

# **Practitioner Perspective: an analysis of Intensive English Language Program Curriculum Reform in a Federal Higher Education Institution in the UAE**

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## **Abstract**

Curriculum development is considered to be the core of the Education sector. Therefore, examining and evaluating the curriculum content and development process has been a continuing concern among researchers in the educational field. Hence, this research aims to analyse and assess the level 2 curriculum reform of the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) in a federal higher education institution in the UAE. To achieve the aim of the research, two objectives were designated: evaluating the appropriateness of the intensive English language program curriculum reform, and providing recommendation based on the literature and own experience for further development. A number of findings/conclusions were made through analysing the IELP level 2 curriculum. The first conclusion is that curriculum developers in this institution followed the National Curriculum Model and Tyler's Model in planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum. Furthermore, the analysis of the curriculum components also showed that the IELP curriculum was following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR played an important role in determining students' level and understanding their needs. Another conclusion from the analysing of the IELP level 2 curriculum is that the time designated for each cycle is not enough for achieving all the learning outcomes mentioned in the curriculum. These findings provide an insight for further development of the IELP and future research to understand the IELP. It is recommended that future research should consider conducting surveys and interviews with different curriculum stakeholders, especially those most affected by it, that is, students, teachers and parents. It is argued that surveys and interviews will provide better understanding of the curriculum development and the impact of the IELP curriculum on both teachers' well-being and students' language proficiency and well-being.

**Keywords** Curriculum, English Language, Intensive Program, National Curriculum, Tyler's Model, Constructivism

## **1. Introduction**

Curriculum reform plays an essential role in developing up-to-date curricula that cope with changes in the world. Hence, practitioners and researchers have grown an increased interest in analysing and evaluating the curriculum development process (Kurt & Erdoğan 2015; Hall 2014; Al-Jardani 2012). According to Posner & Rudnitsky (1994), to build curricula that can add to students' knowledge and experience, it is crucial to continuously evaluate curricula and suggest development methods. A considerable amount of literature has been published on English Language curriculum development and reform; however, a few studies discussed the curriculum of the Intensive English Language Program (IELP). The debate about the effectiveness of IELP has been a controversial subject within the field of education. However, few researchers have been able to draw on the importance of evaluating the curriculum to determine the areas of weakness and suggest developments (Dincer et al. 2020; Alhaisoni 2012). As an English language instructor in one of the federal high education institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), I have taught the IELP curriculum for several years, since 2014. This paper aims to analyse and evaluate the IELP level 2 curriculum to build a better understanding of it. Several studies involving Dincer et al. (2020) and Due et al. (2015) have reported how crucial it is to analyse and evaluate the appropriateness of the intensive English language program to ensure its effectiveness in helping students.

The main purpose of the intensive English language program is to help students who do

not meet the English entry requirement for a Bachelor, Higher Diploma or Diploma programs. It is designed to improve student's English language skills and prepare them for higher education studies. I chose to analyse the level 2 curriculum, which is considered to be A2+ according to CEFR. My rationale for selecting this curriculum is related to my job, as I have been teaching it for several years. Hence, to gain insight into the curriculum development process, I chose the following aim and objectives. This paper aims to critically analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of IELP level 2 curriculum reform in a federal higher education institution in the UAE. Thus, the following objectives are set to be considered through the analysis and evaluation process:

- Evaluate the appropriateness of the intensive English language program reformed curriculum.
- Provide recommendation based on the literature and own experience for further development

This study is based on theoretical and empirical frameworks. Hence, it deploys a curriculum analysis approach using the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) approach, with an in-depth analysis of intensive English language program curriculum reform. Using the CIPP will provide insight into the curriculum context, input, process and product. Furthermore, a horizontal analysis dimension will be followed to analyse the curriculum development process. Thus, the analysis of the IELP curriculum reform will provide an insight into its aim and purpose. Furthermore, it will provide more perspectives

with regards to the theory and approach used in curriculum development as well as highlight curriculum stakeholders, i.e. curriculum designers, approvers, implementers ...etc in the curriculum development process. Analysis of the intensive program curriculum development will provide a better understanding of curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Furthermore, the evaluation will determine the appropriateness of the intensive program regarding the consideration of students' different abilities and needs within the EFL context. This paper will provide recommendations based on the literature and the researcher's own experience in the field of education in the EFL context.

This paper consists of six main sections. The first section is the introduction, which provides a brief overview of the intensive program curriculum background and purpose. Additionally, it includes the research problem and the rationale for choosing the topic. It also provides the significance of the study, the context in which the study is taking place, the aim of the research and the objectives. The second section is the literature review and theoretical underpinning, which presents theories and previous studies that examined curriculum development, implementation and evaluation theories and approaches. Furthermore, it shed light on literature and previous studies with regards to the reformed curriculum of the intensive English language program. The third section is the methodology which explains the approach and method used in analysing the curriculum development process and the data collected for this research. Also, it offers a brief explanation of the

rationale for choosing this method and ethical considerations. The fourth section outlines the IELP overview and highlights its purpose, owner, stakeholders and curriculum components. The fifth section presents the analysis of the collected data and the findings. The final section provides a discussion of the results, the conclusion and recommendations.

