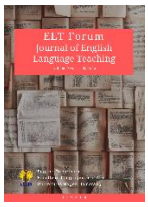
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Takhar University English Department students' perceptions toward the curriculum content: A quantitative study

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Abstract

This current study evaluates the opinions of undergraduate students in the English Department of Takhar University, Afghanistan, regarding the curriculum content. A quantitative method was utilized in collecting data via a structured questionnaire consisting of 203 randomly selected undergraduate students. Three variables were measured: appropriateness of curriculum content, student satisfaction, and curriculum effectiveness. Results indicated that participants demonstrated moderately positive opinions with regards to curriculum material prescription (M=2.82) but indicated highest values for effectiveness as an organization (M=2.84). On the other hand, student satisfaction was found to have an ambivalent response with values of (M=2.67). A key finding was the disparity between the amount of students' satisfaction and expressed confusion regarding their satisfaction with this resource. Students indicated that while they believed the content provided them with ample opportunity to think of new ideas, they also indicated they had difficulty grasping the ideas presented by the content; thus, demonstrating a very large gap between the actual design of the curriculum and how students experience learning from it. In conclusion, this study determined that although the curriculum is seen as a solid foundational framework, the level of student satisfaction and learning outcomes would be improved with revisions made to the clarity, relevance, usefulness of content, and application of content to students.

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INTRODUCTION

With being widely used across continents and being important in facilitating communication between people of different cultures throughout the world (Al-Fahady & Salih, 2020), English has become a language known as "the global language". Not because it is spoken or comprehended by over half of the world's population, rather it serves as the preferred mode of communication for many areas including: business, science and technology, education, literature and culture. As noted by Crystal (1997), English is so prevalent throughout the world that numerous fields such as academia and professions also continue to expand their use of this dominant language. In light of this, many countries around the world have been prompted to create or update their English-language curricula as a result of the increased use of this dominant global language and the trend toward creating or revising curricula based on global educational policies (Xu & Fan, 2016).

Within the framework of studying English language and literature, curriculum content is fundamental in the construction of knowledge and skills of the learner. According to Al-Fahady and Salih (2020), the curriculum content is considered as input that exists at the heart of teaching-learning process. it provides knowledge to the learner in a meaningful and logical manner. McKernan (2008) likewise perceives the curriculum content as the range of topics, resources, and organized learning experiences which direct instruction within the classroom. Although it traditionally has been defined as a list of subjects and/or syllabus but its modern definition refers to any intended, organized learning experiences delivered inside and outside of the classroom that contribute to a student's cognitive, social, and affective development (Al-Baker & Al-Mahawas, 2001; Fayadh, 2017).

Additionally, scholars such as Braslavsky (2003), Adams (2003), and Kelly (2009) point out that the content of any curriculum should demonstrate the principles of learning standards, teaching practices, and assessment procedures. It should also provide learners with adequate information and skills necessary for success both in academic and professional life. As Oxford (2014) puts it, what is taught in school and colleges are subjects' syllabuses, including course contents and lesson plans. Moreover, the curriculum content involves both learners and teachers together with teaching methods. In addition, the content of the curriculum can be viewed as a framework of elements rather than a list of topics.

However, it is worth noting that it is the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Afghanistan which designs the curriculum for the higher education institutions. While it is true that the Ministry provides guidelines and course structure, each university still has the leeway to determine what kind of teaching materials should be used. It is common for universities to use or modify the materials in accordance with their objectives, resource capacity, and students' requirements. Given the rising significance of English in Afghan higher education, the appropriateness of curriculum content evaluation becomes necessary.

English is very significant at the global level, while curriculum is crucial for learning processes. Therefore, it is highly necessary to understand the views of the target population on the curriculum content provided to them in view of the benefits they would derive from such perceptions.

It is important for curriculum developers and students in Afghan universities to acknowledge the significance of curriculum content within English language and literature courses. The development of quality curriculum content can ensure student engagement, improve academic performance, and foster learner self-confidence. There is, however, no previous research conducted in Afghanistan on the prescribed content within English language and literature curricula. Neither has there been any attempt made to explore undergraduate students' perspectives regarding these content. There seems to be a need for further research in order to fill in the gaps that might exist in meeting student needs through the existing curriculum.

