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A Study of Needs Analysis of Education at Undergraduate Level : EFL Case Study

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ABSTRACT-- *This study investigates issues influencing the effective supplementary English as Second Language (ESL) programs at Pakistani tertiary institutions. The dearth of a recognizable curriculum framework at most universities and the absence of consistent faculty development tend to compromise the quality of ESL courses. With existing teacher training programs providing little exposure to curricular development, and the teachers' academic qualifications not contributing to curricular creativity, the lack of follow-up means that the implemented curriculum diverges significantly from the official curriculum document. Focusing primarily on the textbooks and assessment, the classroom teachers do not take into account the educational objectives, and no evaluation of the implemented curriculum is carried out. In this study, seven university ESL teachers working at universities were surveyed to collect data on their teaching/professional experiences, program evaluation procedures and learner needs assessment. Questionnaire data was collected from twenty university students enrolled in a university in Islamabad. Three ESL professionals with extensive experience in tertiary teaching and knowledge of curriculum design and development were also interviewed. The study confirmed that ESL faculty at Pakistani universities lacked training in curriculum design and that needs assessment was arbitrary and informal.*

Keywords--*ESL, Needs Analysis, Curriculum, Evaluation, Education*

I. INTRODUCTION

Within the Pakistani context, English language is not only an official language but it is also the language of correspondence within governmental bodies. Additionally, English is also the language of communication in corporate, medical and other professional sectors. Pakistani school learners study English as a subject from Grade 5 onwards in most parts of the country and it is the medium of instruction in tertiary settings. At university level, a number of institutions offer degrees in English and related subjects. However, the study of the English language goes beyond the study of linguistics or literature. Based on the need for English proficiency in the wide professional settings, higher education abroad and the international workplace, the study of English is also a compulsory segment in the curricula of professional qualifications in medicine, engineering, technology and management sciences. At institutions offering such qualifications, English is taught in the form of courses ranging from communication skills, English Language and technical communication to business communication. At a minimum, learners are required to pass the course in order to progress further in their professional program. As the lingua franca of international communication, commerce, science and technology and education and official language

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within Pakistan, proficiency in English has created an imperative for Pakistani colleges and universities to emphasize the teaching and learning of English skills within curricula in general.

Yet the quality of English language instruction and of the language learning environment varies from institution to institution and in most cases from teacher to teacher. At most Pakistani universities which do not offer degrees in English, the peripheral role of language/communication programs/courses is in contrast to the actual importance of effective communication for students and/or teachers. The quality of such courses is thus dependent upon the efforts and caliber of individual teachers rather than upon nationally determined curriculum guidelines.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Given that research into English language education in Pakistan has been sporadic, standardized language program development has yet to be implemented by bodies such as the Higher Education Commission (HEC) or the Ministry of Education. Consequently, most English language programs at tertiary level in Pakistan continue to be organized on an ad hoc basis by the individual teachers and/or the institutions. Frequently, the teachers designing and implementing the program also lack the specialized background needed for non-instructional tasks such as course planning (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p.1). This means that the effectiveness of English language programs at Pakistani universities pivots on the competence of the course designer and/or teacher rather than upon national educational guidelines.

Program development is underscored by curriculum development which occupies an important niche in educational research and practice. Cornbleth (1990, p.12) argues that how we conceive of curriculum and curriculum making is important because our conceptions and ways of reasoning about curriculum reflect and shape how we see, think and talk about, study and act on the education made available to students. Thus, conceptions of curriculum are more than a matter of theoretical differences as each conceptualization determines the kind of curriculum that will eventually be put into practice and thereby makes it imperative for educational managers and practitioners to be conversant with the theoretical foundations of any curriculum they commit to. (Alfadda, 2012,)

Thinking on curriculum processes has ranged from Tyler's (in Nunan, 1988, p.11) product oriented model of systematic curriculum development which envisaged curriculum activity as occurring in a series of discrete and sequential stages, Taba's expanded but still linear reworking of the Tylerian engineering paradigm (Kiely & Rea Dickins, 2005, p.22) to Stenhouse's (in Nunan, 1988, p.11) process paradigm which centers on the implemented rather than the planned curriculum and focuses on the importance of teachers as the agents of curricular change. The mainstream conception of curriculum has centered on viewing curriculum as a tangible product, usually a document or plan for instruction in a particular subject (Cornbleth, 1990, p13) existing apart from curriculum policy making, design, and practice and from its structural and socio cultural contexts (Cornbleth, 1990). Over the years, such technocratic approaches to curriculum construction have attracted criticism for fostering reliance on experts, de-skilling teachers and promoting both knowledge and social control. The approach has also been critiqued because it perpetuates the status quo and does not view change as a catalyst for progress (Cornbleth, 1990, p. 33-34).

However, the product focused approach to curriculum design has not prevailed to the extinction of other approaches as we shall see in the three conceptions of curriculum discussed below. Stenhouse (1975, p.4) saw curriculum as an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a way that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice. Promoting the idea of teacher as researcher, Stenhouse (1975, p.24) contended that curriculum development must rest on teacher development and that it should promote it and hence the professionalism of the teacher. In contrast to prevalent thinking, Stenhouse advanced the idea that curriculum development and pedagogic practice, rather than being mutually exclusive processes, were closely allied and thus emphasized the centrality of the teacher in the development and implementation of curriculum processes.

