

Effectiveness of ENSB English Language Initial Teacher Education Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to evaluate ENSB EFL curriculum intended for student-teacher education to define its strengths and weaknesses and seek whether it is still effective.

When we compared ENSB curriculum to Ducharme's teacher education model (1993), it proves to partly conform to it since it is made up of the main components: academic courses, theoretical courses and practicum, but when we compared it to Richards' language curriculum model, it is reduced to a schedule: a syllabus, or a list of subjects to be taught with the time devoted to each one.

As far as effectiveness of ENSB curriculum is concerned, its evaluation reveals that the highest score (11.80/20) registered by PEM student-teachers at the end of their studies cannot be considered as successful as the expected standard of achievement criterion (at least 12/20).

Consequently, because of these results and others you will discover during the intervention, ENSB curriculum does not seem to be effective in EFL teacher's preparation.

INTRODUCTION

“Effectiveness of ENSB English Language Initial Teacher Education Curriculum” is selected to identify the strengths and weaknesses of ENSB curriculum teacher education and estimate to what extent it is effective since it has been established that the more highly qualified teachers, the more their impact is on students' learning.

This study requires an evaluation of the curriculum. It is an ongoing process according to Brown(1995). Thus, he includes

“program evaluation” as a component in the process of curriculum development for an eventual revision with a view to improving it.

A series of analyses have been planned: the first one is two fold comparison. One is between ENSB curriculum and teacher education curriculum model and the other one is between ENSB curriculum and the language program model. The purpose is to diagnose ENSB conformity to them. The second analysis is the evaluation of ENSB curriculum via a grid proposed by Richards (2001:292-293).

However, to confirm the results obtained, other analyses such as a scrutiny of official documents and an interview with the final year student-teachers are scheduled.

All these tasks help to highlight the strengths and weaknesses to suggest recommendations to improve the curriculum, teachers’ preparation and by the way Algerian education.

1. Conformity of ENSB English Language Initial Teacher Education Curriculum

ENSB School prepares middle school teachers for four years and secondary school teachers for five years. It awards PEM a professional certificate allowing them a position in middle schools and PES a professional license giving them the opportunity to have a post in secondary schools. The curriculum used in this school was designed in 2002. It is made up of

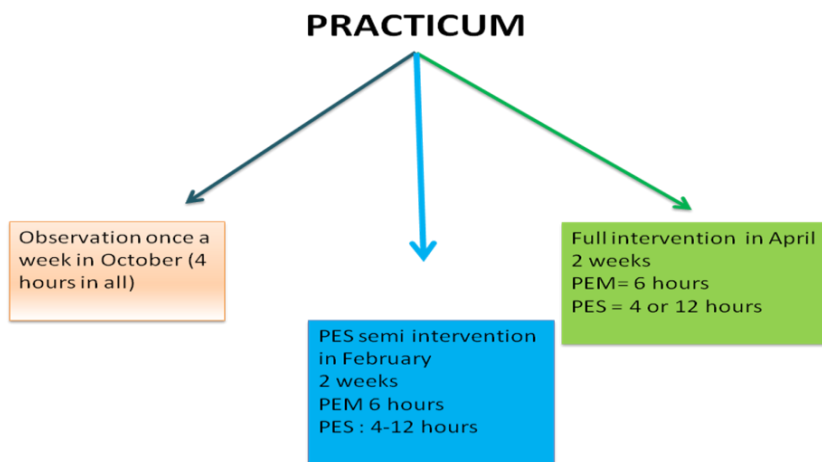
Three main components:

1. Academic courses refer to bases of English language. They include language skills in addition to English language system and target culture (civilization and literature of English speaking countries. Except “Culture”, all these subjects are scheduled for three years as a common core.
2. Theoretical courses are scheduled to teach them how to teach through theory. They are made up of a series of subjects like psychology, pedagogy, ESP syllabus, psychology and

legislation in Arabic and so forth. They help student- teachers perform their teaching profession.

