Striving for Excellence:
An Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges in the
English Language Curricula Reform in the UAE

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تحليل الفرص والتحديات المتعلقة بتعديل مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في
الإمارات العربية المتحدة

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HUDA AL-SHAMMARI

A thesis submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

High school graduates with good English language proficiency are key to the UAE's future, yet many lack the level of English required for entry into university. In response, the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) introduced a new high school curriculum "English Continuous Assessment Rich Task (ECART)" to support teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and then replaced it with another "National English Language Curriculum" by the Ministry of Education (MOE). This study conducts a comparative analysis of the English Continuous Assessment Rich Task (ECART) and the Ministry of Education's (MOE's) High School English Language curricula, examining their philosophies, content, and approaches to design, implementation, and assessment.

The research is designed to explore how both theory and ideological classification can illuminate our understanding of the UAE English curriculum. The research question includes the following three areas of research: an examination of the key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs about the English language curriculum, the key themes that underlying the MOE and ECART curricula, and the main characteristics of the English language curriculum in the UAE before and after the reforms.

An examination of the key issues and underlying themes indicates that both the ECART and MOE curricula were introduced to address challenges facing the acquisition of English for the world stage. The students were for the most part of a similar culture and background. In the MOE curriculum, the issue of preserving Emirati heritage and culture was more important than in the ECART curriculum. The ECART curriculum in contrast stressed the need to learn independent research skills in English while the MOE curriculum strengthened the stress on traditional assessment methods such as final tests. A recommendation would be to seek to attempt once more allowing students to define their own assessments (a hallmark of ECART) within the more highly structured MOE curriculum.

Findings related to Schiro's four framework ideologies indicate that the curricula showed clear differences, from the underlying intent to the learners' final assessment. The MOE uses government-issue textbooks, prescribed assignments and related examinations; the ECART

is more learner-centred with teachers and students designing the learning. The ECART sees English as a world language and students as researchers; the MOE includes more Emirati heritage and culture content, to support the UAE internationally. With respect to stakeholders' beliefs, data concerning teacher's stated beliefs and experiences found more than half the teachers willing to try new methods despite their own learning experiences where their teachers were 'sages on the stage'.

Finally, the study recommends more integrated professional development and the creation of communities of practice for teachers. In addition, it is recommended that further study of students' performance in higher and further education especially focused on their willingness to leave their comfort zone. The use of activity theory as a lense, pointed to rich data in that the ECART involved teachers leaving the familiar teacher-centred and textbook-driven classroom; the MOE it was suggested fits better with their experiences and beliefs. The study demonstrates that the use of activity theory is helpful in comparing and contrasting curricula. The 'activity system dynamics' is especially useful in uncovering innovative approaches, in this case the ECART focus on project work. The success or lack thereof of the implementation of an innovative curriculum and the challenges teachers faced was uncovered with activity theory. It is recommended, therefore, that activity theory be used to help understand the evolution of MOE curriculum as part of a future longitudinal study.

نبذة

يعتبر خريجو المدارس الثانوية ذوي المهارة الجيدة في اللغة الإنجليزية عنصرًا مهمًا في ازدهار مستقبل الإمارات العربية المتحدة، ومع ذلك لا يزال العديد من الطلبة يفتقرون لمستوى اللغة الإنجليزية المطلوب للدخول إلى الجامعة. ولمجابهة هذا التحدي والتغلب عليه، قامت دائرة التعليم والمعرفة في أبوظبي بطرح منهجٍ جديدٍ في المدارس الثانوية يسمى "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه" لدعم تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ثم استبدلته بمنهجٍ آخر لوزارة التربية والتعليم يسمّى "المنهج الوطني للغة الإنجليزية". تُجري هذه الدراسة تحليلًا مقارنًا بين منهج "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه" ومنهج وزارة التربية والتعليم للمدارس الثانوية من خلال معاينة فلسفة كل منهج ومحتواه والنهج المتّبع في إعداده وآلية تطبيقه وتقييمه.

يصب الغرض من هذه الدراسة في اكتشاف الكيفية التي يمكن للنظريات والتصنيف الإيديولوجي فيها إنارة بصيرتنا لفهم منهج اللغة الإنجليزية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. تتضمن أسئلة هذا البحث مجالات الدراسة التالية: دراسة مفاهيم/معتقدات الجهات المعنية الأساسية حول منهج اللغة الإنجليزية والمواضيع الأساسية التي يناقشها منهج "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه" ومنهج وزارة التربية والتعليم والخصائص الرئيسية لمنهج اللغة الإنجليزية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة قبل وبعد التعديل.

