FROM SYLLABUS DESIGN TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Syllabus and curriculum are known as two aspects of instructional activities. Syllabus is can be defined as an outline and summary of topics that has to be covered in an education or training course. The syllabus sets the onward responsibilities of teacher to the students. Teachers can develop syllabus based on the curriculum. Curriculum itself is a broad notion covering the whole body of knowledge the students shall acquire in the school and general description of the teaching program. In short, curriculum is the general statement about the teaching program and syllabus is the about what actually happens in the classroom. Further, this article also presents kinds, components and functions of syllabus and how curriculum is developed. It also discusses about some problems encountered in the implementation of syllabus and curriculum.

Keywords: *syllabus, curriculum, instructional activities*

Education is crucial in developing a nation's personality. Education plays an important role to improve knowledge, skill and moral. Therefore, a good education system is needed not only to build a nation character but also to develop a country physically and mentally.

Education consists of many elements that are complimentary. It is a system that works with the support of the elements around it. Curriculum and syllabus are two elements that support an education to be a good system and later result a good output.

In Indonesia education system, English is one prerequisite subject that is taught from elementary school until university. English is considered important to be mastered since it is one of international languages. The globalization era demands people to have good ability in English so they can compete in the job world and in other fields like science and technology. To reach this goal a good planning - in this case syllabus and curriculum- in English language teaching is needed.

In language teaching and learning two terms are known, they are syllabus design and curriculum development. Syllabus is a specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested. While syllabus design refers to the process of developing a syllabus (Richards, 2001:2), curriculum development is a more comprehensive process than the syllabus design. It includes the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims or objectives for a program to address those needs to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods and materials and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes (Richards, 2001: 2).

Thus, syllabus and curriculum are two different terms that closely related in teaching and learning process. Curriculum is a broader concept that includes all activities in which students do in school. It includes what students learn, how they learn it, how teacher help them learn, what supporting materials are needed, styles and methods used in teaching and learning process. Syllabus is smaller than curriculum since it only covers the content of a course and the lists of what materials are going to be taught and how it will be tested.

This paper is going to discuss about syllabus design and curriculum development. These two terms are considered to be important in teaching and learning process. Their roles deal with how a teaching and learning activity is planned and can run well.

DISCUSSION

1. Syllabus

The term "syllabus" is usually used more customarily in the United Kingdom to refer to what is called a "curriculum" in the United States (Brown, 2001:16). However, what is meant with syllabus here is different with what has been mention by Brown. There are three strong beliefs associated with a course syllabus. First, the syllabus is the key tangible evidence of planning from instructor to the world. Second, the planning manifested through the syllabus can reduce, before a class even meets, about half the work for teaching a course. And the last, the syllabus serves as a communication device and contract to shift the responsibility for learning to the students.

In accordance with the main purpose of syllabus that is to break down the mass of knowledge to be learnt into manageable units, the role of syllabus varies from different points of the teaching material which inspires the production of texts and exercise and the basis on which proficiency will be evaluated. It is the determiner of entire course (Hutchinson and Water in Lolita, 2001:14).

Another source explains syllabus as the representative of both an end and a beginning, a final product of the course planning and a valuable way to introduce the course to the students. The syllabus is one of the few formal, tangible links between teachers and the students since it will be referred to throughout the semester (Jennifer Sinor and Matt Kaplan in crlt.umich.edu).

Rodgers (in Savitri 2009:31) states that syllabus prescribes the content to be covered by a given course. It forms only a small part of the total of school program. Nunan (in Savitri 2009:30) states that syllabus defines the goals and objectives, the linguistic and experiential content, instructional materials can put flesh on the bones of these specifications.

From the definition of syllabus stated above it can be concluded that syllabus is not the same with curriculum. It is smaller part of curriculum that contain the description of what is going to be taught, what goals and objectives are going to be reached, what exercises have to be given and what proficiency is going to be gained. Instructional material is the instrument to fulfill the goals of the syllabus.

