

IMPACT OF AN ESL CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to examine ESL teachers' perceptions of the impact of a revised curricular framework containing performance objectives on their preparation for, implementation in, and evaluation of their classes. Teachers' agency in curriculum making was also briefly examined. This case study was conducted in a private English language school in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The teachers who volunteered to participate in the study possessed diverse experiences and backgrounds in teaching ESL locally, nationally, and internationally. Prior to the study, they used a curriculum framework that did not contain performance objectives. Three data collection methods were used to gather information about the teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework introduced during the study: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. Several findings emerged from the study. First, teachers reported that their use of the revised curricular framework impacted their lesson preparation and implementation. Second, they indicated that their use of the revised curricular framework influenced their approach to evaluation less than it had influenced their preparation and implementation. Third, their involvement in the trial of this revised curricular framework facilitated the teachers' agency in the curriculum making process.

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Chapter One

A Need for Direction

Introduction

My research interest in curriculum development grew out of my work at two private English language schools, one in Calgary and one in Victoria. These two schools are members of a larger network of private English language schools. Before providing background information on the network of schools, I will briefly explain my involvement with the Calgary and Victoria schools.

I taught full-time at the school in Calgary from April, 1999 to February, 2000. During this period in Calgary, in addition to my teaching, I became one of two Head Teachers; my administrative responsibilities included student testing and placement, teacher orientation and training, and curriculum development. In March, 2000 I moved to help establish the new school in Victoria. My position as Head Teacher in Victoria involved teaching full-time and part-time handling the same administrative responsibilities I had in Calgary. Although the administrative responsibilities were similar, there was a greater need for me to support teachers and to interpret and develop curriculum. The teachers in Victoria had less experience and struggled to interpret and implement the curricula at the school. Because of my close working relationships with the teachers in Victoria and because of my personal struggles implementing the schools' curriculum, I became very concerned about what kind of curricular tool might facilitate teachers' preparation for and delivery of lessons. This concern led me to conduct this study at the Victoria school.

Before explaining the rationale for the study, I will provide background on this network of private English language schools. The schools in Calgary and Victoria are members of a larger network of private English language institutions. Other schools are located in Malta, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, and Honolulu. A more detailed background on their history, their school services, schedule, program offerings and student population will give the reader a fuller context with which to understand the curricular issues that are the focus of this study. This background will be followed by the statement of issue, the research question, and the rationale.

Background

These private schools provide English as a second language (ESL) training to adult learners. Schools in Vancouver and Toronto were the first to establish a partnership; they developed common English language programs, shared registration procedures and schedules, and conducted joint marketing. The schools in Honolulu, Calgary and Malta joined the network in the early and mid-1990s. Victoria, the newest addition, was founded in April, 2000. The schools work cooperatively with agencies in different countries to recruit international students.

These schools provide English language classes on consistent schedules throughout the year. There are thirteen four-week sessions, or study blocks, offered at each school. Students arrive on the first Monday of a study block, attend orientation sessions, undergo oral and written placement tests, and begin their classes on the following day. Most students register for a 25-hour weekly program, the classes of which run from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm, Monday to Thursday, and from 9:00 am to 12 noon on

Friday. Students have options to register for part-time (15 hours of class time) or intensive (30 hours of class time) English classes.

The monthly intake occurring throughout the year is designed to make it easier for people to access study sessions. The consistency of the schedule, the registration, and the placement and evaluation processes within the network of schools also makes it easier for students to transfer from one school to another.

The schools offer a number of specialized programs. These include academic and test preparation, including the Test of English as International Communication (TOEIC) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A number of schools offer preparation for the University of Cambridge Local Exam Syndicate; this program helps students prepare for the First Certificate in English (FCE), the Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) and the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). Business English classes are available to students in the Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto schools. Despite the popularity of these programs, none is as widely attended as the General English program (GEP).

The GEP classes are designed for students with a range of English language proficiency. There are classes which cover a range of levels from those who have just begun to study English (Beginner 1) to those who are native-like in their English language competency (Advanced 2). The levels are grouped according to the general level descriptors – Beginner (B), Intermediate (I), and Advanced (A). Numbers designate more precise placement: B1 to B3, I1 to I4, and A1 and A2. Students complete their first four-week session and move to the next level based on their scores on exams and class assignments and on their language skill development. The curriculum for each level

extends over four months so that students do not repeat course content; they usually advance to the next level within two or three months. The GEP is marketed as "... the perfect program for an all-round language learning experience with a communication focus" (Global Village English Centers brochure, 2000, p. 3).

The "all-roundness" of the GEP appeals to students because of its inclusion of content designed to enhance students' "communicative competence." Communicative competence is defined in a number of ways. Nunan (1988) describes communicative competence as "... knowledge of the rules of use and appropriacy and includes linguistic competence" (p. 33). Researchers who compiled the *Canadian Language Benchmarks* (1996) cite Canale & Swain (1996) in their definition of communicative competence and performance:

- linguistic code competence (grammatical "well-formedness" – sentence level)
- discourse competence (cohesion and coherence rules and devices, staging or sequencing of the language functions and information, ways in which expressions combine into meaningful sequences – text and discourse level)
- sociolinguistic competence (considerations of appropriateness in producing and understanding utterances – discourse level, extralinguistic context)
- strategic competence (ways to avoid potential, or repair actual difficulties in communication, coping with communication breakdown, using affective devices – text and discourse level, extralinguistic context. (p. 13)

The GEP has been established to facilitate students' development in communicative competence.

The curriculum of the GEP includes two components. The first component of the program focuses on instruction in linguistic structures and communicative functions. This occurs in the mornings. The teachers attempt to offer much oral practice of the structures and functions the students are learning. Teachers involved with students from B1 to I1 conduct informal needs assessments to determine students' requirements for "survival English," referring to the vocabulary and expressions students need for everyday interactions at the grocery store, bank, and post office. The second, the integrated-skills component, emphasizes discussion-building skills in conjunction with instruction in reading and vocabulary development, listening and pronunciation. This component occurs in the afternoons. The integrated-skills program is built upon a principle of content-based language teaching (CBLT), which means that activities involving reading, vocabulary development, listening and discussion center on a particular content base, or theme. Themes change every month and include, for example, entertainment, science and technology, careers and education, travel, and media and advertising. One teacher instructs a class of students in the morning; a second teacher sees the same class in the afternoon. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate on what they are teaching in the structural/functional and integrated-skills components of the GEP so that they can reinforce skills and content covered by the other teacher.

Teachers in the GEP adhere to principles of communicative language teaching, the basic tenet of which is "...learners must learn not only to make grammatically correct, propositional statements about the experiential world, but must also develop the ability to use language to get things done" (Nunan, 1988, p. 25). To facilitate students' development of communicative competence, teachers use authentic materials (real-world

English newspapers, flyers, schedules, brochures, and the like), involve students in role-playing everyday situations where students must communicate using target language structures, and de-emphasize error-correction to facilitate the development of students' fluency (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

The majority of the GEP attendees are international students; a small number are Canadian immigrants. International students typically come to this network of schools from the Pacific Rim (Japan, Korea, Taiwan), South America (Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador), Central America (Mexico, Guatemala) and Europe (Switzerland, Germany, the Czech Republic). They represent a variety of cultures and languages, educational and professional backgrounds, and goals. Students registering in the GEP are attracted by the diversity of students at the schools, so the network has established quotas at peak times of the year, restricting the number registering from any one country to 30 to 40 per cent.

Statement of Issue

The GEP attracts the highest number of students; nevertheless, it receives the most criticism from students and teachers because the integrated-skills component of the program lacks clarity.

Students have complaints for a number of reasons. The integrated-skills component, with its general and encompassing coverage, often disappoints students who expect to develop their conversation skills. They understand that GEP morning classes emphasize communicative grammar and functions and recognize that studying these structures will help them improve their communicative competence. However, they do not see the relevance of studying integrated-skills classes involving reading, vocabulary development, and listening. A Japanese student recently commented that her goal was to

speaking English fluently with some American friends she was planning to visit in Seattle. She was frustrated by the focus of her integrated-skills classes on reading, vocabulary development and discussions on different topics, and she said she felt as if she were studying English in junior high school (personal communication, 2000).

Students are also confused by the inclusion of themes in the integrated-skills program. The themes that are included on the curriculum give teachers a content base to work from; there is a theme designated for each block throughout the year. While this prevents teachers from overlapping their content-bases for the integrated-skills classes, it means that students registering for a particular study block will also have little choice about the theme explored in the integrated-skills classes. As a result, adult learners in the GEP may have little choice but to read and talk about topics that do not engage them, and this causes them to question the value of the integrated-skills program.

Students would be more satisfied if they understood how taking this theme-based, integrated-skills course could enhance their oral proficiency. Teachers make an effort to explain this to students, but it is difficult because teachers themselves lack specific guidelines for course content.

Teachers are frustrated by the generalities of the integrated-skills curriculum. To understand the teachers' concerns, it is helpful for the reader to have a more detailed description of this curriculum.

The current integrated skills curriculum is outlined in thirteen sections of 1-page documents. Each page contains the content for one level (B1 to A2) and includes the theme for the study block, the general skill areas to target (reading, vocabulary development, listening, pronunciation), and some resources. Teachers have complained

that the lists of skills under each general category (e.g. *skimming* and *scanning* appearing under the reading category; *listening for gist* included under the listening section) do not provide adequate information for them to plan for their courses. Teachers have suggested rephrasing these general skills so that they reflect exit standard objectives for each skill at each level. The current curriculum is also problematic because they include the same skills to be covered at different levels. For instance, *reading for key words* appears under reading skills on both the Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 3 curricula. This duplication creates difficulties for teachers because there is no explanation for the emphases teachers should give to the skills at different levels. In addition, the current curriculum does not include descriptions of skill competencies teachers should target for students at different levels. Finally, the resources listed on these documents are not available at the Victoria school, which means that teachers must find or create their own materials.

Having access to a revised curricular framework containing exit standard objectives (also named “performance objectives”) in the skill areas would enable teachers to better plan for their classes. Such performance objectives, worded in this way: “By the end of students’ time in (level), they should be able to...”, would help teachers evaluate and place students. Clearer objectives at each level would enable teachers to avoid content duplication. A functional framework would also list resources available at the Victoria school.

The Research Question

The following question is the focus of this study: *What are ESL teachers’ perceptions of the impact of a revised curricular framework consisting of performance objectives on their lesson preparation, delivery and evaluation?*

Rationale

Research into better curricula for the integrated-skills component of the GEP has been conducted before at this network of schools. In 1999, the school directors recruited a curriculum director, whose mandate was to revise the curriculum for the range of levels. Sub-committees made up of head teachers and teachers interested in curriculum development were established in each school. Unfortunately, the project participants could not agree on the content or the format of the curriculum documents. The curriculum director resigned in June of this year, and one of the school directors is now leading a curriculum revision project.

School directors and committee members face challenges as they begin this project. Each school possesses curriculum features that are unique to its location, teacher expertise, learner profiles, and administrative realities. School directors want to clarify what aspects of the curriculum the schools share; because the schools are marketed collectively, students assume that classroom content, texts and evaluation procedures will be very similar across the schools. Students often transfer from school to school, and they expect to be placed in the same level, to be able to use the same texts, and to build on the content they have already studied. However, it has been difficult for directors to decide what aspects of the curriculum should be consistent at all schools. Using an integrated-skills curricular framework containing performance objectives might help to standardize aspects of the curriculum and ensure greater consistency.

Experimenting with curricula containing performance objectives in Victoria seemed wise. Teachers at this new school lack resources and expertise, and they have asked for direction for their teaching of the integrated-skills component of the GEP. New

teachers at more established schools in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, under the guidance of the more experienced teachers at each school, are more able to cope with the curricular inadequacies. Conducting a study in Victoria would involve us in reflective practice that could enhance our efforts to decrease teacher stress and increase the quality of second language instruction. The results of this study could also inform school-wide curricular innovation.

Chapter Two

Survey of Literature on ESL Curriculum Development: Traditional Approaches and Teachers' Perspectives

Introduction

The following survey of the literature on teacher involvement in second language curriculum contains three sections. The first outlines traditional approaches to second language curriculum design and provides a brief overview of teachers' engagement with curriculum historically. The second examines teachers' perceptions of and involvement in curriculum making. The third presents different types of second language curricula. This chapter ends with a brief summary of theoretical principles emerging from the literature that form the basis of this study.