More than a decade later, defining the curriculum as a systematic attempt by educationalists and teachers to specify and study planned intervention into the educational enterprise, Nunan (1988, p.10) suggested that the curriculum should be viewed as an attempt to specify what should happen in the classroom, to describe what actually does happen, and to attempt to reconcile the differences between what should be and what actually is. In pinpointing the need to affect a reconciliation between the ideal and the real, Nunan's views anticipated what Cornbleth (1990, p.15) highlights in her book *Curriculum in Context*, as a practical logic in use rather than a reconstructed or idealized logic upon which technocratic conceptions of curriculum development seem to pivot.

In the context of this discussion, Cornbleth's (1990) views of the nature of curriculum although largely supported by examples derived from the US context are of great relevance to the theoretical debate surrounding curriculum approaches. Sharing her experience of following the conventional guidelines for curriculum change, or research, development, dissemination, adoption models which seemed to have precious little impact on classroom practice, Cornbleth (1990, p.13) contends that technocratic approaches do not work because they decontextualize curriculum both conceptually and operationally.

For Cornbleth (1990, p24) a curriculum comes to life as it is enacted and she further asserts that if our curriculum concern is with what students have an opportunity to learn and how they are enabled to learn it, then the focus must be on classroom practice rather than on previously documented intentions. She describes curriculum construction as an ongoing social activity that is shaped by various contextual influences within and beyond the classroom and accomplished interactively, primarily by teachers and students. These descriptions of curriculum emphasize the role of participants and of context in curriculum development and it is this focus which distinguishes the perspectives offered by Stenhouse (1975), Nunan (1988) and Cornbleth (1990) from the prescriptive and product focused approach which presents curriculum processes as divorced from social influence of both participants and context.

III. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A needs analysis in language classrooms refers to the systematic collection and analysis of information which identifies "general and specific language needs that can be addressed in developing goals, objectives and content in a language program" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 156). It has been noted that course designers/teachers at Pakistani universities rarely conduct needs assessment or analysis prior to establishing the parameters of the course

they are designing. Hence course designers miss out on valuable data that may help to shape a program of greater relevance and utility to all who have a stake in the course, for instance learners and institution. Christison and Krahnke (1986, p.78) highlight that sound curriculum design in ESL programs for academic preparation should be based on empirical data that reflect what is really useful to students and not on the intuitions and the expertise of the teaching personnel alone. Richards (1990, p.20) too argues that effective language teaching programs pivot on systematic data gathering, planning, and development within a context influenced by learner, teacher, school, and societal factors, thus making a case a strong case for ongoing needs assessment.

A wide range of needs assessment methodologies within the field of educational research has been discussed. Discussing Stevick's socio-topical matrix which identifies the kind of people learners need to interact with against the things they want to talk about with these individuals, Berwick (1989, p.56-58) also highlights other methodologies as including Freire's dialogue whereby themes in the lives of prospective learners are gradually clarified through graphic and verbal exercises and target situation analysis (Chambers, 1980; Jupp and Hodlin, 1975) which focuses on the nature and effect of target language communication in particular situations. Other inductive methods discussed by Berwick include the Critical Incident Technique focusing on breakdowns in communication and the Delphi study developed by the Rand Corporation which entails asking stakeholders who never meet during the study, to rank items which constitute important or desirable future conditions during the course of several ranking rounds. In each round, the individuals are informed about the degree of support each item has received and they are asked to reconsider their previous choices in the light of an emerging consensus on particular items

While acknowledging that needs assessment can cater for different learner needs by enabling teachers to make pedagogical choices based on what learners require from the course, Graves (2001, p.180-181) cautions that needs analysis is not a value free process and that it is influenced by the teacher's view of what the course is about, the institutional constraints, and the students perceptions of what is being asked of them. She adds that due to unfamiliarity with the procedure students may also experience difficulty in articulating their purposes or needs. Practitioners frequently cite this inarticulateness on the part of the learners as being one of the reasons in not making wider use of learner oriented needs assessment. (Hwang H. & Kim Hyunwoo,2019).

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Using purposive sampling from a specified population (Black, 1993, p.57), the study collected data from seven university level teachers teaching/working at selected institutions and universities in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and Lahore in Pakistan. The participants comprised both male and female faculty members working at a leading science and engineering university in Islamabad (Institution A), business management university in Lahore (Institution B) and the Curriculum Wing at a government ministry. Engineering, technology, management sciences and medicine are some of the core disciplines offered at Institution A. Institution A has two schools, including a Business School and the School of Arts and Sciences respectively offering graduate and post graduate programs in management sciences and in computer science, computer engineering, mathematics and Law and Economics. One of the respondents was an English language specialist, with many years of tertiary level teaching and administrative experience, employed at the ministry. The teachers who participated in the survey

were experienced ELT professionals and therefore well placed to provide the data needed for the study. A segment of the student population from Institution A was selected for the administering of a questionnaire to triangulate the research. The sample student population consisted of 20 male and female undergraduate students studying engineering, information technology and management studies at different colleges/institutes at Institution A. Each specialization/discipline has a corresponding focus in terms of English/communication courses. This was planned to ensure that a greater range of English courses were investigated for the purpose of the research. Respondents were also chosen to participate in interviews.

Instruments for data collection

Two separate questionnaires were used to collect data from the university teachers and the students as questionnaires are economical, convenient and open to dissemination over a wide geographical area (Neuman, 2000, p. 271-272) and allow data collection in an identical and replicable way from a large number of informants, thus making comparison of the results easier and the conclusions clearer (Wray, Trott & Bloomer, 1998, p.167). The faculty questionnaire comprised 34 questions on the background information about the respondents, their teaching/professional experience and their awareness of and perceptions about faculty support structures, program evaluation procedures and learner needs assessment. Most of the questions were close-ended and fixed response although in relevant sections respondent views/opinions were solicited through open ended questions (Neuman, 2000, p.260).