## **2. Literature Review and theoretical underpinning**

This section presents a historical and theoretical background concerning the theory and approach used in developing and reforming the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) curriculum. It discusses the National Curriculum model used in planning, designing and reforming curricula in higher education institutions. Furthermore, it shed light on the usage of Tyler's model in developing a curriculum. The theoretical underpinning of Constructivism theory will be explained in this section. Additionally, literature related to the Intensive English Language Program will be reviewed to provide an insight into its purpose and rationale.

### ***2.1 National Curriculum Model: A Centralised Curriculum***

The National curriculum model is defined by Brennan (2011) as a centralised, top-down approach that the government controls to communicate curriculum to the schools. The main aim of developing the national curriculum is to maintain balanced and consistent teaching and learning processes among all schools in a community (Graham & Tytler 2018). The

national curriculum consists of unequivocal objectives, knowledge and skills that a student will need to attain and achieve by studying the content of the given subject (Brennan 2011). According to Kaya et al. (2015) national curriculum ensures that all schools follow a unified curriculum that was carefully designed to provide the students with all the information and skills needed to construct their knowledge. It has been argued by Gao and Wang (2014) that the national curriculum is controlled by elites who design the curriculum according to their preferences. Furthermore, the curriculum is designed by people with power, authority, wealth and influential positions in the educational system (Brennan 2011). Researchers argue that curriculum developers do not involve the people affected the most by the curriculum, such as students, teachers and guardians. According to Graham & Tytler (2018), decision-makers should involve the students, teachers, parents and guardians in the curriculum development process because they can provide a different perspective regarding teaching and learning necessities. Furthermore, Gao and Wang (2014) argued that a centralised national curriculum does not comply with teachers' wishes and needs to reform curricula in which they believe it is best for their students.

## ***2.2 Tyler's Model***

A considerable amount of literature has been published on Tyler's model on curriculum development (Bhuttah et al. 2019; Sultan 2016). Tyler's model, also known as Tyler's rational and objective model, was designed by Ralph Tyler in 1949 for curriculum

development. Tyler's model is considered a deductive approach as it proceeds from the general design of a curriculum to the specific (Sydeman et al. 1997). Furthermore, it is regarded as a linear approach since it follows a sequential pattern in developing a curriculum (Sultan 2016). It also has been argued that Tyler's model is a top-down approach since it encourages the administration to design the school curriculum then pass it down to teachers to implement it (Bhuttah et al. 2019). Tyler suggested a four-step process by which a curriculum should be developed. Thus, he proposed the four steps, which are: stating objectives, selecting learning experience, organising learning experience and evaluating the curriculum (Bhuttah et al. 2019; Anh 2018; Cruickshank 2018).

According to Bhuttah et al. (2019), objectives are the most crucial part of developing a curriculum because it the core and the foundation of any curriculum. Therefore, the main aim of Tyler's model was to emphasise the importance of setting clear and precise objectives for a curriculum that can equip students with skills and positive attitudes (Cruickshank 2018). Thus, Tyler focused on the behavioural objectives because he believed that learning new information is not enough as students need to know how to use this knowledge. According to (Cruickshank 2018), Tyler encouraged curriculum designers and developers to identify curriculum objectives by gathering information from three primary sources: learners, contemporary life outside school, and subject matter.

Although Tyler's model was considered one of the pioneer's models, yet it had been criticised due to several factors. Several researchers have argued that Tyler's model is time-

consuming, especially when constructing behavioural objectives (Anh 2018). Furthermore, researchers argued that Tyler's model encourages the administrations to control the school curriculum and it neglects the importance of teachers' perspective in developing a curriculum (Sydeman et al. 1997). Also, researchers claim that critical thinking, problem-solving and value acquiring processes cannot be addressed in behavioural objectives (Anh 2018; Sydeman et al. 1997).

### ***2.3 Constructivism Theory***

Constructivism theory of curriculum development had represented a remarkable paradigm shift in the epistemology of knowledge and theory of learning. A large amount of literature has been published regarding the constructivism theory (Fosnot 2013; Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess 2012; Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2000). These studies identified constructivism as a cognitive development approach where students are active and responsible for constructing their knowledge based on their experience through the learning process (Fosnot 2013; Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess 2012). According to Amineh & Asl (2015) learners use their prior knowledge and experience as a foundation and build on it with the new information they have learned. Constructivism promotes a learner-centred approach in which learners construct their knowledge and teachers become facilitators of the learning process (Kaymakamoglu 2018). However, each learner has a different and unique previous knowledge and experience in which they link to and construct upon while



learning new information (Alt 2017).