3. Practicum is student-teachers' first experience with school. Trainees are in-school placements under experienced middle and secondary school trainers' supervision. It is the student-teachers' opportunity to implement what they had acquired in theory.

The teacher training is organized into three sessions.



The duration of the first session is once a week during a month that is four mornings or four hours for PEM and 4 to 8 for PES depending on the stream trainers have in charge since the 'language stream classes are provided 2 hours three times a week. Whereas, "Science and Nature" classes have only two (2) hours a week

1.1Conformity of ENSB Curriculum to Initial Teacher Education Model

The comparison between ENSB curriculum and Ducharme' initial teacher education model(Ducharme ,1993:49) shows that though ENSB curriculum relies on three components; academic courses, theoretical courses and the practicum, it partly conforms to the model that consists of " five strands:

- General education. It refers to knowledge, values, attitudes and cultures.
- Specialist subjects. They represent student-teachers' subject matters.
- Education foundation studies that concern theory.
- Professional studies that are the application of theory.
- Practicum or professional teaching practice.

In some systems, the third and the fourth components are combined. However, 'specialist subjects' as a subject matter included in the model above does not appear in ENSB curriculum. This component is English teaching learning language for ENSB student-teachers.

1.2 Conformity of ENSB Curriculum to Language Program Model

As ENSB curriculum is intended to prepare teachers of English, it should be made up of the components of a language curriculum model. Thus, according to Richards (2001:2) a language program should include "the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims or objectives for a program to address those needs, to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods, and materials and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes."

In this definition, 'needs' analysis engenders most of the components of the curriculum. Hence, for this reason learners' needs have become vital in curriculum development since their emergence with ESP.

Moreover, to show the importance of such a component, and of "Program Evaluation" Brown states that "in ideal situation, curriculum development *would* start with a thorough needs analysis" and progress through the elements of the curriculum that are "interconnected by bidirectional arrows to each other and to a never-ending process called evaluation" (Brown (1995:217). This means that 'needs analysis' is the starting point of a curriculum development and

‘evaluation’ is the ending one that allows a systematic assessment of each component or all of them when necessary.

The comparison between ENSB curriculum and this language program model reveals that among all the components included in the model only ‘*Syllabus*’ corresponds to ENSB curriculum. ENSB is then a list of subjects to be taught with the time devoted to them. This sort of syllabus is defined as a schedule according to most of dictionaries. Thus, it is schedule in which learners’ needs were likely identified in terms of language needs. (Richards, 2001).

The analysis of learners’ needs should help state aims and select what to be taught.(Brown, 1995) The lack of learners’ needs engenders inappropriateness of ENSB curriculum while the absence of aims and objectives is regarded as a weakness by most of applied linguists who assert that when considering a curriculum, designers should inquire about what the curriculum hopes to achieve in the future.(Alderson in Toney,1984) These aims and objectives may help educators use these aims to check whether they have been achieved.

2. *Evaluation of ENSB Curriculum*

This analysis has taken place via Richards’ criteria of effectiveness:

- Mastery of objectives
- Measures of acceptability
- Retention rate or reenrollment rate
- Efficiency of the course (Richards, 2001:292-293)
- Mastery of objectives

This first criterion is difficult to measure since ENSB curriculum does not rely on aims or objectives to check their mastery. Thus, we assume that all the subjects scheduled and the knowledge they involve constitute compulsory student-teachers’ requirements to be mastered since they condition student-teachers’ success or failure.

