
REVISITING THE BACHELOR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION (BSEd) MAJOR IN ENGLISH CURRICULUM: UNDERPINNINGS AND LESSONS FOR ENHANCEMENTS

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Abstract:

The heart of any educational institution is a well-crafted curriculum that specifies and provides a quantifiable method and structure for great education. Curriculum evaluation is an important component in improving educational programs and student learning outcomes, which can help in designing an effective curriculum. The purpose of this study was to provide a framework for curricular adjustments by discussing the various assessments and perspectives of instructors, students, parents, industry experts, and graduates of BSEd English curriculum of an HEI in CAMANAVA regarding relevance, sequencing of course offerings, and offering suggestions for curricular enhancements. Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) framework was employed in this study. Data were collected through focus discussion group, hybrid and face-to-face interview, questionnaire, and chats with students, parents, academicians, industry workers, and alumni. Thematic analysis was used to treat the data. Respondents agreed that there was an imbalance in the distribution of minor, major, and prerequisite subjects in the BSEd English curriculum. Respondents also emphasized the importance of re-sequencing course offerings to account for prerequisite subjects that were required in establishing prior knowledge before proceeding to higher and more difficult courses. Other observations include globalization of the BSEd curriculum and stakeholder involvement in curriculum evaluation. The study recommended that curriculum design and subject sequencing be prioritized with the participation of stakeholders. Furthermore, globalization of the BSEd English curriculum was stressed to prepare future teachers to respond courageously to the needs of a globalized world.

Keywords: BSEd English curriculum, curriculum sequencing, curriculum design, course relevance

Introduction

The curriculum is reckoned as the heart of any learning institution (Alvior, 2014), for without it, it is impossible for any academic organization to exist. The curriculum encompasses the total learning experiences of every individual learner, from setting its sail - by defining the desired educational expectations, designing the content, tailoring instructional strategies, implementing the curriculum, to the crafting of various tools that are effective in evaluating whether expected outcomes were realized. As underscored by UNESCO (2011) a curriculum is a description of what, why, how, and how well students should learn in a systematic and intentional way. The curriculum is not an end but rather a means to foster quality learning. For teachers and administrators, the curriculum serves as their supreme guide as to what is crucial for teaching and learning so that every learner has access to holistic educational experiences based on the learner's needs, time, interests, and abilities. The curriculum ensures the direction of any learning institution and guarantees that learning outcomes have been achieved.

Curricular evaluation is critical to provide feedback whether educational sectors have been achieving their institutional vision, mission, goals, and objectives, concretized through their production of globally, competitive graduates who are skillful, knowledgeable, technology and digital literate, creative, resilient, collaborative, innovative, critical thinkers, socially skillful, civic literate, and highly effective communicators. The teachers give life to the curriculum, and to meet these global trends of expectations from a graduate in teacher education, Secondary English teachers must be well equipped with the necessary trainings, knowledge, and skills to meet universal expectations. Mohammed and Jumare (2020) confirmed that secondary education is a very critical level of any educational system. It is the heart on which higher education is built, the foundation of whatever a child wants to become in life academically started at secondary level. It is therefore empirical that teachers burdened with the responsibility of imparting knowledge at this level of the education system must acquire certain qualities.

The Saber Tooth curriculum (Pediwell, 1939) recounted how a Paleolithic curriculum become outdated when the Ice Age occurred. It implies the crucial need for curricular evolution. The Saber Tooth curriculum serves as a reminder to respect and preserve the traditional system of education but must not be constrained by it. This implies innovation. It means that curricular programs must continue to transform and evolve to cope with the fast-changing phase of life. Curriculum evaluation is key to make curricula in higher education responsive and relevant to the needs and interest of the learners. Bliff (2016) claimed that curricular enhancements permit education programs and schools to focus attention on the development and support of healthy, well-integrated human beings. Curriculum review maintains the check and balance whether the knowledge and skills honed are tantamount to global expectations. There is no constant in curriculum except change. Curriculum must bend with the wind to survive and thrive making educational learning perennial and enduring.