Hence, teachers must try to accommodate students' diversities in classrooms by setting appropriate objectives and adopting pedagogical strategies and methods to promote learning. Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess (2012) argued that teachers should consider their students' prior knowledge and experience when creating their lesson plans and allocate time for students to deploy their newly gained knowledge into practice. Furthermore, researchers suggest that teachers allocate time for class curriculum discussion, negotiation and interaction since learners build a better understanding of new information when they ask questions and discuss views (Amineh & Asl 2015). It has been argued that as learners transform from being passive and become more actively involved in classrooms, they will have more commitment and responsibility towards their learning (Kaymakamoglu 2018; Alt 2017).

#### ***2.4 Intensive English courses implementation in higher education***

Much of the current literature on curriculum development and reform pays particular attention to the curriculum of the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) (Akcan et al. 2017; Al-Okaily 2015; Zhang 2015). IELP was first introduced to help students learn a particular curriculum in a concentrated time. Additionally, it aimed to help prepare students and equip them with the academically needed language competencies and skills (Akcan et

al. 2017). Another reason for implementing an intensive English language program is to increase the number of students entering Bachelors or equivalent (Al-Okaily 2015; Zhang 2015). There is a consensus among higher educational institutions with regards to the importance of having intensive language courses. That is because students will eventually need to provide a satisfactory score in an English language Standardised Test to join an academic program (Zhang 2015). According to Due et al. (2015) IELP works in favour of the students because the IELP curriculum is designed following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which helps to categorise the students according to their level. Each level in the CEFR provides details regarding students' language competencies and language proficiency (Franz & Teo 2018).

In contrast, Zhang (2015) argued that intensive English language programs have many shortfalls. He stated that one of the main disadvantages of intensive language programs is that it does not consider students' different learning styles. Furthermore, intensive English language programs do not adhere to the time needed for constructing knowledge and learning a foreign language which differs from a learner to another (Razawi et al. 2011). It has been argued that Intensive language programs neglect the critical fact about students' differences and cognitive abilities (Zhang 2015). Universities and colleges make assumptions that the IELP curriculum designed following CEFR suits all types of students (Franz & Teo 2018). According to Razawi et al. (2011), IELP disregard factors that highly affect students' language learning ability, such as age, gender, motivation, intelligence,

anxiety level, learning strategies and language learning styles.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper aims to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the intensive English language program level 2 curriculum reform in a federal higher education institution in the UAE. A Horizontal approach will be used to evaluate the efficiency of IELP level 2 curriculum. An in-depth analysis will be carried out using the model of Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP). According to Aziz et al. (2018) CIPP is used to analyse and evaluate the curriculum to determine the shortcomings and suggest improvements to decision-makers, curriculum developers and other stakeholders. The rationale for choosing the Horizontal approach to assess the efficiency of IELP level 2 curriculum is to unpack curriculum components and evaluate each aspect following the previously mentioned literature review and theoretical underpinning. Furthermore, using the CIPP model to critically analyse the curriculum can provide an insight into the appropriateness and suitability of the IELP curriculum components with regards to the purpose and aim of the program. Thus, this research will provide an overview of the IELP background and highlight its purpose and aim. Furthermore, it will analyse the components of the IELP curriculum such as language skills, learning outcomes, choice of resources and types of assessments. Finally, it will evaluate the implementation of teaching and learning processes and evaluate their quality, effectiveness and appropriateness following the EFL context.

The data used in this research is considered secondary data because it is based on existing policy document/data collected from a federal educational institution in the UAE. Therefore, no sample was needed for this research because it is based on analysing the IELP level 2 curriculum as its main document. With regards to ethical consideration, the name of the institution will be kept anonymous to maintain confidentiality. The limitation of this study is that it does not include an analysis of students' products and results during the IELP. A recommendation for future research is to look at students' products and performance in the IELP to examine the impact of the program and the curriculum on their academic performance and language acquisition. Additionally, using surveys, interviews with decision-makers, curriculum developers and other policy stakeholders, such as students and teachers, will provide more evidence and a new perspective with regards to the appropriateness and suitability of the IELP in the EFL context (Mills 2014).

#### **4. Intensive English Language Program Curriculum Overview**

##### ***4.1 IELP Structure Overview***

IELP was developed to address the needs of students who do not meet the English language entry requirements upon admission. From my experience as an employee in this institution, students should achieve a satisfactory score in the English language standardised tests such

as EmSAT or IELTS in order to be eligible to enrol into Bachelor, Higher Diploma or Diploma program. According to the English language tests scores, students are placed into the corresponding level. This program consists of four levels, level 1, level 2, level 3 and level 4, ordered from the lowest to the highest. Students are eligible for a maximum of one academic year in the IELP to complete the program requirement and proceed to a degree program. Students have to achieve a minimum of 60% in the level they were placed at and moved to the following one except for level 4, as students are required to take the EmSAT exit test to enter the degree program. In case students did not meet the English requirement, students will be dismissed from the institution. It is crucial to mention the structure of the IELP academic year. The academic year of the IELP consists of five cycles, and each cycle lasts for seven weeks except for the first and the last cycles, which lasts for eight weeks and five weeks, respectively. Students are allowed to repeat the level multiple times in the five cycles for a maximum of one year.