The principal purpose of a syllabus is to inform students in a formal and timely way of the nature and content of the course, policies and procedures that will apply, and equipment involved in participating in classes. In addition to being informative, however, a syllabus is also a promise of teachers or lectures that is both explicit in what it states will be part of the course, and implicit in what it infers -by not including- will not be part of the course. The syllabus needs to be consistent with the latest approved curriculum action, and everything done or required in the class at any time throughout the term should be in agreement with what the syllabus states or does not state. Syllabus has 17 possible functions that will be stated in the following:

1. Describing course content scope
2. Communicating course focus
3. Suggesting prerequisites
4. Detailing logistics
5. Identifying course goals
6. Sequencing/scheduling instruction
7. Identifying performance objectives
8. Constituting a contract
9. Identifying reference material
10. Providing modifications base
11. Motivating students
12. Permitting self monitoring
13. Facilitating optional learning activities
14. Establishing evaluation system
15. Advertising/promoting/recruiting clientele
16. Serving as an articulation tool
17. Meeting accreditation requirements (Daniel E. Vogler in www.honoluluhawaii.edu)

In theory, a language teaching syllabus can be designed in many different ways, depending on the designers' view of language and view of language learning and teaching. In the past few decades, the grammatical syllabus, the lexical syllabus, the skills syllabus, the functional-notional syllabus, the content syllabus and the task based syllabus have been proposed and attracted more or less attention. Below is a brief description of some influential types of syllabuses.

a. Grammatical syllabus: the underlying assumption behind grammatical syllabus is that language is a system which consists of a

set of grammatical rules; learning language means learning these rules and then applying them to practical language use. The syllabus input is selected and graded according to grammatical notions of simplicity and complexity. These syllabuses introduce one item at a time and require mastery of that item before moving on to the next.

b. Lexical syllabus: lexical syllabus identifies a target vocabulary to be taught normally arranged according to levels such as the first 500, 1000, 1500, 2000 words. Lexical syllabuses were among the first types of syllabuses to be developed in language teaching (Richards, 2001:154)

c. Skills syllabus: skills syllabus is organized around different underlying abilities that are involved in using a language for purposes such as reading, writing, listening or speaking. Approaching a language through skills is based on the belief that learning a complex activity such as "listening to a lecture" involves mastery of a number of individual skills or micro skills that together make up the activity.

d. Functional-notional syllabus: in functional-notional syllabus, the input is selected and graded according to the communicative functions (such as requesting, complaining, suggesting, and agreeing) that language learners need to perform at the end of the language program. The functional-notional syllabus reflects a broader view of language provided by philosophers of language and sociolinguistics.

e. Content syllabus: in content syllabus, the content of language learning might be defined in terms of situations, topics, themes or other academic or school subjects. The stimulus for content syllabus is the notion that, unlike science, history or mathematics, language is not a subject of its own right, but merely a vehicle for communicating about something else. This syllabus is also called the topical syllabus.

f. Task based syllabus: Task based syllabus are more concerned with the classroom processes which stimulate learning than with the language knowledge or skills that students are supposed to master. This syllabus consists of a list of specification of

the tasks and activities that the learners will engage in class in the target language (Nunan in Savitri, 2009: 33).

On the other hand, Hutchinson and Waters (in Lolita 2001:15) describe types of syllabus based on criteria of content as illustrated below:
a. Topic syllabus
b. Structural Syllabus/ situational syllabus
c. Functional syllabus/ notional syllabus
d. Skill syllabus
e. Situational syllabus
f. Functional/ task-based syllabus
g. Discourse/ skill syllabus

The types of syllabus described by Hutchinson and Waters above are different in terms with those proposed by David Nunan. Both terms used by Nunan and Hutchinson and Waters have similar definition. All the terms used refer to the same types of syllabus as have been explained. It is possible to create a syllabus by combining two types of syllabus as described above. Actually most syllabuses in language teaching are combinations of two or more of the syllabus types explained in the previous part. However, one type of syllabus usually dominates, while other types of content may be combined with it. By combining two or more types of syllabus, teachers and lectures can perform instructional activities in a more integrated way.

Syllabus design is a process of developing a syllabus (Richards, 2001:2). Syllabus design involves two or more types of syllabuses since there is no single type of syllabus that can be suitable for all teaching settings. Therefore, creating the combination of syllabuses is recommended. In line with this Tarey Reilly proposes ten steps of practical syllabus design (www.ericdigest.org) as follows:
1. Determine, to the extent possible, what outcomes are desired for the students in the instructional program. That is, as exactly and realistically as possible, defines what the students should be able to do as a result of the instruction.
2. Rank the syllabus types presented here as to their likelihood of leading to the outcomes desired. Several rankings may be necessary if outcomes are complex.
3. Evaluate available resources in expertise (for teaching, needs analysis, materials choice

and production, etc.), in materials, and in training for teachers.