Traditional Approaches to Second Language Curriculum Development

Before examining selected literature on teacher involvement in ESL curriculum development, it is helpful to have a view of traditional approaches used in the broader field of curriculum development. These have also been influential in the circles of ESL curriculum design.

Most works on curriculum theory mention Tyler's (1949) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, and literature on second language curriculum development is no exception. Nunan (1988) describes Tyler as "...one of the most influential curriculum developers of this century" (p. 11) and summarizes the four concerns which provide the foundation for Tyler's writings about curriculum design. These include what the purposes of the program are, what educational experiences might assist the participants in achieving those purposes, how these educational experiences might best be arranged, and

how participants can determine whether their original purposes are being achieved. There are a number of second language curricular models which are based on Tyler's four principles.

One example from the 1960s which emerged from Tyler's model is the one designed by Taba (1962). Dubin and Olshstein (1986) summarize Taba's (1962) curriculum development process: needs assessment, objective formation, content selection and organization, learning experience selection and organization, and evaluation design. The steps in Taba's model find their roots in Tyler's emphases. Tyler's and Taba's models also laid the foundation for more current theories of curriculum development.

Dubin and Olshstein indicate that they have "drawn on the steps proposed by Taba, applying her suggestions in the context of second and foreign language teaching" (p. 3). Their curriculum development process involves fact-finding to determine the learners' needs and the goals of the program, establishing goals, translating these goals into syllabus objectives, selecting content, considering the syllabus shape, thinking about methodology, and writing materials (Dubin & Olshstein, 1986). Others, in creating and revising curriculum, have also emphasized a process of considering learners' needs and program goals, establishing objectives, developing materials, and conducting evaluation (Johnson, 1989; Richards, 1990; Rodgers, 1989). These models have changed very little from designs introduced by Taba and Tyler.

Although Tyler's model has been the basis for curriculum development processes, its utility as a model has been questioned. Nunan points out that Tyler's model has been criticized for its linearity and its "ends-means" view of education (1988, p. 12), and says that, while this model suggests what should be, it does not reflect real processes of

curriculum development. This concern could also be raised about Taba's and Dubin and Olshtain's modern rendition of Tyler's process. Such descriptions do not allude to the key impact that teachers' implementation of the curriculum has upon curriculum development process. Curriculum processes, including determining the purposes, planning the content, and developing the materials, have been the domain of specialists and not teachers (Johnson, 1989).

More traditional approaches of de-emphasizing teachers' involvement in second language curriculum creation are better understood when placed in a historical context of general educational curriculum practices. Paris (1993) presents an enlightening survey of how teachers' relationship with curriculum has been altered. Apple (1986) indicates that increasing numbers of women became teachers between 1900 and 1930; women made up 90% of the teacher population in 1930 (cited in Paris, 1993). Paris (1993) cites Apple (1983, 1986) as saying: "Accompanying the increasing feminization of the teaching force, then, was the transformation of teachers' curriculum work into a highly rationalized and controlled enterprise in which the content and method of teaching were prescribed by others" (p. 6).

Other social changes impacted teachers' involvement with curriculum processes. Some social advocates believed that children should be educated according to their abilities and predicted roles in life. Others stated that children should receive education that would help them meet society's requirements. Determination of individual children's capabilities and society's needs was made by experts outside the classroom, and this meant that teachers had little say about what and how to teach (Paris, 1993).

Paris cites Silberman (1970) as saying teachers' curriculum work was minimized by "teacher-proof" curricula developed in the 1950s and 1960s (p. 10). The mid-1960s and 1970s brought increasing government control of education, which led to legislation introducing competency tests, standardization of educational policy, and accountability. This led to "further minimizing of teachers' engagement in curriculum making and critique in their own classrooms and schools" (Paris, 1993, p. 7), which continued into the 1980s.

It was in the 1980s, though, that teachers' agency in curriculum development became the focus of attention. Paris (1993) cites McDonald (1988) as saying that a new wave of reform has been characterized by "the emergence of the teacher's voice" (p. 9). Since this time, efforts have been made to involve teachers in making decisions about curriculum. Examples of these attempts include involving teacher representatives on committees of administrators who are engaged in curriculum development. However, inviting a few representatives to participate in policy making does little to impact individual teachers, as Paris (1993) points out: "The individual classroom teacher who did not serve on the committee... is still expected to implement curricula created or selected by someone other than herself. She has been neither empowered nor professionalized" (p. 10).

While Paris discusses how mainstream teachers' involvement in the curriculum process has been downplayed historically, there have been those who acknowledge teachers' involvement in the process. Nunan (1988) describes a number of integrated approaches to curriculum design that were developed as a reaction to the linear model Tyler had established. He posits that models by Wheeler (1967) and Kerr (1968) more

successfully take into consideration the impact of teaching and learning experiences on evaluation and subsequent development of course content. He states that another writer, Stenhouse (1975), was "... well in advance of his time" (Nunan, 1988, p. 12) because his model included an emphasis on the practice, or implementation, of curriculum. Nunan (1988) highlights what he considers to be key aspects of Stenhouse's (1970) perspective on curriculum design: its focus on practical considerations of curriculum implementation and its emphasis on the importance of teacher involvement in the process. Nunan (1988) makes the following remark about Stenhouse's (1970) model:

Finally, it gives recognition to the fact that effective curriculum development is largely a matter of effective teacher development by suggesting that curriculum change will only find its way into the classroom if teachers themselves become the principal agents of curriculum change through critical analysis and reflection on their current performance. (p.14)

The previous sections on traditional means of developing second language curricula and historical views of teachers' involvement in curriculum formation processes provide a broad context for the focus in this study. The next section, a brief examination of current literature on teachers' roles in curriculum development, will provide a sharper focus on the issues related to this study. This examination will include teachers' perceptions of the importance of curricular documents, their means for gaining curriculum knowledge, and their views on the qualities of an effective curriculum. Lastly, principles leading to successful curricular innovation will be examined.

Teachers' Perceptions of and Roles in Curriculum Making

Teachers at the Victoria school wanted more direction for their course planning, implementation and evaluation. Their need for direction echoes the findings of other studies.

Nunan (1988) studied the causes of curriculum discontinuity from the perspective of the teachers involved in the Australian Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP). Through data collected from 568 questionnaires and several in-depth interviews, Nunan (1988) found that teachers voiced a common concern about the "...lack of a general framework for teachers to conceptualize and integrate what they were doing" (p. 154). Responses to a third section added to the questionnaire to elicit teachers' perceptions on the lack of curriculum continuity suggested that many teachers wanted curriculum guidelines and stressed that these should be "flexible and optional" (Nunan, 1988, p.162). Nunan summarizes his findings by saying: "From the data, it would seem that teachers are asking for the following: non-mandatory curriculum guidelines" (p. 163). Brindley (1990) describes how the National Curriculum Project (NCP) was established in Australia to develop a curricular framework that would assist teachers as a result of the findings of Nunan's study (1988). Brindley (1990) remarks: "...a number of curriculum resource documents were developed, the aim of which was to provide teachers with a framework for the design and delivery of courses for a variety of learner groups without, however, constituting a prescriptive body of syllabus content" (p. 235).

Teacher involvement in curriculum development has been a necessity in many Canadian ESL contexts. Fleming (1998) describes how, because there are varied providers, clients, and contexts in Canada, curriculum development is carried out by

teachers who have expressed a need for guidance and training in this area. Fleming conducted an inquiry into views of five adult ESL instructors about their autonomy in curriculum implementation. Through analyzing data from several interviews, classroom observations and an examination of curriculum documents, Fleming found that all instructors believed that curriculum guidelines were theoretically necessary and useful, but they expressed concern that these guidelines might be used to restrict their classroom work. He indicates, “The instructors clearly expressed the desire for a flexible document that allowed them to build specific curricula for particular groups of learners” (Fleming, 1998, p. 27). Fleming also found that teachers had no objection to being told what linguistic elements they should target in their classes.

Curriculum guidelines are not always welcomed by ESL teachers, particularly by those who have been creating their own curriculum and who suddenly receive curricular documents from specialists working outside their context. Cray (1997) describes a study she conducted with six teachers in the Ottawa area who were teaching in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC). They had received a copy of the *Draft LINC Curriculum Guidelines* (cited in Cray, 1997). Cray states, “The curriculum, for all its weight and authority, was of little importance to the teachers” (p. 33), and she also remarks, “None of the teachers saw the curriculum as guiding their teaching on a day-to-day level” (Cray, 1997, p. 33). This suggests that, while teachers appreciate having access to curricular frameworks, they may not readily implement them.

Means for gaining curriculum knowledge. Research on teacher participation in curricular innovation in general education can inform curriculum inquiry in second language education. A study on teacher agency in curriculum development was

conducted with a group of four elementary school teachers involved in a word processing curriculum development project (Paris, 1993). Paris analyzed the types and means of curriculum knowledge possessed by teachers.

Paris summarizes Schwab's (1969) distinction of "theoretical knowledge," held by academics in curricular theory, and "practical knowledge," possessed by teachers. Schwab (1969) remarks, "'Practical knowledge' is required to supplement theoretical curriculum knowledge" (cited in Paris, 1993, p. 78). Practical knowledge is to be valued as much as theoretical knowledge, but theoretical knowledge is gained from study while practical knowledge is gained through interaction with a particular context (Paris, 1993). Paris indicates that curriculum knowledge is constantly in evolution: "Just as over time contexts shift, problems evolve, and students grow, curriculum knowledge is always changing" (p. 79). She outlines how curriculum knowledge is gained through practical classroom experiences. One of the teachers participating in the study described how her knowledge of the word processing curriculum changed over the two years she taught the course. Paris (1993) comments on this teacher's experience: "With greater demands on her time and attention, knowledge of what and how to teach that was regarded as valid in the previous year was rejected or revised in the second year" (p. 80).

Paris continues on to describe how curriculum knowledge is broadened by teachers' interactions with colleagues and through the contributions of experts in the field. Such knowledge, however, "... must be brought to bear on the particular context in which each teacher conducts her work" (Paris, 1993, p. 83).

In the context of second language education, Graves (1996) defines curriculum as "the philosophy, purposes, design and implementation of a whole program" (p. 3). She

points out that second language teachers are more frequently being asked to design the courses they teach. Teachers gain practical curriculum knowledge by teaching the course for the first time; this leads to assessment and modifications as they teach the course for the second and third times. Graves (1996) states that this process enables teachers to acquire greater knowledge of and experience with curriculum, which supports the view of teachers' acquisition of practical curriculum knowledge described by Paris (1993).

Teachers, then, supplement their theoretical knowledge of curriculum with practical knowledge they gain through planning for and implementing courses numerous times. While they also develop curriculum knowledge through interactions with colleagues, this knowledge is tested, developed and refined through teachers' reflective work in their own contexts.

The qualities of a functional curriculum. A curriculum that is not prescriptive or mandated appeals to second language teachers (Brindley, 1990; Fleming, 1998; Nunan, 1988). Teachers also perceive curricular documents to be more functional if they are malleable, teacher-driven, and supported. Paris (1993) states that the teachers in her study assumed that curriculum was "malleable" and that "...it was within their role as teachers to shape, reshape, and adapt it to their own and their children's evolving needs and interests" (p. 76). Teachers continuously modified received curriculum to better meet their learners' needs and acted on the curriculum instead of complying with it (Paris, 1993).

A number of studies indicate that, for teachers to be involved in implementing curriculum, they need to have a role in developing it. Nunan (1988) reports a study done by Bartlett and Butler (1985). They examined a number of Australian ESL teachers'

views on who should be responsible for curriculum development. They found the data showed quite clearly that the teachers saw themselves as primarily responsible for all curriculum duties except placement. Fleming's (1998) study shows that teachers perceived themselves as agents of curriculum reform. The findings of Cray's study (1997) imply that the teachers were not interested in implementing the curricular document because it had been developed by outside experts. These studies suggest that, if teachers are actively engaged in the curriculum development process, they may have a greater reason to embrace curricular innovations.