#### ***4.2 IELP Curriculum Overview***

The curriculum is designed following the CEFR and aims to help students with their English language competencies and skills. Thus, it is divided into categories, and each category has several components. The first category is the Functions which deals with students' ability to put their knowledge into practice and use the English language in different topics and themes. The second category is Vocabulary which students are

expected to understand the meaning and the use of the words to pass the weekly vocabulary exam. The following category is Grammar and it includes the grammar points that students need to learn and comprehend to apply them to other skills such as writing and speaking and passing the final grammar quiz. The next category is the Topics & Themes, which deals with the themes and topics that correspond to other skills such as vocabulary, reading, writing and speaking. Following is the Reading category, which states the outcomes and what students are expected to be capable of when studying reading texts. Next is the Reading Text Types, which highlights the main text types that will be used to teach the students, such as Descriptive texts, Informative articles, Instructions and Personal narratives, among other types. The following category is Writing, which shows what students are expected to be able to demonstrate while learning and practising writing. Next is the Listening category, which lists the outcomes and what is expected from students while listening to a speech on several familiar topics. The final category is Speaking, which shows what is expected from students to be able to demonstrate while using the language orally.

## **5. Analysis, Findings and Discussion**

The main aim of this study is to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of Intensive English Language Program in a higher education institution in the UAE. The analysis will be based on the CIPP model. Hence, in this section, the curriculum analysis will be themed

accordingly: context, input, process and product. Furthermore, analysis will be linked to the previous literature review and my own experience. The data analysis, findings and discussion will be interpreted according to the evaluation of the curriculum to achieve the research objectives, which are:

- Evaluate the appropriateness of the intensive English language program reformed curriculum.
- Provide recommendations based on the literature and own experience for further development

### **5.1 Context**

The Foundations intensive program is designed for students who do not achieve the required score in the EmSAT, IELTS or equivalent to enter a degree program. IELP is considered a remedial course that students need to complete to achieve the EmSAT English score or equivalent for entering the degree programs (see Table 1).

<b>IELP &amp; BAS Level</b>	<b>EmSAT Range</b>
BAS	1100+
Level 4	1000 – 1075
Level 3	825 – 975
Level 2	650 – 800
Level 1	Below 650

**Table 1: *EmSAT Scores for IELP and BAS***

Hence, this course is related to other courses as it equips the students with English language skills and competencies needed in other degree courses (Dincer et al. 2020). By analysing the data collected about the program, it was noticeable that the time given for teaching the curriculum and achieving the given learning outcomes is inadequate (see Table 2).

Week Starting	Cycle Schedule
23-Aug	Cycle 1 Teaching (8 weeks)
30-Aug	
6-Sep	
13-Sep	
20-Sep	
27-Sep	
4-Oct	
11-Oct	
18-Oct	Placement Week
25-Oct	Cycle 2 Teaching (7 weeks)
1-Nov	
8-Nov	
18-Nov	
22-Nov	
29-Nov	
6-Dec	Placement Week
13-Dec	

*Table 2: A sample of the Duration of IELP Cycles*

The time needed to learn a foreign language cannot be determined due to the diversity of students' cognitive development and abilities to learn a language (Suhendi 2018; Wang 2011). Based on my experience, the time set for each cycle was not enough to cover all the



elements and achieve all the learning outcomes mentioned in the curriculum (see Table 3).

To enhance this curriculum, I recommend redesigning the curriculum, decreasing the learning outcomes and linking the skills together to be more meaningful to the students.

	<b>Foundations Level 2</b>
	<b>A2+</b>
<b>Functions</b>	F1. Describing future plans F2. Describing habits and routines F3. Describing past experiences F4. Describing people, places, things in more detail F5. Explaining basic information from tables, charts and maps F6. Expressing and justifying basic opinions F7. Expressing feelings/emotions F8. Expressing obligation and necessity F9. Following and giving directions F10. Initiating and closing conversation with their peers and the teacher (both face to face and phone conversations) F11. Making basic inferences F12. Making suggestions F13. Telling the time F14. Using dates, years, calendar F15. Using numbers including fractions and percentages F16. Making comparisons
<b>Vocabulary</b>	V1. Can demonstrate an understanding of the meaning and use of the A2+ (Level 2) words on the Curriculum Vocabulary List.
<b>Grammar</b>	G1. Modals: can, could, might, may, ability and possibility G2. Basic Syntax and Word Order G3. Present and Past Simple G4. This, That, These, Those G5. Present Continuous G6. Comparatives and Superlatives G7. Intensifiers: too, enough, very, so G8. Articles and determiners: much, many, few, little, some, any G9. Conditional (1st) G10. Conjunctions: in addition, however, also G11. Future: will, going to & present continuous G12. Linkers, sequential: first, second, then, next, after that, finally, before/after G13. Question forms (subject and object)
<b>Reading</b>	R1. Can demonstrate an emerging ability to deal with topics of a less familiar nature in various simple texts, while understanding details and general meaning. R2. Can demonstrate basic recognition of different types of text. R3. Can distinguish fact from opinion at a basic level. R4. Can distinguish main idea from supporting details. R5. Can find, understand and synthesise relevant information in everyday material, such as letters, emails, ecards, brochures and short official documents (e.g. official College letters and documents). R6. Can find specific, predictable information in simple non-linear texts such as advertisements, brochures, information leaflets, menus, reference lists, maps, charts, graphs and timetables. R7. Can identify pronoun references.

