

**Towards Guidelines for Curriculum Design and Development in English
Language Teacher Education in Cambodian Higher Education Institutions**

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ABSTRACT

In the current Cambodian higher education sector, there is little regulation of standards in curriculum design of undergraduate degrees in English language teacher education. The researcher, in the course of his professional work in the Curriculum and Policy Office at the Department of Higher Education, has seen evidence that most universities tend to copy their curriculum from one source, the curriculum of the Institute of Foreign Languages, the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Their programs fail to impose any entry standards, accepting students who pass the high school exam without any entrance examination. It is possible for a student to enter university with satisfactory scores in all subjects but English. Therefore, not many graduates are able to fulfil the professional requirements of the roles they are supposed to take. Neau (2010) claims that many Cambodian EFL teachers do not reach a high performance standard due to their low English language proficiency and poor background in teacher education.

The main purpose of this study is to establish key guidelines for developing curricula for English language teacher education for all the universities across the country. It examines the content of the Bachelor's degree of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (B Ed in TEFL) and Bachelor's degree of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (BA in TESOL) curricula adopted in Cambodian universities on the basis of criteria proposed in current curriculum research. It also investigates the perspectives of Cambodian EFL teachers on the areas of knowledge and skill they need in order to perform their English teaching duties in Cambodia today. The areas of knowledge and skill offered in the current curricula at Cambodian higher education institutions (HEIs), the framework of the knowledge base for EFL teacher education and general higher education, and the areas of knowledge and skill Cambodian EFL teachers perceive to be important, are compared so as to identify any gaps in the current English language teacher education curricula in the Cambodian HEIs. The existence of gaps show what domains of knowledge and skill need to be included in the English language teacher education curricula at Cambodian HEIs. These domains are those identified by previous curriculum researchers in both general and English language teacher education at tertiary level. Therefore, the present study provides useful insights into the importance of including appropriate content in English language teacher education curricula.

Mixed methods are employed in this study. The course syllabi and the descriptions within the curricula in five Cambodian HEIs are analysed qualitatively based on the framework of knowledge and skills for EFL teachers, which is formed by looking at the knowledge base for second language teachers suggested by the methodologists and curriculum specialists whose work is elaborated on the review of literature. A quantitative method is applied to analyse the perspectives of 120 Cambodian EFL teachers on areas of knowledge and skills they should possess. The fieldwork was conducted between June and August, 2014. The analysis reveals that the following areas are included in the curricula at the five universities: communication skills, general knowledge, knowledge of teaching theories, teaching skills, pedagogical reasoning and decision making skills, subject matter knowledge, contextual knowledge, cognitive abilities, and knowledge of social issues. Additionally, research skills are included in three curricula while society and community involvement is in only one. Further, information and communication technology, which is outlined in the Education Strategies Plan (2006-2010), forms part of four curricula while leadership skills form part of two.

This study demonstrates ultimately that most domains that are directly and indirectly related to language teaching competence are not sufficiently represented in the current curricula. On the basis of its findings, the study concludes with a set of guidelines that should inform the design and development of TESOL and TEFL curricula in Cambodia.

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DEDICATION

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACC	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEd	Bachelor of Education
DHE	Department of Higher Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESL	English as a Second Language
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Science
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UN	United Nations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
ABSTRACT	I
CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP OF THESIS	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	V
DEDICATION	VII
LIST OF ACRONYMS	IX
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XV
LIST OF TABLES.....	XVII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. BRIEF BACKGROUND OF CAMBODIAN HIGHER EDUCATION	1
1.2. TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN CAMBODIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	2
1.3. ROLES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	3
1.4. RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	4
1.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	6
1.6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	6
1.7. DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS	7
1.8. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH	7
1.9. SUMMARY	8
1.10. METHODOLOGY.....	9
1.11. THESIS OUTLINE.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1. DEFINING CURRICULUM	13
2.2. LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DESIGN.....	14
2.2.1. <i>Assessing Environment</i>	14
2.2.2. <i>Assessing Needs</i>	15
2.2.3. <i>Deciding on Principles</i>	16
2.2.4. <i>Goals, Content and Sequencing</i>	20
2.2.5. <i>Evaluating the Course</i>	21