تشير الدراسة المتعلقة بالقضايا الأساسية والمواضيع التي تناقشها هذه المناهج إلى أن كلا المنهجين تم طرحهما لمعالجة التحدّيات التي يواجهها الطلبة في اكتساب اللغة الإنجليزية على المستوى العالمي، وكان هؤلاء الطلبة في أغلب الأحيان من ثقافة وأساس متشابهين. كانت قضية الحفاظ على الثقافة والتراث الإماراتي في منهج وزارة التربية والتعليم أكثر أهمية مما كانت عليه في منهج "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه"، حيث أكّد هذا منهج على ضرورة تعلّم مهارات البحث المستقلة في اللغة الإنجليزية بينما أكّد منهج وزارة التربية والتعليم على استخدام طرق التقييم التقليدية مثل الامتحانات النهائية. من المقترح أن يتم السعي مرة أخرى لمحاولة السماح للطلبة باختيار طرق تقييمهم الخاصة في منهج وزارة التربية والتعليم الأكثر تنظيمًا (حيث تعتبر هذه الطريقة سمة مميزة في منهج تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه).

تشير النتائج المتعلقة بالأطر الأربعة الإيديولوجية لشيرو إلى أنّ هنالك اختلافات واضحة في المناهج تتعلق بالأهداف الأساسية الكامنة وراء التقييم النهائي للطلبة، حيث تستخدم وزارة التربية والتعليم كتبًا مدرسية خاصةً بالحكومة وواجبات مدرسية محددة واختباراتٍ من نفس النوع، بينما يركّز منهج "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه" على الطالب حيث يصمم كلّ من الطلبة والمعلمين عملية التعليم. يرى المنهج اللغة الإنجليزية على أنّها لغة عالمية وأن الطلبة هم الباحثون في هذه اللغة، بينما يتضمن منهج وزارة التربية والتعليم محتوىً يُركز على الثقافة والتراث الإماراتي لدعم الإمارات العربية المتحدة على الصعيد الدولي. وفيما يتعلق بمعتقدات صناع القرار؛ أظهرت بيانات معتقدات وتجارب المعلمين أنّ أكثر من نصفهم تعتريهم رغبةٌ عارمة في تجربة طرقٍ جديدة بصرف النظر عن طرقهم وأساليبهم المتبعة والتي أكل الدهر عليها وشرب أو والتي عفى عليها الزمان.

وفي الختام، توصي هذه الدراسة أن يتم تطوير منهجٍ متكاملٍ احترافي مع خلق مجتمعات ممارسة للمعلّمين، بالإضافة إلى أنّه من المستحسن إنشاء دراسات إضافية على أداء الطلبة في درجات التعليم الإضافي والعالي والتركيز على رغبتهم في الخروج عن المألوف. كما أشار استخدام نظرية النشاط كنظرية لرؤية رغبات الطلبة فيها إلى وجود معلوماتٍ وفيرةٍ مستمدةٍ من المعلمين الذين استخدموا منهج "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه" وقاموا بالتخلي عن أساليب التدريس التقليدية وقاعات التدريس التي تعتمد بشكلٍ رئيسي على الكتب المدرسية، بينما كان منهج وزارة التربية والتعليم مناسبًا لمعتقداتهم وتجاربهم بشكلٍ أفضل. تُبيّن الدراسة أنّ استخدام نظرية النشاط تساعد في عملية المقارنة والمقابلة في المناهج، وأنّ "ديناميات نظام النشاط" تساعد بالأخص في الكشف عن نُهج مبتكرة، حيث يركّز منهج "تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية المستمر والغني بمحتواه" في هذه الحالة على عمل الطلبة ضمن مشاريع. علاوةً على ذلك، تم الكشف عن جوانب نجاح تطبيق المنهج المبتكر أو الجوانب التي لم ينجح فيها والتحديات التي واجهت المعلمين عن طريق نظرية النشاط. ولذلك، يُقترح أن يتم استخدام نظرية النشاط في المساعدة على فهم آلية نمو وتطوير منهج وزارة التربية والتعليم ليكون جزءًا من دراسة مستقبلية طويلة الأمد.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second language

EIL: English as an international language

MoE: Ministry of Education

CEPA: Common English Proficiency Assessment

ADEC: Abu Dhabi Education Council

ECART: English Continuous Assessment Rich Tasks

NSM: New School Model

ADEK: Department of Education and Knowledge

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

The underpinning aim of this research is to compare and contrast two English language curricula to enhance our understanding of a key research question and three sub-topics. An overall inspection of the English language curricula used in UAE high schools is further supported by a comparison of the characteristics of the school curricula, which are compared using a number of methods including Schiro's (2013) four framework ideologies. Teachers' beliefs regarding the curriculum reform add to our understanding and are complemented by the use of activity theory as a holistic way to uncover a wide range of features of the ECART and MOE curricula. This is the first study of its kind to apply the activity theory in the investigation of the English language curriculum in the United Arab Emirates' (UAE's) public high schools. This introductory chapter of the study lays out several vital sections such as the background of the study, the overview of the study, and the problem statement, followed by key research questions and objectives. Subsequently, the significance of the study focuses on the importance of conducting the present research. The scope of the study is also highlighted as well as the definition of key terms used in the research. The outline of the study is presented here as it orchestrates the entire research. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief chapter summary.

