

## Realities of the English Teacher: Revisiting the Curriculum at Ecole Normale Supérieure, Bouzareah, (ENSB) in Algiers

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Received: 05/04/2022

Accepted: 10/04/2022

Published: 01/10/2022

### Abstract:

This research revisits the School Normale Supérieure Bouzareah curriculum after the 2000 School Reform. Though Initial Teacher Education is implicitly concerned by the School Reform of 2000, Ecole Normale Supérieure Bouzareah seems to have stayed away from the improvements induced by this Reform. The English curriculum has little prepared the trainees for their future profession, and this is impacting the trainees to a great extent as once in their classes, many felt like misfits because what they learnt at Ecole Normale Supérieure Bouzareah does not fit the demands and expectations of the classroom, and is far from the school realities.

### Keywords:

Effectiveness, Curriculum, Student-teachers, Learners' needs, Realities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After the 2000 Reform had been issued by the Ministry of National Education to improve the system of education, new middle and secondary school curricula and textbooks were designed implementing socio-constructivist pedagogy, learner-centred teaching and problem-based learning.

The aim of this study is to visit the curriculum at ENSB in order to see if it takes into account the changes brought in by the reform set by the MNE in 2000, regarding the approach, (competency based approach), materials, and the curriculum content.

In this study we will attempt to identify the mismatch between pre-service teachers preparation through ENSB curriculum and pre-service teachers realities in their own classes.

The study is based on the following research questions:

1. For what school realities is Ecole Normale Supérieure Bouzareah curriculum preparing pre-service teachers of English?
  - a) Does Ecole Normale Supérieure Bouzareah curriculum facilitate the move from theory to practice?
  - b) Does Ecole Normale Supérieure Bouzareah curriculum address school realities and student-teachers' needs and expectations?
2. For what standard is Ecole Normale Supérieure Bouzareah Initial Teacher Education School preparing pre-service teachers of English?

**These questions led to close investigate:**

1. The ENSB curriculum: the academic curriculum including teaching the four skills, some notions of linguistics, the foundations of grammar and phonetics, and an introduction of English speaking countries cultures (British, American and African civilization and their corresponding literatures.
2. Theoretical curriculum: it consists of some subjects taught in English like pedagogy, Material design, Applied linguistics, syllabus design and textbook evaluation, TEFL, etc...and some subjects taught in Arabic: psychology, pedagogy, legislation...
3. The Practicum including the Observation, Semi- intervention and Full-intervention sessions as follows;
  - Observation session: it last one month and it is once a week which means 4hours in all for middle school trainees, but it can be 4 to 8 hours a month depending on the stream of the class they are trained in.
  - Semi-intervention session: it lasts two weeks which means 6 hours for PEM and 4 to 12 hours for PES depending on the stream of the class they are trained in (biology or foreign language stream).
  - Full intervention session: it is over two weeks. It is 6hours for PEM and 4 to 12 hours for PES.

#### 4. The teaching –learning documents

- The first year middle English textbook entitled “*Spotlight on English*” published in 2004.
- The first year secondary English textbook entitled “*At the Crossroads*” Published in 2005.

## 2. Research Methodology

It is based on qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.

- For qualitative method of data collection, rubric, classroom observation checklist, and interviews are used to identify the link between the acquirments and the requirements and the effectiveness of ENSB curriculum.
- For the quantitative method of data we used only one kind of instrument that is the questionnaire addressed to :
  - Trainers assessing trainees during their teacher-training to see whether ENSB curriculum facilitates the move from theory to practice and also whether there is a link between what they acquired and what they are required to perform this teacher –training.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> year middle school trainees inquired about their professional needs to see if there is a link between acquirment and requirement.
  - New applicants who were inquired about their needs.

The findings obtained from the different measuring instruments were triangulated via qualitative and quantitative methods to check for the validity of the results.

To answer the first research question:

### **For what realities is ENSB curriculum preparing pre-service teachers?**

We compared Browns(1995) and Richards(2001) language curriculum models and Ducharme's ITE curriculum model and the results were that ENSB curriculum conforms as pre-service teacher curriculum because it contains the main components : academic, theoretical studies and the practicum, but it has some missing elements like aims, objective, entry and exit profiles. The absence of aims and objectives has caused an imbalance between the main components, and components and subcomponents.

This imbalance is shown through the triangulation of the different components and then between the components and subjects. Thus, this imbalance is noticed in time allotment.

It reflects the dominance of academic studies component with 68.45% for PEM and 63.45% for PES. This constitutes student-teachers subject matter par excellence when we consider that they are future EFL who must have a good command of the target language.

The subject **culture** covers the civilization and literature and deals with the history of English speaking countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Africa with **26.19%**for PEM curriculum and **34.51%** for PES curriculum. Therefore, the amount of time devoted to Culture equals the time devoted to **Theory** and **Practicum** combined that is **26.08%+0.58%** for PEM and exceeds the amount needed for PES that is **32.17%+0.36%**.

### **For the first subsidiary question: Does ENSB curriculum facilitate the move of theory to practice?**

- The triangulation of the results obtained from trainees' needs questionnaire, the trainers' assessment questionnaire, the class observation checklist, and the 5<sup>th</sup> year trainees interview confirms the inappropriateness of the theoretical component of ENSB curriculum since it does not help trainees develop essential skills like transforming theory into practical actions, selecting appropriate content, using adequate visual aids to facilitate students' learning, etc...
- 53.33% of trainees asked for less theory because ENSB does not relate to teacher training. The 5<sup>th</sup> year interviewees stated that theoretical knowledge acquired is not useful.