4. Rank the syllabi relative to available resources. That is, determine what syllabus types would be the easiest to implement given available resources.
5. Compare the lists made under No 2 and 4. Making as few adjustments to the earlier list as possible, produce a new ranking based on the resources' constraints.
6. Repeat the process, taking into account the constraints contributed by teacher and student factors described earlier.
7. Determine a final ranking, taking into account all the information produced by the earlier steps.
8. Designate one or two syllabus types as dominant and one or two as secondary.
9. Review the question of combination or integration of syllabus types and determine how combinations will be achieved and in what proportion.
10. Translate decisions into actual teaching units.

To decide about syllabus design, it has to be taken into consideration of all the possible factors that may influence the implementation of a particular syllabus. By examining each type of syllabus, choosing and integrating types of syllabus, a solution to the problem of whether a syllabus is appropriate or not can be found.

2. Curriculum

Curriculum stems from the Latin word for race course, referring to the course of deeds and experiences through which children grow to become mature adults. However in teaching and learning process the definition of curriculum has extended. Curriculum is the set of courses, course work, and content offered at a school or university (www.wikipedia.com). A curriculum may also refer to a defined and prescribed course of studies, which students must fulfill in order to pass a certain level of education (www.oppapers.com).

According to Richards (2001:39) a curriculum in a school context refers to the whole body of knowledge that children acquire in schools. While Rodgers (in Richards 2001:39) said that curriculum is all those activities in which children engage under the auspices of the school. This includes not only what pupils learn, but how they learn it, how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kind of facilities.

Stern (1983:434) proposed the definition of curriculum as follows.

The term 'curriculum' is commonly used in two related senses. It refers, first to the substance of a program of studies of an educational institution or system. Thus, we can speak of the school curriculum, the university curriculum, the curriculum of French schools, or the curriculum of Soviet curriculum. In a more restricted sense, it refers to the course of study or content in a particular subject, such as the mathematics curriculum or the history curriculum. It is therefore, used as a synonym of what in British universities and schools is sometimes referred to as the 'syllabus' for a given subject or course of studies. In recent years, however, the term curriculum has come to refer not only to the subject matter or content, but to the entire instructional process including materials, equipment, examinations and the training of teachers, in short all pedagogical measures related to schooling or to the substance of a course of studies.

Nunan suggests (1988:3) that a curriculum is concerned with making general statements about language learning, learning purpose and experience, and the relationship between teachers and learners, whereas a syllabus is more localized and is based on the accounts and records of what actually happens at the classroom level as teachers and students apply a curriculum to their situation.

It is clear that curriculum and syllabus are two different terms but they are closely related since both of them are part of an education system. Curriculum covers a broader aspect of an education system, while syllabus functions to interpret what is intended by a curriculum and apply it in the classroom. Curriculum includes materials, teaching methods, styles and methods of assessment, facilities, learning purposes and experience and the relationship between teachers and students.

As an important part of an education system, curriculum needs to be developed in

order to make it match the needs and challenges faced by students. Developing a curriculum involves some stages. It is not an easy task since it deals with a lot of elements and activities that have to be covered. Curriculum development here refers to the range of planning and implementation processes involved in developing or renewing a curriculum. These processes focus on needs analysis, situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching, and evaluation (Richards, 2001:41).

Curriculum development is considered important and has been established since 1980s. It was aimed at reviewing and developing national language teaching curriculum based on a curriculum development perspective. For example, Lim (1988 in Richards 2001:41) states that curriculum development includes needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, material design, language program design, teacher preparation, implementation of program in schools, monitoring, feedback and evaluation.

Tyler (in Richards, 2001:39) stated four fundamental questions that must be answered in developing any curriculum and plan of instruction as follows.

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that is likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

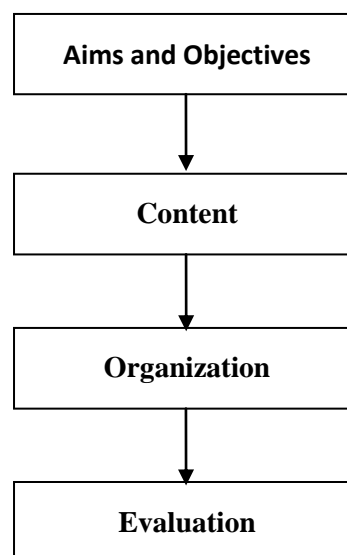The four questions reduced to a simpler model below.