Significance of the study

The present research is highly important for curriculum developers, English language instructors, policy-makers, and students in Afghanistan. This study provides insight into students' perceptions towards specific aspects of the curriculum; thus, this paper points out the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum content from the viewpoint of its efficiency. In fact, as students are involved in the process of implementing the English language and literature curriculum, their perceptions may become helpful for choosing, adapting, or improving certain elements of the curriculum in order to ensure that they meet learners' needs and adhere to current academic standards. The current research also fills the gap in the existing literature as no studies dedicated to evaluating English curricula in Afghanistan exist at the moment. Hence, empirical data obtained from this study can become an asset

for making decisions about further changes in English language and literature curriculum content in the Afghan context.

Research objectives

1. To determine whether the prescribed curriculum content includes appropriate and relevant materials and courses.
2. To examine the level of satisfaction of undergraduate students with the curriculum content.
3. To explore the perceived effectiveness of the curriculum content for undergraduate students.

Research questions

1. To what extent does the curriculum content provide appropriate and relevant materials and courses?
2. To what extent are undergraduate students satisfied with the curriculum content?
3. To what extent do students perceive the curriculum content as effective for their academic development?

Literature review

Appropriateness of the curriculum content

Selection and delivery of the content of the curriculum have remained integral to debates around the quality of education for decades. According to Al-Fahady and Salih (2020), traditional notions about curriculum were concerned mainly with a bundle of instructional materials or syllabuses supplied to learners. However, modern views on curriculum define curriculum as a wide range of organized instructional experiences offered by institutions to facilitate intellectual, psychological, social, and physical development among learners. It is important to emphasize that the current approach to curriculum content reflects a more holistic perspective about the content of the curriculum.

Considering the issue from a practical perspective, it is worth stating that the relevance of the prescribed learning materials will be very critical in achieving curricula objectives. According to Ratnam (2022), in the contemporary higher education, especially when considering situations where English is an important academic language, curriculum design will play a key role in addressing the needs of the students. In light of English becoming dominant in fields like international relations, sciences, economics, and education, efforts by universities to develop better materials have been very pronounced.

Textbook evaluation is another area where studies have stressed the necessity of choosing the right curriculum materials. According to Ahmadi (2016), teachers have usually pointed out their advantages and drawbacks with regard to textbooks for the purpose of preparing students for progress in both academic and professional fields. These studies imply that any good material has to be in accordance with the needs of learners through organizing, linguistic ability, and methodology. Likewise, Merc (2017) believes that curriculum design can be perceived beyond being just the subjects chosen for education.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that curriculum materials must be modified in order to make them relevant and effective. According to Ormec (2009), although the national curriculum was considered satisfactory by most of the teachers, there were various flaws in it such as lack of sufficient time for instruction, too rigid material, and goals that do not correspond with the learners' language level. All of these examples demonstrate the necessity for institutions to adapt their materials according to local needs.

Overall, it appears that developing the appropriate curriculum content needs effort and careful planning. The literature also emphasizes that prescribing the right curriculum content requires intentional design, continuous evaluation, and alignment with learners' academic, cultural, and linguistic realities.

Students' satisfaction with curriculum content

The satisfaction of students is an important aspect of curriculum quality since it depicts to what extent the curriculum is able to address students' expectations. According to Wu, Hsieh, and Lu (2014), ensuring alignment between the content of the curriculum and the goals of the learners plays an important role in ensuring learners' engagement and continued involvement in educational programs. They established that learning satisfaction is determined by curriculum relevancy, institutional support, teaching style, learning conditions, and chances for effective academic interactions.

Recent research indicates that satisfaction ratings are different among various areas of study. According to the Author and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. (2016), it was determined that there were significantly different levels of satisfaction regarding course content among different faculties; specifically, science students rated themselves as more satisfied with course content than did engineering students. Researchers found that a major reason for this discrepancy in satisfaction rating, or level of dissatisfaction with course content, was due to the disparity of course content with the current demands of the workforce. Therefore, institutions must consider updating course content to accurately align with the latest knowledge, skills and expectations in the workplace. Research findings also indicate the significant need for educational institutions to ensure that course curriculums can be adapted to the needs of the present-day job market.