The student questionnaire consisted of 15 questions. This questionnaire contained mostly close-ended questions with fixed responses to convenience the students whose knowledge of curriculum development and evaluation is usually implicit rather than explicit. The first five questions were concerned with discovering the students' gender, age, academic program, experience of English courses at the HE level and the function/role of English, for instance whether it is studied as a first language. Questions 6 to 8 focused on the learners' experience/perceptions of needs assessment/analysis. Questions 9 to 15 were concerned with different aspects of course evaluation as the students know and experience it.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

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Table 1: Which courses have you taught so far?

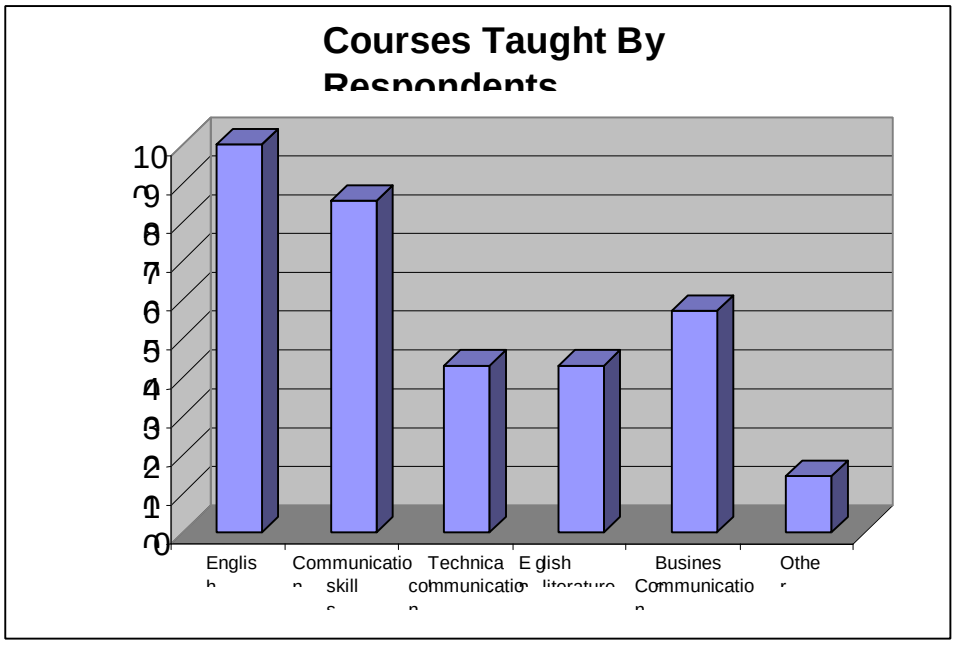

Table 2: At what level are language courses taught at your college/institute/university?