This content is made up of :

| Subjects | Academic studies | Theory | practicum | Computing | Total |
|--------------|------------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Tot Time/PEM | 1800 | 720 | 16 | 135 | 2671 |
| Rate PEM | 67.39% | 26.95% | 0.5% | 5.0% | |
| Tot Time/PES | 2070 | 945 | 12-28 | 135 | 3162/3178 |
| Rate PES | 65%/ | 29.88% | 0.37% | 4.0% | |

Student-teachers requirements

The table reveals a significant time rate of **67.39%** for PEM and **65%** for PES devoted to “Academic Courses”, but this is comprehensible for this component is intended to provide student-teachers with English language to improve their level and become highly qualified teachers of English. However, as these students are going to be EFL teachers, this importance given to language learning is positive. What about “Theory and practicum”. Are they given the same importance?

If we look back to the table, we note that theory is **26.95%** for PEM and **29.88.%** for PES and teacher training is **0.5%** for PEM and **0.37%** for PES.

This unbalanced allotment of time between the main components disturbs the system of education in ENSB curriculum.

- a) What did the absence of “learners ‘needs and aims engender in ENSB curriculum?
- b) Did the curriculum achieve its aims in language learning as well as theoretical courses, despite their absence?
- c) Did the important time rate devoted to “Academic courses” suffice to manipulate the language easily?

- d) Did the allotment of time between theoretical courses allow these student- teachers to get professional competencies to be a qualified teacher?

These questions find answers via the following tables.

| Academic studies | TtimePEM | Rate | TTPES | Rate |
|------------------|----------|--------------|-------|---------------|
| Writing | 360 | 20% | 360 | 17.39% |
| Reading | 225 | 12.5% | 225 | 10.86% |
| List/Speak | 315 | 17.5% | 315 | 14.28% |
| Grammar | 225 | 12.5% | 225 | 10.86% |
| Phonetics | 135 | 7.5% | 135 | 6.52% |
| Linguistics | 135 | 7.5% | 135 | 6.52% |
| Culture | 405 | 22.5% | 675 | 32.60% |
| TOTAL | 1800 | | 2070 | |

Time allotted between English language subjects

This table shows that the absence of ‘Aims’ engenders an unbalanced allotment of time between the subjects so that “Culture” subject seems to have the priority with an amount of time of **22.5%** for PEM and **32.6%** for PES at the expense of “Writing and Listening-Speaking” that is devoted **20%** and **17.39%** for PEM and **17.5%** and **14.28%** for PES. It is evident that “Culture” of foreign language is important for a language teacher, but “Culture” is one element of the foreign language not the language itself. Thus, this means that they speak and write less.

Whereas the allotment of time between the subjects included in “Theoretical Studies” is exhibited in the following table.

Theoretical studies

Allotment of time between theoretical subjects scheduled for PEM and PES

| Subjects | Time/PEM | Rate | Total/PES | Rate |
|---|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| Psychology | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| TEFL | 90 | | 90 | 14,28% |
| Pedagogical trends and school system | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| Applied linguistics | 45 | 6,25% | 90 | 14,28% |
| Material design and dev | 45 | 6,25% | 90 | 14,28% |
| Psych pedagogy | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| Scientific research | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| Issues in culture | | | 45 | 4,76% |
| Syllabus design and textbook evaluation | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| ESP syllabus design | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| Pedagogy contemporary trends | 45 | 6,25% | 45 | 4,76% |
| Research paper/memoire | | | | |
| Arabic | 315 | 43,75% | 315 | 33,33% |
| Total | 720 | | 945 | |

The table shows an unbalanced allotment of time between some subjects like “Material design” “Syllabus Design and Textbook Evaluation” and “Arabic” subjects. All of them are concerned with school field. However, the former are taught in English and the latter in Arabic. Note that the English modules are devoted the minimum time rate of **6.25%** for PEM and **4.76%** for PES while Arabic subjects have the priority with **43.75%** for PEM and **33.33%** for PES.