1.1   Background of the Study

The expansion of the English language in contemporary times has not only been rapid but also global. The number of people speaking English as a foreign language (EAL) has by

far outnumbered native speakers (Flowerdew, 2008; Sung, 2014). It is estimated that there are close to 2 billion people who speak the English language with only 375 million being native speakers (Tamasi & Antieau, 2014; Ishikawa, 2016). The expansion of English can be attributed in part to globalization, which has increased the need for a culturally neutral lingua franca that can be used as a universal means of communication (Baker, 2015). Although originally the spread of English was linked to cultural imperialism propagated by the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US), recent studies have suggested that English has acquired a post-cultural status (Kayman, 2004) in that the language is no longer associated with a particular civilization. It is, therefore, seen as 'a language for all' as evident from the development of different dialects of English around the world (Trudgill & Hannah, 2013).

At present, English is used as the standard of communication by the majority of the members of the business world when interacting with others outside of their own languages (Guo & Beckett, 2007; Guilherme, 2007). Another key trend is the shift towards the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI). In a growing number of countries around the world, English is now used as the EMI for mathematics and science among other disciplines (Dearden, 2014; Dang et al., 2013; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). Researchers are also increasingly adopting English as their lingua franca. This can be attributed to the enormous benefits it offers in terms of promoting a quick and effective exchange of knowledge and dissemination of research advances (Rodrigo, Duenas & Sanz, 2012).

In the last two decades in the UAE, local leaders have been dedicated to charting a new strategic roadmap for the country. This initiative in part seeks to ensure development in other sectors of the economy as a gradual shift from overreliance on oil takes place (El Hag

& El Shazly, 2012). Enhancing the quality of education has, within this context, emerged as one of the ways in which the UAE and other countries that constitute the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) can compete more reliably at the global level (Hvidt, 2013). Although the history of the Arab world is centred on Islam and the Arabic language, the English language has also had a significant impact on the Arabian society. Given that the UAE is a former British protectorate, the local people have had substantial exposure to the English language. This is especially true of those who live in larger cities. The traditional Bedouins were also capable of understanding and speaking the English language to some extent (Baker, 2016).

Although Arabic is the official language in the UAE, English is not only widely spoken but has also become a dominant foreign language in the education curriculum. Across the UAE, the English language has been introduced as a compulsory subject from first level of secondary in all public elementary schools (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2009). While taking into consideration teaching English as a second language as a reliable means through which the English language in the UAE can be advanced, four priorities have been identified. They include: raising the English curriculum quality to an internally recognized level; aligning the curriculum to the cultural, economic and social needs of the country; building and maintaining high-quality learning; and ensuring progressive development that will usher learners to a new level.

Though English is considered a foreign language in the UAE context (Lindsey, 2015; Boyle, 2012; Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2009), there is an emphasis that as part of the education reform the English language should be integrated into other key subjections including science and math. Key emirates such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi have, in particular, been characterized by a new interest in using English as the main language of science, technology

and business. The Ministry of Education in Abu Dhabi in 2011, for example, hired over 500 native speakers of English from countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia to replace departing K-12 Arabic-speaking teachers. This hiring was in response to the adoption of a new curriculum that gives emphasis to the acquisition of language skills. This move was also in line with the overall vision of achieving economic diversification through international interactions (Olarte, 2012; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

For this reason, it is important to have an English curriculum model that addresses a wide range of needs of the students including their future employment and cultural responsiveness. The latter is a particularly important local issue in light of the opposing viewpoint, that imposing English on the country constitutes an injustice to students and the Arabic language. Externally, the dominance of the English language is legitimized on the basis that it fits well into the current business and academic realms. However, those adopting an internal perspective suggest that the continued dominance could lead to the abandonment of the Arabic language and consequently the loss of cultural history (Lindsey, 2012; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). As such, there is a need for a curriculum model that takes into account both external and internal perspectives.

Prior research has, in addition, emphasized the importance of a coordinated range of evaluation, planning and support initiatives geared towards developing a curriculum that meets current economic and social demands (Holsgrove et al., 1998). Several studies (Boyle, 2012; Ibrahim & Al-Mashhadany, 2012; Null, 2011; Casey & Upton, 2008; Walker & Soltis, 2004; Holsgrove et al, 1998; and Poulson, 1998) have investigated curriculum and its ideology, theory and practice. However, only a handful of investigations have focused on the English language curriculum in high schools for public (government) schools in the

UAE. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on how the current UAE English language curriculum enhances student language development. This research, therefore, constitutes an important area of investigation given that language development prepares students for a range of different outcomes such as improvement of their academic performance, achievement of English language proficiency, and ability to effectively interact with the international community.

1.2   Evolution of the English Language as an International Language

This section discusses the evolution of the English Language as an international language. The section is divided into three parts. The first part highlights the evolutionary changes in the English language. The second part introduces the impact of the English language dominance on other languages, while the third part discusses the reasons behind the dominance of the English language.

