

Why a career-oriented and learner-centered undergraduate English curriculum is necessary in Bangladesh?

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ABSTRACT

One of the goals of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is to provide knowledge and skills to all learners. An updated curriculum can play a vital role in achieving that goal in Bangladesh. The National Education Policy 2010 of Bangladesh also puts much emphasis upon skills development through modernized education. Curriculum, the blueprint of any education system, is expected to uphold the expectations of teachers, students and job providers. With rapid development in each sector, we can hope for unprecedented development in English curriculum at undergraduate level. Earlier, studying English meant only the study of literature. This focus has shifted to the study of language teaching because of market demand, though literature dominates. Now English graduates are opting for a variety of professions including teaching and civil service. At present there is no standard undergraduate English curriculum in Bangladesh. The existing incomplete and literature-oriented English curricula at public and private universities are not adequate to meet the demands of the job market as opined by the country's leading educationists. In such circumstances, it is easily perceivable that existing English curriculum needs to be redesigned as skill-based and job-oriented curriculum is much sought-after. This study focuses upon the drawbacks of existing undergraduate English curriculum and establishes the rationale behind going for a reformed curriculum which will be learner-centered and career-oriented. Based on document analysis, focused group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interview, the study's findings will be of immense importance to policy makers and curriculum planners at tertiary level.

KEYWORDS: curriculum, learner, skill, development, stakeholder

Introduction

Tertiary education plays a vital role in developing the future generation of a country and inculcating moral, humanitarian, cultural, social values and promoting students' knowledge and skills. English language skills can prepare them for the socio-economic development of a nation. If we look at our university English education and curriculum, it seems that the present English curriculum has not been fully developed and not properly designed to attain this goal and so "the curriculum should be overhauled every now and then" (Alam, 2005).

Majority of Bangladeshi graduates are not competent enough in English. They lack the required level of competence for job competition at the global level and, therefore, are disadvantaged in the job market. It is very essential to reexamine the different factors responsible for students' poor level of proficiency in English. Among other factors, curriculum renewal, in a broader sense, is essential. A curriculum that is helpful for skills development is necessary. It is therefore essential to examine our existing curriculum (if any) and see its limitation and strength, and/or revise or improve the curriculum as required to change the overall curriculum. Other factors such as ELT materials, teaching-learning and testing are important for changing the scenario.

For producing competent graduates a skill-based, job-focussed and morality-driven curriculum is required. A curriculum which combines knowledge as well as skill is sought-after by employers of

today. For such curriculum, developing curriculum in line with curriculum theories is essential. University English departments in Bangladesh are in dire need of such curriculum which will be learner-centered and which will juxtapose knowledge, skill and morality for producing skilled human resources. That is why an evaluation of existing English curriculum is a pressing need and situation analysis is a pre-condition before going for a revamp in curriculum. This study will focus on situation analysis and show why we should go for a massive change in undergraduate English course design.

Background

The history of English education in Bangladesh dates back to the early 19th century during the company (East India Company) rule. Some type of English curriculum has been followed since that time. The content of English syllabus traditionally contained grammar, structure and literature. Teaching and learning has been largely teacher focused since those early days. During the whole time, the learning outcome was quite satisfactory. A matriculate of that time could read, write and speak English well and could manage a job.

After the partition of 1947, the same kind of English curriculum continued, but the learning outcome of students started declining sharply. It declined further after the liberation of Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh emphasized on education through the vernacular and Bangla was made the official language of education and examination and also the language of courts. Bangla was used in all official communication except foreign missions. There was a growing attitude to translate all textbooks of different subjects in Bangla. Yet, English was a compulsory subject at secondary and higher secondary level though English was no more a compulsory subject at degree level. ‘Bengali Implementation Act’ of 1987 had drastic effect on English as second language in Bangladesh. Those who were inclined to use English in official correspondence they controlled their attitude after the law of 1987. English was banished from government offices except for indispensable factors. The standard of English went down radically at university level especially. The role of English was deemphasized in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the importance of English increased globally, and the government soon realized it and put much emphasis on English education. Different policies were undertaken to improve the state of English teaching and learning. Local and foreign experts were hired to improve the syllabus, train trainers and teachers, and improve test techniques and formats. Even then the learning outcome is seriously problematic. At present, majority of our graduates cannot read, write and speak well, their listening skills are not up to the mark (Ara, 2009)

