ESP TEACHERS' PRACTICE OF DEVELOPING CURRICULUM AT SOME UNIVERSITIES IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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Abstract: ESP curriculum development is of great significance in terms of developing a curriculum that meets the specific needs of a learner group as well as enhances relevance and students' interest and motivation. Teacher involvement in this process is essential in that not many materials are available for leaners with specific needs and an ESP teacher is not only a teacher but also a collaborator, a course designer and material provider, a researcher, and an evaluator (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). The study thus aims to investigate ESP teachers' practice in the curriculum development process. Seventy eight teachers at four tertiary institutions in Ho Chi Minh City were asked about their involvement in the process of developing the ESP curriculum for non-English majors at their universities through a questionnaire and interviews. The data were then analyzed to show the ESP curriculum development process and the teachers' involvement in it.. The findings reveal that the practice of these steps by the ESP teachers was generally implemented at an average level or at a low level except for some aspects in each step. Some implications are also suggested to inform the ESP curriculum development process.

Key words: ESP, curriculum development, ESP teachers, practice

1.   Introduction

In the effort to enhance the quality of English teaching in tertiary institutions, ESP teaching is considered to make English learning more relevant to the students' use of English in their future jobs, and thus arouse their interest and motivation in English learning. The development of ESP curriculum is, therefore, of great significance in terms of developing a curriculum that meets the specific needs of a learner group as well as enhances relevance and students' interest and motivation. Teacher involvement in this process is essential in that not many materials are available for learners with specific needs and an ESP teacher is not only a teacher but also a collaborator, a course designer and material provider, a researcher, and an evaluator (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). The study thus aims to investigate ESP teachers' practice of developing the ESP curriculum for non-English majors at some universities in Ho Chi Minh City. It seeks to find the answer for the question "What is the ESP teachers' practice of developing curriculum for non-English majors at some universities in Ho Chi Minh City?"

2.   Theoretical framework

2.1.   ESP curriculum development

ESP or English for Specific Purposes has evolved since its popularization in the 1960s, partly manisfested in its definition's evolvement. From Strevens' (1988) and Robinson's (1991) definition of ESP, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) modified the definition of ESP as consisting of three absolute characteristics and five variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics are (a) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; (b) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; and (c) ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. In the meantime, the variable characteristics are (a) ESP may be related or designed for specific disciplines; (b) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; (c) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could be used for learners at secondary school level; (d) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced learners; and (e) Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Curriculum development in language teaching, according to Richards (2001), originated from the notion of syllabus design also in the 1960s although issues of syllabus design emerged as a major factor in language teaching much earlier. Syllabus design is one aspect of curriculum development but is not identical with it. Richards (2001, p.2) defines a syllabus as "a specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested" and syllabus design is the process of developing a syllabus and normally focuses on the selection and organization of the content of a particular course (White, 1988; Richards, 2001). In the meantime, curriculum development focuses on determining what knowledge, skills, and values students learn in schools, what experiences should be provided to bring about intended learning outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools or educational systems can be planned, measured, and evaluated. Language curriculum development refers to the field of applied linguistics that addresses these issues. It describes an interrelated set of processes that focuses on designing, revising, implementing, and evaluating language programs (Richards, 2001), so it is suggested that the process of ESP curriculum development is more comprehensive than that of syllabus design.

For the present study, curriculum development is a term used to address "the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims and objectives for a program to address those needs, to determine 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, p.2). The process of curriculum development therefore consists of successive and interrelated steps or components. According to Nunan (1988), the key

elements in the curriculum model are initial planning procedures (including data collection and learner grouping), content selection and gradation, methodology (which includes the selection of learning activities and materials), and ongoing monitoring, assessment and evaluation.

In an attempt of approaching language curriculum development systemtically, Brown (1995) introduces a model of systematic approach to design and maintain language curriculum, which includes needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials, teaching, and evaluation; and how these components interact in particular teaching situations. In the meantime, Nation & Macalister (2010) work out the curriculum design model that consists of three outside circles and a subdivided inner circle. The outer circle (principles, environment, needs) involve practical considerations that will have a major effect in guiding the actual process of course production. The inner circle has goals as its center and the three subdivided parts include content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessing.

For the present study, the scholars' models of curriculum development in general and ESP curriculum development in particular are adopted and synthesized to formulate a working ESP curriculum development procedure that consists of seven steps: (1) analyzing ESP needs, (2) specifying the course goals or objectives, (3) selecting and sequencing the contents, (4) determining teaching and learning methodology, (5) selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials, (6) determining methods and contents of assessment, and (7) evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools.