1.2.1   Evolutionary Changes in the English Language

In order to investigate the effectiveness of the English language curriculum, it is initially important to understand its evolution as an international language and the underlying ideologies. It is well understood that languages undergo an evolutionary process. Language in this context can be perceived as a complex faculty that enables individuals to encode, elaborate and communicate experiences and thoughts via words (Fitch, 2017). According to Peretz and Coltheart (2003), the evolution of languages is consistent with the increasing complexity of cognitive ability as well as social changes. Aspects of language that have evolved over the years include speech and vocal production learning, hierarchical syntax, and semantic and pragmatic components of language. Using vocabulary as an example, it

can be observed that the English Oxford Dictionary launches a revised edition every few years with the addition of some newly adopted words, many of which would not have been understood by many previously. Along the same lines, it can be noted that there are significant differences between the English spoken and written in medieval times and the modern English used in contemporary times. Original texts such as Shakespearean plays have had to be translated into modern English in order to make them more understandable to current generations. As an example, one of the original lines in Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice reads: 'In sooth, I know not why I am so sad. It wearies me; you say it wearies you' (Shakespeare, 2001). This has been translated into modern text as follows: 'To be honest, I don't know why I'm so sad. I'm tired of it and you say you're tired of it too'. Evidently, there are marked differences in the two texts, which depict the language evolution process.

While taking into consideration the international perspective, the English language has been labelled at various points in time as 'the world language' (since the 1920s), 'international English' (since the 1930s) and currently it is labelled as 'global English' (since the mid-1900s). Each of the three labels point to different meanings and the most recent, global English, has periodically been negatively associated with socioeconomic globalization. Some authors have, however, argued that global English is quite distinct from the Anglo-American English, which is embedded in British and American cultures. In other words, global English is not tied to a particular national or cultural base (Jenkins et al., 2011; Sung, 2014). This view also resonates with the emergence of 'new English' languages, in which non-native English speakers appropriate the language in a way that meets their localized needs and interests (Canagarajah, 2005). There have been concerns that in the absence of an effective English language curriculum, learners may use the localized version

of English in inappropriate ways that have an impact on their ability to communicate with individuals from other nationalities. This is the case, since localized varieties of English may not be readily characterized in terms of their structural properties. Socio-linguistic studies emphasize that effective use of language should be based on a frame of reference that has codes which are unambiguous, ordered, stable and internally consistent (James, 2008).

1.2.2 Impact of the English Language Dominance on other Languages

One of the concerns about the global use and spread of the English language in the world pertains to the future of the languages that English replaces. Some scholars (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013) have described English as a 'killer language' in the sense that it tends to lead to the demise of indigenous languages. Such a phenomenon constitutes a serious issue of concern in most societies as language is seen as a symbol of national identity (Morgan, 2007). As a result of the fear that indigenous languages may gradually lose value, some countries have made attempts to reduce the dominance of the English language. Qatar in 2012, for example, made an announcement that institutions of higher education in the country should revert to Arabic as the language of instruction and scientific research. The decision was largely attributed to the observation that the visibility of the Arabic language in research was minimal and that this aspect had negatively impacted on publishing, writing and translation in the Arab world (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

Research identifies three main reasons behind language attrition. The first cause relates to generation-to-generation language transfer. In most cases, parents transfer culture, traditions and values to their next generations. Those who are unable or not willing to pass this on to their children cause their own culture, traditions and language to die (Litz & Smith, 2013). Put differently, lack of effective language transmission is likely to lead to the lack of

full acquisition by the young generations and consequently the eventual cessation of transfer to the future generations. Studies in this area have shown that a significant proportion of young individuals in developing countries who have acquired foreign languages cannot proficiently speak and write in the indigenous/local language (Moeketsi, 2014). The second cause revolves around functions of a language. A language is a mode of communication in society. If it does not serve its purpose anymore then such a language is no longer the key to local communication and will cease to be spoken. In other words, people will gradually forget the language, leading to its demise. The third factor concerns language and the stability of society. Unstable communities are characterized by protracted wars, negative politics risk, and the demise of the local language (Zhang, 2012).

While focusing on English as a global language, it can be argued that the use of English leads to language attrition by triggering the loss of function of the indigenous languages. It should, however, be noted that the advent of English is not the only factor behind indigenous language attrition. Developments in areas such as aviation, tourism and banking make certain languages more popular while the ones that are not frequently used are pushed aside. The society, therefore, has some influence on the extent to which foreign languages such as English achieve dominance over other local languages (Farah & Ridge, 2009).

1.2.3 Reasons behind Dominance of the English Language

In order to develop an effective English language curriculum, it is important to understand the reasons behind the global dominance of the language. Such reasons should then form the basis of ensuring that learners have access to all important aspects of the language. Notably, English is the first language in the world to be accepted and recognized

as lingua franca in the age of the Internet. Over the years, it has become a medium of communication between people who do not share the same mother tongue (Zhang, 2012). Countries, such as Japan, which have previously adopted a monolingual worldview, are now being challenged by the power of English as the default language of international communication (Seargeant & Yan, 2010).