For teachers to implement revised curricula, they need support. Fleming (1998) summarizes an important finding from his study: "The research in this article suggests that ESL instructors need curriculum support in a variety of areas to enhance their autonomy" (p. 31). He gives examples of areas where teachers need support; these include greater release time for the preparation of materials and activities and for assessment. Such support could be in the form of an assistant who could perform some of these duties or in the form of increased training and professional development, which would enable them to perform such tasks with greater efficiency and effectiveness. These findings are repeated in Nunan's (1988) study. He found that, in his study of teachers involved in the AMEP, teachers requested training in the area of curricular innovation and needed more time to engage in curriculum inquiry (Nunan, 1988). Brindley and Hood (1990) suggest that adequate support in terms of finances, time, resources and skilled trainers will increase the chance of implementation. In particular, there needs to be sufficient time for teachers to interact with each other and work through the innovation

together. Greater support for teachers should lead to greater facility to handle curricular change.

Management of curricular innovation. Brindley and Hood (1990) raise some important questions about curricular innovation. One question is: "Once curriculum guidelines or materials have been developed, how (if at all) are they adopted?" (p. 232). Another important question is: "What factors favour and inhibit curriculum innovation?" (p. 232). They looked closely at the implementation of curriculum frameworks developed as a result of the study of the AMEP that Nunan (1988) describes. Upon discovering that teachers needed some non-mandated curricular frameworks, the members of the National Curriculum Project developed draft curricular frameworks in consultation with a number of teachers. They decided to begin to implement these frameworks and set up a pilot project in two centres. They found that the framework was implemented successfully at one center while it was not at the other.

This led them to develop principles that facilitate successful implementation of curricular innovations (Brindley & Hood, 1990). First, for a change to occur, there should be an educational need or political impetus. In the case of the AMEP, the teachers expressed their need for curricular guides or frameworks. Second, Brindley and Hood (1990) point out that "...rational argument alone will not bring about change" (p. 241). Simply involving practitioners in the process will not necessarily result in implementation. Third, individual teachers need to be personally involved with the innovation. If the change meets teachers' personal needs, there is a greater chance they will embrace the innovation. However, "if personal costs turn out to be high and benefits low, innovation will not be an attractive proposition, particularly if adequate levels of

support are not available” (Brindley & Hood, 1990, p. 242). The final principles include the presence of a collegial atmosphere, ongoing professional development, and support within the practitioners’ context (Brindley & Hood, 1990).

The previous sections summarized current literature on teachers’ perceptions of and experiences with curriculum. The focus of this study is on ESL teachers’ opinions of curricula built on performance objectives; therefore, it is useful to briefly examine second language curriculum types. This next section introduces common ESL curricula, focusing on curriculum documents based on performance objectives.

Types of second language curricula. Richards (1990) summarizes several different types of curriculum commonly used in second language courses. Some common types include structural (organized according to grammatical structures), functional (organized according to communicative need), topical or theme-based (organized around themes or content-bases), skills (organized around language skills), and task-based (developed according to required activities or tasks).

ESL curriculum containing grammatical structures was commonly used in the 1950s and 1960s. Its popularity was based on the theory that language learners need to know the grammatical patterns or structural forms of the language before they can effectively communicate (Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Nunan, 1988). This view emerged from theories generated by behaviorists, who believed that second languages were learned through conditioning, and that learner errors were the results of interference from the first language (Larsen-Freeman, 1991). Second language educators felt that forming habits of correct usage would prevent learner mistakes. This led to development of curriculum emphasizing linguistic structures and the development of the Audio-Lingual Method

(ALM), which involves leading students in repetitious drills to enhance habit formation (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Curricula containing linguistic structures used with approaches such as ALM have been criticized for their dryness and, at times, lack of relevancy to learners (Nunan, 1988).

The advent of communicative language teaching (CLT) developed as a backlash to structural curricula which had been used in the 1960s. CLT, the purpose of which is to aid learners in developing "...the ability to use language to get things done" (Nunan, 1988, p. 25) involved giving students practice with communicative expressions that could be used in a variety of situations to carry out authentic tasks. *Threshold Level English*, by van Ek and Alexander (1980), is an example of a text containing a very complex array of communicative vocabulary, expressions and grammatical structures which has been used in CLT. In his preface to the book, Trim (1980) writes "...*The Threshold Level* remains a most powerful tool for those teachers and course planners who are converting language teaching from structure-dominated scholastic sterility into a vital medium for the freer movement of people and ideas..." (p. viii). Curricula based on communicative language teaching, however, are difficult to construct and organize because of the array of situational possibilities and communicative expressions.

Curricula based on content-based language teaching (CBLT) have been popular, particularly in pre-university academic preparation ESL programs (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989). Content-based second language curriculum is founded on the theory that second language acquisition is enhanced when second language skills are taught using content as the basis for curricular frameworks (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989). While such an approach has led to interesting theme-based curricula, one drawback to the

approach is the difficulty selecting a content base that appeals to a variety of adult learners. I feel that incorporating exploration of various themes within a skill-based curricular framework might be an alternative.

Skill-based second language curricula include instruction in writing, reading, and listening skills. For example, a listening curriculum emphasizing skills might include listening for gist, listening for details, and listening for tone (Richards, 1990). Curricula focusing on skill acquisition are often included in academic preparation programs or test preparation programs for second language learners. While the curricula emphasizing language skills can facilitate students' academic goals, they do not necessarily aid students in their communicative competency.

Curricula based on tasks have become increasingly popular; tasks are what language teachers and students focus upon in their efforts to work with the target language (Nunan, 1989). Prabhu (1987) describes sample tasks, which include constructing itineraries from descriptions of travel or from a statement of needs and intentions, constructing a floor plan of a house from a description, or working out the distances between places, from given distances between other places or from a map scale (cited in Nunan, 1989). Task-based curricula have been explored in a number of studies (Hyland & Hyland, 1992; Kenny, 1993; Vincent, 1990); they tend to be learner-centred and engaging. Drawbacks to curricula of this kind include the fact that students are accustomed to teacher-led, teacher-driven activities and find it difficult to adjust to taking greater responsibility for their own learning. Because the task-based curricula are built upon the premise that doing tasks using the second language will help learners acquire

the target language, it is difficult to know what role formal instruction has in classes conducted with this curriculum (Sheen, 1994).

In addition to the types of curriculum outlined by Richards (1990) and explained briefly here, there are other models which highlight humanistic education (Moskowitz, 1988) and cognitive language learning strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The goals of a curriculum based on Moskowitz's (1988) humanistic principles would be to improve students' self-images, positive thinking, and relationships with their class members (1988). Curricula incorporating O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) emphasis on cognition would entail studies of the different language learning strategies that adult learners can access to become more independent and successful language learners.

Curriculum based on proficiency guidelines. Curricular frameworks based on standards of language proficiency can be useful because they contain information on competencies that students should demonstrate at different levels of proficiency. Second language curricula may be established on information from proficiency guidelines such as those published by The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 1987).

ACTFL developed guidelines that include language descriptors in listening, reading, writing and speaking for learners at different proficiency levels. Referring to guidelines such as these has enabled teachers to understand what students should be able to do when they reach particular levels of proficiency. Byrnes (1987) states that having access to guidelines such as ACTFL builds accountability into the process of curriculum development:

Accountability automatically involves the statement of goals, the tasks for reaching those goals, the selection and organization of curricular content, an indication of learning theory and the methodology which would enhance the attainment of the goals, and, finally, a mode of assessment. A proficiency orientation can contribute to all these steps in curriculum development. (p. 125)

Byrnes (1987) maintains that the benefit of using proficiency guidelines is that they are tools teachers can access to set performance objectives which inform their lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation. Dubin and Olshtain (1986) and Nunan (1988) also mention the advantage of using proficiency guidelines as references for clarifying course goals and objectives. Other documents outlining proficiency guidelines include those published by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). Another advantage to incorporating curricula based on such guidelines is that they may serve as a foundation for nationally recognized standards for ESL programs. The preface to the CLB (1996) states: "Given the extent and variety of adult ESL programs that have grown up in Canada over the past several decades, it is not surprising that clients, providers, and funders of ESL language training have noted the need for a common set of standards to assist in the measurement and description of language skills" (p. I).

Summary. This brief review of the literature on traditional second language curriculum development processes was included to provide background for more recent studies which acknowledge the crucial role teachers play in second language curriculum making and implementation. The literature suggests that effective curriculum documents are those which are perceived by teachers as flexible, teacher-driven, and supported. A

number of theoretical principles which may facilitate teachers' adoption of a curricular innovation include a definite need for the innovation, the personal involvement of teachers, and the presence of a collegial, supportive team within the practitioners' context.

Theoretical Principles for the Study

This study is founded on theoretical principles drawn from the preceding literature overview. First, the literature suggests that a curricular innovation is more readily implemented when there is a need for change. At the Victoria school, the teachers expressed a need for a more detailed curricular document that would guide their classroom practice; this need motivated them to try using the revised curricular framework containing performance objectives.

Second, an examination of curricular options for teachers trying to respond to diverse student needs suggests that a curriculum based on proficiency guidelines has advantages. Such a curriculum contains information that teachers can use to develop goals and objectives in conjunction with their learners. It may increase consistency across programs because the performance objectives it includes closely connect to national proficiency guidelines such as those developed by ACTFL. For these reasons, as one of my administrative responsibilities as Head Teacher, I drafted lists of possible exit standard objectives for each level using the ACTFL guidelines (1987) and the CLB (1996) as references.

Third, the literature indicates that, for a curricular document to be facilitating, it needs to be built and revised by teachers. Upon articulating the list of possible objectives for skills at each level, I encouraged the teachers to delete, add and refine performance

objectives in the skill areas targeted in the integrated-skills curricula. Then, I used their suggestions to construct the integrated-skills curricular frameworks used in this study. Since the literature suggests that teachers should be active agents in the design and implementation of curriculum, I had teachers guide the trial and subsequent revision of the integrated-skills curricular frameworks as much as possible.

I allude to these theoretical principles in the following chapter describing the methodology of the study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Background

In September, as a preliminary step to working with teachers to create a curricular framework containing performance objectives, I compiled a draft of exit standard objectives for each level – B2 to I4. These objectives pertained only to the areas targeted in the integrated-skills component of the GEP: reading/vocabulary development, listening, speaking (or “discussion building” as it is articulated on the local brochure). The objectives were worded in the following way: “By the end of a student’s time in (level), he/she should be able to...”.

The performance objectives for each level were based on descriptions of linguistic proficiency contained in the ACTFL Guidelines (Byrnes, 1987). I also adapted information included in the CLB (1996). I compiled two lists of possible exit standard objectives. The first included exit standard objectives for levels B2 to I1; the second contained objectives for levels I2 to I4. These were copied and distributed to all teachers at the Victoria school. The first list was presented to teachers who had greater experience teaching at the lower levels; the second list was given to teachers that had more experience teaching at the upper levels. Then, I conducted one-hour meetings with the two groups of instructors, the first of which occurred on September 7th and the second on September 14th. Two separate meetings with smaller groups were held to increase the amount of time teachers would have to present their ideas. I explained to the teachers that, to make planning, implementation and evaluation of integrated-skills classes easier,

we would create curricular guidelines for each level. Teachers were asked to read through these drafts and make changes on the draft – to add, delete, reorder content as they saw fit – based on their own knowledge of classroom practice and students’ needs at those levels. They were assured that their feedback was voluntary and that any comments they made would be kept confidential. A total of eight teachers attended these meetings; three sent back the drafts of exit standard objectives with their written notes and suggestions.

As a result of the teachers’ ideas and feedback, I began drafting curricular frameworks for each level of the integrated-skills program. Based on school data that students normally spend two study blocks in levels B2 to I1 and three study blocks in levels I2 to I4, I spread the exit standard objectives across two or three documents. For example, the exit standard objectives designated for reading/vocabulary development, listening and speaking at the I1 level were divided across curricular frameworks covering two study blocks. Exit standard objectives designated for the same skill areas at the I3 level were separated into curricular frameworks covering three study blocks. Teachers suggested a format for the framework that they felt would be easiest to use; I arranged this framework so that teachers could select exit standard objectives (renamed “performance objectives”) they wished to target during the four-week study block, based on their learners’ needs and their sense of what they could realistically accomplish in the four-week block. In response to teachers’ recommendations, I added a column to the curricular framework that included pertinent resources and sample activities available at the Victoria school that related to the content listed under performance objectives.

Appendix A shows a sample of a curricular framework for the I1 level.

Because of my experience as a teacher and my responsibilities for supporting teachers and developing curriculum, I wanted to know what kind of curriculum document might best facilitate teachers' preparation for, delivery and evaluation of their classes in the network of schools by conducting a case study at the school in Victoria. Before discussing the reasons for the case study approach, I will explain my focus on teachers as the subjects of the study.