2.2. Teacher involvement in curriculum development

Teacher involvement in the curriculum development process has attracted several researchers in an attempt to look for a curriculum that works more efficiently in certain situations. Powell (1992) looks into a national context in which a regional modern languages project was conceived. The aims of the project are set out as are the means by which monitoring and evaluation took place. The main focus of the article, however, is the perceptions and emotions of the teachers involved, both as clients of an in-service program of professional development and as writers of language teaching materials for the 16-19 age range. The evidence gathered through open-ended questionnaire responses and diary entries reveals an interesting spectrum of feelings. It also underlines the benefits of networking and the importance of external support for writing activities. The positive outcomes in terms of curriculum developments at institutional level are listed in a brief conclusion.

Eisenbach (2012) investigates some reform initiatives that push for stronger curriculum mandates and greater teacher accountability. Such initiatives lead to an increase in scripted curriculums within the secondary education classroom. He poses the questions of what happens when teaching ideologies are at odds with such required curriculums and how teachers maintain a balance when personal beliefs no longer match the curricular expectations

set before them. In his article, he shares the stories of three middle school teachers – the accommodator, the negotiator, and the rebel – as they work to incorporate a scripted curriculum within their language arts classrooms. In examining the curricular approaches taken by these three teachers, he urges educators to question their ethical obligations when infusing a scripted curriculum that opposes their personal teaching beliefs.

In his reflective piece, Banegas (2014) discusses the process of developing a new unifying initial English language teacher education curriculum in the province of Chubut (Argentina). Trainers and trainees from different institutions were called to work on it with the aim of democratizing curriculum development and enhancing involvement among agents. In the process, tensions emerged in the following areas: the cultural and ideological representations of English and the incorporation of interculturality; the integration of fields in the knowledge base; and the role of subject matter in teacher education. The article concludes by stating that while attempts to include trainers' voices were achieved, the curriculum was still conceptualized as compartmentalized knowledge.

Voogt et al., (2011) explore the processes of teacher learning during the collaborative design of curriculum materials in the context of curriculum innovation. The Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) was used to identify these processes. Nine published studies from six different countries about teachers' collaborative curriculum design were analyzed to identify the learning processes that collaborative curriculum design fosters. They concluded that the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth, although initially developed to recognize learning processes in individual teachers, can also be used to identify learning processes that are fostered by collaborative curriculum design in teams of teachers.

In his article, Banegas (2011) investigates the process of an in-service program for English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers in Argentina started in 2007. Teachers began to feel uneasy about the EFL curriculum for secondary education at the time, feeling that something should be done to develop a participatory curriculum to be implemented in the future. He was approached by the Ministry of Education to develop a program based on teachers' concerns as they were initially willing to design in-service opportunities according to teachers' suggestions. He organized his action-research-based program into three sets of meetings: the first set for curriculum evaluation, the second set for learning about specific didactics, and the third set for developing a new curriculum with the hope it could be useful in the future. This teacher-developed curriculum then became the basis of the 2012 EFL Curriculum as part of a new educational reform.

In their qualitative study, Lam et al., (2013) examined eleven Singaporian teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning as related to their experiences implementing integrated

curriculum. Interviews revealed that the teachers' conceptions of integration spanned the spectrum of ideas found in relevant literature. Further, although participants saw benefits to integration, including greater engagement of learners, they also spoke of significant obstacles to its implementation, such as teachers' own perceived lack of subject knowledge and a misalignment with the assessment system. The findings, while echoing previous studies conducted in various countries, highlight implementation difficulties in settings where high stake examinations and disciplinary-based curriculum prevail.

The previous studies explore the teachers' perceptions and practice of many aspects related to curriculum implementation, which are good references for the present study. In this study, the aspect of ESP curriculum development procedures will be explored in terms of the ESP teachers' practice in each step of the curriculum development process.

3.   Methods

Participants

The participants of this study are ESP teachers from four universities in Ho Chi Minh City. All these universities have departments of English, either as a faculty that has their own English-majored students or as a department that teaches the English subject to non-English majors. Eighty-six ESP teachers from these four universities were invited to take part in the procedure of providing data for this study and eighty-two teachers agreed to respond to the questionnaires. Among the collected questionnaires, seventy-eight of them were conformed to the questionnaire requirements. Table 1 describes in detail the ethnographic information of the participants.