2.3. LANGUAGE CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES	22
2.4. TOOHEY’S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM DESIGN IN HIGHER EDUCATION	23
2.4.1. <i>Traditional or Discipline-Based Approach</i>	24
2.4.2. <i>Performance or System-Based Approach</i>	25
2.4.3. <i>Cognitive Approach</i>	25
2.4.4. <i>Personal Relevance or Experiential Approach</i>	26
2.4.5. <i>Socially Critical Approach</i>	27
2.5. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA.....	28
2.6. THE AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA	28
2.6.1. <i>Knowledge of Teaching Theories</i>	31
2.6.2. <i>Teaching Skills</i>	31
2.6.3. <i>Communication Skills</i>	32
2.6.4. <i>Subject Matter Knowledge</i>	32
2.6.5. <i>Pedagogical Reasoning and Decision-Making Skills</i>	33
2.6.6. <i>Contextual Knowledge</i>	33
2.7. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS	34
2.8. APPROPRIATE ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT.....	36
2.9. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY	38
2.10. SUMMARY	39
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	41
3.1. INTRODUCTION	41
3.2. RATIONALE FOR THE METHODOLOGY	41
3.2.1. <i>Rationale for the Use of Mixed Method Approach and Justification for the Application of Embedded Design</i>	41
3.2.2. <i>Justification for the Use of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches</i>	42
3.3. METHODS	42
3.3.1. <i>Research Contexts</i>	42
3.3.2. <i>Choices of Participants</i>	43
3.3.3. <i>Qualitative Data Collection</i>	44
3.3.4. <i>Quantitative Data Collection</i>	44
3.3.5. <i>Description of Questionnaire</i>	44

3.3.6. <i>Procedure for Questionnaire Distribution</i>	46
3.4. DATA ANALYSIS.....	48
3.4.1. <i>Qualitative Data Analysis</i>	48
3.4.2. <i>Quantitative Data Analysis</i>	48
3.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE METHOD USED.....	49
3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	49
3.7. SUMMARY	50
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	53
4.1. INTRODUCTION	53
4.2. THE CONTENT OF THE B ED IN TEFL AND BA IN TESOL CURRICULA	53
4.2.1. <i>University A</i>	54
4.2.2. <i>University B</i>	60
4.2.3. <i>University C</i>	63
4.2.4. <i>University D</i>	69
4.2.5. <i>University E</i>	74
4.2.6. <i>Average Proportions of Skills and Knowledge within the Five Curricula</i>	79
4.3. THE PERSPECTIVES OF CAMBODIAN EFL TEACHERS ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THEY NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICE.....	82
4.4. AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THAT CAMBODIAN EFL TEACHERS NEED.....	84
4.5. ADDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS CAMBODIAN EFL TEACHERS NEED	86
4.6. GENERAL COMMENTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS	87
4.7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	88
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	91
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	111
6.1. RESEARCH PROBLEMS	111
6.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	112
6.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	112
6.4. MAJOR FINDINGS.....	113
6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	115
6.5.1. <i>Guidelines and Implications for Higher Education Institutions</i>	115
6.5.2. <i>Recommendations and Implications for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport</i>	118

6.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	119
6.7. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY	120
REFERENCES.....	121
APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM.....	127
APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM	131
APPENDIX 3: APPROVAL LETTERS FROM TARGET UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE	133
APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE.....	137
APPENDIX 5: OTHER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS LISTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS	143
APPENDIX 6: PARTICIPANTS' GENERAL COMMENTS	147

LIST OF FIGURES

	Pages
Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the content of EFL teacher education curricula in Cambodian HEIs	39
Figure 2. Areas of knowledge included in the BEd in TEFL or BA in TESOL adopted at University A (as percentages)	59
Figure 3. Areas of knowledge included in the BEd in TEFL or BA in TESOL adopted at University B (as percentages)	63
Figure 4. Areas of knowledge included in the BEd in TEFL or BA in TESOL adopted at University C (as percentages)	69
Figure 5. Areas of knowledge included in the BEd in TEFL or BA in TESOL adopted at University D (as percentages)	74
Figure 6. Areas of knowledge included in the BEd in TEFL or BA in TESOL adopted at University E (as percentages).....	79
Figure 7. Average percentage of areas of knowledge included in the BEd in TEFL or BA in TESOL adopted at the five HEIs (as percentages).....	80
Figure 8. Cambodian EFL teachers' perspectives on knowledge and skills they need for their professional practice (as percentages).....	83
Figure 9. Cambodian EFL teachers' perceptions on the domains of knowledge and skills they need for their professional practice (as percentages)	85
Figure 10. Knowledge and skills written, by Cambodian EFL teachers, in the extra list of what they think are essential for them (as percentages).....	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Knowledge base for second language teacher education	34
Table 2. Number of potential respondents	47
Table 3. Participants' demographic information.....	47
Table 4. Acronyms of the domains of knowledge and skills	54
Table 5. Analysis of the content of University A's curriculum	55
Table 6. Analysis of the content of University B's curriculum	60
Table 7. Analysis of the content of University C's curriculum	64
Table 8. Analysis of the content of University D's curriculum	70
Table 9. Analysis of the content of University E's curriculum.....	75
Table 10. Comparison between the domains appearing in the five curricula and those proposed by the curriculum researchers.....	81
Table 11. Statements related to the domains of knowledge and skills for EFL teachers.....	83
Table 12. Conversion of the 21 statements into the domains of knowledge and skills for EFL teachers.....	84