

## Evaluation of Students' Needs in the Teaching Methodology English Language Teacher Training Curriculum in Algeria

### Abstract:

**This** paper seeks to contribute to discussions on the development of teacher training curricula by evaluating the trainees' needs within the English language teacher training teaching methodology curriculum in Algeria. The purpose is to evaluate the teaching methodology curriculum in terms of its response to the students' needs and expectations, hypothesizing that needs assessment in this context is a matter of developers' perceptions where the other stakeholders' views including students' felt needs and educational experts attitudes are neglected. The curriculum is evaluated through the analysis of three questionnaires addressed to teachers, English supervisors in Eastern and Southern Algeria, and final year trainees at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) of Constantine. The analysis of the questionnaires has confirmed the hypothesis stated above

**Key Words:** Curriculum, teacher training, needs analysis, evaluation, teaching methodology.

**Leila DJOUIMA**

Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of Foreign Languages  
University of Mentouri  
Constantine

### ملخص:

**يهدف** هذا المقال الى المساهمة في النقاش حول تطور مناهج تكوين الاساتذة وذلك من خلال تقييم احتياجات المتكويين في مفردات التعليمية بالجزائر ودراسة مدى توافقها مع تلك الاحتياجات. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على فرضية ان تقييم حاجيات المتكويين مبني على تصورات المتكويين متجاهلا رغبات و ميول المتكويين من جهة و اراء خبراء التربية من جهة اخرى. لهذا الغرض تم الاعتماد على ثلاث استبيانات موجهة للأساتذة، المتكويين مفتشي التربية والتكوين بالشرق و الجنوب الشرقي في الجزائر وطلبة الاقسام النهائية بالمدرسة العليا للأساتذة بقسنطينة ولقد ادى تحليل الاستبيانات الى دعم الفرضية المطروحة سابقا.

### Introduction :

**The** analysis of student's needs is a prerequisite in any curriculum development process (Richards 2001). Curriculum development has to regard needs assessment as a central step within the planning phase. Many data gathering sources are identified in curriculum development literature, yet Pratt (1980) warns about the pitfalls of removing the planning process too far from the learner.

He asserts that “in most schools, the programs offered reflect the areas of expertise and interest of teachers rather than the analysis of the needs of learners”p.52. Curriculum development is executed by educators and the need for client opinions is ignored, making the approach a bureaucratic and political quasi-legislative activity of writing rules and regulations (ibid). In teacher training, sources of information about learners’ needs are identified and limited to expert opinions, task analysis, perceived needs, and current practice (Richards 2001). The student teachers are seen as external to the curriculum development process for they are not experts. For this reason, they are believed not to be able to inform about specific needs related to task performance. However, much valuable information about their background information, learning styles, preferences in terms of training methods could be an added value to the planning process. In Algeria, the teacher training curriculum, in general and the teaching methodology curriculum, in particular provide little information about how their content has been selected and organized. Moreover, the students’ needs seem to be ignored and the curriculum is built around developers’ perceptions of teaching English at the Middle school or Secondary School. The ultimate question is: To what extent does a curriculum succeed in achieving its goals in the absence of data about the students?

## **1. Theoretical Background**

### **1.1. Curriculum Development**

The evaluation of the teaching methodology curriculum requires a theoretical understanding of essential background variables. These are namely, the concept of “curriculum” and its development process, teacher training and the teacher training curriculum as a growing concern in education, and the teaching methodology curriculum at the ENS (being the concern of this study).

The term ‘curriculum’ is seen differently by scholars and underlies different ideologies. It has a history of multiple meanings and has changed over time; influenced by historical events, forces, and invented ideas. At any given time, it reflects the “push and pull over” issues in society and has become a particular field of study with an identifiable structure, defining characteristics of practice, and a body of grounded Knowledge (Hewitt 2006). The word ‘curriculum’ is not a recent invention. It belongs to antiquity and has evolved in meaning. With reference to any dictionary, it is from the Latin word ‘currere’, referring to the running of a course as in a chariot race. Beyond the initial definition, dictionaries define ‘curriculum’ as an “aggregate of courses of study given in a school, college, or university (sometimes cited collectively as education institutions), a particular course of study; or both”. Based on a consensus of dictionary sources, curriculum would simply mean “a course of study” (Hewitt, 2006).

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Curriculum development is usually considered to be a development of the last hundred years (Pratt, 1980). The use of the word and its emergence into common use in books and publications goes to the years from 1890 to about 1918 (Kliebond 1986, Schubert, Thomas and Carroll 2002; cited in Hewitt 2006). Furthermore, the emergence of the idea as a discipline in the field of education has begun with the rise of new knowledge in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, and the idea of using 'curriculum' as a concept subsuming words such as 'content' or 'subject matter' appeared in Dewey's 1902 publication "The Child and the Curriculum". Later on, over a period of fifty years, the concept was affected by the rise of social sciences and the question of the practical and academic nature of the curriculum work (Hewitt, 2006). This has become a ground for the modern curriculum which refers to new roles to teachers and students. Indeed, teachers are positioned as agents of change and professional developers of curriculum, and the practices are more overtly student-centered seeking to develop four capacities in young people: confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors (Priestley and Minty 2012).