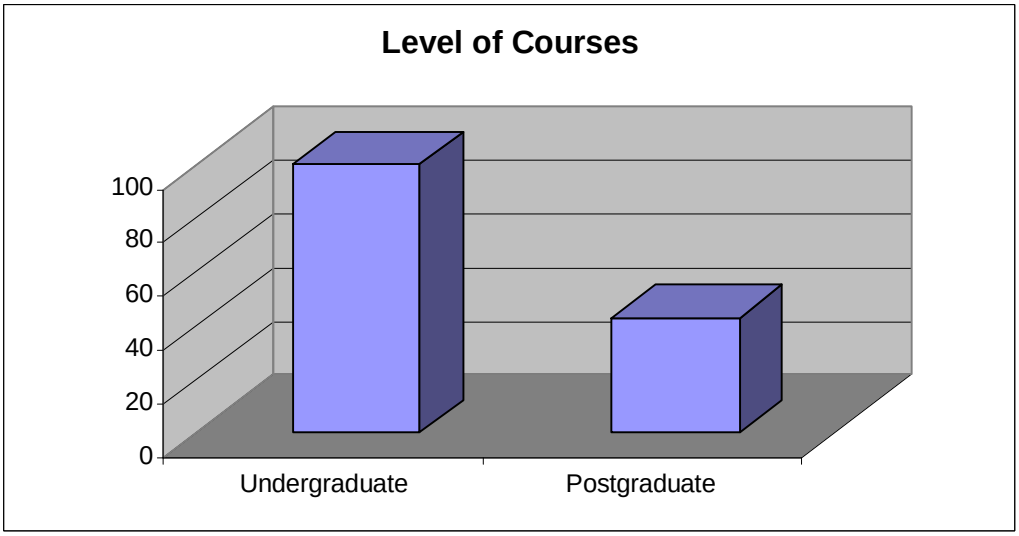

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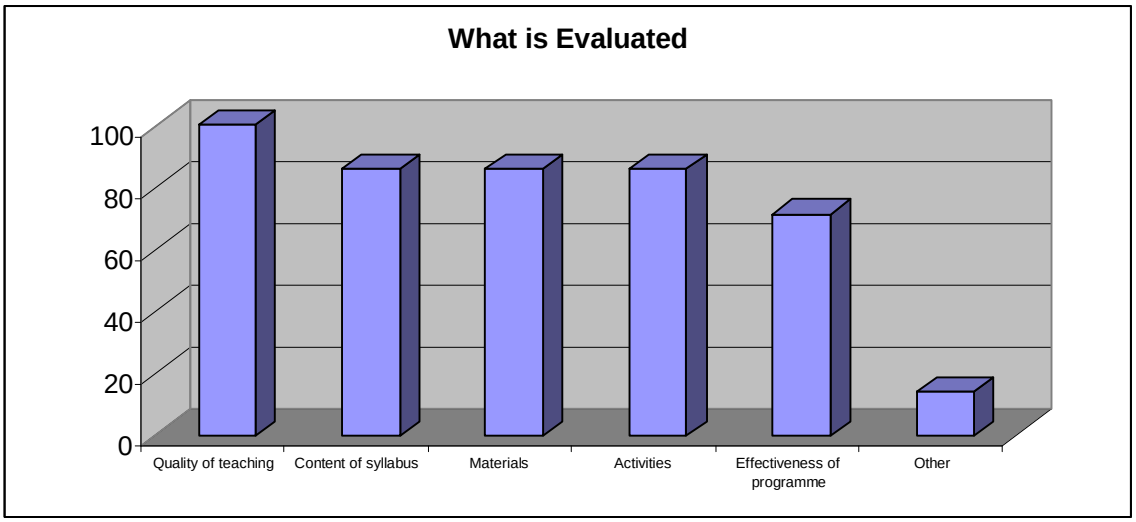
Table 3: What is evaluated in the course?



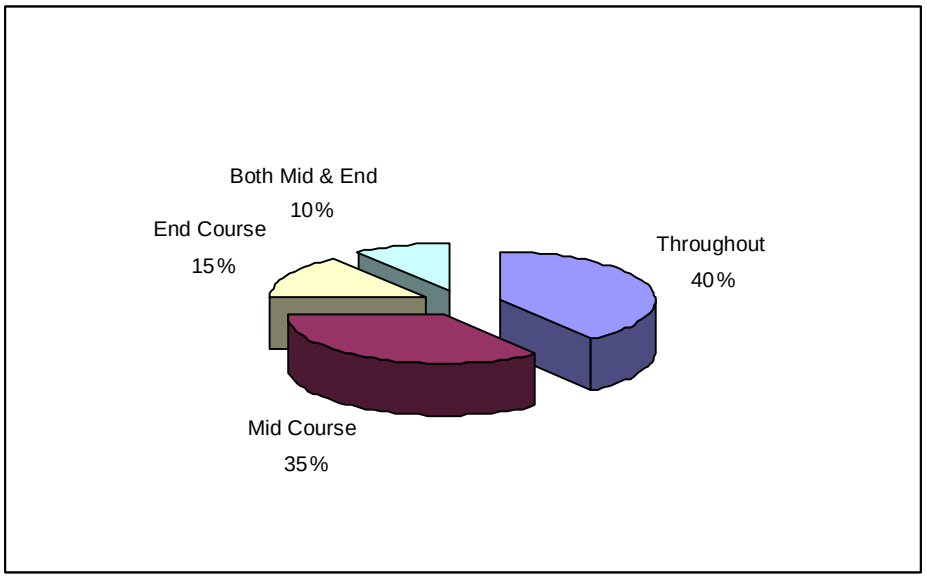


Figure 1: Timing of Evaluation

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Figure 2: Providing feedback on the effectiveness of a course can be affected by the following factors.

Learner needs have to be analysed before the syllabus for a language course is decided. Therefore, Needs analysis of learner needs and wants is a useful tool for making a language course meaningful for learners.

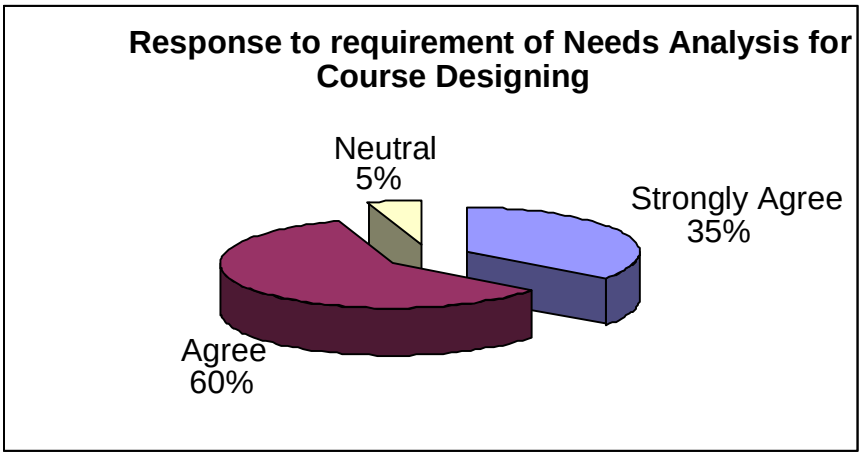

Figure 3*:* Responses to requirement of Needs Analysis

Table 4: Tabular for and NA of Curriculum Tasks

A UNIVERSITY HQ (UHQ)	**RATING SCALE**					
CURRICULUM TASKS	**1 Extremely important**	**2 Very important**	**3 Somewhat important**	**4 Somewhat unimportant**	**5 Very unimportant**	**6 Extremely unimportant**
Initial needs analysis	3*	-	-	1	-	1
Goal and objective setting	2	-	1	-	-	1
Selecting/grading content	2	-	-	1	1	
Ongoing needs analysis	1	-	-	-	2	1
Grouping learners	-	-	-	-	1	1
Devising learning activities	-	-	-	-	-	3

Instructing learners	-	-	-	-	3	
Monitoring/assessing progress	-	-	-	-	1	2
Course evaluation	-	-	-	1	3	

**The numbers against the curriculum tasks and under the rating scale represent the number of respondents who chose the option.*

VI. FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE

Qualifications and work experience of participating teachers

All three areas addressed by the questionnaire provide interesting information on the research focus of this dissertation. While graphical representation of questionnaire results may enable the reader to understand what the data superficially signifies, there is still more to be gained from interpreting the responses to each question. Because 'women faculty tend to show different trajectories than do men' (Bronstein & Farnsworth, 1998, p.558) the fact that the survey was answered by almost an equal number of female faculty as male faculty was helpful in generating data that stemmed from different perspectives and experiences. Also, the respondents were fairly representative of age and career level. Forty-two percent of the respondents held an MA qualification, whereas two of the respondents had additional qualifications in the form of MA TEFL and MBA. Another two were in the process of completing research degrees. The minimum teaching experience at Higher Education (HE) level was 3 years and the maximum was 33 years. Again the variation in the length of time spent teaching at tertiary level was helpful as it provided insights of faculty members who were fairly new to the profession and mature professionals well-experienced in tertiary-level teaching.

