

The effectiveness of the B.Ed. English syllabus: A textual analysis of the syllabus from a critical point of view

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Abstract: The paper analyses the prevailing English syllabus of the B.Ed. programme in Bangladesh. The study determines the level of effectiveness of the English course in developing professionalism of the prospective English language teachers. Recently, English language teaching has gained momentum because of its local as well as global instrumental use. But, Bangladesh is still facing an acute shortage of skilled English language teachers. Hence, the study investigates the existing structure and the scope of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the teacher training programme of Bangladesh. The study analyses the B.Ed. course structure in general and English syllabus in particular prevailing in Bangladesh from a critical point of view. For this purpose, a comprehensive checklist is prepared on the various facets of the English syllabus at the B.Ed. course to measure the effectiveness of the syllabus in preparing the prospective teachers of English.

1.0 Introduction

Teachers are at the heart of educational process at the present system of schooling. To meet the growing demand for qualified and trained teachers teaching needs a scientific renovation. The relevant body of theoretical and practical knowledge constitutes the insight and understanding of a teacher. In defining the kind of knowledge that the teacher needs, Renshaw (1973) states, 'It is this systematic body of theory, in which abstract principles are formulated through scientific research and logical analysis, that forms the basis of the professional's authority and autonomy' (p. 221). To earn such professional knowledge and expertise, a teacher needs to gain a formal preparatory experience.

Teacher education is one of the important sub-sectors of the education system of Bangladesh. The challenges in the field are enormous, and the formation of a qualified teaching force is an utmost necessity. However, Bangladesh is still faces an acute shortage of skilled English language teachers. Therefore, the teacher education programme in the country needs to be revisited.

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If students are not learning, then it is thought that either the teacher or the methods and materials are responsible. However, it may be the fault of the teacher training programmes as well. The training programmes may not be effective to produce efficient language teachers who according to Bailey and Celce-Muria (1979) need professional training and practice. Moreover the designed syllabus in the teacher preparation programme may not be effective in producing efficient teachers.

Therefore the present study explores the B.Ed. English syllabus from a critical point of view to measure the level of effectiveness in producing skilled English language teachers.

Research Statement

In Bangladesh the field of teacher education in ELT is relatively an unexplored area. The inadequacy of professionally trained English teachers is severely affecting the teaching-learning system of English, especially at the secondary level of schooling in the country. The present study analyses the B.Ed. course structure in general and English syllabus in particular prevailing in Bangladesh from a critical point of view.

1.2 Design of the Research

The research is descriptive, non-experimental and investigative in nature. It attempts to review the course structure of the B.Ed. English programme in Bangladesh and explores the effectiveness. For this purpose a comprehensible checklist is prepared on the basis of which an evaluative study is made on the English course in the B.Ed. programme.

Methodology

The research is qualitative in nature. The present study is based on a survey research technique that is qualitative in nature which follows the 'naturalistic inquiry' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), that is, the primary concern of analysis is with interpretation and description rather than with measurement and prediction.

1.4 Sampling of the Study

Data is collected from the prescribed uniform English syllabus at the B.Ed. programme in Bangladesh.

1.5 Analysis and Discussion

To comprehend the analysis of the English syllabus of the B.Ed. programme a general overview of the B.Ed. programme is needed.

1.5.1 The Description of the B.Ed. Curriculum in Bangladesh

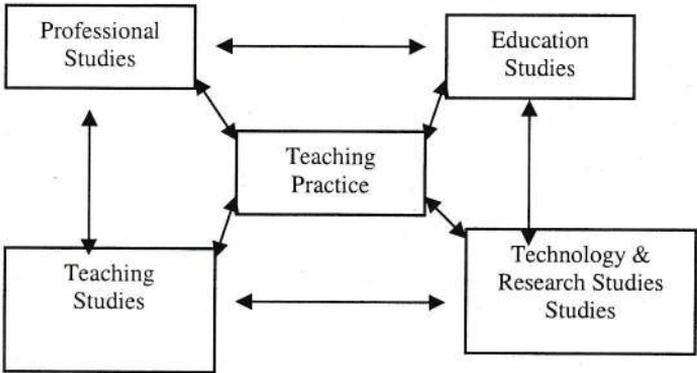
The present section attempts to describe the one-year B.Ed. programme in Bangladesh. The current teacher education curriculum is modified in 2006 and it is effective from the session of 2006 to 2007. It is jointly prepared by the

Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. The B.Ed. training institutions unanimously implement the only curriculum in teaching the student-teachers.