Bangladesh took ground-breaking initiative in higher education which is based on market-driven economic forces in the 1990s. Since then the higher education sector in Bangladesh has experienced significant changes (Kabir, 2013). In a twenty-year strategic plan for higher education, human development has been given top priority (UGC, 2010).

The study of the syllabuses of the English departments of Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University and Jahangirnagar University of 70’s, 80’s, 90’s and the current years (2009-10) show that primarily a purely literature syllabus has changed to a more comprehensive syllabus containing language, linguistics, phonetics and phonology, cultural studies and many more (Yeasmin, 2011). This study aims to see how far we have moved away from literature-oriented course contents. It is true that there are some ELT and linguistics courses included in our syllabus yet, is it enough to face the challenges of 21st century? Will it be able to produce skilled human resources to work in diverse fields?

Rationale of the study

For producing competent graduates a skill-based, job-focused and morality-driven curriculum is required. A curriculum which combines knowledge as well as skill is sought-after by employers of today. For such curriculum, developing curriculum in line with curriculum theories is essential. University English departments in Bangladesh are in dire need of such curriculum which will be learner-centered and which will juxtapose knowledge, skill and morality for producing skilled human resources. Moreover, in the cut-throat competition of 21st century global and local job markets only those graduates survive well who have a better grounding in the qualities much sought-after by today's employers.

There have been significant theoretical developments in curriculum theories and practices, but there is no scope to deny the fact that there has been very little research in education, also in English education, that can meaningfully change our standard of education. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the developments and then evaluate where we stand in relation to these developments; identify whether and which areas we need to improve. The present study is an attempt to evaluate and improve the English curriculum of Bangladesh and shows the need to go for a revised curriculum

Research questions

- (a) What are the flaws of undergraduate English course design at public and private universities of Bangladesh?
- (b) What are the problems faced by English graduates at present in Bangladesh job market?
- (c) Why a career-oriented, skills-based complete undergraduate English curriculum is needed in Bangladesh?

Research objectives

The objective of this study is to focus upon the drawbacks of existing undergraduate English curriculum and establish the rationale behind the need for going for a reformed curriculum which will be learner-centered and career-oriented.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. Both primary and secondary data have been used in this study. Extensive relevant documents, newspaper reports, survey reports, curriculum theories, journals, books, government act, English curriculum of selected universities etc have been consulted and analyzed and interview guideline has been prepared for conducting in-depth interview of ELT experts. Three ELT experts, chosen purposively, having international exposure have been interviewed. Using semi-structured interviews allows the flexibility to unearth unanticipated information in the discussion (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Three FGDs have been conducted with English undergraduate students and they were selected purposively. There were 6 to 8 students in each FGD. They were all seventh semester students. Admission-seekers perceptions have been taken into account for this research and for this purpose, a facebook admission-seekers group has been chosen purposively.

Findings and analysis

Findings from document analysis

Any curriculum should be developed following curriculum theories and models prescribed by renowned educationists and planners. An overview of the leading curriculum theories gives us the

idea that curriculum should be learner-centered, it should be developed following some steps, it should be able to meet the demand of society etc. In brief, a curriculum, a blue print of education system, should take into account the learners' needs as well as local and global context. Harold Rugg rightly says, "Curriculum should develop the whole learner and it is learner-centered. Considers students' interests and needs, deals with issues of modern life, enable students to think critically. He initiated problem-solving activities, role playing and independent learning, and believes that curriculum should deal with local, national and international issues" (Ornstein and Hankins, 2009). One of the best known curriculum theories was introduced in 1949 by Ralph Tyler (1902-1994), in his classic book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. From this book we get the 4 steps of curriculum development:

1. Selection of aims, goals and objectives
2. Selection of learning experiences and content
3. Organization of learning experiences and
4. Evaluation

Is this structure followed while designing the undergraduate English program in Bangladesh? What are there in the goals and objectives part? To find this answer the researcher has chosen course curriculum of two leading public universities of Bangladesh. University 'A' provided the curriculum of 2015-16 and 2016-17 session. It contained admission rules, duration of the program, grading system, registration rules, detailed marks distribution, class hours, year-end examination information, GPA/CGPA calculation rules, promotion rules to higher class, degree requirements, re-admission, university rules regarding examination, academic calendar, detailed course contents from first year to fourth years with marks allocation, prescribed texts and recommended readings. But there were no aims and objectives in the curriculum. Moreover, nothing was there about teaching-learning methodology and tools. The course contents are given below year-wise.

Table 1. Course Contents of BA Honours Program of University 'A'

<i>First Year</i>	<i>Second Year</i>	<i>Third Year</i>	<i>Fourth Year</i>
Eng-101:English Language -1	Eng-201: Advanced Reading & Writing	Eng-301: New Literatures in English(Poetry & Drama)	Eng-401: Poetry from Tennyson to Rossetti
Eng-102:English Language -2	Eng-202: Greek Classics in Translation	Eng-302: Non-Fictional Prose in English (Poetry & Drama)	Eng-402: British Fiction from Swift to Hardy
Eng-103:Introduction to Poetry	Eng-203: Poetry from Blake to Keats	Eng-303: American History and Literature	Eng-403: American Fiction from Hawthorne to Bellow
Eng-104:Introduction to Fiction & Drama	Eng-204: New Literature in English (Fiction)	Eng-304: Poetry from Chaucer to Marvell	Eng-404: 20 th Century English Poetry & Drama
Allied Courses: History of England (Part I) History of English Literature	Allied Courses: History of England (Part 2) History of Western Ideas	Eng-305: Poetry from Milton to Gray	Eng-405: 20 th Century English Fiction
		Eng-306: Prose from Bacon to Orwell	Eng-406: English Literary Criticism
		Eng-307: Drama from Kyd to Congreve	Eng-407: Critical Theory
		Eng-308: Introduction to Linguistics	Eng-408: Teaching Language through Literature

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The course contents of university ‘A’ above, show that it is a traditional syllabus of an English department of a public university of Bangladesh where nearly 95% courses are literature-oriented. Here there is no scope for language skill development. Assessment system is traditional; summative evaluation method is followed.

Private universities came into being in early 90s in Bangladesh through *Private University Act 1992* and currently 100 private universities are offering undergraduate and post graduate courses. Most of these universities are situated in Dhaka. A look at the BA in English program offered by one of the top private universities in Dhaka (University ‘B’) has these points as ‘objectives’: “To impart language skills and develop literary sensibilities so that graduates become intellectually competent and responsible citizens of the world; to help students acquire the required professional skills and mindset that will be valuable for a wide range of careers in such fields as teaching, publishing, media, entrepreneurship, civil service, government and private sectors, as well as for higher studies; to expose students to real-life work environments through apprenticeships/internships, in-house jobs, and mentorship programs”

Table 2. Course Contents of Undergraduate English Program of University ‘B’