In contrast to the view stated above, Enamul-Hoque (2006) underscores the significance of designing a curriculum which is flexible and individualized in nature to promote autonomous learning among students. As per his findings, the curriculum in EFL contexts must incorporate academic English, vocabulary development, critical thinking skills, and communicative competence in a proper balance. His research concludes that learners are satisfied when there is an element of flexibility in their curriculum.

Several other studies have highlighted the impact of the support systems within an institution on the levels of satisfaction. According to Razinkina et al. (2017), increased levels of satisfaction among the learners could be attributed to the improvement in infrastructure facilities, personalized curriculum, online sources, and project-based learning. Similarly, according to Bhushan (2020), some of the common problems experienced by students include the inability to use their language fluently. Consequently, there is a need to include English language and reading-related activities in the curriculum to ensure success.

All these findings illustrate that satisfaction on the part of students is affected by factors such as the relevance of the curriculum, skill development opportunities, institutional support, and compatibility with linguistic and educational needs of students. For satisfying their demands, curricula need to be revised and updated constantly.

Effectiveness of curriculum content for students

A well-designed curriculum is a highly valued component of effective education. Apriliani (2020) points out that curriculum content is one of the most important factors influencing national standards in education and representing the conditions of society, economy, and technology. The author stresses that curriculums should correspond to new developments in terms of cognition, society, and technology. Otherwise, the curriculum may negatively impact education, whereas a good curriculum will enhance its quality.

Incorporation of 21st-century skills in the content of the curriculum has been emphasized as important for the preparation of students for modern needs. According to Alismail and McGuire (2015), incorporation of skills like critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy increases the efficiency and relevance of the curriculum content. The results reveal that the curriculum content is not only supposed to prepare students for standardized tests but also for their future career requirements.

The implementation of curriculum material is an important determinant as well. According to Millson (2020), the presence of practical learning activities in the curriculum significantly impacts the performance of the students because it gives them chances to apply what they have learned in a real-world setting. This activity increases their enthusiasm, helps them gain deep comprehension, and ensures the retention of their acquired skills.

Overall, the research shows that any successful curriculum needs to be current, skill-oriented, meaningful for the learners, and include experience-based activities. In such situations, the curriculum content makes a tremendous contribution to the success of the teaching process.

METHODS

Research design

In this study, a quantitative method was utilized to gather data using a closed-ended questionnaire. A quantitative method was considered most suitable for this study since the research questions required statistical data. The data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. a structured questionnaire was used as data collection instrument. All the questions involved responses on a 4-point Likert scale based on how much participants agreed or disagreed with statements in the

questionnaire. Data analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS (Version 24).

Respondents

There were a total number of 203 undergraduate English Language and Literature students at Takhar University, Afghanistan who participated in this study. To ensure representativeness, the participants were randomly selected from the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. The participants' ages varied between 18 and 30 years.

A simple random sampling technique was applied to enable equal participation of all students, who were part of the English Department. The researchers obtained a list of the students from various classes with the permission of the department. After that, the participants were randomly selected by class groupings. This technique was used to improve the generalizability of results within the department context.

Instruments

In order to collect data, a structured questionnaire was created for this quantitative study to measure three main research variables. The questionnaire was based on curriculum evaluation frameworks (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Tyler, 1949; Print, 1993), student satisfaction evaluations of curriculum models (Wu, Hsieh, and Lu, 2014; Razinkina et al., 2017) and the effectiveness of the curriculum in the teaching of English learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Graves, 2000; Alismail & McGuire, 2015).

The questionnaire comprised four parts. Part A sought demographic details such as age, gender, and year of studies. Parts B, C, and D included 33 questions that assessed the three main constructs of the study: (1) Appropriateness of the Curriculum Content (Statements 1–10). This part assessed the appropriateness of the suggested courses, focusing on their relevance, organization, how well they met the stated goals, and the suitability of the language and academic level used. The development of these items was guided by theoretical perspectives on curriculum design, which stress the importance of relevance, clarity, goal orientation, and learner-centeredness (Print, 1993; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). (2) Student Satisfaction with Curriculum Content (Statements 11–21). This section assessed student satisfaction in relation to clarity, usefulness, engagement, and interest in the curriculum content. These items were formulated based on existing theories of student satisfaction in higher education, which highlight usefulness, goal achievement, learning environment, and instruction quality as essential elements of satisfaction (Wu, Hsieh, and Lu, 2014; Razinkina et al., 2017). (3) Effectiveness of the Curriculum Content (Statements 22–33). This section included an evaluation of reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities, as well as critical thinking skills and their application within academic contexts. The statements in this section were created using established ideas about assessing language curricula and the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course design, which emphasizes practical skill development (Graves, 2000; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Millson, 2020).