Table 1. Participants' ethnographic information

Universities		University One	University Two	University Three	University Four	Total
Age	Below 25	1	0	0	0	**1**
	From 25 to 30	1	3	0	0	**4**
	From 31 to 35	2	9	0	7	**18**
	From 36 to 40	4	3	2	8	**17**
	From 41 to 50	14	2	5	10	**31**
	Over 50	2	2	1	2	**7**
Gender	Male	6	4	3	15	**28**

	Female	18	15	5	12	**50**
Qualifications	Bachelor	2	3	0	1	**6**
	Master	19	13	7	15	**54**
	Doctoral student	0	2	1	2	**5**
	Doctor	3	1	0	8	**12**
	Professor/ Associate Professor	0	0	0	1	**1**
Years of ESP teaching	1-3 years	3	1	0	6	**10**
	4-7 years	2	7	1	6	**16**
	8-12 years	3	5	2	9	**19**
	Over 12 years	16	6	5	6	**33**
Teachers' specialty	EFL teachers	24	19	8	7	**58**
	Specialist teachers	0	0	0	20	**20**
Total number of teachers		**24**	**19**	**8**	**27**	**78**

Out of the total of eighty-two teachers participating in the data collection procedure of the study and responding to the questionnaire, twenty-four teachers agreed to take part in the interview. However, due to their working agenda, twenty-one teachers did participate in the interview.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection was carried out with two instruments, that is, a questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was developed based on our review of the literature, especially on the theoretical frameworks of curriculum development in general and ESP curriculum development in particular (Richards, 2001; Brown, 1995; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) and responds to the research question asked. The questionnaire is written in Vietnamese in order to make it easier and less time-consuming for the respondents, thus helping to ensure valid responses.

For the purpose of the present study, the questionnaire consists of the participants' ethnographic information and the main section which investigates the participants' practice of developing the curriculum at their universities. The main section is divided into seven parts according to seven steps of the ESP curriculum development, that is (1) ESP needs analysis, (2) specification of goals or objectives, (3) selection and sequencing of content, (4) determination and facilitation of teaching methodology, (5) selection or compilation of the coursebooks, (6) determination of the assessment methods and contents, and (7) evaluation of the ESP curriculum as guided by the literature (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). All of these parts aim to explore the teachers' practice in each step of the ESP curriculum development process and all the clusters have Cronbach's Alpha of above .8 (Table 2), thus their reliability is assured.

Table 2: Questionnaire item distribution and their Cronbach's Alpha

Section No.	Sections	Content	Questions	Cronbach's Alpha
I. General Information				
1		The participants' ethnographic information	Q1 - Q6	(ethnographic information)
II. Teachers' viewpoints and the actual practice in the ESP curriculum development process				
2	Procedures of ESP curriculum development	The participants' general perceptions of ESP curriculum development procedures	Q7	.879
3	Analysis of needs for ESP curriculum development	The participants' practice of step one, analyzing ESP needs	Q8 - Q10	.815, .923, .873
4	Specification of the course goals/ objectives in the ESP curriculum development process	The participants' practice of step two, specifying the course goals or objectives	Q11	.933
5	Selection and sequencing of the course contents in the ESP curriculum development	The participants' practice of step three, selecting and sequencing the contents	Q12	(ordinal scale)

6	Determination of teaching and learning methodology	The participants' practice of step four, determining teaching and learning methodology	Q13, Q14	.902, .919
7	Selection/ compilation of coursebooks/ teaching materials in ESP curriculum development	The participants' practice of step five, selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials	Q15, Q16	.961, .936
8	Specification of assessment methods and contents in the ESP curriculum development	The participants' practice of step six, determining methods and contents of assessment	Q17, Q18	.818, .888
9	Curriculum evaluation as a step of the ESP curriculum development process	The participants' practice of step seven, evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools	Q19	.923

The second instrument of the study is the interview which consists of semi-structured interviews scheduled to serve as a guide to the researcher and to enable the participants to provide profitable and fruitful answers related to their practice in each step of the ESP curriculum development process.

The questionnaire data is analyzed using SPSS software to explore the teachers' practice. In the meantime, the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. The pre-coding step involves reading the transcripts and reflecting on them in order to look for key ideas and issues related to the research questions. The interview data was then coded to highlight extracts of the transcribed data and label them into themes and topics so that they can easily be identified, retrieved, or grouped into major tendencies and patterns.