Experience of Curriculum Development

Three of the respondents reported that their training or experience in curriculum development consisted of working out objectives, course plans and syllabi during the course of their work. This is indicative of the situation highlighted earlier in which it was pointed out that teachers in Pakistan lack specialized training in curriculum development. Most teachers learn on the job and hence the quality of what they learn cannot be certified. Analysis revealed that the respondents were well experienced in teaching English.

When asked which aspect (s) of organizing a course they had ever been responsible for, the lowest percentages were recorded respectively for needs assessment (57%) and course evaluation (71%) thereby confirming that needs assessment and course/program evaluation do not feature prominently in the Pakistani teachers' repertoire of responsibilities. Analysis also showed that 42% of the English programs were run by the Department of English, while in the case of an overwhelming 71%, the Humanities and Science Division had a greater role in the running of these program. Due to its broader purview, the Humanities and Science Division does not have the same subject focus as the Department of English, thus leading to the possible short-changing of English programs and faculty in terms of expertise, resources and faculty development. Afzaal et.al (2020) argue that 'the preconceived notions of the learner plays an active role in how the writer uses said communicative options'.

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Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported that English was both a core and support subject, with the term 'core' implying that English was taught as a subject which must be passed in order to progress to the next semester. None of the respondents polled worked at institutions offering English as a degree subject. The substantial percentages affirm the importance of English as a subject, whether support or core, in Pakistan's HE sector. While all the respondents taught undergraduate students, 42% of them also taught at the postgraduate level with the courses they taught being graded using the same pattern as for the other subjects in the university.

Analysis of data showed that decision making as to syllabus, books and materials was overwhelmingly (85%) in the hands of the teachers, with the university coming in the closest second at 42%. This is not so much reflective of teachers' independence as reflective of the lack of standardized curriculum development and implementation as indicated in existing literature (UNESCO, 1998). Interestingly, while on the one hand, 57% of the teachers responded that they did not conduct needs assessment, in the response to another question (Q.16), 71% respondents indicated learner needs were assessed during the course of their teaching. The apparent contradiction may be tied in with the response to question 17 which shows that in 71% of the cases the needs assessment took the form of discussion with students in initial sessions. It is possible that faculty members did not perceive discussions with students as a form of needs assessment, instead viewing needs assessment to take a more visible form such as questionnaires.

Course effectiveness and program evaluation

Analysis of questionnaire data showed that learners were the primary evaluators of the course and that the quality of teaching was the primary focus of a program evaluation. While the evaluation of program /courses effectiveness appeared to be a lower priority (71%), the quality of teaching was accorded the highest priority (100%). Evaluation was thus seen as the evaluation of teacher effectiveness rather than the whole program. This is in contrast with the developmental view of evaluation which sees it as serving the 'purpose [of] learning, innovation, and change rather than external accountability' (Patton, 1994, p.313, 318). In most cases, evaluation occurred both during and at the end of the course with questionnaires being the chief mode of such evaluation. In 85 % of the cases, evaluation resulted in changes to the course but the results very rarely led to research of any kind (14%). Data also showed that although respondents reported current evaluation practices as being focused on teacher effectiveness (85%), they unanimously understood it to pertain to evaluation of all the aspects of the program.

The respondents identified a number of factors impacting program effectiveness. These included 1) unclear goals and objectives, 2) lack of appropriate administrative arrangements, 3) lack of curriculum guidelines and models, 4) problems caused by students, 5) heterogenous groups and diverse learner needs, 6) lack of skills/experience on the part of the teachers, 7) high teacher turnover, 8) lack of information for learners about the course and 9) lack of support resources (self-access). While the first three factors (1, 2, 3) are related directly to curriculum development and implementation, the next two factors (4, 5) pertain indirectly and directly to the need for needs assessment.

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Responsibility for curriculum development and monitoring tasks in practice

Question 33 asked respondents to rate who performed curriculum tasks in their present setup. With reference to University Headquarters (UHQ), 42 % respondents rated initial needs analysis (NA) as an extremely important task for the UHQ. Also fifty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that UHQ played an extremely important role in setting the goals. The role of UHQ in carrying out ongoing NA was rated quite low, thus indicating that the UHQ did not exhibit much responsibility for this particular curriculum task. Devising learning activities, instructing learners and monitoring and assessing progress were again at the lower end of the rating scale for the UHQ. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents did deem the UHQ's role in course evaluation as being somewhat important, but this was offset by an equal percentage of respondents rating it as lower. The respondent ratings confirmed the general tendency of Pakistani universities to assume the most responsibility for the tasks of initial needs analysis, goal and objectives setting and selecting and grading content and to be comparatively less involved in other curriculum tasks.