Learners are the top priority in curricular evaluation. Learners are the core of learning, their development is paramount, so they become an asset in society by contributing quality services. Preservice secondary teachers in English must be equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and training so they become highly effective in the teaching-learning process. Assessing the BSEd- English curricular program is integral to find out whether it is still receptive and relevant to the needs of the preservice teachers especially with the advent of technology and new modalities in the teaching-learning process. The perceptions and assessment of teachers, learners, parents, alumni, and industry experts will make an evident validation on the real status of the existing curriculum in the BSEd-English program. Curriculum should always be impactful to the timely needs of the individual learners especially with the commencement of technological navigations in learning systems. Through the results of the curriculum evaluation, teachers can modify content, approaches, strategies and methods, resources, and assessments to best fit the needs of the learners. Academic heads and administrators can reconsider and strategize to provide the resources to what is most and relevantly needed support for learners. Moreover, through curricular review, HEI curriculum developers are given overall feedback and assessment whether program outcomes have been fully or less achieved. Moreover, it will provide HEIs tangible evidence on areas that need to be improved in the future. Curricular review is a determinant of an HEI 's commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

Curriculum enhancement is perceived to have positive results when all stakeholders such as parents, industry experts, and alumni truly understand their role in the curriculum development and implementation. Being able to listen to perspectives of the stakeholders, such as: learners, the parents, alumni, and industry experts will help them gain deeper understanding on the purpose, process of curricular development, thus; they can be more involved and give their genuine contribution in its implementation. As confirmed by Nyamai, (2021), curriculum development is best deemed successful when all stakeholders effectively understand their purpose in the curriculum development process. When parents play their part, the curriculum developed is said to be effective.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) CMO NO. 46 s. 2012 outlined the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) of the 21st Century Philippine Teacher Education framework which is anchored on the salient features of K to 12, and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. The PSGs specify the "core competencies" that are expected of BSEd graduates regardless of the school where they graduated from. The PSG is geared to provide HEI opportunities to innovate their curriculum on how to achieve maximum learning outcomes in their contexts and their respective missions. CMO no. 75, s. of 2017, Article IV, emphasizes the aim of the degree program which is to develop highly motivated and competent BSEd-English teachers specializing the content and pedagogy for secondary education.

To respond to this call for curriculum innovation towards the development of 21st century secondary English educator, this paper seeks to provide underpinnings whether the current curricular program is producing the desired results for the learners. Specifically, this study is only limited to determine whether (1) the current curriculum of an HEI in CAMANAVA is relevant to meet the needs of BSEd - English students; (2) to explore whether the sequence of course offerings are arranged strategically; and (3) to suggest recommendations for curricular enhancements. This paper discusses the various assessments and insights of teachers, students, parents, industry experts, and alumni to provide baseline towards curricular enhancements.

Figure 1
CIPP model of program evaluation



Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process, Product Model (CIPP)

To set directions on how the curriculum review must commence, Stufflebeam's CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model was adopted to guide the stakeholders assess the BSEd-English curriculum. This framework provides means in generating processes that must be carried out by the curriculum evaluators. Stufflebeam (2001) defined evaluation as the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives. The model has four stages of program evaluation: (1) context evaluation - where the curriculum evaluators assess needs and problems in the context to help decision makers determine goals and objectives; and if there are unmet needs, the evaluator seeks to find reasons for not meeting the needs. Context evaluation identifies the problems, issues, and challenges which need to be addressed; (2) input evaluation – determines information for determining how resources are utilized to achieve curriculum objectives. The purpose of this type of evaluation is to provide information for determining the resources used to meet the goals of the program (Khawaja, 2001). In this premise, the feedback provided by the curriculum evaluators are analyzed to design alternatives to resolve the gaps; (3) process evaluation – monitors and provides feedback to ensure that the means are being implemented. In the context of this study, it implies a follow up study on the effectiveness of the revised curriculum in a year or two after its implementation; and (4) product evaluation, aims to gather and describe curricular attainment not just the end of an implementation of a curriculum. In the premise of this research exploration, it entails the importance of conducting another study to assess its effectiveness after the revised curriculum has been implemented.

Methodology

The techniques employed in this study included Focus Discussion Group (FDG), hybrid and face-to-face interview, questionnaires, and conversations with the students, parents, academicians, industry experts, and the alumni. Thematic analysis was employed to generate themes, that is patterns in the data that are significant and interesting. The themes were exhausted to address the issues. Thematic analysis provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results and Discussion

1. Relevance of the Existing Curriculum to Meet the Needs of Education Students as Perceived by Students, Parents, Academicians, Alumni, and Industry Experts

There was a mutual perception among the curriculum evaluator-respondents that there was an imbalance of course distribution in the BSEd major in English curriculum. The evaluator-respondents claimed that the courses offered at the First-Year level are light in terms of major subjects. It means that most of the courses offered in the first year are minor subjects. The students felt the need for an offset between the major and minor subjects offered at the entry level of their curriculum to avoid difficulty in managing their major subjects, which are mostly offered starting at their second-year level. Major and professional subjects with no prerequisites can be re-sequenced to decongest most of the minor subjects posed at the entry level. Moreover, it was a common experience of the evaluators to find out that most literature subjects were offered at the third-year level, which caused students to be drained and overwhelmed. The bulk of literature subjects taken together led students to get confused and mixed-up literary concepts, tangled thoughts on the stories they read and made students difficult to remember prominent characters from literary selections.