A 4-point Likert scale (SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree) was used, and the participants indicated their level of agreement/disagreement towards each statement. The 4-point scale was selected on purpose without an option for neutrality; thus, encouraging participants to clearly feel one way or the other about their opinions. This design is consistent with recommendations made within quantitative attitude research (Alismail & McGuire, 2015).

The current study used a close-ended questionnaire as the main data collection instrument. This instrument was carefully reviewed and checked by three senior faculty members at Takhar University to validate its contents and clarity. There were a curriculum studies specialist, a TESOL expert, and a research methods specialist who closely checked the instrument. Their contributions and suggestions helped improve the wording, comprehensiveness, and relevancy of the statements in relation to the research objectives. In addition to that, a pilot study was conducted on 20 students who were not part of the actual data collection. Cronbach's alpha analysis of the pilot results showed very good reliability of the measures. The reliability test using the full sample (N=203) proved the measures to be highly reliable. The reliability levels were $\alpha = 0.94$ for the appropriateness of the curriculum content, $\alpha = 0.91$ for students' satisfaction, $\alpha = 0.96$ for the effectiveness of the curriculum, and $\alpha = 0.97$ for the whole survey. After considering the feedback, comments and

suggestions, a few replacements to the wording and structure occurred. The very final questionnaire was both clear and reliable.

Table 1. Reliability statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Appropriateness of the Curriculum Content	10	0.94
Students' Satisfaction	11	0.91
Effectiveness of the Curriculum	12	0.96
Overall Questionnaire	33	0.97

From the above Table 1, it can be seen that all the three constructs had excellent internal consistency levels, with their Cronbach's Alphas being far greater than the minimum value of 0.7. The total reliability level of the whole survey form is 0.97. This shows that the questionnaire had great consistency in the measurement of the participants' perceptions.

Data collection procedures

Data collection was done with the consent and collaboration of the Dean of the Faculty of Language and Literature and the Head of the English Department. Four structured sessions were held with the participants to gather the data using the questionnaire. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researchers discussed the purpose of the study and provided instructions to the participants. The participants signed a consent form indicating that their participation was voluntary. They were allowed enough time, which took about 8 to 10 minutes for completing the questionnaire. Clarification was also provided to students if there were difficult items in the questionnaire.

The research study started on March 1, 2025. The study started with the administration of necessary paperwork and obtaining necessary permissions from the institution. Data gathering was done two months after the study began. It took about four weeks to gather data. The research was finished on December 21, 2025.

Ethical considerations were adequately addressed in the course of conducting the study. This study met the required ethical considerations for educational research. The participants were made aware of the study's purposes, their freedom to withdraw the study at any time they wished, and the confidentiality of their responses. Before data collection, all the participants were made aware of the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, their withdrawal rights, and the anonymity of their responses. The study did not involve the use of any personally identifiable information. The necessary permissions to conduct the study were sought from the Faculty of Languages and Literature and the English Department. When the data collection stage was initiated, there was no established IRB or ethics committee in the researchers' affiliated institution. Consequently, an institutional permit was secured before the start of the study. An official document granting permission was signed by the Head of the English Department, which was also endorsed and approved by the Faculty Administration. Thus, the researchers were allowed to conduct the study and collect data from the participants. This approval acted as the institution's ethical confirmation, making sure the study followed both the rules and the standards for educational research.

Data analysis

After collection, the completed questionnaires were organized, coded, and entered into a Microsoft Excel file and subsequently imported into SPSS (Version 24) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic data and participants' responses. Inferential procedures were used where appropriate to answer the research questions. The 4-point Likert scale served as the basis for interpreting students' perceptions, appropriateness of the curriculum content, students' satisfaction, and curriculum effectiveness.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of the respondents

As shown in table 2 below, the sample consisted of 203 male students, with proportion of (100%). The vast majority of respondents (66.5%) were between 21 and 25 years old, which is typical for an undergraduate population. Linguistically, Dari speakers were the majority (64.0%), followed by