First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
Eng-106:Introduction to Literary Genres	Eng-204:Introduction to Literary Theory	Eng-402:Victorian Literature	Eng-308:Psycholinguistics
CSE101:Introduction to Computer Studies	Eng-111:Morphology	Eng-225:Shakespeare	Optional/Minor III
Eng-101:Basic English & Learning Skills	Eng-115:Introduction to Drama	Eng-302:The Novel II	Optional/Minor IV
Eng116:Introduction to Poetry	GED-201:World Civilization	Eng313:Modernism: Early 20 th Century Literature	Optional/Minor V
Eng102:Fundamentals of English-I	Eng-203:Romantic Poetry	Eng-327:Modern Poetry	Eng499/498:Dissertation/Internship
GED-100:Bangladesh Studies	Eng-312:Modern American Drama	Eng-411:Semantics and Pragmatics	
Eng-108:Composition	Eng-332:Greek Tragedies	Eng-410:Diaspora Writing	
Eng-114:Phonetics & Phonology	Eng208:Sociolinguistics	Optional/Minor I	
Eng103:Fundamentals of English –II	Eng-210:Restoration & 18 th Century Literature	Optional /Minor II	
GED-101:Bangla Vasha	Eng305Contemporary World Literature in translation		

University ‘B’ does not provide any information on teaching-learning methodology and assessment techniques in their curriculum. It offers a wide range of subjects as optional/minor which are mostly literature and language based. What this university has mentioned in their objectives regarding ‘developing skills for wide range of profession’ does not match with their course contents. Course contents show that most of their courses are literature-oriented with a few linguistics courses. They do not have dual-major option.

Higher education is a tool for personal as well as national development in the age of globalization. National Education policy 2010 stated the objective of higher education “is to generate and innovate knowledge, at the same time to build up a skilled manpower.” For a better future generation, for a skilled generation, higher education has no alternative. In this age of cut-throat competition and technological advancement, there is no alternative to creating a knowledge-based and skill-based society and it is possible through universities capable of imparting quality education. A world-class updated curriculum is required to ensure quality education. At the same time, frequent revision of curriculum is very essential to keep pace with an ever changing world.

United Nations is working currently to materialize Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with its 193 member countries and it has 17 “Global Goals” with 169 targets. Governments, businesses and civil society together with the United Nations have started to mobilize efforts to achieve the

Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030 (SDG, 2017). In 4.7 section of SDG it is stated that “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development” (SDG, 2017).

To secure an enviable position in world ranking of universities, curriculum plays an essential role. But it is a matter of grave concern that our universities are lagging behind in world ranking. There is no university from Bangladesh ranked in ‘Best 100 University’ of ‘Times Higher Education’ ranking. Any university of Bangladesh has not been able to secure a position within first 1000 or 2000 universities. Dhaka University, the first public university of Bangladesh established in 1921, has been ranked 5201st and 174th in world ranking and Asian university ranking (Maksud, 2017). If the recent (2018) QS World Ranking is analyzed, the presence of Bangladeshi universities is not worth mentionable. For making university education more effective and skill-oriented, a massive change in English course design is inevitable in Bangladesh.

Having a good command over English is one of the prerequisites for getting quality education and any standard job. Today in our globalised world, the significance of English as a form of communication of thoughts and ideas has grown (Zamir, 2017). Learning English means being able to listen, read, write and speak in English. Without mastering these four skills properly it is a hard nut to crack, to have a sophisticated job now-a-days. It is a matter of regret that people of Bangladesh are far behind in achieving high level of competence in four skills (Ara, 2009). It is a glaring fact that in Bangladesh from primary to postgraduate level, even in professional field, people do not have the required proficiency in all the four skills. Even a masters-degree holder, fails to write English correctly and speak fluently. It is our national problem, not a problem regarding any individual. Moreover, there is another very important issue. Is our English curriculum fulfilling learners’ needs? Is it preparing graduates for job market? Apart from professional necessity, for academic purpose, for higher studies abroad and for having an in-depth knowledge of any particular discipline, one needs to have an acceptable command over English language. So, a big question is whether our present university English curriculum is capable to meet the challenge of producing quality graduates.