The curriculum is structured into five learning areas:

- Professional Studies
- Teaching Studies
- Education Studies
- Technology and Research Studies
- Teaching Practice

All these learning areas are directly or indirectly interconnected with each other, which can be seen in the following diagram:



It should be noted that cultural and professional requirements are embedded in all five Learning Areas

Bachelor of Education Curriculum, 2006 (p. 14)

The *Bachelor of Education Curriculum, 2006* outlines the B.Ed. course structure in the following way:

Sl. No	Curriculum Components	Course Load in Terms of Time (Percentage)
A.	Professional Studies (1 course) 1. Essential Teaching Skills	9%
B.	Teaching Practice (2 Courses) Teaching Practice 1 Teaching Practice 2	28%

C.	Education Studies (2 Courses) Secondary Education, Curriculum, and Child Development Learning, Assessment, and Reflective Practice		18%
D.	Technology & Research Studies (2 Courses) Basic Computer Skills Action Research (in English)		9%
E.	Teaching Studies (15 Courses)		36%
	Group A (Select one, maximum two)	Teaching Bangla Teaching Business Studies Teaching English Teaching Mathematics Teaching Science	
	Group B (Select one unless two selected from Group A)	Teaching Social Science Teaching Religious Studies Teaching Agricultural Education Teaching Home Economics Teaching Information and Communication Technology	
	Group C (May be selected as an extra course)	Teaching Art and Craft Teaching Health, Sports and Physical Education Teaching Music Teaching Commercial Geography Liberal Science	

What follows is the discussion of these curriculum components of the one-year teacher education programme.

Professional Studies

The main objective of this component is on developing the outlook, manner and practices of a teacher with a professional approach. This learning area is comprised of one course i.e. Essential Teaching Skills. This is a compulsory course in the B.Ed. programme and requires a participatory approach.

This course requires the trainees to incorporate the ideas and views obtained from other courses to develop core teaching skills. The trainees integrate their personal attitudes with the theory and skills introduced in the courses of other learning areas. Professional Studies prepare the student-teachers for teaching practice and follow-up as well.

The main purposes of Professional Studies are given below as mapped in *The Curriculum Framework, 2006* of Bangladesh:

To establish a philosophical framework for teaching in Bangladesh

To develop professional approach in the teachers

To make the teachers competent and confident in the classrooms

To grow self-reflective approach in teachers

To prepare the teachers working with the limited recourses in the classrooms

To train the teachers to handle the students of diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

To achieve the purposes, the classes are conducted in small groups and each group has a tutor. In fact the tutor acts as each trainee's professional advisor over the year of the programme. Teaching Practice is organized according to the tutor groups of professional studies. The tutor along with the Teaching Studies lecturer observes trainees on Teaching Practice and later the tutor offers feedback after each Teaching Practice experience.

Teaching Practice

Among all the Learning Areas Teaching Practice (TP) is the most important and wide area of studies in the B.Ed. programme. It is compulsory for all trainees. TP comprises two courses namely, Teaching Practice 1 (TP1) and Teaching Practice 2 (TP2). The purpose of TP is to enable trainees to learn how teaching and learning function in the secondary level of schooling. The trainees get an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge into practice and learn the essential teaching skills from the real contexts of classroom and students.

TP1 works as an experimental practice teaching for the student-teachers to identify the areas of teaching which needs improvement. The assessors, then works on the weak aspects of teaching of the trainee and prepares them for TP2. The *Curriculum Framework, 2006* mentions how TP plays a vital role in the development of the trainee's skills to:

Become aware of how schools are organized to realize objectives of the uni-track curriculum

Learn how to observe a teacher teaching and raise questions for discussion

Learn how to work with a peer in planning lessons and in giving feedback on lessons observed

Learn how to observe students learning and to report their findings

Learn plan and deliver lessons to demonstrate basic teaching competencies in two STS for the relevant NCTB syllabus and textbooks and SSC examinations, and how to assess student learning from these lessons

Learn how to keep records of their teaching and of students' progress in learning

Learn how to reflect on their own teaching activities and those of others (p. 38).