Subjects of the study. Designers of curriculum frequently focus upon the needs of learners and the overall purpose of the program as they construct and revise curriculum. While considering students' needs and teachers' perspectives is equally important, I decided that examining learner needs was beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, I chose to explore curriculum development from the perspective of teachers. Markee (1997) states: "Teachers are key players in all language teaching innovation" (p. 43). I also felt that, to initiate long-lasting curriculum reform and to have such reforms impact classroom teaching, teachers needed to be consulted on the content and format of curriculum guidelines.

Use of a case study approach. I decided to conduct a case study at the Victoria school and with teachers in this context. Research conducted at the network of schools over the previous year had involved classroom teachers initially through having them complete questionnaires at each school. However, further discussions and decisions about curricula had been made by curriculum sub-committees and the school directors. Such a process may have had advantages, being more convenient and efficient. Unfortunately, having the curriculum director, an expert in curriculum design, but an outsider to the network of schools, as the prime agent for curriculum development and dissemination, and limiting

teacher involvement to representation on subcommittees may have contributed to the failure of the project. This explanation fits with what Paris (1993) suggests is the problem with this usual process of curricular innovation: “In spite of being invited to participate in curriculum processes, teachers remain receivers and implementers of curriculum created or selected by others rather than active agents in the creation and critique of curriculum” (p.10).

In this case study at Victoria, teachers have initiated and driven the curricular process. My role as Head Teacher has allowed me to work beside the teachers as a listener, as a scribe, and as an interviewer. Teachers at the Victoria initiated the process when they pointed out the shortcomings of the previous curriculum and recommended changes. As Head Teacher, I simply listened to their concerns and recorded their suggestions. Based on the information I received from the teachers and based on my own experiences as a teacher at the school, I suggested we work as a team to develop our own curricular framework that might alleviate some of the problems. I told them that, in response to their request for firmer objectives for each level, I would compile lists of exit standard objectives. I asked them to meet in September to add to, delete from, and revise the contents of the list. I was a scribe for their suggestions. I asked for their ideas about the kind of format the curricular document should have, and those who had ideas met with me and showed me how they wanted the framework formatted. I worked on setting up the curricular frameworks based on their suggestions on the content and format of the document. The teachers used the revised curricular frameworks for a month and commented on their experiences with the framework through questionnaires and subsequent interviews. As a result of their comments and suggestions, the curricular

frameworks would be altered as an on-going project facilitated by them and by me (since I have administrative time for curriculum development). My intention for the study was to have teachers at the Victoria school work as active agents in the formation and revision of these curricular frameworks.

To investigate teachers' perceptions of the functionality of a curricular framework containing performance outcomes, a case study approach seemed to be appropriate because, although the sample would not lend itself statistically generalizable findings, it might generate hypotheses about the issue of teacher involvement in curricular innovation (Wallace, 1998). For example, exploring teachers' perceptions of the functionality of curricular documents at the Victoria school may lead to the formation of other hypotheses about the kind of curricular guidelines that facilitate teachers' classroom practice. Such hypotheses could be explored in other private English language schools, including those schools that are members of this particular network.

Case studies are used by researchers to gain a large amount of information on a single situation (Neuman, 1997). Such information often includes illustrative data, adding human interest to more abstract research studies (Wallace, 1998). The focused investigation at the Victoria school allowed me to gather a greater quantity of information on five teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of a particular curricular innovation. Much of this information illustrated how more general theories of teacher agency and autonomy in curriculum development and revision are applied in a specific context.

Case studies can also lead to future larger-scale investigations. The Victoria school is typical of other schools in this particular network and of other private English language institutions. Its schedule, mandate, student population, teachers, program offerings, and

course content are very similar on a smaller scale to those of other larger schools in this particular network and of other private English language schools. It seemed, therefore, that a case study conducted here would have potential for generalizability to other schools. Such a study could be combined with other like studies to develop a greater body of knowledge which could inform future studies on the topic (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Analyzing teachers' perceptions about how a particular curricular framework impacted their classroom teaching at Victoria would provide some useful information upon which others could build upon in their efforts to develop more meaningful curriculum documents.

Design

I decided to use questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and field notes as means for collecting data in this study. The selection of both a quantitative method (questionnaires) and qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and field notes) enabled me to explore issues in greater depth and to triangulate the results. Wallace (1998) suggests that reliability of data can be increased by comparing it against data gained from another technique, and remarks, "Questionnaires and interviews are thus often used in complementary fashion" (p. 130). I maintained field notes of informal conversations from October 23rd to November 17th so that I would have qualitative data to compare with information gained from the post-trial questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaires. Questionnaires are commonly used in ESL research for a number of reasons: they frequently offer precise, clear data; they can be used on a small or large scale; the data can be gathered at different times (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). However, questionnaires may be problematic because they have to be carefully written to

avoid confusion, and it can also be difficult to receive responses to questionnaires from professionals who have a number of tasks vying for their time (Wallace, 1998; Neuman, 1997). Despite such difficulties, I decided to collect data through the use of two questionnaires.

The initial questionnaire was designed to gather information about teachers' opinions about the curricular document that had been in use for the integrated-skills program before the commencement of the study. To design this questionnaire, I reflected on information teachers had given me through our informal conversations and meetings during the five months prior to the study. Teachers were concerned about the format of the old curriculum, the organization and utility of the content, the availability of resources, and the students' reactions to the course content and themes.

The initial questionnaire, a Likert scale assessment tool, contained twenty statements relating to the issues outlined above separated into three sections. These addressed teachers' use of the curricular document as they planned for their integrated-skills classes, implemented their classes, and evaluated students in their classes. The first section, which focused upon teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the curricular document for planning for the integrated-skills classes, contained six statements. The purpose of this first section was to elicit teachers' feedback on the curricular framework's readability, comprehensibility and utility of its contents for their planning. The second section, covering teachers' perceptions of the utility of the curricular framework as they implemented their classes, included eleven statements. In this section, I was attempting to get teachers' perceptions of the students' reactions to the course content as they implemented it. Three statements made up the third section, which highlighted teachers'

perceptions of the functionality of the document for the purposes of evaluation. I wondered if the curriculum served as a resource for teachers as they developed evaluation instruments, whether they felt these instruments were valid, and what their perceptions were of students' reactions to the instruments. A separate and final area of the questionnaire was added to provide teachers with space for further comments and concerns they had about their use of the curricular document.

Each statement contained in the questionnaire was followed by five choices ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, and a space for comments after each statement was provided to allow teachers to explain or qualify their response. The decision to allow teachers an opportunity to expound on their response to each statement was based on findings by Nunan (1988) in his analysis of surveys completed by teachers during his study of 60 full-time teachers with the Australian Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP):

Many of the teachers who commented on the survey criticized the use of questionnaires for data-collection purposes. Most of them wanted to qualify their responses in some way....It seems that, in general, teachers are loathe to give unequivocal responses on matters relating to professional practice. (p. 31)

I hoped that such comments would explain teachers' responses and help me determine whether the statements may have been misinterpreted by teachers. To each questionnaire, I stapled a sample of the integrated-skills curriculum document for the level of students the teacher had taught most frequently. For example, if the participant had often taught integrated-skills classes at the low intermediate level, I provided a copy of the Intermediate 1 curricular document for reference.

The first questionnaire was not piloted because all the teachers involved in the integrated-skills classes volunteered to participate. To compensate for this, I carefully constructed the questionnaire, closely monitoring the clarity of the instructions, the relevancy and wording of the statements, and the length. Because I was on site when the questionnaires were distributed, teachers were able to check their interpretation of the instructions and statements with me.

The second questionnaire was created after the study began. It was altered to address changes to the format and content of the curricular framework that teachers had recommended. The purpose of this second questionnaire was to reveal teachers' perceptions of the functionality of a new curricular framework containing performance objectives. The second questionnaire was constructed to resemble the first questionnaire as closely as possible so that I could compare the mean of teachers' responses to statements on the first questionnaire with those on the same statements contained in the second questionnaire. A format closely resembling that of the first questionnaire was chosen for the second questionnaire. The questionnaire contained three sections of statement groups; the first pertained to the teachers' use of the framework as they planned for their integrated-skills classes, the second related to the teachers' implementation of the content included on the framework, and the third concerned the teachers' reference to the framework as they evaluated students in their classes. Eighteen statements relating to the same issues as those appearing on the first questionnaire, with a range of responses from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, were included on the second questionnaire. Teachers were given space for further comments after each statement, and a separate

section was included at the end of the questionnaire to allow teachers to provide additional information.

As was the case during the distribution of the first questionnaire, I was on site when the second questionnaire was distributed. Therefore, teachers were able to check their interpretation of the instructions and statements with me while they were completing the questionnaire. Again, as with the first questionnaire, I stapled copies of the new integrated-skills curricular frameworks that the teachers had piloted during their month-long trial with their particular class to the second questionnaire. For example, if the participant had taught integrated-skills classes at the low intermediate level for the month-long study, I provided a copy of the new Intermediate 1 curricular framework for reference.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviews were set up with two teachers "... as [checking mechanisms] to triangulate data gathered from other sources" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 181). To explore issues pertaining to the use of the revised curricular framework based on exit standard objectives in greater depth, I conducted two semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were included because, although they possess an overall structured framework of open questions, "... [they] allow for greater flexibility within that, for example in changing the order of questions and for more extensive follow-up of responses" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 183). This allowed me to control the types of questions, but gave the interviewees freedom to ask for clarification and gave me an opportunity to follow up on the responses.

A single interview schedule was used for each of the interviews. The first section of the interview schedule, entitled *Background questions*, included open questions about the

interviewees' past experience teaching ESL and the kind of curricular documents they had used in previous teaching contexts. This section of the schedule contained easier "lead-in" questions to increase the interviewees' confidence, break the ice, and help them get accustomed to being audio taped (Wallace, 1998).

The second section contained three key questions which echoed the contents of the first and second questionnaires. The first question solicited the interviewees' comments about the curricular document they had been using at the Victoria school from April to September. This question was presented to give subjects an opportunity to re-emphasize or add further comments to their opinions recorded in the first questionnaire. The second question consisted of three parts requiring the interviewees to comment on their use of the new curricular framework for their preparation for, implementation of, and evaluation of students in their integrated-skills course during the pilot study. This question, with its three parts, reiterated the topics featured in the three sections of the second questionnaire. The third question asked for interviewees' comments about the kind of curricular document they would find most functional. This question did not repeat content covered in the questionnaires, but allowed the interviewees an opportunity to comment on issues or suggestions that had not been explored in the questionnaires or during previous interview questions.

Each thirty-minute interview was audio taped with the interviewees' permission. The interviews were recorded so that fuller, more accurate information could be obtained (Wallace, 1998; McDonough & McDonough, 1997). The recorded interviews were then transcribed and returned to the interviewees to confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Field notes. Field notes are used to record observations, experiences, and conversations while researchers are in the field. The difficulty is to simultaneously record information while observing; therefore, researchers tend to jot rough notes down and then later incorporate these into longer “direct observation” notes (Neuman, 1997, p. 364).

During this study, I did not observe classes taught by the teachers who volunteered to participate in the study because of scheduling difficulties. My intention was to capture teachers’ reactions to and reflections on the framework, so I maintained field notes in which I recorded key points from conversations (planned and informal) with instructors about this framework. This enabled me to gather data on teachers’ perceptions of and reactions to the framework while they were engaged in the process of using it. I met with teachers during breaks and at the end of the day. Teachers voluntarily commented on their experiences piloting the new curricular framework and gave me permission to make rough notes of their comments and concerns.

Selection of subjects. The five teachers who volunteered to participate in the study have worked at the Victoria school for different periods of time. One teacher has been with the school for eight months, another for seven months, the third for six months, and the other two for approximately three months. They have worked with a variety of levels of classes offered at the Victoria school. Two of them have more experience working with mid to upper intermediate students, having worked with I2 to I4 students for six months. Two have experience working with mid to high beginner students, one of whom has worked with B3 students for at least five months. The remaining teacher has worked with students at the low intermediate level for two months. The participants have diverse teaching backgrounds as well. Two have taught in countries such as Japan and France

and have experience teaching academic preparation at Canadian universities and conversational English at high schools; three have most of their experience teaching ESL in private schools in Victoria. All teachers participating in this study have been teaching full-time (25 contact hours per week). My desire was to work with teachers who had a range of experience teaching at the Victoria school and who possessed eclectic teaching backgrounds.