Responsibility for curriculum tasks in the ideal situation

Question 34 was patterned on 33 but the respondents had to indicate who they thought *should be* responsible for the curriculum tasks. Whereas in question 33, fifty-seven of the respondents had said that the UHQ role in goal and objective setting was extremely important, in question 34, only twenty-eight percent of the respondents rated the role of UHQ for this particular task as being extremely important. This may represent the practitioners' misgivings about the UHQ setting goals and objectives which lacked receptivity to local adjustment. The number of respondents who rated initial needs analysis to be an extremely important task for the UHQ remained constant, thus indicating the respondents' satisfaction with the status quo.

The number of respondents who had earlier indicated that the Director played a somewhat important to extremely important role in goal and objective setting, ongoing needs analysis, monitoring/assessing progress and course evaluation decreased quite visibly when it came to the respondents' views of how things should be. Goal and objective setting failed to poll a positive rating and in fact showed an increase on the not important side of the scale. Only one respondent thought that the Director's role in ongoing needs analysis should be rated as 1. Monitoring/assessing too was given the rating of 3 by one respondent and for course evaluation, the number of respondents giving the rating of 2 declined from 3 to 1. While the top down style of management is a reality at Pakistani universities, the faculty respondents, when given the choice, seemed to prefer the Director taking on fewer of the curriculum tasks.

In contrast to the earlier response, there was a decrease in the number of responses for most of the curriculum tasks for the teacher in question 34. However, most notable was the increase in the number of people who thought that the teacher's role in course evaluation should be 'extremely important' registering an increase from 1 respondent to 3 in this case. In question 34, a small number of the respondents rated the outside curriculum specialist's role in performing all tasks, except for grouping and instructing learners, between 1 to 3 which reflected their interest in having access to outside expertise.

VII. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

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Student experience of needs assessment in their language programs

In the student questionnaire, sixty-five percent of the student respondents were male and thirty-five percent of them were female and aged between 18 to 25. Eighty percent of the students were enrolled in programs at Institution A's information technology institute of which number 10% were postgraduate students. Twenty percent of the students were enrolled in BBA at Institution A's business institute. Question 4 elicited the information that 75% students had studied English in the form of Communication skills and an equal percentage had studied it as English Literature (an innovative course introduced at the business school within the last two years to fulfil course requirements for enrolment at foreign universities). In question 5, the learners indicated that they were learning English as a second language. Data showed that none of the students had ever filled out a needs assessment questionnaire prior to the start of a course. This tallies with the insights provided by faculty respondents in which 71% of the respondents had commented that learner needs were assessed through discussions during the initial sessions. The difference in the percentage of learners saying that they had never filled out assessment questionnaires and a lower percentage (14%) of faculty respondents noting that needs assessment had been carried out through questionnaires can be explained by the fact that whereas the students belonged to Institution A, some of the faculty respondents belonged to other universities and thus followed different practices than faculty members at Institution A. Thirty-five percent of the respondents 'strongly agreed' and 69% of the respondents 'agreed' that needs analysis was a useful tool. The high percentage of those agreeing with the statement indicates that learners would like to be consulted and to provide input for the kind of English language course they are taught.

Data revealed that majority of the respondents (80%) had been asked to provide feedback on the effectiveness of their courses, with 65% of them giving feedback through questionnaires and 15% through discussions. The centrality of the learners' role in providing feedback tallies with the insights provided in the teacher questionnaire. At most Pakistani universities, education has become a competitive commercial venture that requires client satisfaction. In this case the clients are the students who pay substantial amounts of money to study at the universities and therefore there is an expectation on the part of learners that the university administration will ensure the quality of the courses being taught. Hence, course evaluation questionnaires become important instruments for eliciting student views and opinions for subsequent changes to the course itself. In most of the cases (45%) evaluation took place mid semester and in 30% of the cases it took place at the end of the course. Only in 5% of the cases was evaluation said to take place throughout which is a very low percentage considering the greater utility of ongoing adaptation.

Learner preferences for providing feedback for course development

In response to the statement 'Learner feedback/evaluation can be effective as it can lead to changes in the developing/organizing of the course' in question **12**, twenty-five percent of the learners 'strongly agreed' and 55% 'agreed' with the statement, thus evidencing the learners' interest in providing feedback.

While the number of respondents who had indicated that they experienced ongoing evaluation was quite low (5%), there was a marked increase (40%) in the number of respondents who wanted evaluation to take place throughout. This showed that the learners understood the usefulness of ongoing feedback as it could benefit them rather than learners in later courses. Fifty percent of the learners indicated that they preferred questionnaires as a course evaluation tool. This preference is understandable in view of the learners' cultural background which places

a premium on the value of communication which takes place on paper. Unlike discussions, questionnaires offer the learners much desired anonymity which allows them to speak their minds without fear of the instructor or the administration.

The last question **(15)** was very insightful as it allowed respondents to pick the option they thought would most impact the kind of feedback they provided. Twenty-five percent of the respondents picked option 1(*the consideration that the course grade has still not been finalized and your feedback may affect the final grading*) and the same percentage chose option 2 (*the teacher is well liked even if the course is not particularly well taught or well organized*) leading to the conclusion that anonymity and personal liking for the teacher impact the way learners evaluate to a great extent. Liking or disliking of the teacher were overriding considerations for at least 20% of the students as they picked options 2 as factors which would affect their feedback. The responses to this question indicate that learner feedback is not neutral and is impacted by whether the learners will remain unnamed when providing feedback and also by how much they like or dislike the teacher. Thus, the evaluation of teachers by learners should not always be regarded as the best indicator of program effectiveness.

The faculty interviews

In order to triangulate the results, interviews were carried out with three respondents. Due to constraints related to interviewees availability and the time difference between UK and Pakistan where interviewees 1 and 2 were based, the interviews were conducted via email. Hence the questions were more structured. This was not ideal but a fair amount of relevant data was still elicited through these interviews.