TP2 is based on the experience of TP1. This session is important for practicing a wide range of teaching methods to develop necessary teaching methods. During this time, trainees reflect on the feedback and their own teaching effectiveness. They learn about various notions such as, gender awareness in the class, use of resources and aids, practice syllabus planning and implementing, teachers' attitude and professionalism etc.

Both courses are internally assessed and externally moderated by an examiner appointed by the National University of Bangladesh. The trainees are required to observe a specific number of classes and later they are required to plan and teach specific number of lessons. The trainees receive feedback on their performance from the TTC lecturers, school coordinators of TP and subject teachers which assure the effectiveness of the courses.

Education Studies

The primary goal of this Learning Area is to develop a sound contextual knowledge framework for secondary teaching in modern Bangladesh. It comprises two courses and is compulsory for all trainees.

The trainees learn about the policy framework and education system and the rights and responsibilities of themselves within the system they work. Education Studies develop a sound understanding of 'who they teach', 'what they are expected to teach', 'the system in which they teach', 'how student's learn', 'ways of determining what students are learning' and 'how teachers can improve their effectiveness'.

The successful learning of this Learning Area requires high participation of the trainees. The trainers follow lecture methods in teaching the courses.

Technology & Research Studies

There are two compulsory courses in this Learning Area. The objective of these courses is to enable teachers in using modern technologies and methods. They learn about the use of computer so that they can access the modern and up-to-date learning recourses. In the Action Research course, the trainees learn how action research can be helpful for ongoing improvement of teachers.

Teaching Studies

In this Learning Area, trainees are required to study two courses out of 15 (fifteen) courses according to their preferences. The key goal of this area is to develop pedagogical-content knowledge of the subject teachers in a way enabling them to become knowledgeable, skilled, confident and interested in teaching at the secondary level. The teaching of English is taught as an elective subject under this learning area.

The Learning Area teaches some important topics as the *Curriculum Framework, 2006* informs:

The secondary curriculum and the subject related documents, such as syllabus and textbook

The nature of the subject

Developing skill in teaching the subjects, preparing the lessons, using the available materials and low cost recourses in teaching the subjects and using the textbook efficiently in the classroom

Managing the participatory classroom activities in the large classroom and enabling the trainees so that they can handle students from different social, economical and cultural backgrounds.

Application of personal experience and research in professional development

Thus, the Teaching Studies prepares the student-teachers with a high level of personal and professional growth as subject teacher at the secondary level.

1.5.2 The English Syllabus of the B.Ed. Course

The present section analyses the English component of the B.Ed. programme in Bangladesh. The study determines the level of effectiveness of the English course in developing professionalism of the prospective English teachers. For this purpose, a comprehensive checklist is prepared on the various facets of the English syllabus at the B.Ed. course. The present division evaluates the English syllabus on the basis of the checklist.

Checklist to Analyze the English Syllabus of the B.Ed. Programme

The checklist comprises six areas such as Course Content, Methods in Language Learning and Teaching, Methodology, Instructional Materials and Material Production and Language Testing. Each area has a set of questions on various aspects of the English syllabus for the purpose of analysis.

Course Content

Are the course objectives well-suited with the course contents?

Does the English syllabus provide any scope for the teaching of vocabulary and pronunciation?

Does the syllabus maintain a balance between theory and practice?

Methods in Language Learning and Teaching

What are the methods suggested in the B.Ed. English syllabus?

Skills

Are all the four skills adequately addressed?

Does the B.Ed. syllabus teach grammar skill?

What types of materials are suggested in teaching the skills?

What are the activities practiced in developing the skills?

Methodology

What types of activities are encouraged in the B.Ed. English syllabus?

Does the B.Ed. English syllabus suggest reflective teaching, self-evaluative teaching and micro-teaching?

Is there any scope for peer-teaching, teaching practice and observing demonstration classes? Are they adequate for the purpose?

Does syllabus propose learner oriented teaching-learning situation?

Instructional Aids and Material Production

Does the B.Ed. English syllabus suggest the use of instructional aids?

Does the B.Ed. English component propose the use of films, audio, OHP or any other modern teaching aids?

Is there any scope for training in material production?

Language Testing

Does the English syllabus offer any scope for testing the learning outcomes?