According to Skilbeck 1976; cited in Richards 2001, there are at least three basic educational ideologies that generate different types of curriculum theory. Classical humanism, progressivism and reconstructionism. The curriculum for classical humanism would concentrate on cultural heritage and stress the intrinsic value of the subject matter and its role in developing the learners' intellect, humanistic values and rationality. Progressivism (also known as child-centered education) rejects traditional approaches to education and promotes freedom over social order, while reconstructionism views education as a way of improving society, providing opportunities for the growth of individuals within the modern industrial world.

The process of curriculum development is seen as a series of activities that will provide a framework that helps teachers to combine teaching activities that are most suitable for a given situation (Brown 1995). It is a framework that helps students to learn as effectively and efficiently as possible in the given situation through a process of planning, implementing and evaluating that ultimately results in a curriculum plan (Lunenburg 2010). Curriculum development goes through a complex process that is based on a framework that breaks down that process into components and sub-processes. For Graves (1996), it is important to build a development process on one framework because it provides an organized way of conceiving a complex process. Curriculum development literature has recorded many models and frameworks. Hewitt (2006) has identified a list of models that he named 'traditional models'. More recent works on curriculum development have grouped models into categories depending on the features and focuses they share. Lunenburg (2010), for

instance, describes three models: Tyler's (1949), Beauchamp and Saylor (1981), and Alexander and Lewis (1981). He states that the three models share many characteristics since they are all deductive, linear and prescriptive. Other classifications have been identified, including Ornstein and Hunkin's (2004) technical/ non- technical, Bell and Lefoe's (1998) outcome integrative, linear objectives, and interaction models. O'Neill (2010), on the other hand, refers to two versions of curriculum development, namely the product and process models. Most of these models agree to a great extent on approaching curriculum development in a systematic, objective based manner, referring to Tyler's model (1949) as a basis for any curriculum work. Today, curriculum practitioners can select among a plethora of models, processes and frameworks. Basically, they can adopt one model or another depending on their own assumptions and visions on curriculum work. However, it is possible to adapt the common features within an integrated model based on sound logical steps. The following aspects are a compilation of the common elements suggested in the previously mentioned models. We mean it to be a systematic strategy for curriculum development that goes through planning, implementation and evaluation:

- \_ Planning for curriculum design: Examining the learners' needs, context situation, and educational aims.
- \_ Stating aims and objectives
- \_ Selecting and organizing content
- \_ Developing materials
- \_ Evaluating the curriculum and its accompanying materials.

### **1.2. Teacher Training**

Teacher training has received particular attention in recent educational research because of the impact it has on quality learning and, consequently, on the development of modern communities. It is a special area in learning since it is a matter of preparing people for a job. In broad terms, training is about developing people as individuals and helping them to become more confident and competent in their lives and in their jobs. It is acquired through a series of well-designed activities (Pont 2003). Specifically however, teacher training refers to activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and involves understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom (ibid).

According to Gauthier and Tardiff (1996), before the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, knowledge of the subject matter was the only requirement for being a teacher. Anyone who could read, for example, could teach reading and set up as a school teacher without any form of preparation. Teacher training was not required and, therefore, did not exist at all. However, with the emphasized need to establish schools to educate children (even from the working class), the first

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attempts to train teachers began to emerge in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For this purpose, teaching started to be based on a method where the tips and tricks of the craft suggested by the best teachers in that period were recorded in the earliest teaching manuals. Within this perspective, it was noticed that knowledge of the subject taught did not necessarily make a good teacher, even if it remained a fundamental requirement. Besides, other types of knowledge that could be taught, generally done through apprenticeship with an experienced teacher, were needed to teach well. This gave birth to a formalized kind of teaching known as traditional pedagogy that spread throughout the western world and even beyond. However, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional teaching started to receive criticism, giving birth to a new pedagogy where importance was given to science and discussions about teaching. Furthermore, the promotion of a child-centered pedagogy under the name of 'educational psychology' was needed. Yet, this new pedagogy was based on behaviorist and humanist models that failed to transfer to the classroom. Consequently, the idea that teaching could only be learnt through direct involvement and trial and error was reinforced. The pedagogical concerns have become of minor interest and have been reduced to experience a passion to teaching.

In language teaching, specific approaches to teacher training began in the 1960's with short training programs and certificates designed to give prospective teachers the practical classroom skills needed to teach new methods such as audio-lingualism and situational language teaching. Within the same period, a body of specialized academic knowledge appeared, including courses in language analysis, learning theory, methodology, and sometimes practicum, thanks to the emergence of applied linguistics. Consequently, good teaching started to be seen as the mastery of a set of competencies. In order to train pre- service teachers, curriculum developers would select the most appropriate orientation. In this respect, Pennington 1989 has identified three main approaches: the competency-based approach to develop the trainees' ability to apply the knowledge they acquire in their teaching, the holistic approach to prepare individuals to function in any situation rather than training for a specific situation, and the attitude adjustment approach where methodology is introduced after several phases for the purpose of attitude adjustment.