The Bachelor of Secondary Education in English program provides a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the study of English, with the goal of developing students' critical thinking skills, analytical writing abilities, and communication expertise. The program offers courses in various disciplines such as literature, linguistics, creative

writing, rhetoric, and composition. Additionally, students enroll in minor subjects to further specialize in their studies. Pursuing a minor can help students develop complementary skills or explore a new field of interest. The minor choices offered vary by institution, but some common options include psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, and even business administration (Hatfield, 2023).

The distribution of major and minor subjects has its strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of a Bachelor's degree in English is that it allows for more flexibility in choosing electives that may not be related to one's major (Coursera, 2023). However, the downside is that the current trend in major subjects tends to be more specialized, with a focus on specific skill sets or fields of study. On the other hand, bachelor's degree in English tends to include a range of humanities-based subjects, which can broaden one's perspective and critical thinking skills. While this distribution may be more than sufficient for some, others may feel limited by the narrow range of options available within these subject areas. Thus, the distribution of minor and major subjects offers both advantages and disadvantages, and ultimately depends on the individual's academic goals and interests.

Academicians should constantly keep minor and prerequisite subjects in mind while distributing and sequencing subjects because they are critical for students' advancement in higher education. Minor and prerequisite subjects can help identify areas of interest for future studies, prepare students for upcoming material and provide a foundation of background knowledge necessary for future courses (Sato et al., 2017). As they are deemed useful, minor and prerequisite subjects can also have a significant impact on the time it takes to graduate and the corresponding costs to students. This logistical problem can be attributed to scheduling issues as well as increased time to graduation, which can be financially burdensome for students.

Additionally, there is frequently observed disconnect between instructors teaching a prerequisite and a linked course, which can cause confusion for students and negatively impact their learning experience. Despite the perceived benefits of minor and prerequisite subjects, broad evaluations may not accurately measure the nuanced influence of prerequisite courses on student learning. Furthermore, prerequisite courses assume a large degree of overlap with later courses or programs which may not be the case in reality. Only a few studies have examined the impact of minor and prerequisite courses on student success in higher education, and there has been little effort to assess the value of minor and prerequisites in bachelor's degree curricula, particularly in English curricula, which may take a variety of forms, including student feedback and quantitative metrics, to ensure that prerequisites are truly effective in promoting students' success in higher education (Sato et al., 2017). It is critical to convey to students that minor and prerequisite subjects have promising benefits on knowledge acquisition when subject allocation is in equilibrium.

2. Effective Sequencing of Course Offerings

It was found to be a common perception among the evaluators that there is a need for strategic and effective sequencing/ordering of course offerings in the curriculum. The evaluator-respondents claimed that there is a need to give emphasis on the development of the students' technical and writing skills. It was strictly emphasized that the subjects which are Technical Writing and Creative Writing must be offered at the entry level of the program. This will immensely give the students a chance to hone their writing skills, the best way to prepare them for their writing deliverables and research writing outputs as their level progresses. Moreover, Language education research taken along with Field Study is also found to be very tedious in the part of the students. Both subjects entail critical focus and time. This indicates that the two subjects must be taken separately to gain focus, efficiency, and productivity.

Curriculum sequencing is an essential element in the current educational landscape allowing educators to effectively structure and organize the order of subjects taught in the classroom. Cognitive load theory plays a crucial role in informing how curriculum sequencing is approached. This theory recognizes that the brain has limited processing power, and therefore, it is important to sequence subjects in a way that reduces cognitive overload and maximizes learning potential. In English literature, for example, the sequencing of subject matter is designed to center on three concepts - Subject, Form, and Point of View - with overall goals of promoting a deeper understanding of literary analysis and interpretation (Ulin, 1973). Moreover, students must first learn to compose essays before they can offer an appropriate literature review paper.