Does the B.Ed. English component teach about various factors of testing and test design in language teaching?

Analysis of the B.Ed. English Syllabus and Findings

On the basis of the above checklist, an analysis has been done of the B.Ed. English syllabus of Bangladesh.

Course Content

A good syllabus specifies the goals and objectives in the beginning, so that both the teachers and learners clearly know the aims of the syllabus. It is an essential criterion of an effective syllabus. The B.Ed. English syllabus also lists its objectives and learning outcomes with a detailed description of them. The three objectives are:

Develop a personal understanding of ELT based on the knowledge of the pedagogy and the curriculum of English language.

Develop the knowledge, skills, attitude and practices of ELT to function effectively in the classroom.

Develop the practices of self-evaluation and reflection for professional improvement as English language teachers.

Now the question is whether these objectives are realized in the course contents of the syllabus. It is desirable that the objectives are related to the course contents

so that the course has an overall coherence to the purpose. An overall study of the English syllabus reveals that the English component offers a thorough review on the issues such as the curriculum and the language teaching at the secondary level of Bangladesh and present status and importance of ELT in the global as well as local contexts. This is how the first objective is fulfilled. The second objective is satisfied, as the English syllabus includes the teaching of the four language skills including the grammar skill, introduces various language teaching methods and provides a scope of peer-teaching and practice teaching. These teachings are essential to work as an efficient English language teacher in the secondary classrooms. The third objective also serves the purpose, as the course contents promote the practice of self-evaluation and reflection. Throughout the syllabus, the importance of professional growth and development is emphasized.

To be a skilled English language teacher, it is essential to know how to teach vocabulary and pronunciation. At the same time, these teachings are important in developing the accent and fluency as well. For these purposes the English course of the B.Ed. programme teaches vocabulary, IPA vowel and consonant sounds, stress and intonation and transcription. So it is revealed that vocabulary and pronunciation are taught in the B.Ed. English syllabus.

As far as the issue of balance between theory and practice is concerned, the B.Ed. English syllabus gives equal importance both on theory and practice. The course offers scope for learning about different methods and skills of language teaching and learning. Practice, on the other hand, is always stressed. High level of trainee participation is suggested in all levels of training. Practical implication of theories is seen in teaching the four skills and grammar, practicing class management, peer-teaching, planning the lessons and teaching practice sessions. The activities are designed in such a way that the trainees are expected to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice. Therefore, it can be said that apparently the B.Ed. English syllabus maintains a balance between theory and practice.

Methods in Language Learning and Teaching

Theories and methods of language teaching play a crucial role in any ESL learning, teaching or training programme. The B.Ed. English component familiarizes the trainees with various methods such as, Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Situational Method, Audio-lingual Method, Communicative Approach and Eclectic Method. Following the successful trends of English language teaching, the syllabus stresses on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to teach the language. The trainees are encouraged to use CLT in teaching the language as teachers.

Skills

The basic language skills such as, listening, speaking, reading and writing are crucial in teaching-learning of any language. The B.Ed. English course suggests

the teaching of the four language skills. Additionally, the syllabus offers the basic theoretical knowledge also in teaching the four language skills. Various types of activities such as group/pair discussion, planning, video observation, role-play, mind-mapping, case studies etc. are suggested in teaching the four language skills. However, no guideline is given to practice these activities in teaching the four skills. At the same time, the English syllabus does not suggest that what kind of materials should be used in teaching the skills. However, *the Curriculum Framework, 2006* of Bangladesh encourages the subject teachers to use different types of electronic resources as well as the locally available resources in teaching the language. Therefore, it seems that the use of materials depends on the skill of the trainers. The trainers need to be innovative and competent enough to use the materials what they think suits the need of the class.

These apart, grammar skill is also included in the syllabus for the purpose of accuracy. Structure and lexis of English, informal and formal grammar, and grammar analysis is incorporated in the English course. However, the syllabus does not include the grammar activities to teach the skill.

After the study of the syllabus, it can be said that though the English component of the B.Ed. syllabus offers ample scope for teaching the four language skills, clear guideline is not given on how to teach the skills. The activities are listed randomly without proper instruction of how to use them in teaching four different language skills.