The nature of knowledge in a teacher training curriculum has become a focus of interest reflected in education literature. Peretz (2011) has identified the following chronologically ordered list of contributions that have determined the type of content to be transmitted to teachers:

\_ Schulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge (knowledge of general pedagogical,

- \_ Grossman and Richet's (1988) principles, skills and knowledge of the subject matter to be taught,
- \_ Tamir's (1988) personal practical knowledge,
- \_ Edward and Ogden's (1998) curriculum subject knowledge,
- \_ Tamir's (1991) professional and personal knowledge,
- \_ Connelly, Clandinin and He's (1997) personal practical knowledge,
- \_ Edwards and Ogden's (1998) curriculum subject knowledge,
- \_ Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) change as growth or learning perspective,
- \_ Yee Fan Tang's (2003) field experiences practice oriented,
- \_ Holden and Hicks (2007) global education,
- \_ Gorski's (2009) subject matter, strategies for teaching, and societal issues, and
- \_ Bultink's (2009) teachers' practical theories.

In language teaching, Cross (1995) suggested that the curriculum should refer to pedagogic techniques, materials development, management skills, professional knowledge, applied theory and lift (knowledge concerning current affairs, global issues, social concerns, the target cultures). For Richards (1998), there is no general consensus on what content should be for teachers. Yet, he proposes six domains of content to constitute the core of knowledge base for language teacher education: theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge. Besides, Crandall (1991:118; quoted in Graves 2009) states that a language teacher education program needs to prepare teachers to have knowledge and skills in a variety of domains. It is also required to provide a flexible foundation upon which graduates can build as they progress through the different stages in their careers". In this sense, Graves (2009), suggests a list of six content domains: Language and linguistics, language acquisition and learning, cultural perspectives, practices and products, teaching methodology, assessment, and professionalism.

Before being able to decide what content is worthwhile to be included in the training curriculum, the designer has to go through a process that Pont (2003) views as cyclical and ongoing built up of five distinct phases :Analyzing training needs, planning and designing the training approach, developing the training materials, delivering the training, and evaluating the training. In the first stage, analyzing training needs, basically, the designer has to collect data from limited sources. Richards (1998) identified four sources of information: expert opinions, task analysis, perceived needs, and current practice. Expert opinions refer to the views of subject matter specialists and experts as to what it is that prospective language teachers need to know. Task analysis refers to deriving pedagogical content from an analysis of the situations in which teachers work, the tasks they typically perform on the job, and the kinds of skills they need for performing the task. The other significant

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sources are the teachers' perceived needs (teachers' own perceptions of what trainees may need to learn) and current practice in teacher training (the examination of what training programs currently offer to teachers). The trainees' felt needs are ignored since the areas of content seem to be external to them. It is believed that they do not know what is essential for them to be teachers. Richards (1998:06) claims that using teachers as a source of information about program content raises the tricky question of whether teachers really know what they need to know. Furthermore, the needs of society are privileged over the needs of the individual, and the procedures for examining training needs are different from those used in general education. Pont (2003) identifies three main areas in which the analysis may take place; needs at organizational level (where in the organization is training most needed?), needs at occupational level (what is needed in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude so that the duties of various jobs can be effectively and competently carried out?), and needs at individual level (who needs training in what? What is needed by individuals to bridge the competency gap between where they are now and where they should be in terms of skill, knowledge and attitudes?). Consequently, Pont (2003) seems to provide a student oriented view on needs in a training curriculum. In addition to the perceived needs identified through the analysis of the job, there is an orientation towards the training student felt needs through the process of needs assessment.

Concerning planning and designing the training approach, we require to address the following tasks: defining the learning objectives of the training, deciding on the most appropriate methods of training, deciding on the staffing and support, selecting from a variety of media, deciding upon content, identifying evaluation tools, deciding on pre-requisites and pre-course preparation for the learners, and organizing and sequencing the training. The aims need also to be determined. According to Graves (2009), the aim in teacher education is to prepare teachers for successful classroom practice so that their learners in turn, learn to communicate using the language. The language teacher education curriculum must integrate the academic study of language and culture, theories of second language acquisition, teaching methods and assessment, at the same time as exposing student teachers to appropriate models of second language pedagogy and providing them with opportunities to experiment with and get feedback on their own teaching. The objectives that derive from the training aim(s) should be clearly stated as to refer to the tasks the trainees are expected to perform as teachers. On the other hand, the design and organization of courses in teacher training refers to the integration of theory and practice. (Graves 2009:10) states: "in a curriculum that successfully integrates theory and practice, courses are organized so that theories are related in some way to what the teacher –trainee will see or do in

the classroom; the trainee, in turn, is able to observe and evaluate theory-in-action, to apply theories in micro-teaching experiences and in their teaching practicum, and to assess their appropriateness and effectiveness” (ibid). Teachers may feel unprepared for the classroom and find themselves unable to use the methods and theories they were taught. The reason is that teacher education programs focus on theory in ways that do not link the reality of the classroom or to the practice of teaching (Burns & Richards, 2009). Therefore, courses, practica, observations and research should be closely aligned. The objectives should clearly specify what trainees will know by the end of the course and how that knowledge will inform practice. Furthermore, course descriptions should specify how trainees will give evidence of achieving both knowledge and skill objectives (Graves, 2009.P.10).