Interviews 1 & 2

Respondent 1 (R1) heads the Centre of English Language at a private university in Pakistan. Respondent 2 (R2) works as a consultant at the Curriculum Wing in a government ministry

Interpretation of the faculty questionnaire results suggested that the respondents had little formal experience in curriculum development and that needs assessment and course evaluation were the least implemented processes. The interview questions were designed to confirm these results and to achieve further understanding of how language programs are planned and implemented. When asked how far existing curriculum frameworks could be used in the Pakistani tertiary ESL context, they replied that frameworks developed by specialists (were) useful for providing a holistic view regarding Teaching of English as a Second Language (R1) and that they could be successfully used in the Pakistani tertiary ESL context (R2). However, R1 suggested that it was important that the national and local contexts should be kept in view so that the frameworks (could) be modified accordingly to make them more relevant and appropriate, while R2 cited the need for training experts in curriculum design and development and adaptation of frameworks to learners needs and wants as important factors.

It was interesting to note that R1 and R2 felt that curriculum frameworks need to be contextualized before successful implementation. Frequently, policy making bodies are keen to implement reforms based on imported concepts only for the implementation to fail at the classroom level at times primarily due to the fact that there is a complete absence of a social dialogue that would systematically involve teachers, experts and teachers organizations in policy making (ITACEC Teacher Education Position Paper, 2004, p.2).

When asked about the kind of frameworks they used in developing English courses for university students. R1 responded that no single curriculum framework was used for designing courses. Depending on the needs assessment, courses in higher education are generally a mix of General English (with the focus on Communication Skills) and ESP, and R2 commented that she used a framework that set standards for various competencies, identified benchmarks at different developmental levels and indicated student learning outcomes. It is illuminating to note how the conception of a curriculum framework for each respondent is a different one. As Cornbleth (1990, p12) notes, our conceptions and ways of reasoning about curriculum reflect and shape how we see, think and talk about, study and act on the education made available to students. R1 seemed to think of it as more of a process dependent on what the students need and R2 appeared to view it as more product focused in describing it in terms of competencies, developmental levels, and outcomes. Such a product view has been critiqued by Cornbleth (1990) because it is the basis for a technocratic approach to curriculum construction which deskills the teachers, promotes knowledge and social control and perpetuates the status quo.

The next question focused on whether implementation of curriculum processes should be the primary responsibility of the teacher. R1 partly agreed with this, but qualified her response by calling for the overall support of the administration . R2 disagreed with the statement and explained that the teacher could not be primarily responsible for the curriculum processes as a process requires stages to do or achieve something, and as stages progress and expand, so does the sharing of responsibilities. R1's response seems to have been made with teacher autonomy in mind although she does call for administrative support. R2's approach to this is to advocate a more collaborative effort in implementing curriculum processes, although it is not entirely clear from her response whether she favors collaboration or delegation in the discharging of such responsibilities.

When asked about their views on the role of needs assessment in the development of effective language courses, R1 responded that needs assessment (was) critical in determining the type of curriculum as well as in designing the courses in terms of number of hours, teaching faculty, and development of materials. R2 also responded in a similar vein by saying that needs assessment is of prime importance in the development of effective language courses which view is supported by existing literature (Christison & Krahnke, 1986; Richards, 1990). R1, in this case, views needs assessment holistically. It is meant to be a process that determines all aspects of the course not just the curriculum, a perspective which aligns with Richards' (1990, p.1-2) understanding of it is as a ' mechanism for obtaining a wider range of input into the content, design, and implementation of a language program'.

In the next question (6), interviewees were asked whether they agreed that course effectiveness could not be indicated through the testing of student proficiency. R1 agreed that assessment (was) different from evaluation but qualified her agreement by saying that the classroom work and test results of students remain (ed) an integral part of the evaluation process apart from students feedback, and peer evaluation. R2's answer echoed that of R1 in that she thought of assessment as a broad concept involving procedures to gather information about nature and quality of students' work.

Interview 3

Respondent 3 (R3) headed the Department of English at Institution B and was enrolled in a PhD program at a UK university. The interview with R3, although semi structured, was based on the major issues under review in this dissertation. The interviewee was questioned as to who was responsible for Curriculum design at Institution B. R3 described the academic environment at Institution B as very independent and autonomous noting that 'fortunately, for us at [Institution B], Curriculum Design (CD) is entirely the responsibility of the faculty member who is teaching'. This was evidenced in the practice teachers at Institution B had 'complete authority in terms of (that) we could negotiate what we wanted to teach, how we wanted to teach it as long as the learning outcomes were being met'. According to R3, 'certain guidelines that were set by HoD or Dean of the School' had to be followed 'although more or less the responsibility of CD was the teachers'.

Curriculum design and development are thus seen as being the direct concern of the teacher in question. R3 did not elaborate on what kind of training, support and resources were available to teachers who do not have training in CD. It may be kept in mind that while teacher autonomy is a positive thing for teacher confidence and growth, if responsibility for developing the curriculum is assigned to the teachers, they must be provided with the 'time, the skills and the support to do so' (Nunan 1987, p.75). Adding that such support may include not only awareness-raising of curriculum models and guidelines' but also support from curriculum advisors, Nunan emphasizes that 'such support cannot be removed and must not be seen in isolation from the curriculum (Nunan, 1987, p. 75). Yet if we go by what is practiced at Institution B and the level of training for CD identified in the faculty questionnaires, it is a matter of concern that teachers at universities are autonomous but largely untrained to teach at the tertiary level.