*Practitioner Perspective: an analysis of Intensive English Language Program*

	<p>R8. Can make use of clues such as titles, illustrations, paragraphing, punctuation, headings.</p> <p>R9. Can read simple texts up to 600 words with few important words above A2+ Level, as defined by the Curriculum Vocabulary List.</p> <p>R10. Can recognise main points in straightforward news articles on familiar subjects.</p> <p>R11. Can understand rules and regulations, when expressed in simple language.</p> <p>R12. Can understand, analyse, follow and check instructions.</p>
<b>Writing</b>	<p>W1. Can do basic self- and peer-editing using a predetermined checklist.</p> <p>W2. Can make effective use in writing of A2+, A2 and A1 words from the Curriculum Vocabulary List and the Level 2 grammatical structures given above.</p> <p>W3. Can write appropriately structured short descriptive and narrative paragraphs about personal environment, including people, places, past experiences and activities, habits and routines, including the ability to express likes and dislikes.</p> <p>W4. Can write simple essays of at least 150 words in 30 minutes describing familiar topics or expressing a personal opinion.</p> <p>W5. Can write personal messages asking for or clearly conveying simple information of immediate relevance.</p> <p>W6. Can write personal messages describing experiences, feelings, places and events in some detail.</p> <p>W7. Can write short objective descriptions of a picture or a series of pictures, and simple graphs.</p>
<b>Listening</b>	<p>L1. Can demonstrate an ability to understand clear standard speech on familiar topics regularly encountered at home, work, school, leisure, etc.</p> <p>L2. Can follow simple directions and instructions.</p> <p>L3. Can follow videos and audio recordings of about 4-6 minutes.</p> <p>L4. Can identify at a basic level the main point of TV news items reporting events, accidents, etc. where the visual supports the commentary.</p> <p>L5. Can identify main points, details and the gist in short narratives of familiar matters, messages and announcements.</p> <p>L6. Can identify speaker attitudes, feelings, and mood.</p> <p>L7. Can make basic inferences regarding an audio or video recording.</p> <p>L8. Can understand extended monologues and dialogues.</p> <p>L9. Can understand the main points of audio news items (e.g. podcasts) and simpler recorded material about familiar subjects delivered relatively slowly and clearly.</p> <p>L10. Can understand topics on current affairs or of personal interest if the delivery is slow and deliberate.</p>
<b>Speaking</b>	<p>S1. Can ask for repetition or reformulation from time to time when communication breaks down.</p> <p>S2. Can communicate effectively in a range of common or familiar situations, with preparation (e.g. thinking time) and describe events, personal opinions and plans, and narrate a story.</p> <p>S3. Can describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities and personal experiences.</p> <p>S4. Can establish social contact: greetings and farewells; introductions.</p> <p>S5. Can exchange relevant information and suggest a solution to practical problems when asked directly, with some help with formulation and repetition of key points if necessary.</p> <p>S6. Can express how he/she feels in simple terms, likes and dislikes, and express thanks.</p> <p>S7. Can generally follow and respond to changes of topic in formal discussion conducted slowly and clearly and related to familiar subjects.</p> <p>S8. Can give a short, rehearsed presentation (3-5 minutes) (with and without technology) on an everyday topic, briefly giving reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions. Can respond appropriately to a limited number of straightforward follow up questions.</p> <p>S9. Can identify self on the phone and state purpose.</p> <p>S10. Can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations (e.g. role plays) and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary.</p>

	<p>S11. Can manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; can ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations.</p> <p>S12. Can take part in routine formal discussion of familiar subjects in clearly articulated speech, involving the exchange of factual information, receiving instructions or the discussion of solutions to practical problems.</p> <p>S13. Can tell a story or describe something in a simple list of points. Can describe everyday aspects of his/her environment e.g. people, places, field trips, a job or study experience.</p> <p>S14. Can use simple descriptive language to make brief statements about and compare objects and possessions.</p>
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**Table 3: A sample of IELP Level 2 Curriculum**

### 5.2 Input

Through analysing the curriculum, it is noticed that students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of language skills and construct the language’s ability in their daily lives. Students entering this level are considered less than A2+ according to CEFR; thus, the curriculum was designed to ensure that students achieve a CEFR proficiency level of up to A2+ by the end of this course (see Table 4).