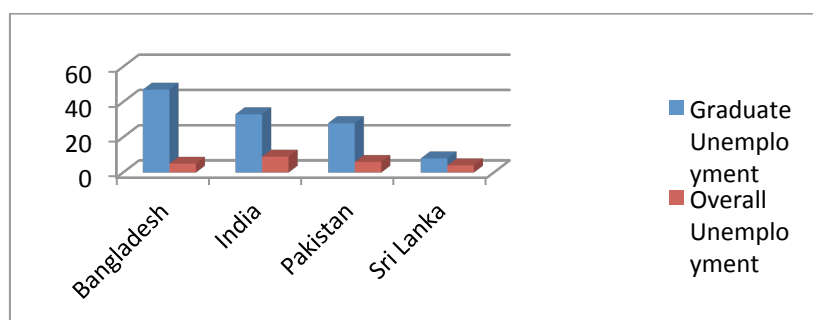


Figure 1 . Graduate unemployment in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (in %)

Unemployment is a serious threat to a developing country like Bangladesh. The rate of unemployment is much higher among university graduates. Graduate unemployment rate is comparatively higher in Bangladesh which is apparent in fig. one based on a study of 2014. An online journal reports that it is very alarming that 5 students of a leading public university committed suicide out of frustration in the last 5 years for not getting a job. FBCCI President said that in Bangladesh 90 percent of the highly educated are from general education, not from technical education and this creates unemployment. Student focused and skill-based curriculum is appropriate for today’s highly competitive globalized world. Curriculum needs to be redesigned in such a way

that it fulfills the demand of employers as well as learners. Keeping that in mind, best institutions employ teachers in curriculum planning and development and keep updating their curriculum (Rahman, 2017). Therefore, it is a dire necessity to go for a revised curriculum which will be skill-based, morality-driven and knowledge-oriented.

The present undergraduate curriculum is not focusing on the development of four language skills and soft skills which are highly needed for a better job. Listening skills and speaking skills are being neglected in higher education. Today's English graduates are good at writing but lack presentation skill which is a obligatory for any good job. They also lack inter-personal skill which is a matter of regret. Our English curriculum needs a thorough investigation and a reformed curriculum is a necessity. Without having sound knowledge of English language our first-year honours students are faced with 'heavy dose of literature in the syllabus' which in most cases may create panic about the language (Alam, 2005). It seems our curriculum is developed without much planning and without following curriculum theories. Even ELT stream students are not fully capable of having full command over 4 skills after their graduation. 'It appears to me that students graduating from the language stream have no more mastery over the English language'(Alam, 2005). There is a big question regarding the English language proficiency promoted by the present curriculum.

A noted educationist has mentioned 10 major problems of higher education in Bangladesh and one is that, it has no specific direction and does not have link with professional field (Haque, 1984). Another noted educationist emphatically says that our higher education has no specific goal, not job oriented and our students study without having a target to achieve and consequently they study just to have a certificate (Mian, 2012). The more a curriculum is linked with society and industry, the better. Moreover, to what extent our curriculum follows curriculum theories, is a matter to take into account. The ever-increasing graduate unemployment problem cannot be ignored. Both local and global circumstances and ever-changing world push us towards evaluation of existing curriculum. We cannot go for a syllabus free from literature. Islam (2017) in an interview said:

“I don't think literature is losing attraction. But literature is not for market, which is one thing we have to be really careful about. Not everything can be reduced to marketability. Many graduates of English departments have joined the corporate world. They have done well because they have the analytical power, which the corporate world values.”

So, literature is necessary but it should not be over-emphasized in course content. Rahman (Dr. A.A. Rahman, Personal Communication, February 2015) opines in this way: “What are being taught in our English departments now, if it continues in future, these may become irrelevant, and consequently, English departments may be compared with Pali, Sangskrit departments”. These are very judicious utterances from a scholar. Here he has anticipated the horrible future of a fully literature-dominated discipline. It goes without saying that English departments are dynamic and it is expected that they will be ever-prepared for upgrading their curriculum for the sake of graduates and stakeholders to cope with the continuous changes in English field and pedagogy.