Uzbek (25.1%) and Pashto (10.8%) speakers. The distribution across class levels was relatively even which provides a representative view from all stages of the academic program.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents (N=203)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	203	100.0 %
	Total	203	100.0 %
Age Group	18 - 20 Years	62	30.5 %
	21 - 25 Years	135	66.5 %
	26 - 30 Years	6	3.0 %
	Total	203	100.0 %
First Language (L1)	Dari	130	64.0 %
	Pashto	22	10.8 %
	Uzbek	51	25.1 %
	Total	203	100.0 %
Class Level	Freshman	41	20.2 %
	Sophomore	47	23.2 %
	Junior	59	29.1 %
	Senior	56	27.6 %
	Total	203	100.0 %

Descriptive statistics of the main variables

The results presented in Table 3 below show that the perceptions of the students, on average, about the prescribed curriculum materials were positive (Mean = 2.82). Mean values of all items fell within the category "Agree." Agreement was highest with the statement "I think the content can facilitate learning" (M=2.91). Although the overall perception was positive, mean values were concentrated at the bottom end of the "Agree" category.

The data in the Table 4 below presents a rather complicated image regarding the level of satisfaction from the students' perspective. The mean value of the overall variable is low (M=2.67) and fits into the "Agreement" category. Importantly, it is the lowest among all three variables. What is particularly interesting is that the students agreed not only with positively-worded statements but also with negatively-worded statements. For instance, the participants expressed their agreement that content helps them "create new thoughts" (M=2.75) but also agreed that they "face problems in understanding" (M=2.58) and have "negative feelings" (M=2.56). Thus, there exists an inherent contradiction in the students' responses, and this demonstrates their high level of ambivalence and dissatisfaction among the students. This dissatisfaction was even further supported by the participants agreeing that "other resources are better" (M=2.85).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for appropriateness of the curriculum content (N=203)

Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	I feel that the content meets the demands of students.	2.87	0.89	Agree
2	I think that activities in the content are appropriate for my class.	2.83	0.90	Agree
3	I think the guidance in teaching and learning is provided in the content.	2.78	0.92	Agree
4	I think the content and materials are up-to-date.	2.87	0.98	Agree
5	I think the content can facilitate learning.	2.91	0.90	Agree
6	I think the content and materials are field-specific.	2.79	0.93	Agree
7	I believe the content and materials are a contribution to the field.	2.73	0.96	Agree
8	I believe the content and materials are relevant to the field.	2.78	0.94	Agree

9	I think the topics in the content are related to learners' needs.	2.79	0.95	Agree
10	I think the content and materials are based on the students' preferences.	2.80	0.95	Agree
Variable Average		2.82	0.75	Agree

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for students' level of satisfaction (N=203)

Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
11	I am satisfied with the curriculum content being presented.	2.65	0.99	Agree
12	I face problems in understanding the prescribed content.	2.58	1.02	Agree
13	The prescribed content and materials can convey the learning objectives.	2.72	0.97	Agree
14	I have negative feelings toward the prescribed materials.	2.56	1.05	Agree
15	The curriculum content makes me able to create new thoughts.	2.75	0.99	Agree
16	I am not satisfied with the curriculum content being prescribed.	2.70	1.03	Agree
17	To meet my satisfaction, the presented curriculum content is difficult to learn.	2.63	1.03	Agree
18	The curriculum content is relevant to the demands of exam.	2.75	0.95	Agree
19	The other resources besides curriculum content are better as well.	2.85	0.90	Agree
20	Other resources allow flexibility in learning.	2.82	1.00	Agree
21	The curriculum content helps me get new information in which I can link to my previous studies.	2.76	0.95	Agree
Variable Average		2.67	0.70	Agree

From Table 5, below, it can be seen that students perceive the curriculum as effective in its organizational and guiding role (Mean = 2.84). This is the highest mean rating amongst all the three variables. Item 33 "the curriculum content act to ensure that education quality issues are a collective responsibility" got the highest mean rating (M=2.96). Items which supported provision of suggestions and feedback for improvement (M=2.90) and the items which discussed educational goals (M=2.87) also rated highly. This indicates that students consider the curriculum as a well-established system which effectively establishes goals and focuses on educational quality issues, despite being critical about the curriculum contents.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for effectiveness of the curriculum (N=203)