Data Collection

The data for this research study were collected using three data collection processes (two questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and field notes) from mid-October, 2000 to the end of November, 2000. Teachers at the Victoria school were initially informed about the study in early September and mid-September, during two staff meetings located on site. At that time, I explained the purpose of and time frame for the study, and I outlined the responsibilities that participants would have. Five teachers volunteered to participate.

Questionnaires. The participating teachers completed the first questionnaire before the new study block began on October 23rd. On October 24th, I distributed the new curricular frameworks for the integrated-skills component. Teachers were then involved in teaching their levels of the integrated-skills program from October 24 to November 17th and were asked to try the new curricular framework containing performance objectives for this period.

Originally, I had planned to pilot a curricular framework for each level of the integrated-skills component. When the study began on October 24th, however, placement of new and returning students meant that the school in Victoria was not offering a class at

the B1 or B2 levels but was running one class at the B3 level, two classes at the I1 level, one class at the I2 level, and one class at the I3/I4 level.

The second questionnaire asking participants for their comments on their use of this revised curricular framework for the integrated-skills program was distributed the week after study block 11, which was the week of November 20th. Teachers were asked to submit their completed questionnaires early in the following week. Two teachers submitted the completed questionnaires on November 28th, two submitted them on November 30th, and one teacher submitted the questionnaire on December 1st.

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted two thirty-minute semi-structured interviews with two teachers who participated in this study. Although I had asked the other three teachers to participate in interviews, they declined because of their busy schedules. One of the teachers I interviewed had experience working with levels B2 to I1, and the other had taught levels I2 to I4. To decrease the intrusiveness of the process, I gave the teachers a choice of times and sites where the interviews could take place. Before each interview, I showed the teachers a copy of the interview schedule and gave them a brief interval (approximately 10 minutes) to read the questions and ask for clarification. One teacher was interviewed on the morning of November 18 at my home. Upon receiving her permission, I audio taped the 30-minute semi-structured interview. The second teacher was interviewed on the afternoon of November 19th at her residence. Again, after receiving this teacher's permission, I audio taped the 30-minute semi-structured interview.

Field notes. The third form of data existed in the form of rough field notes made when teachers informally dropped by my office at the Victoria school. I asked them if I

could take notes as we chatted, and they granted permission. These notes were then read and analyzed for recurring themes which gave further insight on teachers' perceptions of the new curricular framework (Neuman, 1997).

Data Analysis Process

Questionnaires. I scored Questionnaire 1, assigning numerical values to the answer choices: *strongly disagree* received a rating of 1, *disagree* was designated 2, *neutral* received a rating of 3, *agree* was designated 4 and *strongly agree* was allocated 5. I tabulated the teachers' responses to each of the twenty statements included on this questionnaire. Since the sample involved only five questionnaires, I plotted the responses by hand. Then, I recorded teachers' comments if they were provided in the space allotted after each statement. I calculated the mean, mode, and median for the responses for each of the twenty statements. I tabulated the responses in Questionnaire 2 in the same way and conducted the mean, mode and median for the responses for each statement.

The next part of the data analysis required me to cross-reference the statements from the first questionnaire with those on the second. The numbering of the statements differed because the revised curricular framework had slightly different components from those included on the original curricular document. For example, on the original curriculum, reading and vocabulary were separate sections and each contained separate content. Therefore, these were listed as separate statements on questionnaire 1. However, on the revised curricular framework, reading and vocabulary were combined in one section, so I addressed both areas in one statement. This was also true for listening and speaking; on the original curricular document, the two areas were included on one section; on the curricular framework, they were separated into two sections and contained

distinct performance objectives for each. This meant that I needed to collate the statements carefully, ensuring that the statements were grouped so that I could compare the teachers' responses to information categorized in general skill areas on the curricular documents.

Upon collating the statements and finding the mode, median and mean for each, I calculated the standard deviation for the responses to each statement on each questionnaire. I analyzed the mean response for each question to determine whether there was reported change in the teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework. This number was then converted to a percentage. (See Tables 1, 3 and 5 presented in the following chapter.)

After reading the questionnaires for quantitative data, I examined them for qualitative results. I read through the teachers' comments where they appeared after each statement. I summarized each comment and coded it positive (+), negative (-), or neutral (n). Comments on the strengths of the curricular document were coded positive; comments on the weaknesses of the curriculum were coded negative. I also coded comments that were suggestions (s). In addition to their comments appearing after the statements, teachers had presented concluding statements in the final section. I examined the comments, searching for commonalities, and I found that four themes emerged from the statements: concerns about curricula generally, concerns about the integrated-skills curricular framework in particular, positive comments about the integrated-skills curricular framework, and suggestions for improving the curricular framework. (See Tables 2, 4 and 6 in the following chapter.)

Semi-structured interviews. I listened to each of the 30-minute audio recordings and transcribed the data. I read through the data and coded the responses according to their reference to the three sections included on the questionnaire. Section 1 included statements concerning teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework as they planned for their classes. Section 2 included statements about teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework as they implemented their classes. Section 3 focused on statements about teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework as they evaluated students in their classes. I read through the data again, coding other comments that did not relate to these three general categories. In particular, I searched for data that revealed teachers' beliefs about curriculum and their roles as agents in the curriculum development process: generating, implementing, reflecting, critiquing, and refining (Paris, 1993).

Field notes. I read through the field notes and coded them according to how they developed or explained teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework. As with the transcripts, I also reread the notes and coded any responses not directly relating to these categories reflecting teachers' perceptions of the curricular framework for their preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Again, I analyzed these notes for themes revealing teachers' beliefs about curriculum and their role as agents in the curriculum development process (Paris, 1993).

Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

I synthesized the findings that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data. I was particularly concerned about the validity of the questionnaires, which were designed for this study. Consequently, I compared data from the questionnaires with

carefully examined data obtained from the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and data from the field notes. McDonough and McDonough (1997) emphasize the importance of triangulation: “The two kinds of data, quantitative and qualitative, may coincide on a number of points, thus strengthening conclusions drawn from them, and diverge on others” (p. 71). I hoped to achieve triangulation by balancing data received from quantitative means with that gained through qualitative means. I was also aware of the issue of plausibility with interpretations of qualitative data. McDonough and McDonough cite Erickson (1986, p. 140) in his presentation of five basic rules: (1) Evidence should be sufficient in quantity to support the interpretations; (2) Evidence should emerge from varied data methods; (3) Researchers should monitor features in the data that are inadequate or “deliberate misinformation” (p. 140); (4) Researchers should carefully watch for disconfirming data and include this in their findings; (5) Researchers should analyze “discrepant cases” carefully (p. 140). I was mindful of these rules as I examined the data from transcripts and field notes.

A validity check on the qualitative data was performed with a doctoral candidate who has experience with the technique and who has taught ESL for four years. This check was conducted after the process used by Fleming (1998). After I read through the data and coded it according to the thematic content that emerged, I submitted 20% of the data to the doctoral student for a validity check. We coded the sample independently and agreed 72% of the time. I examined the differences in the coding to determine whether they were in opposition (e.g., turns marked as strengths by one and weaknesses by the other). There were no examples of this kind of opposition. Most differences were resolved through discussion, finally achieving agreement that was over 90%.

Chapter Four

Teachers' Perceptions: The Revised Curricular Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings resulting from data from the two questionnaires, the interviews and the field notes. The findings are presented in the following four sections in this chapter: Utility of the revised curricular framework for teachers' planning, utility of the revised curricular framework for teachers' implementation, utility of the revised curricular framework for teachers' evaluation, and a general summary of teachers' comments about the revised curricular framework.

For each of the first three sections of this chapter, I have included findings gained from the quantitative and qualitative data from the two questionnaires. Quantitative data from the two questionnaires is presented in Tables 1, 3 and 5. The tables present the mean scores comparing teachers' perceptions of the old curriculum and their perceptions of the revised curricular framework piloted during this study. I include the standard deviation achieved for each statement, and the gain/loss expressed in whole numbers and in percentages. Qualitative data from the two questionnaires is presented in Tables 2, 4 and 6. These tables compare teachers' comments about the old curriculum and the revised curricular framework. The fourth section of the chapter includes a summary of the qualitative findings from the interviews, the field notes, and the additional comments teachers provided at the end of the two questionnaires.

Utility of the Revised Curricular Framework for Planning

Quantitative findings. I examined how, in terms of preparing for their integrated-skills classes, teachers' perceptions of the revised curricular framework document differed from their perceptions of the old curriculum that had been in use.

The five teachers rated the revised curricular framework containing performance objectives higher across all areas of comparison. The greatest gain (a 44 % increase) was recorded for the utility of the resources/sample activities included on the revised curricular framework. The second greatest gain (a 32 % increase) was the revised curricular framework's inclusion of performance objectives for the skill areas. The comprehensibility of the old curriculum and the revised curricular framework received the smallest increase (8 %). Table 1 summarizes this data.

Table 1

Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of Curricular Documents for Planning

Issue	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		+ Change	+ %
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Clarity of format	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.71	1.00	20.00
Aid to organization	3.20	1.10	3.80	0.45	0.60	12.00
Comprehensibility	3.80	0.45	4.20	0.45	0.40	8.00
Facilitation of planning:						
Specific skills	2.60	1.14	4.20	0.45	1.60	32.00
Utility of themes	2.60	1.14	4.00	0.77	1.40	28.00
Utility of resource						
lists/sample tasks	2.40	0.55	4.60	0.55	2.20	44.00

Note. The values represent means where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

+ = gain

Qualitative findings. I allowed space on the first and second questionnaires for teachers to comment or clarify their responses comparing the utility of the old curriculum to that of the revised curricular framework for planning. They provided comments that either built upon or further explained their responses to the Likert scales.

To analyze these comments, I coded them according to whether they were positive, negative, suggestions, or neutral. From data taken from the first questionnaire, which addressed teachers' perceptions of the utility of the existing curriculum document for planning, I found that teachers had 8 negative comments, 2 positive comments, 2 neutral comments, and 1 suggestion. Data taken from the second questionnaire, the subject of which was the teachers' perceptions of the utility of the revised curricular framework for planning, revealed 3 positive comments, 1 negative comment, 2 neutral comments, and 2 suggestions. Table 2 presents these findings.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of Curricular Documents for Planning: Summary of Comments on Questionnaires

Issue	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
Clarity of format	(-)A little confusing.	(+)Lots of information. (s)Need to restructure format slightly.
Aid to organization	(-)Hard to distinguish general skill headings. (-)Not specific enough. (-)No differentiation between levels.	(n)Used it as a guide. (s) List objectives in order of importance.
Comprehensibility	(+)General, but useable. (+)Sometimes comprehensible.	
Functionality of objectives	(n)Teacher still decision-maker. (-)More detail needed.	(+)Selected 2 or 3 objectives; was able to plan lessons.
Utility of themes	(s)Need more Canadian content. (-)Not always practical. (-)Restraining.	(-)Not convinced of utility. (n)Depends on the theme.
Utility of resources/ sample activities	(-)Many are unavailable. (n)Useful if available.	(+)Used them as examples of appropriate activities.

Note. - = the data was not reported (+) = positive comment (-) = negative comment

(n) = neutral (s) = suggestion

Utility of the Revised Curricular Framework for Implementation

Quantitative findings. I considered how teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the revised curricular framework for class implementation differed from their perceptions of the utility of the old curriculum.

The five teachers rated the revised curricular framework higher than the old curriculum. The greatest increase (a 27% gain) occurred in the area of the appropriacy of the reading/vocabulary objectives. Two other areas achieving an increase (a 20% gain) were in the areas of the appropriacy of the objectives for listening/speaking and for pronunciation. The smallest gain (8%) appeared for the teachers' perceptions of the value of the integrated-skills component of the GEP for learners. Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 3

Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of Curricular Documents for Implementation

Issue	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		+Change	+%
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Ability to find						
resources	3.30	0.97	4.00	0.00	0.70	14.00
Suitability of objectives:						
Reading/vocab.	2.85	0.54	4.20	0.84	1.35	27.00
Suitability of objectives:						
Listening/speaking	3.60	0.55	4.60	1.00	1.00	20.00
Suitability of content:						
Pronunciation	2.80	0.84	3.80	0.84	1.00	20.00
Value of content						
to learners	3.30	0.45	3.80	0.45	0.50	10.00
Value of methodology						
to learners	3.50	0.50	4.00	0.00	0.50	10.00
Value of theme						
to learners	3.00	0.71	3.90	0.74	0.90	18.00
Value of program						
to learners	3.80	0.45	4.20	0.45	0.40	8.00

Note. The values represent means where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

+ = gain

Qualitative findings. Teachers added comments on the first and second questionnaires to clarify their responses comparing the utility of the old curriculum to that of the revised curricular framework for implementation of integrated-skills classes.