4.   Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings regarding the teachers' actual participation in the process of developing ESP curriculum. In specific, it describes the extent to which the investigated teachers took part in the seven steps of ESP curriculum development, that is, step one: analyzing ESP needs, step two: specifying the course goals or objectives, step three: selecting and sequencing the contents, step four: determining teaching and learning

methodology, step five: selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials, step six: determining methods and contents of assessment, and step seven: evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools.

4.1.   Teachers' participation in Step One: Analyzing ESP needs

To explore the teachers' participation in step one, that is, analyzing ESP needs, a number of questions are designed in the questionnaire. Question 8 examines the ESP teachers' usage level of the tools used in ESP needs analysis. Question 9 looks into the contents to be collected in ESP needs analysis by the teachers. Question 10, in addition, focuses on the stake-holders that need to be surveyed in ESP needs analysis.

Table 3: The ESP needs analysis tools used by the teachers

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q8C.a.Exam/ test results	78	1	5	3.13	1.155
Q8C.b.Existing documents and materials	78	1	5	2.94	.972
Q8C.c.Observations	78	1	5	2.92	1.042
Q8C.e.Seminars	78	1	4	2.15	.823
Q8C.d.Interviews	78	1	4	1.95	.836
Q8C.f.Questionnaires	78	1	4	1.91	.856
Valid N (listwise)	78				

Regarding the usage level of different tools used in ESP needs analysis, Table 3 illustrates that the ESP teachers' usage level of these tools is mostly below the average. The only tool that was used a bit higher than average was using exam or test results with the mean of 3.13 although the standard deviation of 1.155 shows that the teachers' usage level of this tool was very divergent from one another. The second highest mean tool is using the existing documents and materials (m = 2.94) and the lowest mean tool is using questionnaires (m = 1.91).

In the interviews with the teachers, they stated that the needs analysis was either not carried out or done informally. For specialties that many coursebooks and materials are available on the market, the faculty chose a compulsory coursebook and other supplementary materials available on the market for teaching and learning. The needs analysis, therefore, was not carried out formally with the tools specified in question 8. For specialties that coursebooks and other materials were not available on the market, the faculties and teachers had to compile the coursebooks or teaching materials for themselves. However, the needs analysis was also not conducted formally. They instead talked to some content teachers or students for a general idea of what they need, which would be the bases for the EFL faculties or teachers to look for or compile suitable coursebooks.

Table 4: The contents collected for ESP needs analysis by the teachers

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q9C.e.Students' current ability of English	78	1	5	2.73	1.053
Q9C.f.Students' preferences on different teaching and learning activities	78	1	5	2.69	1.023
Q9C.i.Organizational and environmental conditions for good teaching and learning	78	1	5	2.69	.997
Q9C.h. Recommendations to difficult aspects in using English	78	1	4	2.60	.944
Q9C.g.Frequency of common errors	78	1	4	2.49	.964
Q9C.a.Situations of using English at the students' future workplace	78	1	4	2.46	.833
Q9C.b.Situations of difficulty in using English at the students' future workplace	78	1	4	2.31	.857
Q9C.c.Frequency of different channels of communication in English at the students' future workplace	78	1	4	2.23	.737
Q9C.d.Frequency of linguistic elements	78	1	4	2.21	.795
Valid N (listwise)	78				

As regards the contents to be collected in ESP needs analysis, question 9 in the questionnaire collected data on the teachers' practice of collecting the specified contents for ESP needs analysis. Table 4 displays that the teachers' practice of collecting the specified contents was below the average with the mean ranged from 2.21 to 2.73. The interview data also reveals that at all the four universities, the development of the ESP curriculum was assigned to a small number of senior teachers who were the faculty heads or team leaders and had experience of ESP teaching as Teacher 4, a senior ESP teacher at University One, put it:

> "The ESP curriculum was developed by the faculty head or an assigned team leader, who had experience in ESP teaching. We did not do an explicit formal needs analysis but base on the name and common keywords of the speciality to look for the coursebooks and extra materials on the market or on the Internet. We sometimes asked the content teachers about some aspects such as ESP needs, ESP or speciality materials, some ESP vocabulary, etc. but we often did this individually, according to our personal relationship with the content teachers…"

Due to this way of practice, systematic contents needed for ESP needs analysis were not sufficiently and properly collected during the ESP curriculum development process.