Figure 1. Curriculum development model by Riller

Tyler's model of curriculum development raised a number of objections. One of critics to Tyler's model was proposed by Nicholls and Nicholls (in Richards 2001:39). Nicholls and Nicholls describe curriculum development in four stages as follows.

1. The careful examination, drawing on all available sources of knowledge and informed judgments, of the objectives of teaching, whether in particular subject courses or over the curriculum as a whole.
2. The development and trial use in schools of those methods and materials which are judged most likely to achieve the objectives which teachers agreed upon.
3. The assessment of the extent to which the development work has in fact achieved its objectives. This part of the process may be expected to provoke new thought about the objectives themselves.
4. The final element is therefore feedback of all the experience gained, to provide starting point for further study.

Actually, the two models proposed contain almost similar elements. Aims and objectives stated in Tyler model can be interpreted as the first stage in Nicholls and Nicholls. The careful examination in Nicholls and Nicholls stage is directed toward determining objectives as well. The assessment and feedback that are used in Nicholls and Nicholls model are resembled with evaluation proposed by Tyler. The different between these two models is the absence of organization in Nicholls and Nicholls model. To substitute the organization element, Nicholls and Nicholls proposed the development and trial of methods and materials used to achieve objectives.

3. The Problems of English Curriculum and Syllabus Design in Electronic Engineering Study Program

The development of curriculum and syllabus is required since it is made to meet the demand of the needs and situation, the development of science and technology, the global trend and the requirements of stakeholders. State Polytechnic of Malang is a vocational education institution that also put English as one of courses that must be taken. State Polytechnic of Malang has seven departments that consist of Business Administration, Accounting, Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electro Engineering and Chemical Engineering. Each department has study programs with Diploma III and Diploma IV degree.

Electronic Engineering is a study program in Electro department. In Electronic Engineering English is taught in four semesters and it has one credit. It is given in the second until fifth semester and it is taught once a week with 90 minutes per meeting. The curriculum implemented is 5+1 curriculum that means 5 semesters are held in classroom, workshop and laboratories, while 1 semester is spent for doing the final project and on the job training.

The curriculum demands that Electronic Engineering students must be able to communicate in English both oral and written. Another demand is students must pass Polytechnic English Competence Test that is held every year for third grade students. Polytechnic English Competence Test equals with TOEIC-Test of English for International Communication -, the term is used to substitute

the TOEIC since it is a patent name and it cannot be misused. However, the demands of curriculum are not fulfilled by the English syllabus created by lectures. Lectures tend to create grammatical syllabus that contain grammar material only. They do not focus on how students can use the grammar rules for practical use and communication; instead they force students to do 'on paper' exercises.

The facts stated above make it difficult for students to reach the goals as required by the curriculum. These later cause students to be fail in doing job interview or after they work in the companies. Most stakeholders, in this case the companies that accept the alumni of Electronic Engineering study programs, complain that they do not have good speaking and writing ability. The low ability is caused by the fact that the syllabus design does not support the teaching of the two abilities needed.

The 5+1 curriculum also influence the teaching of English in Electronic Engineering study program. Since the curriculum is implemented, the duration of English is reduced. Before the implementation of 5+1 curriculum, English is taught in five semesters. After the 5+1 curriculum is implemented English is only taught for four semesters. This certainly brings a lot of disadvantages mainly for students. Usually, English V-in this case English that is given in fifth semester- contains about how to perform job interview and how to write good application letters. The deletion of English V causes students to lose time to practice their English to prepare job interview and to enter the job world.

Actually, the problems stated above can be solved by revising the syllabus design used in the teaching of English. Instead of using grammatical syllabus, the combination of skill, Functional-notional, and task-based syllabus can be used. The three syllabuses focus more on the communication purposes needed by the students of Electronic Engineering. However, it is difficult to be performed due to a lot of factors, for example the lectures skills, another demand that has to be fulfilled by students that is to pass the Polytechnic English Competence Test and the old paradigm about studying English which tend to be meant with learning the grammar rules.

CONCLUSION

Syllabus and curriculum are two different terms that are complementary to each other. They are part of an education system which have to developed and revised to meet the demand of situation, need and the global trend. Syllabus design usually does not only focus on one type, since they can be combined in accordance with the need of language teaching and learning. In line with this, curriculum also needs to be developed. The development here doesn't mean that it has to be changed every five year or so, but it has to be revised and renewed to make it suitable with the students' needs and future challenges.

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