EmSAT Score	CEFR	CEFR Descriptors	Level
2000	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him or herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.	<b>Proficient</b>
1625 – 1975	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him or herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	

1250 – 1600	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his or her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	Independent
875 – 1225	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.	
500 – 850	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his or her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.	Basic
300 – 475	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him or herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he or she lives, people he or she knows and things he or she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	

*Table 4: Detailed EmSAT Descriptors in accordance with CEFR*

(UAE Ministry of Education 2019, p.13)

However, it is observed that while teaching this course, the students found the curriculum very challenging and very random since they were learning each skill in isolation from the others. Additionally, the curriculum had a minor link to their daily lives, making it hard for them to apply what they have learned outside of the class. Based on my experience, students learned better when new information is linked to their prior and existing knowledge and they were given a small project to apply what they learned. Learners can comprehend further information when they are allowed to link the new information to their previous knowledge and experiences and when they are allowed to put this knowledge into practice

(Alt 2017). Thus, I recommend integrating the skills into interactive activities that are taking place outside of the classroom to allow the students to put their knowledge into practice.

Furthermore, it seemed like the IELP took into consideration students' differences by allowing them to repeat the level multiple times; however, it did not consider the effect of repetition on students' motivation and well-being (see Figure 1).

### **Intensive English Language Program**

The Intensive English Language Program (IELP) has been developed to address the needs of students who wish to enter the institution but do not meet the English entry requirement for a Bachelor, Higher Diploma or Diploma program. Please refer to the Admission to the institution section for detailed entry requirements.

Students who do not meet the institution English entry requirement must first be enrolled in IELP courses and successfully complete the English requirement to be enrolled into any Bachelor, Higher Diploma or Diploma program.

Students have one year to meet the entry and program requirements after which they either progress into a program or leave the institution.

The academic year of the intensive English language program consists of five cycles, and five levels of English language courses. Students are initially placed into one of the five levels, and have an opportunity to progress to the next level at the end of each cycle. In order to progress to the next level, a student must achieve an overall course grade of 60% or higher. If a student does not meet the criteria for progression at the end of the cycle, the student continues in the same level during the next cycle.

There is no limit to the number of times a student may repeat a given level up to the total duration limit of 5 cycles. Even students who do not progress to a higher level during the year will be afforded a maximum of 5 cycles (1 year) to achieve the English requirements necessary for degree program entry.

Students may complete the intensive English language program at any level by meeting the English Language requirements for program entry (see Academic Policies, English Language Requirements above).

### **Intensive English Language Program**

*Students should be aware of the following:*

- Required courses must have a passing grade in order for a student to progress.
- A student who receives a grade of F must repeat the course.
- There is no limit to the number of times a student may repeat a given level up to the total duration limit of 5 cycles. Even students who do not progress to a higher level during the year will be afforded a maximum of 5 cycles (1 year) to achieve the EmSAT English score (or equivalent) necessary for degree program entry. • For those who have failed to complete the foundation requirements within one full academic year (5 cycles), the following options will be available to students:
  - a. Come back to study in HCT Foundations program for a fee for a maximum one more semester (two consecutive cycles).
  - b. Meet Academic Requirements within one semester (students can attend another institute or do self-study as they prefer).

*Figure 1: IELP Information Excerpted from Institution Catalog*

Students' learning is driven by several factors, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which are considered vital factors for learning and constructing knowledge (Bear et al. 2017). Based on my experience, I noticed that students who repeat the same level more than once tend to lose their motivation and desire to learn. Additionally, they compare themselves to their friends who progressed to other levels, which deeply affected their well-being. Therefore, I recommend providing the students who fail the course with remedial

sessions that focus on the areas of weakness instead of just making them repeat the same curriculum. While analysing the curriculum content, I noticed that the writing, grammar, and vocabulary seem to be linked together; however, the link is minor because the vocabulary is very random and is not selected as per the topics mentioned in writing (see Tables 3 & 5).