### **For the second subsidiary question: Does ENSB curriculum address school realities?**

The triangulation of the qualitative data obtained from ENSB curriculum analysis, 2000 National Reform, and the new textbooks reveals that ENSB curriculum is far from reflecting the school realities since it does not provide trainees with the methods and approaches in force in Algeria (CBA, student-centred pedagogy,...)It also, trains pre-service teachers on textbooks and methods that no longer exist.

## **For the second subsidiary question : Does ENSB curriculum address student-teachers' needs and expectations?**

- The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data obtained from associate teachers, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> trainees and trainers, reveals a mismatch between ENSB curriculum and trainees' needs, and the absence of a link between the trainees' acquisition of theory provided by ENSB curriculum and the trainees' needs in terms of professional skills essential for class practice in school contexts.
- There is clearly a gap between ENSB curriculum and trainees' needs. As it stands, ENSB curriculum is not appropriate to trainees' needs.
- The triangulation of the results obtained from trainers' assessment questionnaire, trainees' needs questionnaire and associate teachers' interview reveals trainees' poor level of English though the time devoted to language learning is 68.45% for PES and 63.45% for PEM.
- The amount of time allocated to listening –speaking skills (16.67% for PEM and 14.79% for PES) is not sufficient to practice oral English and develop listening and speaking competencies even though the latter are the “bedrock of the professional confidence of non-native English teachers”. (De Lima, 2001:145)
- Moreover, 72.26% are unable to write in correct English and 64.86% are unable to read and understand the gist of a text after the first reading.
- Therefore, ENSB curriculum fails to meet trainees' needs in terms of language skills while these skills are “the basics” for English teaching.

## **For what standard is ENSB preparing pre-service teachers of English?**

From the results obtained through the different research instruments addressed to the trainees, trainers, and associate teachers we can conclude that:

- ENSB curriculum lacks conformity as language program.
- There is imbalance in time allotment between the main components and between subjects and components.
- ENSB curriculum is obsolete regarding the knowledge taught and the didactic tools used to develop the teaching skills.
- ENSB curriculum is inappropriate to trainees in terms of linguistic and professional skills.
- Moreover, the level of achievement of trainees has decreased notably among middle school trainees, and only 6 PES out of 60 obtained a score between 12/20 and 14/20.
- ENSB curriculum does not prepare teachers to use ICT in class.
- Therefore, ENSB English curriculum does not meet the international standard needed for the formation of EFL teachers who could challenge EFL teachers in the world.

### **3. conclusion**

- a- ENSB Curriculum has failed to implement the Ministry of Education Reform based on constructivist pedagogy ;competency –based teaching and problem-based leaning currently applied in middle and secondary schools all over the country;
- b- The lack of consideration of learners' needs at ENSB created a mismatch between the English curriculum and future teachers' needs;
- c- Because it does not take account of student-teachers' needs, ENSB curriculum can hardly prepare pre-service teachers for coping with the school realities.
- d- As the aims of the curriculum have not been stated clearly , there is imbalance in time allotment between components and between subjects and components; therefore, some essential subjects/courses related to teaching have been given less attention;
- e- As a matter of fact, all researchers and curriculum designers at an international level do recommend that all the subjects that assist pre-service teachers to be more performing in running a class efficiently, should deserve more consideration. (Vally&Tom,1988cited in De Lima,2000)

### **4. Recommendations**

#### **a. To both Ministries**

- As ENSB School is an interdependent component of the educational system, it should be informed of any decision taken by the MNE to improve teacher quality and vice -versa ENSB School should adhere to any recommendation emanating from MNE to avoid mismatch and dissonant practices.



- ENSB should bring in change urgently and design a new curriculum appropriate to STs' needs and school realities, but if developing a new one is not possible immediately, we suggest to add missing elements such as the introduction of CBA Approach and Constructivist Theory, project-based learning, problem-solving, etc, as well as the study of the Algerian English curricula and textbooks in force.
- ENSB School should collaborate with the schools for the selection of the period for teacher-training and the duration of the training since today neither the former nor the latter are relevant.

### **b. To the Department of English**

- ENSB should introduce an efficient system of assessment which makes trainees more aware and responsible for their learning and ensure a fair assessment to all.
- ENSB should promote continuous assessment using a variety of assessment tools (checklist, grid, and rating scale) to avoid bias in student-teachers' assessment.
- It should make the observation of trainees by trainers compulsory during the practicum in order to diagnose the trainees' weaknesses and correct them.
- It should integrate teacher training experience in ENSB curriculum in the form of micro teaching classes performed by trainees before attending the school placement sessions which can be estimated by Educators attending the teacher-training demonstrations on trainees' grade notebook.
- ENSB should include a satisfactory level of performance through which the curriculum acceptability can be estimated.(Richards, 2001).
- It should increase the length of the practicum, and schedule the observation session in the second year of the degree course.

### **c.**

#### **d. To the team of curriculum designers**

- Design a flexible curriculum which can accommodate any changes to improve the quality of teaching-learning, based on the educational aims stated by MNE on the international model integrating courses on ICT for learning and teaching to help trainees use them in class.
- Ensure a good balance between the main components, and the sub-components of the ENSB curriculum, update the knowledge of these components, and relate it to today's new developments in education by including ICT.
- Allow for the possibility of scholarship to trainees for an intensive immersion experience among an English speaking community.
- Design a practicum program which focuses on Mastery of the subject-matter, Language skills, Methodological skills, Decision-making skills, Social skills, and Enabling skills to do research to improve and develop professionally.
- For the school placements, the Ministry of National Education should organize training sessions for trainers on their mission as trainers: supervisors and evaluators.

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