The knowledge contained in these different theoretical subjects seems to be inappropriate and obsolete if we look at the content programmed. Among all the Language Methods scheduled in the

curriculum (2002:74): “Translation /TPR (Total Physical Response/The Silent Way/Community Language Learning/ Eclectic Method and Communicative language teaching”, only the last if it is developed can have a link with the competency-based approach implemented in the current textbooks. In addition, the textbooks programmed for their application are “New Lines, Midlines, Comet, Practice and Progress, Penguin course book 1 and course book 2, Spring 1& 2. These textbooks no longer exist.

But what do student-teachers think about all this?

The answer was given via an interview conducted with a group of ten fifth year student-teachers after having finished their ending summative exams and accomplished their last training session. This operation purported first of all to collect their opinions on:

- The link between what they have acquired through ENSB curriculum and what they were required to perform during teacher training.
- Their ability to transform theory acquired into practical actions during teacher training sessions.

and then to measure these student-teachers language skills

The results obtained were:

- Samia: *“There is no link between what we are taught and what we are required to perform and provide our students with knowledge.*

This idea was shared by most of them (eight)

Reasons

Karim: “Knowledge is obsolete”.

Samia: We spent too much time learning subjects like Civilization, Literature subjects and Arabic subjects instead of spending it on the application of theoretical courses” or on studying textbooks used in the schools

Nadia: Sorry madam! I personally believe that the major causes are the “curriculum and educators’ ways or methods of teaching”. This opinion was supported by five interviewees. They

qualified the first of being obsolete and the second “traditional” because the courses are purely theoretical.

Concerning “their ability of transforming theory into practical acts, the results were:

The majority thinks: *“it is difficult to transform theory into practice.”*

Mohceine: “For example, it is impossible for me to transform the theoretical course on competency-based approach given by an inspector into practical actions or skills.

Reasons:

Soussou: I admit to have a poor English language.

They ended this discussion admitting that:

They have learned interesting things concerning school in some specific theoretical subjects such as “Material Design” “, TEFL” , “Syllabus Design and Textbook Evaluation”, “Applied Linguistics but the information provided did not help them in teaching during the training sessions, believing that it is obsolete.

At the same time the interviewer was noting interviewees’ language skills:

- *some students are accurate and fluent while the great part find difficulties in*
- *pronouncing some words*
- *Using tenses*

These results may be confirmed by the criteria selected: measures of acceptability and rate of retention or rate of reenrollment and the efficiency of the course. (Richards, 2001:292-293). These studies need the scrutiny of official documents.

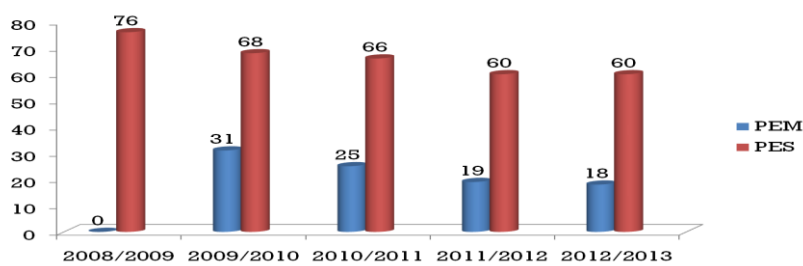
- Measures of acceptability

This criterion checks whether ENSB curriculum leads student-teachers to a satisfactory level of achievement. The procedure required a sample of study. We selected cohorts between 2008 -2013

for PES and 2009-2013 for PEM according to the available official documents. We studied the cases of student-teachers of those who

- 1. First registered the year 2008-2009 for PES and 2009- 2010 for PEM;
- 2. Passed to the higher level after the second summative exam;
- 3. Achieved the score of at least 12/20 ;

This analysis provides the following results



umber of successful student-teachers

The number of PEM registered on the list of the first year was 47 but the application of the first criterion reduced it to 31 and the second criterion produces a significant dropout to attain 18. The application of the third criterion reveals **no** successful PEM student-teachers because the best score registered was 11.81/20.