As to developing the training materials, the previous stages are integrated into a complete set of materials to assist course delivery and meet the stated learning objectives. Examples of training materials are workbooks, handouts, audio-visual aids, sequencing content, validating new materials, etc...

Delivering the training is the stage when it all comes together. Cross (1995) suggests the following training modes: the frontal mode (teacher centered), the experiential mode (the focus is on the process rather than content), the workshop mode, the pair/group mode, and the individualized mode (trainees take responsibility for their own learning).

The last part of the cycle, evaluating the training, is vital but often neglected. It involves various forms of evaluation: self-evaluation, evaluation of course materials, evaluation of the whole course, and the situation after the course.

Another approach to the design of a training course called the ‘systematic approach’ has been suggested by Pont (2003) and is made up of nine stages: the general aim of the course, the key learning objectives, content in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the appropriate learning methods, the resources needed to use these methods, the course design, the course presentation, the course evaluation, and the course improvement.

### **1.3. Teaching Methodology Curriculum at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS)**

The teacher training curriculum of English at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) is the product of fourteen years of ongoing development, evaluation and reform. From 1999 up to 2013, the curriculum has been a matter of five versions seeking to respond to the major aim and policy of the ENS: quality training. In 1999, the first proposal for the training curriculum was a matter of reflection over the overall shape and content of the curriculum. No needs analysis had been undertaken; decisions about the curriculum components emerged from the developers’ experience and knowledge about what trainees needed to know to become teachers. Most of the elements included in the curriculum emerged from common practice at universities and available



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literature about teacher training experiences elsewhere. In 2000, the curriculum is agreed on and its effective implementation started, to show over time that it was too demanding. Like all educational curricula, the curriculum was ambitious by nature and reflected the intentions of its developers to teach many things at once. Besides, reactions from the part of teachers and students have revealed that some particular areas in the curriculum overlapped and redundancies were identified. In 2007, the ENS decided to reflect over reform and, in 2008, a modified proposal (without formal assessment of the trainees' needs) was presented. The new curriculum received consent, to start being implemented in 2010. A year later (2011), the ENS teachers worked on a proposal for a curriculum based on the "Licence- Master- Doctorat" (LMD) format for the purpose of adapting the existing curriculum to the demands of the new higher education policy. In September 2013, however, another version of the curriculum amended by the Ministry of higher Education became what is known today as the national curriculum for teacher training.

The overall teacher training curriculum is articulated around a three year common core followed by one year for the 'professeur de l'enseignement Moyen' (PEM) profile and two years for the 'professeur de l'enseignement secondaire' (PES). It is based on the assumption that for a teacher training curriculum to be successful, it has to cover knowledge about the language, knowledge about teaching methodology and knowledge about the target culture. In addition, the curriculum should include cross-disciplinary subjects: French and ICT. Research as a learning experience is included in the curriculum to adapt the trainees to the new trend in teacher training, that of developing reflective teachers who are able to adapt to the changing demands of their profession. The following table is a year by year presentation of the training modules.

<b>1<sup>st</sup> year</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> year</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> year PEM Profile</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> year PES profile</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> year PES profile</b>
<b>Writing</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Writing &amp; grammar</b>	<b>Applied linguistics</b>	<b>Applied linguistics</b>	<b>Applied linguistics</b>
<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Speaking, listening &amp; phonetics</b>	<b>TEFL</b>	<b>TEFL</b>	<b>Syllabus design</b>
<b>Speaking &amp; listening</b>	<b>Speaking &amp; listening</b>	<b>Linguistics</b>	<b>Materials Design &amp; Development</b>	<b>Materials Design &amp; Development</b>	<b>Pedagogical trends</b>
<b>Reading techniques</b>	<b>Reading techniques</b>	<b>Teaching English as</b>	<b>Textbook Evaluation &amp;</b>	<b>Textbook Evaluation</b>	<b>Legislation Scolaire</b>

		<b>a Foreign Language</b>	<b>Syllabus Design</b>	<b>&amp; Syllabus Design</b>	
<b>Phonetics</b>	<b>Phonetics</b>	<b>Pedagogical Trends &amp; Educational Systems</b>	<b>Educational Psychology</b>	<b>Psychology of the Child &amp; the Adolescent</b>	<b>Training</b>
<b>Introduction to Linguistics</b>	<b>Introduction to Linguistics</b>	<b>Communication &amp; Attitude Preoccupations</b>	<b>British &amp; American Literature</b>	<b>British &amp; American Literature</b>	<b>Issues in Culture</b>
<b>Introduction to Western Civilization &amp; Literature</b>	<b>Introduction to Western Civilization &amp; Literature</b>	<b>Introduction to Psychology</b>	<b>British &amp; American Civilization</b>	<b>British &amp; American Civilization</b>	<b>African Civilization &amp; Literature</b>
<b>French</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>British &amp; American Literature</b>	<b>African Civilization &amp; Literature</b>	<b>African Civilization &amp; Literature</b>	<b>Extended Essay</b>
<b>Computing</b>	<b>Computing</b>	<b>British &amp; American Civilization</b>	<b>Legislation Scolaire</b>	<b>Research Methodology in Education</b>	
		<b>Computing</b>	<b>Training</b>		