I coded these in the same manner as I coded the comments for the previous section, noting whether they were positive, negative, suggestions, or neutral. When examining qualitative data, I coded mostly affirmative statements (e.g., “Yes, with exceptions...”) positive, and I coded mostly negative comments (e.g., “Not always practical...”) negative. From data extracted from the first questionnaire, which concerned the existing curriculum document, I noted 8 positive comments, 9 negative statements, and 6 neutral statements. After examining statements from the second questionnaire, I coded 8 positive comments, 2 negative statements, and 1 neutral comment. Table 4 presents this information.

Table 4

Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of Curricular Documents for Implementation:Summary of Comments on Questionnaires

Issue	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
Ability to find resources	(n)Found some but not all. (+)Selection is improving. (n)"Search & ye shall find."	
Suitability of objectives: Reading/vocab.	(-)Too difficult for B3. (-)Not enough time for them. (n)Seem quite universal. (+)Sometimes appropriate.	(+) Very appropriate. (-)Some tough to implement.
Suitability of objectives: Listening/speaking	(+)Sometimes appropriate. (-)Often too general.	(+)Yes, with some exceptions. (+)Yes, but difficult to find short listenings.
Suitability of objectives: Pronunciation	(-)Arbitrary; not focused on students' needs. (n)"Hit and miss." (-) Can't find them.	(+)Generally good; not always connected to students' needs.
Value of content To learners	(-)May not be satisfied with materials taught. (n)Neutral. (+)Teacher evaluations: (+) "It's valuable."	(+)They seem to be satisfied. (+) Content seems valued, based on one trial [month].
Value of methodology for learners	(+)Sometimes suitable. (+)Generally they seem content. (+)Seemed to find it useful.	(+)They seem to be satisfied.
Value of theme	(-)Perhaps not valued.	(+)Usually theme is valued.

	(n)Teacher: did not use theme.	(-)Not sure; teacher has to
	(-)Students seem unaware of themes.	work at it.
Value of integrated-skills program to learners	(-)Sometimes boring.	(n)Students have less energy (+)Seems to be valued.

Note. - means the data was not reported (+) = positive comment (-) = negative comment

(s) = suggestion (n) = neutral

Utility of the Revised Curricular Framework for Evaluation.

Quantitative findings. I compared teachers' perceptions of the old curriculum with those of the revised curriculum framework in terms of their impact on teachers' evaluation processes.

The five teachers rated the revised curricular framework for its functionality for teachers' evaluation processes. The greatest gain (a 25% increase) was revealed in the area of the functionality of the curriculum document for the design of instruments suitable for students. The gain in the areas of the usefulness of the curriculum as a reference for developing instruments and as a foundation for creating reliable evaluative tools was slight. This was particularly true in terms of the usefulness of the curriculum as a foundation for developing reliable tools; the gain was the lowest of all the areas: 2%. Table 5 summarizes these findings.

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of the Revised Curricular Framework for Evaluation

Issue	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		+Change	+%
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Utility of curriculum:						
developing tests/ other instruments	2.90	1.02	3.80	0.84	0.90	18.00
Utility of curriculum:						
developing reliable instruments	3.40	0.89	3.60	0.55	0.20	4.00
Utility of curriculum:						
developing suitable instruments for students	3.40	0.61	4.60	1.00	1.25	25.00

Note. The values represent means where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

+ = gain

Qualitative findings. Teachers added comments to clarify their responses to the statements comparing the utility of the old curriculum with that of the revised curricular framework for evaluation of integrated-skills course.

I coded these in the same manner as I coded the comments for the previous two sections, coding them positive, negative, suggestions, or neutral. When examining qualitative data, I coded mostly affirmative statements (e.g., “Yes, with exceptions...”) positive; and I coded mostly negative comments (e.g., “Not always practical...”) negative. One comment about the curricular framework being “a little high in areas”, I coded “n” because the statement was unclear. From data on teachers’ perceptions of the former curricular document as a support for evaluation, extracted from the first questionnaire, I noted 2 positive comments, 2 negative statements, and 3 neutral statements. After examining statements from the second questionnaire, I coded 4 positive comments, 3 negative statements, and 1 neutral comment. Table 6 presents these findings.

Table 6

Teachers' Perceptions of the Utility of Curricular Documents for Evaluation: Summary of Comments on Questionnaires

Issue	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
Utility of curriculum: developing tests/ other instruments	(+)Use it mainly to develop homework/class tasks. (+)Use it as a guideline. (-)Often not specific enough.	(-)It is too specific and does not connect to evaluation. (+)Useful for developing (-)Not useful for developing quizzes. (-)Too many objectives. (+)Helpful to have concisely stated goals for focus.
Utility of curriculum: developing reliable instruments	(-)Find it difficult to base all evaluation on the curriculum. (n)Don't base evaluation on the curriculum.	(+)Generally, yes. (n)Sometimes it's "a little high" in areas.
Utility of curriculum: developing suitable instruments for students	(n)Don't know. (n)Have no information from students. (-)Have received negative comments from students	(+)Greater focus on students' ability to meet performance objectives.

Note. The values represent means where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

+ = gain

Summary: Qualitative Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews, Field Notes, and Additional Comments on Questionnaires.

I coded data from the semi-structured interview transcripts and the field notes. I also examined teachers' comments recorded in the last section of each of the two questionnaires; this section appeared on the final page of both questionnaires and included space for teachers' additional comments about the old curriculum and the revised curricular framework. These themes emerged: processes used with the revised curricular framework, strengths and weaknesses of the revised curricular framework as it compared to the old curriculum, and suggestions for improvement.

As teachers commented on the revised curricular framework, they revealed some of their beliefs and theories about curriculum: why curriculum exists, how curricular innovation is managed, how curriculum knowledge is gained, and what qualities an ideal curriculum possesses. As teachers articulated their opinions about the revised curricular framework, their "tacit beliefs, not so readily accessible, were brought to the fore when routine practices were challenged" (Paris, 1993, p. 72). An issue that seemed to influence many of their perceptions of curricula was having too little time for curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Processes used with the revised curricular framework. The teachers talked about their processes for using the revised curricular framework. They indicated they initially relied on the framework to thoroughly familiarize themselves with its contents. One teacher spoke about how she focused on reading and rereading the framework for the first two weeks. Through her classroom implementation, she reflected on the contents of the framework and what was actually happening in her classroom:

...I think part of my working with this document was artificial in the sense that often I was analyzing the document as a document itself partially, too... There was some of the trying to implement it in the class, but I think for part of it, in terms of the class, I was going on auto pilot and then, the rest of the time I was really focusing on what I thought of the document itself and sort of comparing it to what was going on in the class but not really implementing it... (personal communication, November 18, 2000)

Another teacher used the framework as a starting point for selecting the content she covered during the month. Her initial stages of planning involved sifting through the objectives and selecting two or three that she thought were realistic for her learners. After this, she made her own list of objectives and then looked over relevant materials in the class sets of texts designated for her students. As the teachers began to implement their curriculum, some mentioned reflecting on how their methodology was helping them achieve the objectives they had selected from the curricular framework and less on the contents of the framework. As the study block progressed, the teachers relied less on the framework, but one teacher commented, "I think focusing on it so much at the beginning planted some stuff in my brain, you know. I think being able to use it over and over again would sort of build it up in layers after a while..." (personal communication, November 18, 2000).

Strengths and weaknesses of the revised curricular framework. The findings from the qualitative data suggest that teachers felt that the revised curricular framework possessed strengths and weaknesses.

First, three teachers commented on the framework's inclusion of performance objectives. They stated that such objectives gave them direction for planning their classes and for rationalizing their choice of activity. One commented in the last section of questionnaire two: "Narrowing down the vagueness and ambiguity makes assessing and targeting objectives a concrete goal rather than an abstract hope." There were some responses highlighting the usefulness of certain specific objectives, such as those appearing for vocabulary development and speaking.

Second, three teachers indicated they appreciated the sample activities and the cross references to specific resources available at the Victoria school: "I find the specific listing of resources and materials available to us, very helpful" (comments, questionnaire 2).

Third, one teacher stated that she liked the information contained in the curricular framework about what skills needed to be targeted at each level and how these compared to those covered at the preceding and following levels. She states, "...what I liked about the document you made here is where you compare it to what other levels have because seriously no one is going to go through and read all of them to compare..." (personal communication, November 18, 2000).

Despite their appreciation for the inclusion of performance objectives in the framework, the teachers had some concerns. One mentioned that teachers need to carefully select the two or three objectives that can be targeted during the month-long block. Another had a concern about the performance objectives' level of specificity. She states, "...Sometimes the examples then became, to me, almost too specific....And I found it difficult to transfer everything over because it was so specific..."(personal

communication, November 18, 2000). This teacher went on to say that she felt that some of the objectives for listening were too prescribed for her style of teaching: “But I will never be comfortable teaching bang, bang, bang, bang, . . . Because for me, if I lose one of the bangs, then I’m screwed, you know? Because I have problems keeping that kind of rhythm going” (personal communication, November 18, 2000). Another highlighted the wordiness and ambiguity of the speaking performance objectives and said she needed more information on what exactly to target and how to target it. One stated that pronunciation should not be articulated in terms of specific exit standard objectives.

Other weaknesses specifically mentioned included the amount of information included in the framework. Another mentioned that, although she understood that I did not intend for her to cover all the objectives, she felt that the framework contained too much information for her to analyze and consider before she selected her target objectives.

Data from the questionnaires, transcripts and field notes show that four of the five teachers found the framework easier to understand and use than the old curriculum. One of the teachers made this comment as she viewed her copies of the old curriculum and the revised curricular framework:

... the first block, . . . I was just lost, lost, lost, lost, lost. And then I had this to work with, which, wow! What a difference! It’s much, much more helpful . . . It’s something that obviously that you can see that I used it a lot; whereas this one is, oh, it’s, it doesn’t have a wrinkle in it!

(personal communication, November 19, 2000)

Suggestions for improvement. A discussion of the concerns about the revised curricular framework led the teachers to suggest changes to the document's format, thematic content, articulation of objectives, and cross-referenced resources. Three teachers recommended additions to the framework.

Two teachers commented on the format of the framework. One participant suggested that the sample activities included under the general heading of sample resources/materials available should be presented in a separate section. She stated that this separation would make it easier for teachers to locate the sample activities, which was not the case currently because they were combined with resource lists. Another remarked that presenting the performance objectives and other items in a summary form would be helpful: "Like I think I almost want stereo instructions more than full sentences." (personal communication, November 18, 2000). Such changes to the format would make it easier for teachers to locate and remember the performance objectives.

Two teachers commented on the theme included on the curricular framework. While both said having a theme served a practical purpose in preventing teachers from overlapping content, they were concerned about the type of themes. One suggested that including more relevant themes, such as Canadian content, developmental education, or environmental concerns would be helpful.

Two teachers suggested that the articulation of the objectives need to be changed. One said that breaking down performance objectives into more specific objectives and then providing more direction on how the specific objectives should be addressed at different levels would be facilitating. The teacher used the reading performance objective of inference as an example:

...the past document... will have “inference” for Intermediate 4, Intermediate 3, Intermediate 2. OK, what’s the difference? What should they be able to do with inferencing in Intermediate 2 compared to Intermediate 3 compared to Intermediate 4? That’s all I want to know, in a way...

(personal communication, November 18, 2000)

Another idea for improvement involved further specification of the cross-referenced resources. Although general information about the text chapters was cross-referenced to the performance objective, one teacher suggested that more precise direction be provided on the document. She wanted a specific list of pages and exercises that targeted the performance objectives: “You can’t ...be so specific that you have to spoon feed almost, but, but it might be a bit more helpful just to be a little more specific... OK, what is in there that would really get to these objectives?” (personal communication, November 19, 2000)

Three teachers recommended additions to the curricular framework. One recommended inclusion of sample evaluation methods to be built upon the performance objectives: “... possible evaluation suggestions linked to activities which are then linked to the objective, so seeing an example of how goes from objective to activity to evaluation...” She went on to add that such samples serve as “a place to start from” (personal communication, November 19, 2000). Two others recommended adding more information about resources. One advised adding a list of recommended resources to the framework; another suggested that it would be very helpful to have resources other than texts listed on the framework. She also asked that web sites that are appropriate for each level be added to the framework as samples of the potentially suitable sites for particular

address it. She recommends the framework be changed to include sample evaluation tasks.