An analysis of English graduates profile from Alumni souvenir of Dhaka University English Department (2012-2016) shows that out of 250 students, 67 students joined banking, airlines, corporate, journalism, film making, judiciary, entrepreneurship etc jobs and rest of them joined civil service and teaching (Wali, 2018). This shows that English graduates are coming out of their typical teaching and civil service professions. So, academicians and course designers should rethink about undergraduate English course design and make it more learner-friendly and market-focused.

Summary of findings from document analysis

- i. Course contents are developed without following curriculum theories. No fully developed curriculum is found to exist. So, it is unable to meet local and global demand fully.

- ii. Undergraduate course structure is literature dominated which hardly develops any skill, rather encourages memorization and passive learning.
- iii. To meet the SDG goals, quality of higher education should be increased through curriculum renovation and modernization. English education lags behind in this regard.
- iv. To reduce unemployment and to foster development, improved tertiary education is a prerequisite. Developing the 4 skills of language should be given emphasis.
- v. Literature should be there in syllabus, but in small scale. Classic literature and major literary items of each age can be included.
- vi. Higher education in English discipline should be job-oriented, industry-focused, learner-centered and morality-driven. Because of old-pattern course design, English graduates are lagging behind in job markets.

Findings from in-depth interview

In-depth interviews have been conducted with three leading ELT experts of Bangladesh and all of them are Assistant/Associate Professors of English at leading public/private universities in Bangladesh. They have expressed their invaluable comments on present English education and curriculum. Regarding goals and objectives of English curriculum one of them (T1) says:

“Our universities have no specific subject-wise curriculum, nor do they have any clear goals and objectives. Even most of the teachers use syllabus and curriculum interchangeably. So what exists at present at English departments is a syllabus with year-wise name of recommended books and marks distribution. As there is no aims and objectives, teachers are in the dark about the overall goals of English discipline. And we are heading towards nowhere. The result is a big gap between students’ performance and employers’ expectations.”(T1)

Respondent T3 believes that English departments lack a uniform curriculum. He says,

“In Bangladesh, we don’t have any uniform curriculum in our English departments, rather it is scattered and sometimes unwritten. There is no formal goals and objectives, but still we are continuing our activities. Our students do not have specific target, so they take civil service as a common goal and most of them take preparation for it from their second/third year.” (T3)

Regarding course content respondent T1 says:

“Public university course content is mostly literature-oriented and students take it for granted that in English department they have to study mainly literature and some language courses. Whereas if you go to India or Nepal you will see that their course content is totally different. They are studying less and less literature, rather they have made their curriculum comparable to any UK university curriculum. They are offering dual major where student take another subject with English which creates better job opportunity for them.”(T1)

Another respondent (T2) comments this way regarding course content:

“I had an opportunity to see the undergraduate curriculum of a public university of Nepal, it is just magnificent in the sense that it is able to attract quality student and aims at satisfying employers’ demand. They have added courses of communication studies, computer science, environment studies, ethics, media studies, public speaking, tourism etc. But in Bangladesh we are still teaching literature more and more and my students are losing interest in class. It is not that all will enter civil service and teaching, some may have different choice. But this traditional syllabus makes my students apathetic towards their study.”(T2)

Respondent T1 thinks that a change should be there in course design which will shift the literature-centered course to career-centered

“The present course design is not suitable for diverse jobs in today’s competitive market. Even there is not sufficient scope for developing 4 language skills. For example, one of my female students wanted to work in hotel management sector for which she needs ESP skills. But this existing syllabus will not help her much in getting a job in chosen area.” (T1)

Scope for 4 skill development is a vital issue in any English department. T2 and T3 comment this way:

“Our department has no language lab, so it is difficult for us to practice 4 skills right now. But we are hopeful as our Chairman Sir has already ensured us of establishing a language lab here. Besides our syllabus has little emphasis on 4 skill development.” (T2)

“As we follow a literature based syllabus there is hardly any scope for us to practice 4 skills in the classroom. There is a course on ‘Advanced Reading and Writing’, but no course on listening and speaking.” (T3)

Assessment plays a vital role in any education system and in public universities we are still following traditional assessment method. An experienced Professor (T3) shared his idea this way:

“There is much emphasis on year-end examination in my department though tutorial examinations are held for each course. We are thinking to bring about a change in examination system by reducing weightage on year-end examination. Moreover, we are strongly against any question pattern that encourage rote memorization.”