A variety of reasons have been put forward to explain plausible reasons for the use of English as the global lingua franca (ELF). To begin with, the dominance can be linked to the status of English as an intercontinental language that cuts across communication, occupations, knowledge and technology, education, research and mass media, among other disciplines (Litz & Smith, 2013). English, in this case, has the largest vocabulary of any language in the world thus making it suitable for use in most of these disciplines where other languages would be deficient (Lems et al., 2017). Second, people are becoming increasingly aware of English at all levels of life. Around the world, its importance and value are being recognized. In all fields and in every aspect of life, people are eager to learn the English language as its significance is felt similarly everywhere (Madsen, 1987). Third, a large number of educational institutions around the world are adopting the English language as the sole medium of instruction. All learning materials are also being provided in the English language (Litz & Smith, 2013). Fourth, marketers investing beyond their national boundaries are increasingly adopting the English language in order to maximize awareness and sales of their products and services. Fifth, researchers have associated the spread of the language to the global economic and cultural dominance of the US (Zhang, 2012). Lastly, it has been observed that the Internet, which has a vast reserve of data and is accessed by billions of people in all corners of the globe, is over 55 percent in English (Lems et al., 2010). Therefore, individuals who are familiar with English as the common global language are

likely to have greater chances to obtain a wide range of information from the Internet, understand the value of international goods and services, be able to study in a wide range of institutions and ultimately be more employable.

In the UAE, there has been a fear that the Arabic language began to decline due to the rise of foreign languages, especially English. According to Al-Issa & Dahan, (2011), the majority of Emirati children studying in private schools are fast losing their ability in the four skills of Arabic.

1.3   English Language in the GCC

Countries that constitute the GCC are increasingly adopting the English language as a method of instruction in their educational institutions (Jdetawy, 2011; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Such adoption, as mentioned earlier, is consistent with the recognition of English as the global lingua franca. There have been concerns, however, that the dominance of the English language will contribute to eroding of Arab identity (Karam et al., 2017). Notwithstanding these concerns, the existing literature identifies four main obstacles to the effective teaching and learning of the English language in the GCC. Concerns include inferior English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) instruction, linguistic obstacles, curricular obstacles and socio-linguistic obstacles.

With regard to ESL/EFL instruction, this dissertation seeks to follow Campbell et al.'s (2014) lead in moving from traditional EFL measures to adding in references to the post-EFL academic success, future work, and community contexts in which high school students will need to succeed. Some of the countries in the GCC region rely heavily on rote learning in the teaching of English and other foreign languages such as French. The outcome

is that some learners are weak in the production elements of the language, for example in speaking and writing English (Fareh, 2010; Al-Jarf, 2008). From a linguistic perspective, Karam et al. (2017) found that a significant number of teachers are not confident in their ability to teach English. Such a belief in part emanates from the lack of adequate professional development among English teachers and has implications on their ability to ensure learners gain proficiency in all relevant areas of the English language.

At the curricular level, a range of problems continues to hinder the ability to achieve international quality standards in teaching and learning of the English language in the Arab world. One of the concerns is that the curriculum and textbooks used in most countries are inadequate for student needs (Al-Jarf, 2008; Abdo & Breen, 2010). In the face of such inadequacy, teachers are at times left with no option other than to devise their own ways of teaching the language based on their students' needs. This aspect poses a significant problem as teachers often experience difficulties in developing their own instructional materials. Another problem of the English curriculum in the region is that it is not designed to make students 'think, solve and create' (Karam et al., 2017). Put differently, the curriculum lacks hands-on activities that would otherwise help the students to remain motivated and engaged in learning the language. In support of this, Fareh (2010) explains that difficulties in teaching English in the Arab world in part emanate from a curriculum that is teacher-centred and lacks adequate assessment techniques.

With a final focus on socio-linguistic obstacles, it has been shown that some students often express fear in learning the English language (Dakwar, 2005). The fear arises from the view that full competency in the language may not be achieved. Some countries, such as the UAE, have made efforts to overcome this aspect by bringing in native English speakers to

teach English. However, these teachers are often not well versed in the Arabic language and hence have problems in helping students overcome difficulties arising from semantic differences in the Arabic and English languages (Rass, 2011). In addition, some of the native English speakers are not necessarily trained in teaching ESL. Therefore, there is an additional risk that the required level of proficiency may not be achieved.

1.4 English Language Proficiency in the UAE

In the years following the independence of the UAE in 1971, the late UAE Education Minister Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan put in place strategies to promote education standards in the UAE for present as well as future generations. The minister's aim was to ensure that education contributed to the development of a knowledge-based economy and hence an improvement in the living standards of the population (Randeree & Randeree, 2009). Consistent with this goal, the minister facilitated the development of the Ministry of Education (MOE), which endeavoured to create a local educational authority. This government body was charged with managing the curriculum as well as the subjects that were offered in different schools (Ridge et al, 2017). In addition, there were a number of other initiatives including the founding of national universities such as Zayed University and the UAE University, which were designed to exclusively cater for the higher education needs of local Emiratis. The English language was identified as an appropriate medium of instruction alongside Arabic, given its global spread and use in education and business among other areas (Madsen, 1987; Randeree & Randeree, 2009).