Item	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
22	In academic areas, the curriculum content discusses educational goals with teachers and students.	2.87	0.90	Agree
23	The curriculum content ensures that teachers work according to the institutions' educational goals.	2.85	0.90	Agree
24	The curriculum content observes teaching and learning in classes	2.82	0.92	Agree
25	The curriculum content gives teachers suggestions how they can improve their teaching.	2.90	0.93	Agree

26	The curriculum content gives students the opportunity how they can improve their learning.	2.85	0.90	Agree
27	When a student has problems in his/her classroom, the curriculum content takes the initiative to discuss the matter.	2.80	0.93	Agree
28	The curriculum content ensures that students are informed about possibilities for updating their knowledge and skills.	2.86	0.91	Agree
29	The curriculum content provides opportunities for students to do special effort or accomplishments.	2.76	0.87	Agree
30	The curriculum content provides development plan for students.	2.84	0.97	Agree
31	The curriculum content defines goals to be accomplished by the instructors.	2.82	0.90	Agree
32	The curriculum content ensure that a task-oriented atmosphere is fostered.	2.79	0.91	Agree
33	The curriculum content acts to ensure that education quality issues are a collective responsibility.	2.96	0.86	Agree
Variable Average		2.84	0.78	Agree

Discussion

The purpose of this research paper was to evaluate the content prescribed in the curriculum for the English Language and Literature program to ascertain whether it offers suitable materials, to evaluate the level of satisfaction of students, and to establish the degree of effectiveness of the curriculum at the English Department of Takhar University. Also, demographic factors were included in this research paper to give an all-round profile of the respondents. In general, it can be said that students have a highly positive attitude towards the implementation and design of the curriculum, but their level of satisfaction regarding its content has revealed some issues.

In terms of the relevance of the curriculum materials and content, many participants stated that the material addresses their requirements, suits their study program, and helps them learn. Some other participants noted that the curriculum material offers clarity, organization, and academic guidance. Other participants indicated that the material enables them to participate better in classroom activities. These findings are in alignment with the claims made by Ali Merc (2017) that the curriculum is a learning blueprint that comes from student learning outcomes. According to Merc, the curriculum goes beyond being a collection of subjects; it is an organized system that connects teaching objectives, activities, and evaluation measures to ensure effective learning. This perspective is consistent with students' positive evaluations of the curriculum's theoretical foundation and general design.

However, when looking at the satisfaction of the participants regarding the content of the curriculum, there is a lot of cause for concern. There were a number of the participants who expressed some level of dissatisfaction with the content provided and found themselves struggling to comprehend what was being offered. Furthermore, the participants mentioned having negative views on the curriculum since, according to their experience, it did not meet their academic needs. This finding concurs with the opinion of Bhushan (2020), who stated that readymade syllabi were often unsuitable for first-generation learners or those who had come from different educational backgrounds. In the same regard, Bhushan (2020) added that students need to have an opportunity to make changes to the syllabi, making them more skill-oriented. Thus, the dissatisfaction among the participants could possibly be attributed to the inability of the syllabus to cater to the needs of the students, including their academic needs and the ability to understand it linguistically. Additionally, institutional challenges such as limited resources, or insufficient academic support may also contribute to reduced satisfaction, as suggested in Bhushan's findings.

Despite the above-mentioned problems, participants also conveyed some positive emotions about the issues of relevance and assistance provided. Some of the participants stated that additional

materials together with the curriculum facilitate their learning process, help to understand the subject better in relation to the exam, and assist them in thinking of new learning strategies. In terms of Wu, Hsieh, and Lu (2014), this corresponds to a certain extent to their findings related to the significance of satisfaction from instructional convenience, teaching quality, and learning experience. Namely, they claim that students become more satisfied if the curricula facilitate the learners' intentions to study for a long time, provide clear academic routes for them, and are presented via interesting approaches. In this sense, the mixed findings in the present study reflect both the strengths of the curriculum structure and the challenges of its practical implementation.

Regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum, it is worth mentioning that students perceived it very positively. According to them, the content of the curriculum ensures the quality of the institution, guides the teacher, facilitates evaluation in the classroom, contributes to solving the problems of the learners, and creates possibilities for academic success. These findings can be explained by the results of the research conducted by Alismail and McGuire (2015). The authors claim that in order to prepare learners for future challenges, they need an effective curriculum that incorporates clear content and skills of the 21st century. They point out that it should stimulate creativity, critical thinking, and technology skills. As of the current study, the positive evaluations of curriculum effectiveness made by the participants therefore suggest that, at least conceptually, the curriculum provides a solid framework for supporting meaningful learning and academic development.