On the other hand PES student-teachers were 82 on the attendance 1st year list, but the application of the first criterion reduces them to 76 and their number changed after the application of the second criterion over the years to become 60. However, according to the third criterion, the number of successful student-teachers was 29 at the end of the first year, It went backwards over the years to attain 6 in the fifth year.

- Rate of reenrollment

This procedure consists of studying the number of those who apply for a place in ENSB School each year. The study examined a duration

of four years from 2004-2008 for middle school teachers and five for secondary school teachers from 2004-2009

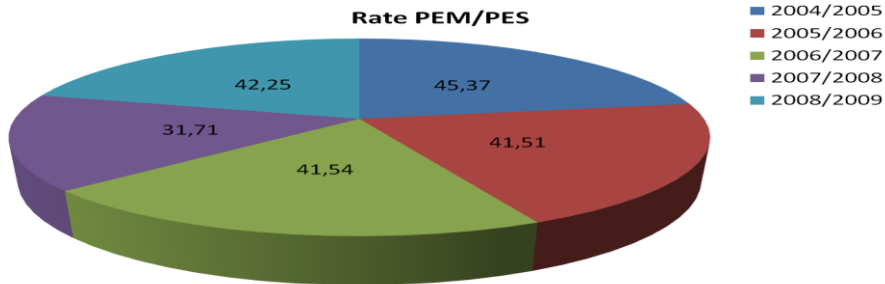


Table of rate of re-enrollment in ENSB School

This analysis occurs to confirm the previous results about the extent of effectiveness of ENSB curriculum.

To a great extent the rating of enrollment over the years seemed to be satisfying for both profiles. This proves the effectiveness of ENSB curriculum.

- Efficiency of the Course

This procedure is important since it measures the success of the subjects scheduled in the curriculum through the facility of designing the course and implementing it. As the curriculum is intended for specific professional purpose, it consists of specific subjects. Courses are difficult to design since they need specialized materials, an amount of time for consultation (particularly for associates).

Conclusion

Effectiveness of ENSB curriculum required a series of analyses that permitted to get the following results categorized into strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths:

- ENSB curriculum is partly conforming to initial teacher education model since it relies on the three main components: academic courses /Theoretical Courses/ Practicum.
- ENSB curriculum has only one same component as Richards' language program model, that is a syllabus.
- ENSB curriculum gives "Academic Courses" the highest amount rate of time.
- ENSB curriculum leads to an acceptable rate of re-enrollment for both middle and secondary school teachers.
- ENSB curriculum leads to an acceptable level of achievement for PES(secondary school teachers)
- ENSB curriculum seems to have provided student-teachers with interesting knowledge according to them.

Weaknesses

- ENSB curriculum misses "Specialist subjects" and "Professional Studies" components
- ENSB curriculum is not conforming to a language program model that is reduced to a simple schedule.
- ENSB curriculum as a language program has :
 - no needs analysis.
 - no aims
 - no entry and exit profiles
 - no methods
 - no materials
 - no program evaluation
- ENSB curriculum has an unbalanced allotment of time between the main components of teacher education curriculum and between the subjects scheduled.

- ENSB curriculum provides some subjects like “Civilization and Literatures with 22.5% for PEM and 32.60% for PES and Arabic subjects with 43.75% for PEM and 33.33% for PES at the expense of the main components.
- ENSB curriculum is inappropriate since there is no link between what student-teachers are taught and what they are required to perform in school.
- ENSB curriculum Content is made up of obsolete knowledge.
- ENSB curriculum uses old textbooks for application of theory.
- ENSB curriculum leads to traditional courses. They remain purely theoretical.
- ENSB curriculum does not help trainees to transform theory into practice.
- ENSB curriculum does not help design courses easily.
- ENSB curriculum does not prepare accurate and fluent English speakers.
- ENSB curriculum does not achieve its aims and objectives.
- ENSB curriculum seems to be ineffective.

Recommendations

Revision of the curriculum by a group of experts taking into account the strengths and weaknesses registered.

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