Given the predominance of the Arabic language in the UAE and its strong influence on local education systems, the MOE undertook a reform in the curriculum to promote the teaching of the English language at school levels as well as at higher institutions. The

government made significant efforts to popularize the use of English in school as well as in higher education in both public and private schools. The result was that the medium of teaching and instruction in its national universities also was to take place in English. These were the first steps of the MOE in standardizing its education standards to those of international levels (Litz & Smith, 2013; Randeree & Randeree, 2009; Fox 2007). It could be concluded that the quality of education was considered as lagging far behind what the MOE had desired to achieve based on international standards. According to a 2011 UNESCO report, countries in the Arabian Gulf are falling behind international standards (Gitsaki, Robby & Bourini, 2014). This is an indicator that further educational reforms are needed in curriculum and teaching methods. Research also points to key reasons for poor education quality standards including: high rates of repetition, low-quality teaching because of lack of skills in teaching, and a lack of significant knowledge of the learning techniques (Muysken & Nour, 2006). Additional evidence of poor learning outcomes includes the lower number of students passing the Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) and consequently the lower enrolment rates of Emirati students in university study abroad programmes (Gitsaki et al., 2014).

The CEPA was a locally-developed admissions and placement test used by three dominant federal institutions of higher education in the United Arab Emirates: Zayed University, the Higher Colleges of Technology, and UAEU. Following the success of the CEPA test, the Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT) was designed to replace and expand the testing to measure skills independently of curriculum for grades (1-4-6-8-10-12). The EmSAT computer-based benchmarking test and was implemented in 2016/7 covering English, Arabic, mathematics and physics. It was also offered as an alternative to the IELTS

and TOEFL exams, which are usually required to secure a university place (Ridge, Kippels & Samar, 2017).

Despite the existing obstacles, the MOE has continued to implement significant reforms that could enable the improvement of the English curriculum. The underlying rationale has been that enhancing proficiency in English among Emiratis presents them with the best opportunities for academic achievement as well as readiness for further training as future workers (Gallagher, 2011). In addition, the MOE has adopted the view that using English as a medium of instruction for all key subjects at the university level allows Emirati students to improve their language skills and hence their ability to compete more effectively in the present global economy (MOE, 2014).

One of the notable initiatives in the UAE includes the establishment of a pilot educational model meant to help analyse the performance of students and hence the ability to identify areas where proficiency could be improved (Gitsaki et al., 2014). All public schools are also required to participate in the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA). The test scores are used as a basis for determining entry into bachelor programmes in federal institutions. The extent to which the tests are strictly used has, however, been a subject of debate. Gitsaki et al. (2014) for example indicate that while as many as 80 percent of the students lack the basic English proficiency to pass the test they are still admitted to federal tertiary institutions. For students who fail in the CEPA but still manage to graduate from high school, the MOE requires participation in an intensive English language programme for up to five semesters after entering university. The exit requirement is that the student must take an internationally recognised exam such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) in which they must achieve a band of 5.0 after two years

of study of the English foundation programme. Some researchers have noted that the delay in admission caused by the IELTS test tends to diminish the students' level of motivation and might also reduce overall academic achievement (Wiseman & Anderson, 2012).

Individual Emirates have also undertaken measures to improve English language proficiency within their schools. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has established the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC), as an example, which seeks to develop a world-class education system capable of supporting learners to achieve their highest potential (Thorne, 2011; Gallagher, 2011). In relation to English language instruction, ADEC launched the English Continuous Assessment Rich Task (ECART) programme in 2009. The ECART was applicable for students in grades 6 to 12 and sought to achieve changes in curricula and assessment of the English language. Specifically, the programme sought to contribute towards the development of pedagogical approaches for continuous assessment as well as effective assignments, presentations, practical activities and tests (ADEC, 2011a). The extent to which these curricula changes have contributed to enhanced proficiency in the English language in government schools is, however, yet to be comprehensively investigated.

Another key reform by ADEC involved the 2010 implementation of the New School Model (NSM) in public schools. The NSM required learning outcomes to be included in the ECART curriculum framework. The changes were initially implemented in Kindergarten (KG) through to Grade 3 starting in the academic year 2010/11 and continued to be added to other grades incrementally. The stated aim of ADEC's New School Model is to develop students as communicators, thinkers, and problem-solvers so that they will become well-rounded individuals (ADEC 2017a). The ECART and NSM reforms were supported by public-private partnerships (PPP). The PPP schools started their collaborations to

standardize their education provision based on international standards. The focus has mainly revolved around training and mentoring public school teachers. The partnerships have also performed an important role in fostering better educational standards in English learning (Al Ateeqi, 2009).

In September 2017, a Skill Continuum curriculum reform was also being developed in the UAE for implementation in public schools. The reform is based on the Common Core State Standards Initiative Framework. The framework is originally a US educational initiative that outlines a set of expectations of knowledge and skills that students should know in English language, arts and literacy at the end of each grade from Kindergarten (KG) to grade 12. Through this initiative, the ADEC seeks to establish consistent standards of education across the Emirates and hence the adequate preparation of students who graduate from high school to college and later on into the workforce (Pennington, 2015; National Governors Association, 2017). The skill continuum focuses on the four language domains (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) and includes media and technology. Also, the assessments system differs from previous ECART curricula. As of September 2018, the Skill Continuum curriculum was no longer in use as all Abu Dhabi high schools moved to implement a new MOE curriculum. Given the massive investment in implementing new initiatives, research is needed into their effectiveness.