**Table 1: Training Modules, adapted from the curriculum report (ENS Constantine, 2008)**

Graves (2009), in her report about the teacher training curriculum in Algeria, identified three main domains within the overall curriculum: language, teaching development and professionalism, and culture. Examining her list of objectives for the teaching methodology domain would place three modules from the Algerian teacher training curriculum within that frame. They are namely teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), materials design and development (MDD) and textbook evaluation and syllabus design (TESD). The three modules share one common feature; that of equipping the trainees with know how to act competencies.

TEFL is a module taught over two years in the curriculum: Third and Fourth year. It is common practice to find this module in almost all the teacher training curricula worldwide. Students entering a teacher training college certainly expect to learn how to teach, how to prepare lessons, and how to assess learners. One hour and a half session per week is the time allotted to TEFL. The aim from teaching this module is to introduce basic concepts in TEFL to provide teacher-trainees with tools that would help them in their future career (Third Year) (curriculum document, ENSC, 2008). Another aim is to explain thoroughly the basic foundations of classroom tasks and activities, the use of

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appropriate teaching/ learning steps (ibid). The curriculum for Third Year is made out of six chapters that tackle the following areas: Objectives, aims and goals, content selection and organization, approaches, methods and techniques, materials and media (types of materials and media), lesson planning and presentation (steps, warm-up, learning activities, follow-up activities, homework), and testing/assessment (aims, types of tests, designing tests, marking/scoring a test). TEFL in the curriculum is entitled 'Theory and Practice'. In other words, the trainees are exposed to theories that they later on put, themselves, into practice. Each chapter of the syllabus of TEFL contains some practice activities where the trainees have to demonstrate an ability to tackle issues in teaching making use of what they have learnt in theory through applications in the Middle/ Secondary School textbooks. The Fourth Year syllabus recycles former knowledge acquired in the Third Year and progresses to cover the following areas: teaching foreign language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing + the integration of the skills), foreign language teaching approaches (synthetic, analytical, eclectic, Competency-based, information processing activities (intake, rehearsing, transfer, problem solving) for the Secondary School profile and information exercises (drilling, modification, practice,/use) for the Middle School profile, teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar, teaching pronunciation, language games, learning styles and strategies, classroom management, group division, and teacher feedback. The syllabus recommends at least two tutorials to illustrate practical matters. However, it all depends on the trainer's skills and creativity to run the course making use of the available techniques and modes in use in teacher education. MDD is taught in the Fourth Year. Three hours, per week is the time allotted to this module. Language teaching has revealed that materials development is an important skill needed by teachers and that by engaging in materials development, teachers can help themselves both to understand and apply theories of language learning and to achieve personal and professional development (Tomlinson 2003: 445). The subject deserves its place in the curriculum. If it achieves its objectives, it will shift the orientation of teachers from mere repetition of guidelines and principles to reflection over their practice and adaptation of content to the varying demands of their classes. The aim behind this course is to clarify the nature and types of teaching materials and media, their quality and adaptation to classroom use, their authenticity, complexity, and learnability. The trainees are expected to be able to analyze existing language teaching materials and to adapt them to learners' levels and teaching situations, and also to be able to select, design and develop language teaching materials (curriculum document, .ENS Constantine, 2008). The MDD syllabus covers the following areas of content: materials types (oral/aural, reading, audio-visual), learning objectives in Bloom's taxonomy, styles and

strategies ( cognitive, affective, social and meta-cognitive strategies), lesson plan/procedure and activity type, criteria of materials analysis and evaluation (adoption, adaptation ), and materials analysis and evaluation. At the end of the course, the trainees have to realize a project in which they design materials and evaluate them. The content is distributed over three terms and holds three main objectives: familiarizing the learners with the process of materials analysis, design and evaluation.

TESD is taught in the Fourth Year for trainees of Middle School profile (three hours per week). Syllabus design extends to the Fifth Year with the Secondary School profile (one hour and a half per week for each year). The aim is twofold: to familiarize the trainees with a process that takes place before class (syllabus design), and approach its basic concepts (planning, design, implementation, evaluation, renewal). The other part tackles textbook evaluation techniques and procedures that are believed to be essential in teacher training. The Course is made out of two parts. Part one includes basic definitions of syllabus, curriculum, syllabus design, planning needs analysis, situational analysis, ideologies, setting aims and objectives, content selection and organization, syllabus types, and syllabus evaluation and renewal (for the Middle School profile). The second part is devoted to textbook design and evaluation.