Table 5: The stake-holders involved in ESP needs analysis by the teachers

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q10C.b.ESP teachers	78	1	4	2.81	.884
Q10C.a.Students	78	1	5	2.71	.995
Q10C.c.Specialist teachers	78	1	4	2.58	.919
Q10C.e.Alumni/ Staff working in this specialty	78	1	5	2.29	1.008
Q10C.d.Managers/ Employers/ Professionals	78	1	4	2.22	.921
Valid N (listwise)	78				

Besides the needs analysis tools and contents, the study also explores the stake-holders involved in ESP needs analysis. Questions 10 in the questionnaire investigated the teachers' practice of involving stakeholders in their needs analysis process, namely students, ESP teachers, specialist teachers, managers, employers, professionals, alumni or staff working in the specialty. Table 5 displays that the teachers' practice of involving the specified stake-holders in their needs analysis process was below the average with the mean ranged from 2.22 to 2.81.

In the interviews with the head of the faculties and with the teachers, they expressed the difficulties of approaching the target situations with people directly working in the field including managers, employers, professionals, alumni or staff working in this field. Many of them did not even think of the involvement of these people. Instead, they relied on their own experience, on informal talks with students, specialist teachers in the university, and other ESP teachers in the department.

4.2. Teachers' participation in Step Two: Specifying the course goals or objectives

To investigate the teachers' participation in step two, that is, specifying the course goals or objectives, questions 11 were designed to explore the teachers' practice of specifying the course goals or objectives. The collected data showed that the teachers did not base on the specified bases at a proper level. Specifically, they based on the experience in ESP teaching of the curriculum developers with the mean of 2.87, the students' entrance and outcome standard levels that are specified in the curriculum framework with the mean of 2.69, the leaners' needs with the mean of 2.60, the language needs with the mean of 2.60, learning needs with the mean of 2.58, the situation needs with the mean of 2.23, Vietnam's 6-level foreign language proficiency framework with the mean of 1.86.

The interview data is in conformity with the questionnaire data in that the teachers admitted that the specification of goals and objectives were basically in general terms and based on the curriculum developers' experience rather than on the data and information collected

from a scientific and systematic ESP needs analysis. Teacher 9, the vice dean and the ESP curriculum developers at University Two, stated that:

"In fact, we chose the coursebook first, then we used the coursebook contents as the contents of the course. And we also based on this coursebook to write the goals or objectives of the ESP course in terms of knowledge and skills. It is very difficult to base on the Vietnam's 6-level foreign language proficiency framework to write the ESP goals or objectives because its descriptors do not focus on ESP, but it focuses basically on General English…"

4.3.   Teachers' participation in Step Three: Selecting and sequencing the contents

In the attempt to explore the process of selecting of sequencing the contents, step three in developing ESP curriculum, question 12 in the questionnaire asked the teachers to order the type of syllabus framework from 1 to 8 according to their current syllabus. The data shows that the syllabus framework that were being used the most was the topical of content-based syllabus with the mean of 1.40. The syllabus frameworks that were used as the next layers in the syllabus were skills syllabus with the mean of 3.54, lexical syllabus with the mean of 3.97, task-based syllabus with the mean of 4.04, functional syllabus with the mean of 4.13, and situational syllabus with the mean of 4.62. The two syllabus types that were least recognized as being applied in the current syllabuses were text-based syllabus with the mean of 6.15 and no syllabus type indicated with the mean of of 7.94. In the interviews with the teachers who participated in the ESP curriculum development process, they expressed that becausse ESP was related to specific fields of knowledge, it should be topical or content-based so that the students could be equipped with specific language used for those specific fields.

The interviews about the process of selecting and sequencing the contents for the ESP courses showed that there was a difference between the specialties that had many types of coursebooks available on the market and the specialties that did not have coursebooks available on the market or on the Internet. For the former one, the faculties held professional meetings where teachers contributed their ideas about which coursebooks and other supplementary materials were to be selected for the ESP course or even which chapters or units to be selected in the specific coursebooks. Teacher 11 at University Three who was assigned to write the ESP curriculum put it that:

"After the faculty has selected a coursebook on the market and the chapters or units to include in the curriculum, we would technically list them as specific contents in the curriculum. The contents themselves then were based on to to write the goals and objectives of the course…"

As for the specialties that did not have many coursebooks or other extra materials on the market, the faculties had to organize the development of coursebooks or compilation of teaching materials. The faculty deputy dean who was also an ESP teacher at University Two explained that:

> "We assigned the teachers who were in charge of developing the ESP coursebook for a specific type of students. There were in fact some ESP contents that we often discussed informally or formally in the faculty's meetings, which were identified by basing on the key specialist terms that were virally discussed in the university, for example, immigration, investigation, cyber security, etc. The coursebook writers would select certain contents to include in the coursebooks. The order of these contents was also sequenced quite relatively, mainly according to the coursebook writers' will because it was difficult to determine which contents to come first or which would follow in the coursebooks…"

The actual ESP syllabuses also illustrates that the contents of the ESP course were selected and sequenced from the specified contents in the compulsory coursebooks included in the syllabuses. The coursebooks can be selected from the world-recognized publishers such as Oxford Publishing House or Cambridge Publishing House or written by the very teachers in the faculties.

4.4.   Teachers' participation in Step Four: Determining teaching and learning methodology

Step four in the ESP curriculum process, determining teaching and learning methodology, is of great importance in achieving the goals or objectives of the ESP course. Question 13 in the questionnaire focused on the ESP teachers' participation in establishing the activities or mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of the ESP curriculum while question 14 explored their involvement in activities that support the ESP curriculum implementation.

The collected data suggested that the ESP teachers' participation in establishing the activities or mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of the ESP curriculum was at a below average level. Accordingly, the data illustrate the ESP teachers' participation in establishing mechanisms to support students in learning and self-study with the mean of 2.88, establishing mechanisms for students to get feedback on teaching and learning process through many channels with the mean of 2.83, developing different learning options for better and weaker students with the mean of 2.46, organizing orientation sessions and seminars to better raise students' awareness of the course goals or objectives and the methods of teaching, learning, and self-study with the mean of 2.38, and organizing the investigations with questionnaires and other tools to find out students' needs on motivation, learning styles, teaching and learning activities, etc. with the mean of 2.27.

In the interviews with the teachers, teachers from only one out of the four universities stated that their faculty did organize the orientation sessions to raise students' awareness of the course goals or objectives and the methods of teaching, learning, self-study and other related issues. At other universities, most of the teachers said they carried out the teaching as indicated in the syllabus, and they sometimes did talk to the students about the specified issues but this did not always take place and depended on the time they might have.

Whereas question 13 investigated the ESP teachers' participation in establishing the activities or mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of the ESP curriculum, the data collected with question 14 demonstrate that their involvement in activities that support the ESP curriculum implementation was below the average. Specifically, the ESP teachers participated in compiling test banks and evaluation profiles with the mean of 2.74, compiling a system of reference materials for teaching with the mean of 2.58, organizing orientation sessions and discussions with teachers before, during and after the ESP course with the mean of 2.54, training teachers in ESP teaching with the mean of 2.22, developing a set of tools to manage students' self-study, eg. tests for self-study, marking schemes, etc. with the mean of 2.21, developing survey tools for students and teachers with the mean of 2.15, and training teachers in the specialist subjects with the mean of 2.15.

In the interviews, the teachers at only one university expressed that the university did cooperate with another university in Ho Chi Minh City to organize a one-week training on ESP teaching for the teachers but this activity was more appreciating than effective. Most of the ESP teachers interviewed stated that they based on the assigned coursebooks to look for related knowledge and materials from the Internet or the specialist teachers on their individual relationships. They then tried to convey what they understood about the specific contents to the students in English and helped students with the language with traditional English teaching methods rather than having a systematic knowledge of the subject or applying a communicative approach to help students use the language needed for their future jobs. However, they pointed out that they were supported with test banks and some unit tests which were compiled by the teachers and then shared among them.

4.5. Teachers' participation in Step Five: Selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials

After determining the content framework and methodology during the ESP curriculum development process, the next step or step five is to select or compile the coursebooks and teaching materials for the ESP course. Question 15 in the questionnaire explored the level of ESP teachers' participation in selecting or compiling the coursebooks and teaching materials for the ESP course while question 16 examined the teachers' level of applying the specified bases in

selecting or compiling the coursebooks and teaching materials in the process of ESP curriculum development.

Regarding the level of ESP teachers' participation in selecting or compiling the specified ESP coursebooks or materials, the collected data displayed that only the coursebooks or students' books received the mean of 3.23, indicating that the teachers' participation in the selection or compilation of ESP coursebooks or students' books was at an above average level. In the meantime, they involved in selecting or compiling other kinds of ESP materials just at a below average level, including workbooks with the mean of 2.96, books or materials on reading skills with the mean of 2.94, books or materials on vocabulary with the mean of 2.78, books or materials on the specialty with the mean of 2.71, books or materials on writing skills with the mean of 2.69, teacher's books with the mean of 2.67, books or materials on grammar with the mean of 2.49, books or materials on listening with the mean of 2.47, books or materials on speaking skills with the mean of 2.45, CDs, DVDs, or softwares with the mean of 2.40, books or materials on pronunciation with the mean of 2.33.