1.5   Problem Statement

English has been a dominant language in the UAE public schools' education curriculum (Boyle, 2012). Students are required to take English starting from Grade 1 and continue throughout high school as English is a mandatory subject needed to graduate (Al-Kharabesh et al., 2009). However, the level of English proficiency of many Emirati students

in government schools is still weak. In 2013, 80% of the Emirati students that graduated from high schools were unable to gain admission to federal colleges and universities because they did not meet the score of 180 or above in the UAE's CEPA tests (Rogier, 2012; Coombe & Davidson, 2014). In 2015-2016, the number of students passing the CEPA test has increased to 30% (Google Books, 2020). Passing the CEPA is a requirement for all students seeking to enter federal tertiary education. The high failure rates are indicative of weakness in the country's ability to delivery second language education. Examining the UAE's English language curriculum and teaching methods is one important way of addressing this weakness. Despite indicators of a potentially ineffective English curriculum, there have been limited efforts to conduct comprehensive investigations of the underlying issues and approaches for improvement in order to help students meet the internationally required standards for English proficiency. This constitutes a gap that the present study seeks to fill by investigating the current English curriculum in the UAE government schools (MOE) compared to the previous one (ECART).

Due to the paucity of second language achievement research, there is no consensus on approaches, strategies and syllabuses. The present trend is, however, leaning towards 'communicative instruction', 'task-based instruction' and 'process-oriented syllabuses'. Yet, there is still ongoing discussion as to whether or not these recent approaches and methods are applicable to any or all instructional contexts.

The research aims to address such issues and recognise probable gaps between theory and practice as well as to explore challenges and formulate recommendations in implementing activity theory in the investigation of the English language curriculum in UAE high public schools. This study will also call for additional research and contribute to

additional knowledge on comparing and contrasting the MOE and ECART curricula that could benefit the education authority in the UAE.

1.6   Main Aim of Study

The main aim of this study is to identify contextual issues that pose obstacles to the effective implementation of the English language and use the activity theory to illuminate obstacles in implementing the English language curricula as well as assisting in formulating recommendations on how the obstacles can be dealt with effectively.

1.7   Research Objectives

This research has a main research objective with three sub-objectives:

To explore how theory and ideological classification facilitates a deeper understanding of the UAE English curriculum including:

a. key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs towards the English language curriculum in the UAE and ongoing changes,

b. key themes underlying the different curricula, and

c. the main characteristics of the English language curriculum in the UAE before and after the reforms (ECART and MOE curricula).

1.8   Research Questions

In exploring the English language curriculum in the national schools of the UAE, the following questions are considered:

i. Which theories facilitate a deeper understanding of the recent reforms in the UAE English curriculum?

ii. Are there other rubrics, such as ideological classifications, that help compare and contrast the ECART and MOE curricula?

iii. What are the   key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs towards the changes of the English language curriculum in the UAE?

iv. What are the main characteristics of the English language curriculum in the UAE before and after the reforms?

1.9   Significance of the Study

In terms of the significance and contributions, the present study has both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical perspective, the use of activity theory helps provide additional support pertaining to the efficacy of the theory in identifying issues that affect or influence the learning process. The choice of activity theory for this study was a result of reviewing a large number of theories and deciding that activity theory's focus on understanding 'who is doing what, how and why' could provide the deepest level of insight. Activity theory provides a conceptual framework that helps in providing a greater level of understanding of inter-relationships between actions, activities, operations and subjects' motives, and aspects of the social context within which the activities or actions are framed (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999; Sharples et al., 2010). In the context of the current study, the theory is instrumental in assessing what key stakeholders think about the existing English curriculum and their recommendations for improvement. In addition, no present study has compared and contrasted the ECART curriculum (in use in Abu Dhabi schools until 2017) with the MOE curriculum (implemented in Sept 2018).

At the practical level, the study is highly significant given that the UAE and other countries in the GCC are keen on using English as a means to ensure their citizens are able to compete with their international counterparts. There has been very little research that has focused on this category of students, yet they are the most affected when they are required to spend additional time in an English foundation programme prior to gaining admission to federal tertiary institutions. The study also helps identify curriculum solutions and problems such as poor teaching skills that are based on rote learning and a curriculum that lacks adequate levels of systematization and progression. There is a need for a curriculum that takes into consideration the student's ability to learn as well as their language interests at each phase of the education system.