## **2. Evaluation of the Teaching Methodology Curriculum**

In order to assess the trainees' needs, the teaching methodology curriculum was evaluated through the administration and analysis of three questionnaires addressed to teacher trainers, supervisors, and Fourth / Fifth year trainees at the ENS of Constantine. The research was conducted with the aim to provide a clear opinion and perceptions of teacher trainers and supervisors about the teaching methodology curriculum, and to determine the trainees' needs and expectations from the same curriculum.

### **2.1.The Teacher Trainers' Opinions and Perceptions about the Teaching Methodology Curriculum at the ENS**

The Teachers' Questionnaire, one of the common tools in curriculum evaluation and needs assessment research, was devised in order to collect data about the teaching methodology curriculum. It was distributed to 9 teachers (the total number of the curriculum teachers) and consisted of 59 questions divided into 9 sections: general information, the training curriculum, needs analysis, aims and objectives, content, materials and media, implementation, evaluation, and further suggestions.

The analysis of the questionnaire came out with the following results. The majority of the teacher trainers of the teaching methodology curriculum hold a significant experience as teachers (88.88%) and teacher trainers (66.66%). Besides, the majority hold a magister degree in TEFL and linguistics, two areas required for the teaching of the curriculum modules. This explains that most of

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the teachers (88.89%) are familiar with the overall teacher training curriculum, linking therefore teaching methodology to the whole training curriculum. For the majority of teacher trainers, the overall curriculum covers theories of teaching, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, teaching skills pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge. This corresponds to the highest rate (44.44%) of the teachers who have stated that the curriculum does not refer to needs analysis and focuses on perceived needs, expert opinions, task analysis and current practice excluding 'in this way, the trainees' felt needs. Yet, for 66.67%, the curriculum meets the trainees' expectations, an information they could obtain through their regular assessment of the trainees' needs in addition to feedback from alumni students. According to 66.67% of the trainers, the curriculum specifies the aims of the different modules. 55.55% believe that the aims are clearly specified and express what the trainees would achieve for 44.45%. However, 22.22% have stated that the aims reflect the overall adopted ideology. Besides, 66.67% have confirmed the availability of clearly stated objectives, 44.45% of whom have asserted that they reflect the overall aims and are subject to ongoing revision performed through their assessment of the trainees' needs. As far as content is concerned, 33.33% of the teachers confirm the availability of course descriptions in the curriculum. For 44.45%, the teaching methodology curriculum exemplifies the competency based approach and for 55.56%, the time allotted for the syllabuses allows the achievement of the stated objectives. Besides, for 55.56%, the curriculum integrates theory and practice and suggests a typology of activities for 77.78% in the form of courses, practice, observations and research. This corresponds to Graves' (2009) categorization. Assessment is envisaged to evaluate the trainees' how to use knowledge in teaching contexts for 77.78%, but the curriculum does not mention any role for the teacher trainers who believe that they should play three main roles: instructor, model, and guide. On the other hand, 33.34% have mentioned that even for trainees, no role is attributed. The type of materials and media used by most trainers are handouts and audio-visual aids that are adapted to the learners' needs and level and that are available in their department. However, only 33.33% are satisfied with the materials and media they use. To implement the teaching methodology curriculum, 33.33% of the teachers adopt the frontal and the pair/ group work modes allowed by the class size. For 77.77%, the modes are interesting and motivating, information they obtain from trainees' feedback, reactions, responses, raised questions, attendance, participation, motivation, and performance. Evaluation, an important step in curriculum development and implementation is frequently carried out by 77.78% of the teachers in the form of self-evaluation, evaluation of materials, evaluation of the course, and evaluation of the situation after the course. The teachers'

evaluation focuses on the objectives, content, methods and resources. According to 66.67% of the teachers, the curriculum has been subject to one formal evaluation that has led to improvements at the level of content adjustment and trainees' needs. Yet, the teachers still claim for the statement of clearer objectives and more attention to trainees' needs.

The overall analysis of the Teachers' Questionnaire supports the hypothesis that the teaching methodology curriculum has been developed over the designers' perceptions, without recording them in the curriculum document. The teachers have confirmed that the curriculum meets the students' expectations and its content allows for the achievement of its stated aims and objectives. On the whole, the Teachers' Questionnaire provided information about the teachers' perceptions, interpretations and implementation of the curriculum that may help revise the official document under a common, more detailed and explicit framework.

## **2.2. The Supervisors' Opinions about the Teaching Methodology Curriculum at the ENS**

The Supervisors' Questionnaire was administered in order to get feedback from the Ministry of Education agents: the supervisors. The aim was to provide the research with an external opinion that would contribute to the identification of the gaps between the teaching prerequisites and the teaching methodology curriculum. The targeted population for the questionnaire was supervisors of Middle and Secondary Schools operating in the 22 cities where the graduates of the ENS of Constantine work. The questionnaire was either handed in, or emailed to the identified population, and returns came from twelve supervisors making the sample for this research. The questionnaire consists of 27 questions divided into five sections: general information, the teacher training curriculum, post training teachers' profile, teaching methodology, and further suggestions.

