggest that many instructors do not teach their courses in ways best calculated to achieve the ends that faculties themselves consider important. For example, critical thinking as an important part of over-all development in language teaching is not given its due importance while designing syllabus while as it is a fact that it comprises one of the most important needed elements in any curriculum design. Derek Bok in his article, "*Improving the Quality of Education*" writes:

> Although 99 percent of professors consider critical thinking an "essential" or "very important" goal of a college education, fewer than 20 percent of the exam questions actually tested for this skill. (par.5)

3) Now that most faculties have defined the learning objectives of their college and its various departments and programs, it should be possible to review recent examinations to determine whether individual professors, programs and departments are actually designing their courses to achieve those goals. College administrators could also modify their student evaluation forms to ask students whether they believe the stated goals were emphasized in the courses they took.

4) In addition, the average time students devote to studying varies widely among different colleges, and many campuses could require more of their students. Those lacking evidence about the study habits of their undergraduates could inform themselves through confidential surveys that faculties could review and consider steps to encourage greater student effort and improve learning.

5) The vast difference between how well seniors think they can perform and their actual proficiencies (according to tests of basic skills and employer evaluations) suggests that many colleges are failing to give students an adequate account of their progress. Grade inflation may also contribute to excessive confidence, suggesting a need to work to restore appropriate standards, although that alone is unlikely to solve the problem. Better feedback on student papers and exams will be even more important in order to give undergraduates a more accurate sense of how much progress they've made and what more they need to accomplish before they graduate.

Strategic Points Regarding Designing a Curriculum

1) The modern trend is to frame the curriculum based on the twin pillars of the social viewpoint and its social relevance. If the focus is Indian society, then constitutionally it is democratic and thus has to focus onconcepts like liberalization, privatization, globalization, equality and justice. So curriculum needs to be goal-specific and should focus on overall development of each group without being in contradiction of other or any minority. Dr.Neil Hopkins writes in his paper, "*The Democratic Curriculum: Concept and Practice*":

The issue of what constitutes the appropriate forms of study in any given curriculum is inevitably a political decision. Who makes that decision will determine the sources of power in the education system, be they local, regional or national. The idea of a democratic curriculum, where stakeholders other than local or national government have a significant say in what makes up the curriculum, has a long heritage. (1)

2) In determining the criteria of curriculum development it is necessary to decide beforehand what is to be included and adopted in framing a suitable curriculum for learners in India. Modern educators are agreed in considering the learner as the central factor in the curriculum. The learner's needs, interests and experiences should be considered in the classroom. The learner should be trained towards worthy social ends. The immediate rather than the distant future must be kept in view. The activities of the educational institution should be of real worth and interest to him now. The curriculum should have a definite bearing to the life of the child the powers of the child in construction, creation, observation, and investigation, problem-solving. It should provide recreation at the same time.

3) At every stage curriculum should be flexible and adjustable to the need of pupils. It should be dynamic and possible of revision so that it may be in harmony with changing social conditions, and should reflect the latest developments in educational philosophy and psychology. An elastic curriculum is based on areas of study rather than on the needs of the children. A good curriculum should never be a sort of bed for the child. If it is, instead of fitting the curriculum to the child's needs, the child is fitted to the curriculum.

4) A good curriculum must be suitable and socially relevant to the community for which it is framed. Because of the fact that doing something that inherently impossible is nothing less than a corrupt exercise and imagining a desired future change in such situation is more unrealistic. A good curriculum will try to achieve realistic aims that are possible within its limits. The racial culture of a specific country or state, customs and environment must be reflected in the model curriculum, Indian culture, folklore, art, local and national institutions must be dealt with so as to lead to the development of national feeling and patriotism in the minds of the pupils. The ten core factors of education should be imbibed through the framework of the curriculum.

5) The curriculum should reproduce the greaterbenefitsfor human beings. It must hold the ideas and ideals of the society should be honored of its past, should be interested in its present progress, and ought to be hopeful about its future. Even while teaching a second language; it is important for a comprehensive curriculum to stress the importance of native language. Subjects such as the native language, literature, history, geography, mathematics, physical sciences, health and physical education should be included in the curriculum. These courses taught with the proper aims in view will educate the children towards the desired end. The subjects of the curriculum, and the methods of teaching adopted should lead to the development of essential qualities of citizenship in the pupils. Self-

reliance, self-control, concentration, leadership, individual and collective responsibility, sympathy and social service, are those qualities help in the development of character.

6) Totality of experience is another important principle or criterion in the construction of the curriculum. 'Totality' or 'integration' is the terms used for 'total experience'. Traditional compartmentalization of the subject-matter should be discouraged. The experience should be presented as a whole. Again, activities of teachers as well as those of students should be integrated. BridConnolly writes in his book, *Adult Learning in Groups*, "Curriculum …is the totality of the learning experiences in any educational programme, in the progress to the goals and outcomes of the programme." (107)

7) There are various subjects which are included in a curriculum. These subjects which are taught represent certain branches of knowledge and various forms of skills. These are bound to prove of great value to the future citizens. Organizing the work of a school according to subjects is of value especially for the older and more intelligent pupils. There are many disadvantages in the system of subject teaching for the lower classes. The young child cannot understand or appreciate the logical order into which subjects are divided and presented. Therefore, the division of the curriculum into separate subjects can only be justified for the high and middle classes.

8) In the kindergarten and primary stages, it is best to introduce activities of different kinds in which the application of several subjects is required. There are many useful and educative activities which cannot be taken up separately. These may be dealt with as "projects". The project method should be given a prominent place curriculum to be developed for the primary classes and may be in the middle classes as well.

2. Conclusion

The paper dealt with the idea of syllabus and curriculum strategy and how in absence of a strategy one is bound to find failures in one's students. Most of the students studying in such universities are bound to find problems in expressing themselves coherently. The importance of strategy in syllabus- curriculum development can be perceived from the following lines in Hall&Hewings' book, *Innovation in English Language Teaching: A Reader,* where they explain it lucidly as:

> Any teaching curriculum is designed in answer to three interrelated questions: What is to be learned? How is the learning to be undertaken and achieved? To what extent is the former appropriate and the latter effective? A communicative curriculum will place language teaching within the framework of this relationship between some specified purposes, the methodology which will be the means towards the achievement of those purposes, and the evaluation procedures which will assess the appropriateness of the initial purposes and the effectiveness of the methodology. (9)

It is also found that students graduating from such universities are not good at communication skills. The focus of curriculum should involve development, implementation of strategies which can be verified by syllabus, and an objective evaluation of language teaching methods. This fact has been highlighted by Richards&Richards in their book *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching* as they write:

> Curriculum development focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students learn in schools, what experiences should be provided to bring about intended learning outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools and or educational systems can be planned, measured, and evaluated. (2)

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