*Practitioner Perspective: an analysis of Intensive English Language Program*

Level 2 Vocabulary Quizzes						
#	Quiz 1	Quiz 2	Quiz 3	Quiz 4	Quiz 5	Quiz 6
1	area	advertisement	a few	accident	badly	adventure
2	available	aged	a little	actually	bit	ambulance
3	believe	battery	advanced	almost	borrow	attractive
4	castle	biology	afterwards	already	cheque	belt
5	clearly	brain	against	appointment	colleague	blood
6	concert	bright	anybody	broken	cupboard	detail
7	countryside	chemistry	anyone	carefully	customer	danger
8	cycling	contact	anyway	competition	department	dangerous
9	during	decide	anywhere	cover	discount	difference
10	enough	degree	brilliant	crowd	double	dying
11	fact	electricity	delay	dream	earn	exactly
12	field	even	discuss	entrance	envelope	exist
13	finally	geography	document	ever	Euro	fair
14	guest	guess	easily	fit	gold	flight
15	hold	history	explain	glove	latest	grow up
16	however	improve	extra	goal	licence	herself
17	include	including	find out sth	hill	member	himself
18	interested	instead	foreign	least	model	hurt
19	international	less	form	medicine	pence	mad
20	journey	matter	guide	prefer	per	make-up
21	just	memory	idea	prepare	post office	ourselves
22	lovely	must	normal	probably	pound	passenger
23	luck	negative	notice	roof	real	queen
24	lucky	own	polite	round	receipt	ruler
25	mix	perfect	pupil	runner	rent	several
26	modern	physics	reason	snake	rented	star
27	nearly	programme	rock	strange	sheet	terrible
28	offer	record	sign	temperature	shut	themselves
29	piece	science	speaker	throw	size	towel
30	popular	software	spoken	tyre	stamp	underground
31	quite	staff	tour	weekly	steal	visitor
32	receive	stair	unfortunately	wet	tidy	well known
33	spend	still	variety	whole	upset	wheel
34	unusual	suit	view	wool	upsetting	worrying
35	wild	useful	while	yet	worse/worst	yourself
Level 2 Grammar Content						
Weeks 1 - 2	Weeks 3 - 4	Weeks 5 - 6	Final Assessment			
Present and Past Simple	Conjunctions: in addition, however, also	Conditionals (1st)	Present Continuous			
Basic Syntax and Word Order	Modals: can, could, might, may, ability and possibility	Comparatives and Superlatives	This, That, These, Those			
Question forms (subject and object)	Future forms: will, going to, present continuous	Intensifiers: too, enough, very, so				
	Articles and Determiners: much, many, few, little, some, any	Linkers, sequential: first, second, then, next, after that, finally, before/after				

Table 5: IELP Vocabulary and Grammar Quiz Content



Another observation was that the grammar elements chosen for this course could not all be used in the topics suggested for the writing. As I was teaching this course, I noticed that some of the vocabulary and grammar items were taught for the test purpose as they were not linked to other skills. For example, conditionals (1st) and present continuous were taught through the course; however, students were required to use mostly present simple or past simple in their writing to describe people, place or events, express opinions ...etc. (see Tables 3 & 5). Therefore, I recommend redesigning the curriculum under themes and integrate the skills within those themes. While analysing the curriculum, it was noticeable that there was no mention of the resources used by teachers to achieve the learning outcomes (see Table 3). From my experience, teachers were developing various materials to explain the curriculum elements and share them with other teachers. Teaching strategies and methods greatly impact students' learning as they help scaffold students' knowledge and comprehension of what is being taught (Gao & Wang 2014).

### ***5.3 Process***

IELP students are freshman students who did not achieve the required English EmSAT (or equivalent) score to join a degree program (see Tables 1 & 4). According to students' scores achieved in the English EmSAT test, students are divided into different levels. Thus, students who achieved an EmSAT score ranged in between 650-800 were enrolled on a level 2 remedial course to enhance their English skills and equip them with the required

knowledge and skills needed in degree programs. As stated previously, there was no mention of the resources used by teachers to deliver the curriculum; thus, teachers were developing their materials to teach the students. Although teachers were sharing the materials, the absence of primary resources for curriculum delivery resulted in inconsistency among classes of the same level. Thus, I recommend providing main resources to avoid inconsistency in addition to teachers' self-developed materials.

As a teacher and a member of the IELP level 2 team, I noticed that some teachers preferred to teach to the test and focused on topics that are being tested rather than concentrating on enhancing students' language skills and competencies, which affected students' language proficiency. Teachers' approach in delivering the curriculum to students can impact students' learning experience since it can either help them construct knowledge or memorise information for test purposes (Jensen et al. 2014). As I recommended previously, redesigning the curriculum and decreasing the learning outcomes to a manageable number will help teachers focus more on students' language proficiency rather than focusing on tests. Furthermore, by analysing the curriculum, I noticed that students were only allowed to apply their knowledge and understanding through producing conversations or written samples which are considered in-class activities. Based on my experience, providing students with opportunities to put their knowledge into practice, i.e. project-based language learning approach, helps students to gain a better understanding of language usage in real life. The project-based language learning approach supports students' language

comprehension and promotes critical thinking skills through practical knowledge (Dooly 2013). Therefore, I recommend providing the students with opportunities to practice what they have learned to gain a better understanding of it. By analysing the curriculum, I noticed that the curriculum evaluation process was not mentioned; however, based on my experience as a teacher and IELP member, the curriculum was evaluated through three main mediums. Students' satisfactory survey, teachers' course evaluation survey and end of course meeting were used to assess the curriculum.