The analysis of the questionnaire has resulted in the following outcomes. The respondents hold a significant experience as teachers before becoming supervisors. All of them have been teaching for more than thirteen years and have supervised teachers for more than five years. All of them hold a 'Licence' degree (corresponding to the minimum academic requirement for the profession). Besides, they cover 14 out of the 22 targeted cities in this research either at Middle or Secondary Schools. They all have agreed about the importance of teacher training and have stated that it should be both theoretical and practical, providing knowledge in the following domains: the subject matter, teaching methodology, and the target culture. Among the respondents, 58.33% are familiar with the teacher training curriculum. This allows them to provide opinions about the curriculum adequacy to the nature of teaching English at the Middle/Secondary School. Most of the supervisors, who are familiar with the curriculum, got their information from the post training

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teachers they supervise and only a few of them have been consulted by the design team. Besides, the supervisors have confirmed the necessity for them to be associated to the teacher training curriculum design and that they could contribute at many levels: information about the profession requirements, and the discrepancy between what trained teachers are able to do and what they are required to be able to do. The supervisors have also referred to many approaches as being most appropriate to teacher training. Yet, the highest rate (25%) is of supervisors who believe that the approach should be teacher-centered. In addition, for supervisors, the curriculum should cover theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning and decision making, and contextual knowledge. Regarding the post-training teachers' profile, most of the supervisors (75%) have confirmed that they assess the post-training teachers at entry to the profession, using specific criteria. They do this mostly to depict the areas of strength and weakness of beginner teachers for purposes of maintenance and improvement of standards, adopting therein Goldsburry's 1988 correcting model, where the supervisor is expected to possess diagnostic skills and higher knowledge than the teacher, in order to maximize benefits of expertise. Their focus is on many areas, namely the knowledge of the subject matter, teaching methodology and the target culture. The assessment they undertake has revealed that beginner teachers demonstrated weaknesses at different levels, the highest rate being at the level of teaching methodology. Consequently, in order to overcome the identified weaknesses, supervisors have mentioned that they organize in-service training sessions, provide teachers with feedback about their performance, but more importantly, some of them send feedback reports to the ENS so that adjustments are made at the level of the curriculum.

Within the teaching methodology curriculum, supervisors have recognized the importance of the three modules, (TEFL, MDD, and TESD), and that they all have impact on the teachers' performance. Yet, prominence is given to 'TEFL' probably because it addresses direct classroom concerns. The two other modules were seen less important since they deal with aspects that are beyond the classroom practice in that they prepare teachers for more likelihood to deliver successful teaching. At this level, the supervisors were provided with the targeted abilities from the curriculum modules and were asked to identify the ones that teachers needed most to demonstrate. For 'TEFL', all of the listed abilities have been judged important for teachers to demonstrate. Yet, prominence was given to some skills over the others. The supervisors have shown priorities throughout their responses, and therefore have stressed lesson 'planning and presentation', 'teaching grammar', 'teaching vocabulary', 'learning styles and strategies', 'aims and objectives', and 'classroom management and group division' over 'testing', and 'teaching the four skills

and integrating them'. The supervisors' ranking of abilities may be justified by their observation of the teachers' weaknesses. In other words, teachers might have shown more serious weaknesses at the level of 'lesson planning' than they did at the level of 'teaching the four skills'. For 'MDD', the supervisors have also expressed the importance of the suggested abilities but attributed more prominence to 'selecting authentic materials and designing them for classroom use' than to 'adjusting materials to the learners' level, time, objectives and classroom settings' and 'analyzing and evaluating materials'. Yet, we assume that for teachers to be able to select materials, it is necessary for them to know how to evaluate materials on the basis of a set of criteria they would achieve through the course. Besides, once the materials are selected, they need to be adjusted to the level, time and classroom setting. For 'TESD', the supervisors have also perceived the module's abilities as pertinent and needed by teachers to perform their job. However, the ability of evaluating textbooks is seen less important compared to the other interrelated abilities of curriculum/syllabus design. The supervisors' view may be justified by a contextual reason, since in Algeria, the textbook is a unique official national document often standing for the syllabus. Generally, textbooks are evaluated for the purpose of selection and since there is no alternative, teachers are bound to use the only available resource. Some of the supervisors have provided suggestions related to the improvement of the curriculum. They would like to contribute in the design of the curriculum through coordination (an absent parameter that should be addressed). They have raised the problem of trainees' exposure to more theory than practice and the importance of developing critical thinking and reflection, essential ingredients for teachers.

On the whole, the Supervisors' Questionnaire supports the hypothesis that the supervisors have an important role to play in the design of the teaching methodology curriculum. Communication between the curriculum designers and the educational experts can bridge the gap between what is perceived as important and what is identified as essential for teachers to perform their job. In addition, the supervisors have identified weaknesses at the level of the targeted abilities within the curriculum so that they are taken into account when the curriculum is revised.