The existing English course design is not able to develop skill among the learners, rather it promotes memorization. T1 commented in this way:

“I agree as most of our courses are literature-oriented students sometimes feel bored and they expressed their boredom frankly to me. Actually such traditional syllabus now-a-days cannot create appeal to the creative mind. There is no presentation practice, no debate, no courses from allied discipline except Bangla and History...these make this department lethargic. Our students have no aim specifically. Most of them are dreaming to be civil servants or teachers as their seniors did. They do not dare to become entrepreneurs or CEOs. That's where lies the great deficiency of this syllabus. My students manage previous questions, get photocopied notes and thus pass the exams and after 4 or 5 years they are coming out with BA in English, actually no skills acquired.”(T1)

All of them agree that a drastic change is necessary in undergraduate English course design. They also agreed that frustration of learners can be removed by keeping them busy through the year and by bringing a radical change in curriculum. T3 says:

“I have found some of my bright students losing interest in study as they could not get admitted into their favourite departments. When these students get admitted in English department, their frustration accelerates seeing prosaic literature courses. So, all these make them apathetic towards study. They suffer from loneliness and depression. Moreover, future uncertainty and job condition worsen the whole matter. So, there should be a drastic change in course design. It should be made student-centered. I don't like to see gloomy faces in my class. To tell frankly, I don't find interest in lecturing when I see absent-minded faces.”(T3)

Summary of in-depth interview

English departments do not have fully developed curriculum. They have no aims and objectives. This existing course pattern is unable to develop 4 basic language skills and relevant other skills for job. No language lab is found. Assessment process is summative and year-end final examination is held. Students getting no benefit and their skills are not developed. Teachers find such courses uninteresting and fruitless. It does not propel critical thinking and develop skills. Students find it problematic to join diverse job fields after graduation.

Findings from focus group discussion with English discipline students and social network sites

Main stakeholders of any program are the students. So, their voice should not go unheard. This researcher conducted three FGDs (6-8 in each FGD) with English undergraduate students at two private universities of Bangladesh. Total respondent was 20. A guideline has been prepared for this purpose. Their significant comments have been given below:

“My father graduated from English department of Dhaka University and he studied a complete literature course. Now I am studying English and I am also finding a literature-dominated course. There Can be variation. Some courses from other relevant disciplines can be included.” (R 2)

“Most often classes become boring, I have seen my classmates not enjoying classes. As most of the contents are literature-based we not always find it interesting.” (R 17)

“What is there in English department? Literature stuffs and a few language course. Though I love reading literature, but what is the use of studying Old English today?” (R 5)

“I have chosen English department because I want to join civil service in future. Yet, sometimes I do not enjoy the class. There is no recent literature in this department. Who will love to read Spanish Tragedy or Bewoulf in this age? There can be recent world literatures in syllabus.” (R 11)

“I was always adamant to study English literature. I like the course pattern. Those who are telling about change in courses, I agree with them to some extent.” (R 18)

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“The course design is OK. But reading materials are inadequate in our library. So, we have to depend mostly on internet. Sometimes teachers ask for assignments which are not found in library or book shops. Then all copy those from internet. This practice should be checked.” (R 7)

“Some top private universities are offering dual major in English department. I think it can be introduced in our university which will drive away the boredom of literature.” (R 13)

“English graduates are not getting their jobs other than teaching. Studying only literature is making us unsuitable for banking, journalism, corporate jobs.” (R 9)

Let us have a look at a case study taken from a social networking site.