The interview then moved onto a discussion of needs assessment and its role in terms of R3's experiences. According to R3, to assess learner needs, 'basically what the teacher did was that she looked at the profile of the students...available on the computer to the teacher looked at their O level and A level results, how many FSc students were there…and accordingly designed the course'. R3 qualified this by saying that the practice was to 'keep majority of the students in mind' and that the assessment was not 'individual need based as such'. Another practice usually followed by the interviewee was to attend the faculty meetings of the department for which she had to design the English course and get input from the teachers as to the kind of English proficiency they required from their students.

When asked whether learners approached her if they wanted additions to the course outline, R3 indicated that it 'happens all the time' but that usually 'first year and second year students (didn't) know what (was) good for them frankly', although it was her practice to ask all learners to discuss what they wanted from the course in initial discussion sessions. After that there was 'little room to maneuver' as the course outline had to be followed. R3 was then asked if ongoing needs analysis could be helpful for teachers who found it difficult to adjust to student requirements as a matter of course. R3 agreed with the utility of ongoing needs analysis but voiced reservations as to its practicality, as it was difficult to implement changes arising out of ongoing NA as the assessment process was already in place. However, she stressed that these ideas could be used for the next course.

R3 also added that if teachers wanted to make major changes to course design then the usual practice was to present these at departmental faculty meetings and receive input from colleagues. The interviewee did agree that 'students could benefit from formal needs assessment' but that that was an observation rather than something she

had learnt through experience. R3's view and experience of needs assessment is one rooted in practices prevalent throughout Pakistan's HE institutions. While it would be ideal to have ongoing needs analysis and extensive learner input, admittedly, practical and cultural constraints cannot be removed at will. Likewise, teachers need to learn how to feel skilful in conducting and responding to needs assessment'. Thus an element of skill on the part of all stakeholders is required for participating in, conducting and responding to needs assessment.

With reference to course evaluation, the interviewee observed that evaluation of faculty was discussed with each teacher and the 'sandwich approach' was taken in that the teachers were praised *and* critiqued (my italics). Course evaluation at Institution B took place through the administering of a end of course questionnaire which was 'very very well structured and focused on the teacher, administrative support, course content and the teaching assistant's role' and yielded 'authentic data on how effective the course was'. Finally, the interviewee was asked if formalizing certain procedures and making them coherent would help all Pakistani tertiary institutions. Initially, R3 equated this with prescriptive measures imposed by the Higher Education Commission and observed that this would be counterproductive as it would endanger teacher autonomy. However once the question was clarified to mean putting in place better needs assessment and course evaluation procedures and support structures so that inductees could find it easier to implement curriculum, R3 agreed that this would be very helpful as there were few trained teachers at tertiary level in Pakistan.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to look into how curriculum design and development for English language courses at Pakistani universities took place. In looking at curriculum design and development, the primary focus was on needs assessment and course evaluation. Interpretation of questionnaire and interview data strongly confirmed that:

- English language faculty at Pakistani HE institutions are not sufficiently trained in curriculum design and development
- Needs assessment is conducted in an individualistic and informal manner by ELT professionals
- Course/program evaluation is seen solely as an evaluative exercise rather than having developmental implications
- Faculty induction is at best informal and arbitrary and at worst non existent
- Language program design processes are viewed as discrete rather than interdependent

The current situation in Pakistan fits the pattern described by Richards (1990, p25) whereby program/curriculum in language teaching is not 'viewed as an integrated and interdependent set of processes that involves careful data gathering, planning, experimentation, monitoring, consultation, and evaluation'. Instead, as Richards (1990, p.25) outlines there is a reliance on reductive solutions which focus only on a single aspect of the process, comprising 'changes in teaching techniques, methods, learning styles, technologies, materials, or teacher preparation'. It is argued by Richards (1990, p.25) that a more 'comprehensive basis for educational practices' is needed in order to make the domain of foreign/second language teaching rigorous.

In the light of the findings of this study, it may be argued that as long as Pakistani policymakers and educators continue to take a disjointed view of curriculum development and faculty induction, English language program

will continue to be fragmented and less than effective in achieving learning objectives. This study also revealed that needs assessment although practiced inconsistently, is considered of prime importance by faculty and students alike and that course evaluation appears to be client/learner driven.

In view of these findings, a number of recommendations are made under two broad heads to improve curriculum development processes for ESL programs at Pakistani universities:

Measures to improve curriculum development and needs assessment

ESL faculty at Pakistani universities need to be trained in the curriculum processes, most especially learner needs analysis, as teacher assumptions and collegial consultation about what needs to be taught provide only an incomplete picture of how to make the learning process more effective. One of the most important tasks at hand is to ensure that ELT professionals are conversant with needs analysis because effective teaching can only take place if teachers have awareness about the importance of assessing learning needs and the skills to conduct such assessment. The customization of courses can engage learner interest and produce better learning outcomes. Partnership and dialogue between the policymakers in Pakistan's HE sector and the teaching professionals is also needed to achieve a culture of curricular expertise and creativity.

Change in university management's conception of language program evaluation

Educational managers at Pakistani universities also need to accept that there is more to evaluation than teacher evaluation and more to evaluation procedures than judging a course by learner performance on tests. Evaluation, if it is to be of any use, needs to be ongoing and holistic and above all needs to involve the teachers not just as the subject of the evaluation but as active participants. What is being suggested is that the focus of program evaluation in Pakistani HE institutions needs to go beyond gauging client satisfaction with the teacher to encompass other aspects of the program as well. This will mean a cultural shift in the way evaluation is perceived by those who direct appraisal of programs.

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