### **2.3. The Trainees' Attitudes and Expectations in Relation to the Teaching Methodology Curriculum at the ENS**

The Students' Questionnaire, a useful tool to gather information about students, was administered to trainees of English at the ENS of Constantine. It aimed at identifying the trainees' background, learning styles, interests, preferences, attitudes, abilities, and expectations, and comparing the results with the data obtained from the previous questionnaires. It targeted a population of 115 Fourth and Fifth Year trainees meant to graduate in the academic year 2013/2014, eighty of whom have returned the questionnaire. In order to allow



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for the fulfillment of the curriculum content and the end of the practical training where the respondents could put into practice the acquired theoretical knowledge, the questionnaire was distributed at the end of the third term of the academic year 2013/ 2014. It consists of 32 questions divided into 5 sections; general information, learning styles and strategies, attitudes and expectations, abilities, and further suggestions.

The analysis of the questionnaire has come up with the following results: Most of the trainees (87.50%) are female; this denotes that in Algeria, teaching is a profession that attracts females more than males, assumingly due to many socio-cultural convictions such as convenience and suitability of the job to females. In addition, the respondents are representative of 17 cities from the East and Southeast Algeria, and belong to the two available profiles at the ENS (Bac +4 and Bac +5). The majority (86.25%) has chosen to be teachers for many reasons, including the love of the profession, the motivation by the job contract, and the influence of parents and some of their former secondary school teachers. The trainees have provided information about their learning styles, stating that 45% are visual. Yet, the rest of the respondents have referred to combined learning styles, confirming that the latter are not dichotomous (black or white, present or absent), but generally operating in a continuum (Ehrman 1996). Furthermore, the trainees have expressed preferences in terms of training modes, giving prominence to the pair/group work mode that usually leads to some form of sharing of opinions. The trainees have also identified the modes that their teaching methodology teachers used and ranked the pair/group work mode in the first position. This denotes that the trainees are satisfied with their teachers' training modes who use a variety of modes away from stereotyped unique practices that may lead to automatic classroom contact. On the other hand, the trainees (40%) have argued that among the suggested approaches, the competency based is the most appropriate. In terms of attitudes and expectations, the trainees in majority (81.25%) have agreed that linguistic, pedagogical and cultural knowledge is necessary for teacher trainees to acquire. Furthermore, for 95%, of the trainees, training requires the use of media and specific equipment, including the data show, class videos, and special classroom organization. These are available in the department for 86.25% of the respondents. The trainees have also stated that their teaching methodology teachers use handouts, internet resources and textbooks probably referring to the Secondary/ Middle School textbooks, since no textbooks for teacher training purposes are available. For trainees, their teachers' materials are incomplete, and need adaptation and updating. Besides, most of the trainees (55%), have considered that the three modules of the curriculum (TEFL, MDD, and TESD) are important for teacher training. According to most of them, the curriculum teachers describe the courses aims and objectives, a step they all

consider important within the running of the course. The reason for them is that they get clearer ideas about what they learn, but more importantly because they can direct their own learning and identify priorities. Furthermore, for 71.25% of the students, the teaching methodology modules should be both theoretical and practical. This is quite logical, considering that theory and practice are inter-complementary. Theoretical knowledge is best assimilated when matched with practice, and the latter is best performed when backed by theoretical foundations.

The trainees' overall appreciation of the teaching methodology curriculum is that it responds to the needs and expectations of 61.25%, requires adjustment to the needs and expectations of 26.50%, and does not respond to the needs and expectations of 5%. Students, on the whole, have also identified the courses' components they could demonstrate among a suggested list extracted from the curriculum document. The trainees have also identified some missing components within the modules allowing therefore, the curriculum designers and teachers are provided with valuable information about the areas of strength and weakness within the trainees so that they could address them in future curriculum reforms or even develop treatment measure at local level within each module. The trainees have provided interesting comments and suggestions but with a loud claim for practice.

On the whole, we can say that the trainees' questionnaire has revealed that the teaching methodology corresponds to a large extent to the trainees' needs and expectations, denoting therefore that the teachers' perceptions and informal needs assessment respond to the real expectations as expressed by trainees.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this research support the hypotheses it departed from. They reveal that the curriculum is planned around the developers' perceived needs and that the trainees' felt needs are informally and unofficially continuously assessed by subject matter teachers. They also reveal that despite the significant role the curriculum client (Ministry of Education) can play in the identification of trainees' needs in terms of description of the various tasks they will perform in their job, there is a serious gap between the two sides and coordination is rare. Nevertheless, the teachers' and the trainees' questionnaires have revealed that the way the curriculum is implemented satisfies the students' needs and responds highly to their expectations. The supervisors, on the other hand, have provided positive feedback concerning the pertinence of the curriculum content to the training of qualified, skilled teachers. Besides, in addition to the identification of areas of minor importance to the training of teachers, the supervisors' questionnaire has also led to information about the weaknesses the teachers show in terms of knowledge acquired from the curriculum. On the other hand, the trainees' questionnaire has led to the emergence of the need for practice which is felt missing in the curriculum and the identification of the

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curriculum abilities that the students fail to demonstrate. In the light of these results, we drew the conclusion that the teaching methodology curriculum is not without weaknesses and necessitates a revision for purposes of improvement.

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