As for the teachers' level of applying the specified bases in selecting or compiling the coursebooks and teaching materials in the process of ESP curriculum development, the data collected with question 16 highlighted that six of the nine bases had above average means, including the curriculum goals or objectives with the mean of 3.40, the content determined with the mean of 3.33, the time allotted with the mean of 3.26, teacher experience with the mean of 3.24, the unit structure determined with the mean of 3.23, and the methods of testing and assessment developed with the mean of 3.2. The other three bases' means, however, were below the average, including the viewpoints on language teaching and learning with the mean of 2.95, the viewpoints on language with the mean of 2.50, and the ESP needs analyzed with the mean of 2.23.

4.6.   Teachers' participation in Step Six: Determining methods and contents of assessment

To examine the next step in the ESP curriculum development process, that is, step six - determining methods and contents of assessment, question 17 in the questionnaire focused on the ESP teachers' participation in designing the specified assessment tools when developing the ESP curriculum and question 18 examined the bases or principles that the ESP teachers based on to determine the requirements for testing and evaluation during the curriculum development process.

As regards to the ESP teachers' participation in developing the specified assessment tools during the curriculum development process, the collected data varied. They practiced developing the final achievement test and the progress test after each lesson or group of lessons the most with the mean of 3.97 and 3.94 respectively. Other tests that were also developed by the ESP teachers at an above average level consisted of the mid-term achievement test with the

mean of 3.59 and the proficiency test at the end of the course with the mean of 3.37. Some other kinds of tests were developed by the ESP teachers at a below average level, including the proficiency test at the beginning of the course with the mean of 2.91, tests for students' self-assessment with the mean of 2.78, and placement test with the mean of 2.72.

The ESP teachers' level of applying the specified bases or principles also varied in developing the assessment tools. They applied three of the specified bases or principles at an above average level, including being able to provide information that helps adjust the next teaching and learning process with the mean of 3.24, being able to be developed into exam question banks with the mean of 3.21, having a good washback effect on the next teaching and learning process with the mean of 3.14. The other two bases or principles were applied by the ESP teachers in developing the assessment tools included being compatible with the contents and learning methods with the mean of 2.79 and being able to measure the learning outcomes compared with the goals and specified learning outcomes with the mean of 2.37.

4.7. Teachers' participation in Step Seven: Evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools

The last step or step seven in the ESP curriculum development is evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools. Question 19 in the questionnaire examined the ESP teachers' practice of applying or referring to the specified contents to be evaluated in the curriculum evaluation process. The collected data revealed that the ESP teachers' practice of evaluating ESP curriculum was at a low level. Among the contents specified in question 19, two contents were applied or referred to by the ESP teachers at a below average level, that is, teachers' teaching process with the mean of 2.74 and students' progress with the mean of 2.68. Other contents specified in question 19C were applied or referred to by the ESP teachers at a low level, including the development of the curriculum contents with the mean of 2.49, teaching materials with the mean of 2.47, facilities and learning environment with the mean of 2.38, students' motivation with the mean of 2.19, the training and development of the teaching staff with the mean of 2.18, the development of the curriculum with the mean of 1.96, and decision making with the mean of 1.90.

The findings have revealed that the ESP teachers participated most in step five – selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials, and step six – determining methods and contents of assessment. In step five, they were involved most in selecting or compiling the coursebooks, workbooks, and teaching and learning materials related to reading and vocabulary. In step six, the ESP teachers were most involved in developing final achievement tests, progress tests and mid-term achievement tests. The ESP teachers' participation in the curriculum development process ensured the basic requirements for the ESP to take place

rather than sufficient for the ESP curriculum to be effective and meet the needs of their current or future workplaces.