Curriculum leaders should spend time analyzing their existing curriculum choices and creating sequencing plans for subjects such as English, science, math, and other minor and prerequisite subjects to ensure optimal learning success for their students. In constructing a school subject or course of study, selection, organization, and sequencing of subject

matter are critical components of the process (He et al., 2015). A scope and sequence document is another valuable tool that lists concepts, topics, and materials covered in a particular curriculum. For English, it is crucial that there is a focus on curriculum sequence and substantive knowledge to provide students with a multidimensional understanding of the subject matter. The sequence includes plans and materials for learning experiences to support and extend learning at various levels of development (Time4Learning, 2022).

According to Myatt (2022), when determining subject sequencing in a curriculum, various factors are taken into account. Mainly, the needs of the students must be considered so that the curriculum can be tailored to their learning requirements. The goals and purpose of the curriculum are also considered to ensure that the sequencing aligns with the desired outcomes of the curriculum. Foundational knowledge or skills are prioritized before more advanced and complex topics to ensure students have a strong understanding of the basics before moving on to more challenging material, thus the need for identifying prerequisites. Dependencies between concepts or skills are also taken into consideration when determining subject sequencing to ensure that students have the necessary background knowledge to understand new material. In addition, topics that should be assessed, as well as the frequency of assessments, are important factors in determining subject sequencing. To ensure that students are mastering the material, the sequencing must also consider the appropriateness of activities for different topics, as well as their effectiveness in engaging students and helping them learn.

Curriculum sequencing should be scaffolded, breaking complex tasks into smaller parts, and taught logically, building upon previously learned concepts, to ensure students can understand and learn the material effectively. Sequencing should also be flexible, allowing students to review and revisit material as needed, and provide opportunities for further exploration and discovery. To guide curriculum sequencing, Myatt (2022) construed that four key principles should be followed: careful thought to build upon prior knowledge, scaffolding complex tasks into smaller parts, teaching logically building upon previously learned concepts, and being flexible with sequencing to allow for review and revisit material as needed. In summary, curriculum sequencing is an important part of the learning process that requires careful thought and consideration of various factors to ensure students can understand and learn the material effectively.

Recommendations

a. Curriculum design and sequencing of course offerings.

Implementing a comprehensive and relevant Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English program necessitates an emphasis on comprehensive curriculum design, effective teaching and learning methodologies, technological integration, and student-centered learning outcomes. To accomplish this, a balance in the distribution of major, minor, and prerequisite studies is required. Subjects should be sequenced methodically to support the successful and progressive development of students' knowledge and abilities. Leverage technology to enhance the teaching and learning process. Top-ranked curricula with research-based methodologies and best practices for building effective instructional programs can also be advantageous for students seeking a wide experience in English studies, including courses in literature, writing, and linguistics.

b. Inclusion of stakeholders in the curriculum assessment

It is recommended that students, parents, and alumni be involved in assessing the BSEd English curriculum for a better delivery. As claimed by (Sato, 2017) that there have been few studies to examine the effectiveness of sequencing course offerings and the impact of prerequisite courses on student success in higher education, and there has been little effort to assess the value of minor and prerequisite subjects in the bachelor's degree. Assessment can take a variety of forms, including student feedback and quantitative indicators, to ensure that prerequisites are beneficial in increasing students' success in higher education.

c. Internationalization of BSEd - English curriculum

Internationalization has become a vital aspect of higher education in recent years, particularly when it comes to Bachelor's degree in English. Technology and mobility opportunities can provide students with valuable extension to core training, allowing them to gain international experience and exposure to different cultures (Davey, 2023). By doing so, students are able to gain a broad understanding of different cultures, norms, and languages, which can aid

them in their future careers. In other words, an internationalized curriculum should incorporate a range of activities and opportunities that help students gain a global perspective and develop intercultural competencies such as joining international conferences, onsite and online teaching of learners from abroad, cultural exchange programs, practice teaching abroad, etc. Overall, the incorporation of internationalization into Bachelor's degree in English curricula is crucial for preparing students for today's globalized world.

Conclusion

With the intricacies and novel challenges exists in the modern societies such as COVID-19 pandemic, the emerging trend of artificial intelligence, hybrid learning modalities, re-alignment and modification of the basic education curriculum in the Philippines, and the like, it is crucial that the Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in English undergoes curricular evaluation in order to examine and improve the overall impact of curriculum's responsiveness to the integral needs of the education students. The curricular review plays an essential role in responding to the various needs of the education students in the HEI in CAMANAVA. Curriculum evaluation should focus on strategizing the re-sequencing of course content, sustaining balance in the distribution of courses offered per semester, inclusion of stakeholders in the curriculum evaluation, and internalization of BSEd-English curriculum to help students manage their learning expectations and to equip them with knowledge, trainings, and skills according to global standards.

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