In summary, the results show that students have different feelings. While they appreciate the curriculum's structure, design and theoretical usefulness, they remain moderately satisfied with aspects of the content's practicality, clarity, and alignment with their learning needs. This tension indicates that students have mixed feelings regarding the applicability, relevance, and practicality of the course content. The need for changes to enhance and improve the curriculum becomes clear from these results. Therefore, there is a need to modernize the curriculum and make necessary improvements that will benefit the learners more. Alignment of the content with student needs, updating materials, and integrating more flexible, skills-oriented components may help bridge the gap between curriculum design and actual classroom experience.

CONCLUSION

In most cases, curriculum is seen as a collection of learning materials used during educational processes. On further analysis, one may find out that the curriculum goes beyond being merely a collection of academic materials. The concept can also encompass all types of learning opportunities provided within an institution for the purpose of promoting intellectual, psychological, physical, and social development. Under such an interpretation, curriculum would take the shape of a framework incorporating aspects of academic outlines, co-curricular activities, and structured opportunities that aim to build student confidence, promote meaningful learning, and prepare learners to function effectively in academic and professional contexts.

The findings of the current study show that the participants hold a complex set of perceptions toward the English Language curriculum at Takhar University. Quantitatively, students expressed a moderately positive perception of the curriculum's relevance and structure (M=2.82). However, this was countered by a clear sense of ambivalence in their satisfaction (M=2.67), where students concurrently found value in the curriculum and reported significant difficulties with its content. This tension between theoretical design and practical experience is the study's central finding.

Despite the concerns that raised about satisfaction, the participants expressed the most positive agreement regarding the overall effectiveness of the curriculum as a guiding framework (M=2.84). They acknowledged that the curriculum helps clarify educational goals, guides teachers and students in accordance with institutional policies, and contributes to development-oriented practices within the department.

A key strength of the present study lies in its contribution as the **first empirical investigation** that evaluates undergraduate students' perceptions of the English Language and Literature curriculum at Takhar University. By evaluating perceptions related to content appropriateness, students' satisfaction, and curriculum effectiveness, this research provides valuable ideas for curriculum designers, policymakers, instructors, and university administrators.

Overall, this study emphasizes the need for **continual curriculum review and improvement**, with special attention to learner satisfaction, clarity of content, and responsiveness to students' academic needs. Strengthening these areas will help ensure that English language curricula in

Afghanistan not only maintain theoretical effectiveness but also support practical learning experiences that empower students in meaningful and lasting ways.

Implications and future research suggestions

Indeed, the current study does have its limitations. The process of data collection was carried out during a particularly difficult time in the Afghan context, whereby the researchers had access to a limited number of participants due to time constraints. Such constraints can pose some problems in terms of generalizing the findings. Future research on the topic can overcome such limitations through larger sample sizes, collecting qualitative data, and conducting comparative analyses across multiple universities.

Furthermore, all the participants in this study were only male because of contextual and institutional restrictions prevalent in Afghan higher education institutions during the time of conducting this research. Thus, the exclusion of female participants from this study was neither a methodological choice nor a conscious decision but an unavoidable necessity dictated by sociopolitical and educational circumstances. The researchers made every possible effort to include participants among the student population that was accessible to them; nonetheless, since there were no female students present in the institution, a gender-balanced sample was impossible. This drawback must be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study. In other words, the findings represent the views and experiences of male participants exclusively and cannot be generalized to female students or to situations involving both genders. It is recommended for future research to include female participants in their studies in order to provide a more comprehensive and representative understanding of the research phenomenon.

Conflict of interest

The researchers declare no potential conflict of interest.

Contribution of authors

Author 1: Corresponding, conducting literature review, developing the questionnaire, data collection, writing the methodology, analyzing and interpreting the findings, writing discussion, and proofreading.

Author 2: Writing introduction, developing the questionnaire, writing conclusion, editing, and conceptualization.

Author 3: Reviewing, providing supervision, providing software and technical support, and conceptualization.

Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study including anonymized questionnaire responses, MS Excel dataset, and summary statistics are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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