In summary, the qualitative and quantitative data showed that the teachers' use of the revised curricular framework facilitated their preparation for and delivery of integrated-skills classes. The qualitative and quantitative data also suggested that the revised curricular framework did not influence teachers' evaluation of students in these classes.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Introduction

The findings from this study suggest that the use of the revised curricular framework impacted teachers' integrated-skills course preparation and implementation. However, their use of the curricular framework did not seem to influence their classroom evaluation. Involving teachers in the process of piloting the revised framework seemed to increase their agency in the curriculum making process (Paris, 1993). These results are discussed below.

Teachers' Processes using the Revised Curricular Framework

The revised curriculum framework seemed to impact teachers' preparation most significantly. They began to prepare for the month of teaching (study block 11) by trying to understand the curricular framework. One stated, "... at the beginning I was very excited to have it in contrast to what we had previously... and I wanted to try and understand and see how I could work it" (personal communication, November 18, 2000).

Teachers spent time at the beginning of study block 11 reading the revised framework and carefully selecting the performance objectives they would target in their classes. They did not have guidelines for their selection processes. It is apparent that some teachers chose performance objectives according to their knowledge of students' needs. Others selected performance objectives by first viewing the content of the school resources. Then, they chose objectives based on what was easily accessible in resources. Throughout the first two weeks, the teachers referred to the revised curricular framework frequently. They mentioned that they read through the framework, examined

resources, listed the objectives they planned to target, and considered how they would target them. As they began to implement the revised curricular framework, they stated that they did not need to refer it as frequently as they had at the beginning of the study block.

This process teachers employed to read and understand the intent of the objectives, to select two or three, and to consider implementation helped them retain the key content. This conceptual foundation enabled them to plan for and implement their classes without continuously reading over the revised framework throughout the block. The revised framework, with its selection of performance objectives, seemed to require teachers to carefully reflect as they prepared to teach their classes. While the process of reading the revised curricular framework, selecting objectives, finding appropriate materials may have been laborious, it seemed to facilitate teachers' acquisition of curriculum knowledge which would guide their classroom implementation for the study block.

The process that teachers underwent as they piloted this curricular framework is the subject of other studies. In her examination of elementary school teachers experimenting with new word-processing curricula, Paris (1993) states: "The teachers engaged, instead, in multiple, simultaneous, and continuous curriculum processes and moved through and among these processes in recursive and episodic fashion" (p. 128). The process by which curriculum knowledge is gained involves questioning, observing and altering (Paris, 1993). Questions are posed by teachers as they grapple with issues provoked by new curriculum. Observations are made about curriculum implementation -- organization, methodology, and resources. Observations lead teachers to make alterations

in their practice. These processes are intertwined: observations can lead to questions; alterations can lead to observations, and so on (Paris, 1993). Engagement in this reflective process contributes to teachers' curriculum knowledge and can lead to greater agency in curriculum making (Paris, 1993).

The teachers seemed to engage in this recursive process of questioning and observing as they prepared for and implemented their integrated-skills classes. For example, one teacher indicated she "was going on auto pilot and then, the rest of the time really focusing on what I thought of the document itself and sort of comparing it to what was going on in the class but not really implementing it..." (personal communication, November 18, 2000). This comment indicates she may be engaged in observing the potential utility of the revised curricular framework and considering its practical application for her classes without actually implementing it. This seems to suggest the teacher was questioning and observing during the study in order to gain more practical knowledge of the document (Paris, 1993).

Despite the knowledge they gained from their reflective process, teachers seemed to feel that working with such a densely formatted curricular framework was too demanding. This also may have contributed to the reduced time they spent analyzing the document in the last half of the study block. Paris (1993) points out that intense involvement in reflective process is episodic: "...progress was halted or slowed when the teachers' attention was diverted. Some diversions came in the form of the day-to-day demands of maintaining ongoing classroom routines" (p. 142). In the last half of the study block, several teachers at the Victoria school abandoned their focus on the process of using the curricular framework. One teacher commented: "I find it difficult to keep

redesigning every day, every month for a different... It just seems, in terms of preparation for this school, for this program, what we're doing here is like a travelling road show" (personal communication, November 18, 2000) Teachers at the Victoria school commented on the challenges of their first experience using the revised curricular framework. Teachers seemed to have found the process that required them to work through the curricular framework very demanding.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Content of the Revised Curricular Framework

Chapter one alludes to the teachers' struggles to prepare for classes using the old curriculum because of its vagueness. It seems that the more precise objectives contained in the revised curricular framework facilitated teachers' preparation for and implementation of their classes.

As teachers reflected on the performance objectives and lists of resources and sample activities, they stated that they found the new curricular framework easier to work with than the old curriculum had been. They were able to select objectives, examine the resources and sample activities listed, and consider the theme as they prepared for their classes. The lists of resources and sample activities seemed to ease teachers' workload, particularly at the beginning of the block. These lists of resources and activities appeared beside the performance objectives they referred to, and teachers found this helpful. Teachers felt that having additional information about expectations for students' performance at different levels helped them clarify their classroom emphases.

The clear content of the revised curricular framework seems to have facilitated teachers' classroom implementation because it provided creative stimulus. Teachers commented that having a non-mandated array of performance objectives, sample

activities and resource lists generated other ideas. The revised curricular framework gave them a starting point which enable them to see other possibilities. Teachers' positive experiences working with performance objectives reflect comments by Nunan (1988). He remarks that formulating precise statements about what a learner should be able to do at the end of a course "...is an essential step in the curriculum design process which greatly facilitates a number of other steps" (Nunan, 1988, p. 59). The steps Nunan alludes to may include further specification of objectives, but they may also include the development of new ideas, approaches and methodology.

The teachers felt, however, that at times, the performance objectives included on the revised curricular framework were problematic. They were too wordy and prescribed, which made them difficult to understand and implement. Inexperienced teachers struggled with selecting the objectives from the list. Some of the objectives seemed inappropriate, especially for pronunciation. Another difficulty teachers had with the performance objectives was their specificity. One teacher remarked: "...Sometimes the examples then became, to me, almost too specific. It's like they almost crossed over a line... And I found it difficult to transfer everything over because it was so specific..." (personal communication, November 18, 2000).

Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of the Revised Curricular Framework on their Evaluation

The revised curricular framework did not seem to significantly impact teachers' evaluation of students in their integrated-skills classes. The main reason for this may be that this framework lacked specific examples showing how teachers might design instruments to test students' progress. I assumed that teachers would design their own

tests based on the performance objectives they had covered in class. However, one teacher requested the revised curricular framework include sample evaluation methods that linked back to classroom tasks based on particular performance objectives.

There may be two other reasons that their use of the revised curricular framework had little impact on teachers' evaluation. Due to the amount of content they need to cover in the integrated-skills component of the GEP, teachers do not have enough time to evaluate students often. They typically have only fourteen two-hour integrated-skills classes in one study block, so this makes frequent evaluation very difficult. Also, evaluation has not been a feature of the integrated-skills component of the GEP. Developers of the integrated-skills component have tried to establish a high-interest, low-stress program to increase students' enjoyment and to facilitate students' linguistic development. This has meant that rigorous evaluation has not been an emphasis of the integrated-skills component of the GEP. As a result of the time constraints and de-emphasis on evaluation in the GEP, teachers are more concerned about their preparation for and implementation of classes. As Brindley and Hood (1990) state, curricular innovation impacts teachers most when there is a pressing need for it. At the Victoria school, teachers seemed to have a greater need for guidance for their preparation and delivery of classes at this time; therefore, while using the revised curricular framework, teachers reflected on its functionality for their preparation and implementation rather than on its utility for their evaluation.

Teachers' Agency with the Revised Curricular Framework

As they piloted the curricular framework, teachers suggested improvements to the document. They recommended a more readable format, more relevant themes, finer

articulation of the emphases that teachers should provide at different levels, additional examples of evaluative tools, and the inclusion of web sites and recommended resources. One recommended more specific references to textbook pages and chapters be included in the resource list. They seem to want an effective curricular document that meets their needs for clarity, readability and relevance.

These suggestions show that teachers, if they are included in the process of curriculum reform, are willing to try curricular innovation and to increase their agency in curriculum issues. Their engagement in the process increases their curriculum knowledge and allows them to contribute to the knowledge of others.

Summary

This discussion highlights the positive and negative influence the revised curricular framework seemed to have on teachers' preparation and implementation processes. Their concentration on these processes may have lessened their need to focus on evaluation, which may explain the limited impact their use of the framework seemed to have on their evaluation processes. Teachers' engagement in critiquing and suggesting improvements to the framework seems to reveal their growing agency in curriculum development.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Before presenting the conclusions and recommendations for future study, I will briefly return to the issues raised in chapter one of this study. The concerns outlined there involved the inadequacies of the old integrated-skills curriculum and the need for change.

The old integrated-skills component of the GEP has been the source of dissatisfaction for students and teachers. Students have expressed concern that the theme-based instruction in reading, listening, and discussion does not contribute to their conversational fluency. Teachers have been frustrated because the content of this course has been difficult to implement.

Because teachers at the Victoria school had requested guidance for their implementation of integrated-skills classes and because a study at the Victoria school could contribute to the larger curricular revision process across the network of schools, I decided to examine the impact of a revised curricular framework on teachers' preparation, implementation and evaluation processes for their integrated-skills classes. This revised curricular framework, which contains performance objectives for reading, listening and speaking, was requested by and developed with Victoria teachers in reference to proficiency guidelines (ACTFL, 1987; CLB, 1996).

Having taught full-time at the schools in Calgary and Victoria and having experienced the stress and fatigue that working in these contexts can involve, I wanted to work with teachers to create more effective curriculum. In another context, I had worked with a team of colleagues to create curricula containing exit standard objectives and

found that, as teachers, we were able to develop our own practical and enlightening curriculum. These personal experiences contributed to my eagerness to engage teachers in Victoria in a curriculum development project.

The research question at the heart of this study was: *What are teachers' perceptions of the impact of using a revised curricular framework containing performance objectives on their lesson preparation, delivery and evaluation?*

I also explored a related issue: teacher agency in curricular innovation.

Conclusions

While qualitative and quantitative data gained from this study suggest that the impact of this particular framework on Victoria teachers' evaluation was insignificant, they show teachers' use of the revised curricular framework impacted their preparation for and implementation of integrated-skills classes.

Teachers found the inclusion of performance objectives in the revised curricular framework assisted them with conceptualizing their course content. Since the performance objectives were optional, they had the freedom to choose objectives that were relevant to their learners and achievable during the study block. Having access to clearer objectives seemed to decrease teachers' work because they did not have to create the content of their courses every time they taught them, they simply selected it from a list of performance objectives they had helped compile before the study began. The resource lists and sample activities also minimized teachers' work. Teachers could implement suggestions on the curriculum or they could use them as foundations for developing additional resources and activities. It can be concluded that using this revised

curricular framework containing performance objectives facilitated Victoria teachers' lesson preparation and delivery.

The findings from the study also imply that teachers are active agents in curricular innovation and development. As the Victoria teachers involved themselves in initially suggesting changes to the old curriculum, adding to and revising a list of exit standard objectives based on the ACTFL and CLB proficiency guidelines, experimenting with the revised curricular framework and reflecting upon its functionality, they had a number of important insights and suggestions for the curricular framework's improvement. These included reducing the density and quantity of the framework's contents, adding suggestions for evaluative tools, recommended resources and web sites, and specifying emphases teachers should have when teaching performance objectives across different levels.

Recommendations

I would like to make the following recommendations as a result of this study.

First, the curricular framework should be revised based on the teachers' suggestions and implemented for a longer period of time at the Victoria school. Revisions that teachers suggested included greater specificity of objectives, clearer formatting, inclusion of additional resources and evaluation suggestions, and more relevant thematic content.

Second, this revised curricular framework should be piloted at other network schools to determine its impact in other settings. This study was conducted at a new, smaller school. Examining its influence on more experienced teachers at established

schools would provide more information about the kinds of curricular documents that are facilitating in different contexts with different participants.