“A female student with good academic standing got admitted into X University’s English department in Bangladesh, a department of her dream. On the very first day at her campus when she got the syllabus and saw the contents...she cried out inwardly. A girl of this super fast generation will study ‘old English literature-Bewoulf, 16th Century poetry, Kyd’s Spanish Tragedy or Greek Myth!!!! while her friends in private universities are studying EEE, BBA or English (TESOL major). Next year she left that university and got admitted into another university for studying BBA.”

Some other admission-seekers posted in facebook group:

“What is taught in English department is literature which we can study at home. If you say about language proficiency development, you don’t need to study at English department. You can develop it by taking help from any coaching center or net.”

“I do not want to be a teacher. So what’s the use of studying in English dept.?”

“My parents want me to study EEE, though I had some fascination towards English department. But considering job and immigration prospect I have decided to study EEE.”

Summary of FGDs and social network sites:

It is perceived from the FGDs and comments of admission seekers from social networking sites that students do not like the current course design of English discipline which is mostly literature-dominated. Students want to join variety of professions and they are thinking that their current curriculum is not sufficient to meet the demand of job market. 17 respondents out of 20 told that they do not like the literature curriculum and three of them opined that dual major in English discipline will be beneficial for them. Alam (2005) said that ‘English is branching out and market determines what should be there in course design.’ So, it is high time to rethink English course design of Bangladesh and come up with significant change in line with students’ desire and market demand. Dual majors and open electives can be included in English course design as per students’ view.

Conclusion

It is a time to go for a change in undergraduate English curriculum. Our existing undergraduate English course design is problematic and it needs to be redesigned. English graduates are unable to join diverse work forces with traditional syllabus. For producing skilled and knowledgeable graduate, there should be a revamp in curriculum. We need to set our aims and objectives first in the light of social and global perspectives, and arrange course contents accordingly. Less emphasis should be there on literature and more on skills development. Of course, learners’ perceptions and stakeholders’ views must be taken in consideration. A thorough redesign and introduction of career-oriented course contents can attract meritorious students to this department. A complete learner-centered curriculum should be developed with aims and objectives.

Majority of the courses should not be there on literature, rather emphasis should be given on the 4 skill development. Courses on management, journalism, creative writing, environment, Human

resource management, public relations, public speaking, law, marketing can be included on demand. Dual major can be implemented where students can take some courses of another major of their preference. Linkage with industry should be maintained. Internship program spanning over at least 4 months at the end of 4-year program can be initiated. Course contents should be attractive and meet the demand of local and global needs.

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Appendix- I

Interview Guideline

[This researcher seeks your kind assistance in carrying out a research on undergraduate English curriculum in Bangladesh. The information you provide will be used for academic and research purpose only. It is highly confidential and it will not be disclosed to anybody.]

Name and Designation:

Institution:

Date and Time:

1. How long you have been teaching English?
2. Do your department have 'Goals and Objective' in curriculum?
3. Is there any complete curriculum in your department?
4. What are the positive sides of existing course syllabus of your department?
5. What are the shortcomings of it you think? Plz comment on assessment method.
6. Is there ample scope for developing 4 skills of language?
7. Your course content is mostly literature oriented. Please comment.
8. The existing English course design is not able to develop skill among the learners, rather it promotes memorization. Do you agree?
9. Do you think a change is necessary in English curriculum? Why/Why not?
10. Are your students enjoying teaching-learning following this course contents? Why/Why not?

Thank you for your cooperation and it will be incorporated in this research.

Appendix II

FGD Guideline

Date and Time:

Venue:

1. How are you? As a student of English department what is your impression about the courses you are studying here?
2. Are you satisfied with it? Why or why not?
3. Tell something about your future plan.
4. What is your view about teaching-learning in your department?
5. What is your advice to those who want to study in this department in future?
6. What do you think about assessment in your department?
7. How to redesign the course pattern? Any suggest you have?
8. What is your views about library facility and texts you are recommended?

Thank you very much for your opinion.