The steps that the ESP teachers least participated in were step one – analyzing ESP needs, step two – specifying the course goals and objectives, and step seven – evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools. According to Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998), an ESP teacher is not only a teacher but also a collaborator, a course designer and material provider, a researcher, and an evaluator. The practice of not sufficiently involving teachers in these steps of the ESP curriculum development process, therefore, have led to the situation that these universities did not have enough human resources for conducting these steps formally and properly. This was one of the main causes that leaded to various difficulties in ESP teaching at these universities such as specifying the course goals or objectives that accorded with the ESP needs, selecting and sequencing the course contents that based on sound evidence, determining an efficient teaching and learning methodology that could help achieve the course goals, determining the contents and methods of assessment that could measure the students' achievements compared with the needs-informed goals or objectives, and the evidence-based criteria for evaluating the performed ESP curriculum.

5. Conclusion and implications

In this study, ESP teachers' practice of each step in the ESP curriculum development process has been explored. The qualitative and quantitative data was collected according to the seven steps with different aspects specified in each step of the ESP curriculum development process, including analyzing ESP needs, specifying course goals or objectives, selecting and sequencing the contents, determining teaching and learning methodology, selecting or compiling coursebooks and materials, determining testing and assessment contents and methods, and evaluating the ESP curriculum to inform each step as well as the whole process of ESP curriculum development. The data wasanalyzed to answer the research question. The practice of these steps by the ESP teachers was generally implemented at an average level or at a low level except for some aspects in each step. This situation resulted from the fact that the first step of the process, that is ESP needs analysis, was not carried out properly and comprehensively, leading to the following steps not informed with or based on a sound scientific foundation for the ESP curriculum development process.

The remedial work, therefore, could start with conducting a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the four aspects of ESP needs as a base for adjusting the later steps of the ESP curriculum development process. The faculties or universities should have cautious and feasible plans to involve teachers in every step of the ESP curriculum process. In step one, analyzing ESP needs, universities or faculties should organize conferences that invite not only

the ESP teachers, specialists and other related stake-holders in the universities but also other professionals outside the universities such as specialists in the specific field, leaders, managers or future employers of the students, and alumni or employees who are currently working in the field. These types of conferences can be useful in discussing the ESP needs, the course goals or objectives that base on the ESP needs, the key contents that need covering in the course, and so on. The universities and faculties should also organize or advantage ESP teachers to go on field trips to the students' current or future workplaces to have hands-on experiences and more practical ideas of the duties the students are performing or will perform in the future so that they can have better ideas of what to include in their ESP courses, and thus participate more actively in the ESP curriculum development process.

In step two, specifying the ESP course goals and objectives, universities and faculties should have ESP teachers involved in discussing and specifying the course goals or objectives basing on the ESP needs they have been aware of and collected themselves. These bases consist of not only the language needs but also the situations needs, learners' needs, learning needs as well as other bases such as the Vietnam's 6-level foreign language proficiency framework, the students' entrance and outcome standard levels that are specified in the curriculum framework, ESP teaching experience, and so on. Similarly, the selection and sequencing of the course contents in step three should also be discussed and decided with reference to the ESP teachers' opinions who have a clear picture of the ESP needs and the course goals or objectives that have been specified.

In determining the teaching and learning methodology in step four, ESP teachers should be involved more on discussing and establishing mechanisms to support the curriculum implementation such as organizing orientation sessions and seminars to better raise students' awareness of the course goals or objectives and the methods of teaching, learning, and self-study, or organizing the investigations with questionnaires and other tools to find out students' needs on motivation, learning styles, teaching and learning activities, etc. During ESP curriculum development, universities and faculties should also plan various activities to support ESP teachers including training them in the specialist subjects and in ESP teaching, developing ready-for-use tools such as different survey tools, tools sets for managing students' self-study, marking schemes, etc.

In selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching and learning materials in step five, universities or faculties as well as individual ESP teachers should base conformably on various bases, especially the ESP needs that have been collected and analyzed, and the course goals or objectives that have been specified. Similarly, in selecting or compiling methods and contents of assessment in step six, the faculties as well as the ESP teachers should also take into account various bases, especially being able to measure the learning outcomes compared with the goals

and specified learning outcomes, having a good washback effect on the next teaching and learning process, and others.

Besides steps one and two, step seven is also one of the steps in the ESP curriculum development process that needs improving the most. Universities and faculties should have plans to continuously and cyclically evaluate each step of the ESP curriculum development process as well as the effectiveness of the whole curriculum. Comprehensive checklists of criteria should be developed for evaluation of each step as well as the whole process of curriculum development. Specific tools should be developed including questionnaires, interviews, feedback forms, observation forms, among others. Evaluation activities should also be conducted including organizing various related conferences, organizing field trips to students' current or future workplaces, orienting and encouraging research on curriculum development, and so on.

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