#### **5.4 Product**

Regarding assessing students' comprehension and knowledge about the curriculum, it was noticed that summative assessment was the only type of assessment used in this course. Furthermore, it was noticed that vocabulary is assessed weekly, unlike other skills that are tested once during the cycle (see Table 6).

<b>IELP CYCLE 3 ASSESSMENT CALENDAR</b>						<b>Date: 10-Jan</b>
<b>Week</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	
1	Jan 10 First day of IELP Cycle 3 classes	Jan 11	Jan 12	Jan 13	Jan 14 Vocab Quiz 1	
2	Jan 17	Jan 18	Jan 19	Jan 20	Jan 21 Vocab Quiz 2	
3	Jan 24	Jan 25	Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 28 Vocab Quiz 3 + Reading Quiz	
4	Jan 31	Feb 1	Feb 2	Feb 3	Feb 4 Vocab Quiz 4 + Writing Quiz	
5	Feb 7	Feb 8	Feb 9	Feb 10	Feb 11 Vocab Quiz 5 + Listening Quiz	
6	Feb 14	Feb 15	Feb 16	Feb 17	Feb 18 Vocab Quiz 6 + Grammar Quiz	
7	Feb 21	Feb 22 Last day of IELP Cycle 3 classes	Feb 23 FWA: English Pre-Foundations, Level 1 &	Feb 24 FWA: English -	Feb 25	

*Practitioner Perspective: an analysis of Intensive English Language Program*

		EmSAT English exit test	Level 2	Level 3	
Placement	Feb 28	Mar 1	Mar 2	Mar 3	Mar 4

Table 6: Sample of IELP Cycle Assessment Calendar - Cycle 3

Integrating formative assessments to check students' comprehension through the cycle is highly recommended to help students know their comprehension level. While examining the assessment calendar, I found that by the end of the cycle, students take a Faculty Wide Assessment (FWA), which, according to my experience, consists of the following skills vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing and listening (see Table 6). FWA is used to check students' comprehension and determine whether they are eligible to proceed to the next level or not. By analysing the assessment calendar and the curriculum, I noticed that speaking was not tested through the whole cycle and was only used during the class with teachers and peers. Therefore, I believe that achieving the learning outcomes mentioned in the curriculum is not possible (see Tables 3 & 6). I believe it is crucial for students to practice speaking inside and outside the classroom; thus, I recommend adding several activities that require students' interaction with Native speakers to provide the students with the opportunity to use the language in a real-life context. Based on my experience, assessments are not developed or controlled by teachers as all tests are being developed centrally. Also, teachers do not have access to the tests; thus, they cannot evaluate the quality of the assessments and ensure their correlation with the curriculum that has been taught. Assessments are used to assess students' comprehension and knowledge of what has been introduced; thus, teachers are the ones who should be responsible for creating

assessments to ensure their consistency to what has been taught in the class (Sambell 2013). Therefore, I recommend that teachers develop the quizzes and share them among them to ensure the consistency of testing among a level and ensure the relevance of the test to what has been taught.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

To conclude, this paper has one main aim: to analyse and evaluate the efficiency of IELP level 2 curriculum reform in a federal higher education institution in the UAE. To achieve that aim, two objectives were developed to facilitate this. First, the analysis of the IELP curriculum provided the researcher with an insight into the curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation processes. This paper has suggested that in curriculum development, the National Curriculum Model and Tyler's model are not very effective because other stakeholders are not given chances to participate in developing the curriculum. Teachers, students and parents have different perspectives with regards to the curriculum since they are the ones affected by it (Posner & Rudnitsky 1994). Thus, I recommend involving all stakeholders in curriculum evaluation to enhance the curriculum. Additionally, although the curriculum clearly states the learning outcomes and curriculum components, it did not mention the resources used in curriculum delivery, the evaluation process and assessment strategies. From my point of view, the curriculum needs to add more details regarding the teaching and learning resources and assessment strategies, as

well as it is recommended to add the approach used in evaluating the policy and the roles and responsibilities involved in the process.

Regarding the appropriateness of the curriculum, the analysis has shown that the curriculum follows the CEFR standards, which helped in understanding students' levels. The IELP curriculum is designed to ensure that students who do not achieve the required degree program entry score are provided with the help needed to enhance their language and prepare them for degree programs (Dincer et al. 2020). The analysis revealed that the IELP level 2 curriculum has learning outcomes that are considered unachievable, taking into consideration the time designated for each cycle. Although summative assessments were used to provide an insight into students' comprehension level, yet from my point of view, the validity and reliability of the tests are questionable since teachers have no access to evaluate their correlation to what has been taught in the class. Furthermore, I argue that allowing students to repeat the level multiple times can negatively affect students' motivation and well-being. Hence, I recommend providing the repeating students with additional sessions focused on their areas of weakness to address them and provide the necessary help. For future research, I recommend conducting surveys and interviews with students and teachers to expand knowledge and understanding about the IELP curriculum and examine its impact on both teachers' well-being and students' performance and well-being.

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