Third, studies into the learners' perceptions of the utility of this framework's contents should be completed at the schools. Such studies should be conducted before larger-scale curricular revisions are made. Data about students' perceptions of their course content would yield helpful ideas about further curricular revisions.

Fourth, teacher agency in curriculum development should be encouraged. Teachers gain affirmation when their experience and practical classroom knowledge are drawn upon. Greater affirmation could lead to increased willingness to participate in curricular innovation. Such participation could lead to further reflection and experimentation with curricular reform. Paris's (1993) statements summarize this concern best:

Nurturing teacher agency requires as well that teachers' curriculum work be understood in terms of its present and historical contexts and that it be interpreted through the eyes of the teachers who live it. To do so permits teachers, teacher educators, and others who would support teacher agency in curriculum matters to recognize the personal, practical, and contextualized curriculum knowledge teachers already possess, to value the processes by which they create and critique it, and be sensitive to and build upon that knowledge and those processes that may already exist within teachers' repertoires. (p. 151)

ESL teachers participating in this study called for, helped create, experimented with and critiqued a revised curricular framework containing performance objectives. Altering this curricular framework based on these teachers' comments, piloting the

curricular framework with other teachers in larger schools in the network, conducting studies into learners' reactions to the content of the curricular framework for their integrated-skills classes, and nurturing teachers' involvement in future curriculum projects are possible extensions to this study. As further research is done, it is hoped that it will foster greater recognition for curriculum knowledge and expertise possessed by teachers in the ESL profession. It is also hoped that ESL teachers themselves will understand that they possess the curriculum knowledge they need to move in new directions.

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Appendix A: Sample Curricular Framework

Study block: 11
 Level: Intermediate 1
 Designated chapters/units: *Canadian Concepts* (Chapters 1-5)
Pronunciation Pairs Units 1-4; 21-25

Theme: Media and Advertising

Great Ideas (Chapters 1-7)

Language Skill	Possible performance objectives for Intermediate 1 students	Sample resources/materials available at GV Victoria
Reading/vocabulary development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate understanding when teacher reviews vocabulary on everyday topics (social customs, eating out, sports, seasons, environmental concerns) • Guess at meaning of some isolated words from a familiar context, recognize grammatical functions of unknown words • Follow common (1-6 step) written instructions with no visual cues. • Identify main ideas and specific information contained in short passages (3-5 paragraphs) of simply structured and written prose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Canadian Concepts 4</i> (chapters 1-5) Vocabulary items on these everyday topics are featured in this Textbook • Short articles (1-5 paragraphs) on everyday topics in the <i>Times Colonist</i> are useful for vocabulary practice for I1 students • Sample written instructions appear on medicine labels, household cleaners, laundry detergents, food packages (e.g. Kraft Dinner), hair products. From the phone book, instructions on how to make a long distance call or on how to set up phone service • <i>Canadian Concepts 4</i>: Chapters 1-5 feature exercises which give students practice with identifying main ideas and supporting details. • <i>Great Ideas</i>: Chapters 1-7 feature some reading practice reinforcing main ideas, organization patterns and supporting details. E.g. ch. 1, p. 6; ch. 2, p. 8; ch. 5, p. 24.
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify most content words (nouns/verbs) in a 3-5 sentence utterance about an everyday topic. • Answer questions about topic/details from longer excerpts (1-3 minutes) about everyday topics. • Listen for specific information from authentic sources including weather reports, telephone messages, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample activity: Teacher reads a 3-5 simple sentence passage from authentic material (newspaper article, brochure, conversation "snippet". Students jot down what the teacher reads. Teacher speeds up as students' listening progresses. • <i>Canadian Concepts 4</i>: chapters 1-5 There are listening activities in these chapters involving audio cassettes and video clips which give students practice listening for main ideas and specific details. • <i>Great Ideas</i>: chapters 4, 5, and 7 provide more authentic listenings for the detailed information listed on the left

	<p>television programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and respond to simple sets of instructions about movement and position (simple commands and prepositions of location) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample activity: teacher prepares students to eventually make phone calls to numbers where students need to listen to specific instructions, press appropriate numbers and get necessary information. Students are required to report their information back to their classmates.
Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • /iy/, /I/, /ey/, / • /p/, /b/, /V/, /d/, /k/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units 1-4 • Units 21-25
Speaking/Discussion building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact appropriately and more spontaneously in conversation on everyday topics (Initiate topics, ask WH- questions to get the speaker to elaborate, politely change topics, comment further on a speaker's previous statements) • Describing moods/feelings and events • Review of complimenting • Relating simple anecdotes about past experiences • Discussing preferences and plans • Informal elementary presentation skills (to enable students to do 3-5 minute short "sharing" sessions) (Anticipating audience's questions and providing information in response.) • Participate in simple discussions/activities about content learned from reading/listening tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample activity: Every day, the teacher asks one student to bring in a topic he/she wants the class to talk about during a 10 minute "warmer" at the beginning of each class. The teacher focuses students on their need to respond quickly and smoothly and their need to prolong their speaking turns for 1 minute. • <i>Great Ideas</i>, chapters 1 & 2 • <i>Great Ideas</i>, chapter 3 • <i>Great Ideas</i>, chapter 6 • <i>Great Ideas</i>, chapter 6 • <i>Canadian Concepts 4</i>: ch. 4 (sports presentation) • <i>Canadian Concepts 4</i>: 1-5 Each unit provides students with opportunities to increase their fluency through discussions

Appendix B: Questionnaire 1

Questionnaire 1: The existing integrated-skills curriculum

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about your perceptions of the functionality of the existing integrated-skills curriculum for levels B2 to I3/I4 as you consider how you prepare for your afternoon classes, implement your afternoon classes, and evaluate students' performance in your afternoon classes.

Please answer the following questions based on your accumulated experience working with this integrated-skills curriculum. To assist you in reflecting upon the monthly themes, typical format, and types of skills and content that you have used for a variety of levels, I have attached a sample of the Intermediate 1 integrated-skills curriculum.

Please note that your answers will be used for the purpose of my study only. The information you provide is confidential and will be destroyed immediately after the study is completed.

.....
Please examine the following statements. After each statement there are 5 answers ranging from strongly agree (a) to strongly disagree (e). Please select the answer that best reflects your thinking. If you wish to add further comments about your response, please do so in the "comments" space after each statement.

The following items refer to your perceptions of the usefulness of the integrated-skills curriculum document as you plan for your afternoon classes.

1. The format of the integrated-skills curriculum is easy to follow.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

2. I can order/organize my coverage of specific items which appear under the general skill headings.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

3. When reading specific items (e.g. leading a discussion) under general skill headings (e.g. listening/discussion skills), I am able to interpret what these specific items mean.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

4. When analyzing specific items (e.g. identifying key words) under general skill headings (e.g. vocabulary skills), I am able to plan what I will cover in my classes.
a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

5. I find the theme for each study block useful for planning for my afternoon classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

6. Having the resources listed under “recommended readings” and “recommended listenings” is helpful for me to refer to as I plan for my afternoon classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

The following items relate to your perceptions of the usefulness of the integrated skills curriculum as you implement your afternoon classes.

7. I have been able to find resources, materials and activities to implement the skills and theme listed on the integrated-skills curriculum.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

8. The specific skills appearing under the general category of *reading skills* seem to meet my learners’ needs in this area.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

9. The specific skills appearing under the general category of *reading styles* seem to be appropriate to teach my learners.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

10. The specific skills appearing under the general category of *listening/discussion skills* seem to meet my learners’ needs in this area.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

11. The specific skills appearing under the general category of *pronunciation* seem to meet my learners’ needs in this area.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

12. The specific skills appearing under the general category of *vocabulary skills* seem to meet my learners' needs in these areas.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

13. The specific words itemized under the general category of *vocabulary list* seem to be useful words for my students to learn.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

14. My learners seem to think the content of my afternoon classes that I have developed based on the integrated-skills curriculum is appropriate for their needs.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

15. My learners seem to think the resources, materials and activities I use for my integrated- classes are suitable.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

16. My learners seem to enjoy the theme designated for each study block.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

17. My learners seem to be enjoying the afternoon classes.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

The following items refer to your perceptions of the usefulness of the integrated-skills curriculum as you evaluate students in your afternoon classes.

18. The integrated-skills curriculum is useful for me to refer to as I develop quizzes, homework assignments, and classroom tasks to evaluate students' performance in my afternoon classes.

- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

19. My students' performance on quizzes, homework assignments, and classroom tasks based on the integrated-skills curriculum seems to mesh with my overall impressions of their English language development.
- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

20. My students seem to think my evaluation methods and tools based on the integrated-skills curriculum are appropriate.
- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

Additional comments about the usefulness of the integrated-skills curriculum documents as you plan for, deliver and assess students in your afternoon classes:

Appendix C: Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 2: A revised curricular framework including exit standard objectives

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about your perceptions of the functionality of the revised curricular framework including exit standard objectives for levels B2 to I3/I4. Please consider the document's usefulness for your preparation for and implementation of your afternoon classes, and for your evaluation of students' performance in your afternoon classes.

Please answer the following questions based on your one-month experience (study block 11) working with this curricular framework. To assist you in reflecting upon the monthly themes, typical format, and types of skills and content that the framework includes for a variety of levels, I have attached a sample of your curricular framework for study block 11.

Please note that your answers will be used for the purpose of my study only. The information you provide is confidential and will be destroyed immediately after the study is completed.

.....

Please examine the following statements. After each statement there are 5 answers ranging from strongly agree (a) to strongly disagree (e). Please select the answer that best reflects your thinking. If you wish to add further comments about your response, please do so in the "comments" space after each statement.

The following items refer to your perceptions of the usefulness of the curricular framework containing exit standard objectives as you plan for your afternoon classes.

1. The format of this curricular framework is easy to follow.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

2. I can plan my course content based on the specific performance objectives that appear in the middle of my framework under *Possible performance objectives for...*
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

3. When analyzing these performance objectives for each language skill, I am able to interpret what those objectives mean as I think about planning my integrated-skills classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

4. When reading these performance objectives, I can plan what I will cover in my classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

5. I find the theme for each study block useful for planning for my afternoon classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

6. Having information listed under *Sample resources/materials available at GV Victoria* on the curricular framework helps me plan for my afternoon classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

The following items relate to your perceptions of the usefulness of the curricular framework containing exit standard objectives as you implement your afternoon classes.

7. I have been able to find resources, materials and activities to implement lessons based on the exit standard objectives included in the curricular framework.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

8. The performance objectives appearing beside the general category of *Reading/Vocabulary Development* seem to be appropriate targets for my learners.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

9. The performance objectives appearing beside the general category of *listening* seem to be appropriate targets for my learners.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

10. The performance objectives appearing beside the general category of *speaking* seem to be suitable targets for my learners.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

11. The content appearing beside the general category of *pronunciation* seems to meet my learners' needs in this area.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

12. My learners seem to think the content of my afternoon classes that I have developed based on this curricular framework is appropriate for their needs.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

13. My learners seem to think the resources, materials and activities I use for my integrated-skills classes are suitable.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

14. My learners seem to enjoy the theme designated for each study block.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

15. My learners seem to be enjoying the afternoon classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

The following items refer to your perceptions of the usefulness of the integrated-skills curriculum as you evaluate students in your afternoon classes.

16. The curricular framework containing exit standard objectives is useful for me to refer to as I develop quizzes, homework assignments, and classroom tasks to evaluate students' performance in my afternoon classes.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

17. My students' performance on quizzes, homework assignments, and classroom tasks based on the objectives contained in the curricular framework seems to mesh with my overall impressions of their English language development.
 a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

18. My students seem to think my evaluation methods and tools based on the curricular framework including exit standard objectives are appropriate.
- a. strongly agree b. agree c. neutral d. disagree e. strongly disagree

Comments:

Additional comments about the usefulness of the curricular framework containing exit standard objectives as you plan for, deliver and assess students in your afternoon classes:

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background questions

1. Where have you taught ESL classes in the past?
2. What kind of ESL curriculum documents did you work with in these places?

Key questions:

This study block we tried a different curricular framework from what we've used before at our school.

1. What comments do you have about the curriculum document we used in the past?
2. How do you think this new curricular framework that we've been using during the last month influenced your
 - a. preparation for your integrated-skills classes during the last study block?
 - b. actual teaching during your integrated-skills classes in study block 11?
 - c. evaluation of students in your integrated-skills course during the last study block?
3. What kind of curricular framework would you find easiest to use?