Implementation of Methodology

The B.Ed. English syllabus involves the student-teachers in various activities such as, group/pair discussion, debating, role play, case studies, jigsaw tasks, problem solving, mind mapping and brain storming etc. The concepts of encouragement and support, involvement and skills of teaching are developed by using these activities.

The principles of the B.Ed. syllabus are based on the concepts of the reflective and self-evaluative teaching and the microteaching. The student-teachers are taught to maintain reflective journal so that they learn to evaluate their own learning and teaching. In support of the concepts, learning activities includes action research techniques, case studies, simulations and microteaching modeling.

The study reveals that the B.Ed. syllabus offer adequate scope of peer-teaching and practice teaching. Peer-teaching prepares the trainee-teachers for practice teaching. Moreover, they observe videos and classes to learn different teaching skills. During the practice teaching 1, the student-teachers observe the real classes and later on they also conduct some real classes. The teacher-educators give them feedback and based on the feedback they take preparation for practice teaching 2. In addition, the B.Ed. English component teaches lesson planning.

The student-teachers go through the sessions of simulations and they improve their lessons based on the feedback of the fellow trainees and teacher educators. Therefore it is noted that the English component provides ample scope for peer-teaching and practice teaching.

It is further noted that the syllabus suggests a learner-oriented teaching-learning situation. The activities are designed in such a way that it promotes a trainee-centered environment in the classroom. The teacher educators are supposed to act as facilitators. However, the implementation of the methodology largely depends of the teacher educators.

Instructional Aids and Material Production

Teaching aids play a crucial role in making the teaching-learning situation a success. The use of modern teaching aids can create interesting learning environment. Nonetheless, the B.Ed. English syllabus mentions the use of blackboard in the training classes. Apparently, it does not promote the use of modern instructional materials such as, PHP or PowerPoint. However, it encourages observing demonstration videos to train the student-teachers and identifying of supplementary resources and teaching aids.

The B.Ed. English syllabus does not offer any scope for teaching material production in the classroom. The syllabus suggests the trainees to be proactive and inventive in locating the resources available in the limited contexts where they will teach. But the trainee teachers do not get opportunity to learn about various concepts of producing realistic materials.

f. Language Testing

To assess the learning of the student-teachers various tests such as, interviews, presentations, assignments, term tests, critique of journal papers, internal examination and final examinations are conducted. The student-teachers undergo simulation and peer-teaching session which also may confirm the learning of the trainees. Further, the B.Ed. English syllabus teaches the concept of testing in language teaching. The trainees are taught about test items, Bloom's taxonomy in language teaching, testing the four skills, formative and summative assessment. However, types of test, modes of test, how and what to test in testing four language skills and details of test design are not included in the syllabus. The analysis reveals that the English syllabus of the B.Ed. programme advocates a brief concept of testing. It does not offer a comprehensive study of language testing.

1.6 Conclusion

The findings of the interpretation show that as a whole the B.Ed. English syllabus seems to be effective in producing skilled and efficient English language teachers at the secondary level. However, the syllabus does not seem to be modern and

up-to-date, because it does not promote modern teaching equipments such as PHP or Power Point, OHP or overhead projector. So it can be suggested that the English component should teach the trainees how to use modern teaching equipments where it is feasible. As far as teaching of testing is concerned, though the trainees are taught about different aspects of language testing, they do not get any opportunities to prepare the language tests for language learners. It is, therefore, recommended that the B.Ed. English course should incorporate the practice of language test design. In this way, the trainees will get basic preparation to design the English language tests for the students. However, from the general point of view it is revealed that the English syllabus at the B.Ed. programme is helpful in training the English language teachers.

In conclusion, it can be said that the findings of the B.Ed. English syllabus study confirms the potentiality of the prescribed syllabus in the preparation of the language teachers. However, still Bangladesh has acute shortage of English language teachers. It is, then assumed that the problem lies somewhere else, not in the syllabus specifically. The goal of the undertaken research is to study the B.Ed. syllabus in general and the B.Ed. English syllabus in particular to determine the effectiveness of the programme in producing effective English teachers. But, the same study can be carried out on a larger scale by including the responses of the B.Ed. trainees. To get a complete picture of the teacher education and ELT in Bangladesh, a research can be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of the B.Ed. English course and to assess the impact of the course on the ESL learners as well as on the trained in-service teachers.

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