1.10   Definition of Terms

i.   **English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and related terms:** When choosing content and techniques for teaching English to students who do not speak English as a native language a number of ideological perspectives and their resulting acronyms are employed. There are two approximate camps of how best to prepare students to participate and use English in their futures. Some researchers such as argue that English should be taught so that non-native speakers are considered second language learners (English as a second language – ESL) or foreign language learners (EFL) or additional language (EAL) especially when students might already speak a local dialect and a national language in school and then study English. In such cases, the aim is to produce learners who can exhibit the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) as close as possible to native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2011). Pronunciation and 'correct' grammar and spelling is considered especially important. On the other hand, some researchers

argue for teaching of English as an international language (EIL) and considering World Englishes in which the aim is to consider English as a common language or lingua franca (ELF). Here the use of ELF describes the use of English as a language of common communication among speakers of other and not similar language. Here English is considered in terms of its functionality and speakers are allowed a wider variety of flexibility with respect to pronunciation and grammatical structures. EFL was chosen to be the common term used in this dissertation.

ii. **Curriculum:** Curriculum means many things to different people depending on their individual is philosophical perspectives (Tanner & Tanner, 1975). From Bobbitt's early work in 1918 to the present day, the concept of 'curriculum' is considered an academic a field of study complete with a research tradition and related theories (Goodlad, 1985). In the field of education, a curriculum can be elucidated as a comprehensive experience of a student during the process of education. It refers to a planned education sequence, which could open a view of the experiences of a student with regards to a school's or educator's instructional goals (Teach Away Inc., 2017). In this dissertation, we will look at curriculum as a specific programme undertaken by students (Vars, 1991) and explore the definition in more detail in Chapter 2.

iii. **Curriculum Systematization:** The continuous improvement model systematizes education in that is cyclical in that seeks to measure learning outcomes across subjects and so implement changes to support improvements (Zambrano, 2019). Measuring the impact of regular changes contributes to an annual improvement of teaching and learning. The use of learning management systems and their ability to capture large,

complex data at the micro and macro levels has aided in supporting curriculum systematization.

iv.   **Learning progression:** The design and implementation of a curriculum that builds forward in applying increasingly sophisticated activities and learning outcomes in each discipline. Bloom's taxonomy of critical thinking has been used extensively in developing student-learning objects that progress from knowledge to more complex thinking skills. Learning progression is a standard in teaching mathematics (Nicole et al., 2018) and is increasingly popular in designing and implementing science-related curriculum (Richard, Seungho, & Asli, 2011; Taskin, & Ozgur, 2019).

v.   **Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA):** The CEPA is a series of locally created standardized tests, which can be utilized for placement and admissions by three federal institutions of higher-level education in the UAE: The Higher Colleges of Technology, Zayed University and UAEU (Gitsaki et al., 2014).

vi.   **Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC):** The acronym ADEC represents the Abu Dhabi Education Council. ADEC was established in 2005. It has taken over the role from the UAE's MOE in terms of becoming the education regulatory body that supervises public schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (Al Alili, 2014). It standardizes reforms in the educational curriculum (ADEC, 2017).

vii.   **English Continuous Assessment Rich Tasks (ECART):** For the implementation of the English subject, a pedagogical framework was organized that was entitled the ECART or the English Continuous Assessment Rich Tasks. The framework aligns with the new indicators and the strands of the New School Model (NSM). The four strands comprise

English language Reading, Writing, Talking and Listening. For all the above strands, there is an indicator as well as content for each. The indicators dictate the particular outcomes of learning which are accomplished with specific content sets. It focuses on collaboration between students and moves away from the traditional textbook methods of teaching that focus on output or standards (ADEC, 2011a; ADEC 2017; Ridge & Farah, 2009).

viii. **New School Model (NSM):** The NSM represents an initiative by the government of Abu Dhabi to improve schools, with a focus on student-centred learning. The model elucidates a student-based approach of learning wherein the students can learn in a technologically-enriched environment with advanced facilities of teaching. The NSM is concerned with pedagogical approaches, the learning environment, and assessment practices which enable catering to different styles of learning for every student (ADEC, 2011a).

ix. **Perception and beliefs:** Perceptions dictate what others feel about an individual or an entity and create a belief based on it. Beliefs are based on what feeling an individual develops and keeps about a person or entity (Zhang, 2012).

x. **Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK)**: previously from 2005-2017 was known as Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC). The Department of Education and Knowledge is responsible for the management, direction, adoption and implementation of educational development strategies and initiatives in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

1.11   Organization of the Study

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 provides a review of literature pertaining to English curricula and the use of activity theory. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology, specifically the data collection, sampling process and data analysis. Chapter 4 provides an analysis and discussion of the interviews conducted by the researcher. The findings are also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, Chapter 5 substantiates the findings based on the reviewed literature and draws conclusions and makes relevant recommendations as well as indicating the limitations of the study.

1.12   Conclusion

This first chapter has provided an introduction to the study, with an overview of the present issues in teaching English in the UAE. This chapter has also examined research into the background of the study. Research questions, objectives, scope, significance and definition of terms have been outlined. Lastly, the organization of the study and summary of the chapter have been presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0   Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of the literature, justifying the use of activity theory as a model of analysis of the key issues concerning the English curriculum. The chapter comprises several sections. The first evaluates on the aspect of globalization and the need for having an enhanced English language education, followed by an evaluation of the development of English and English language instruction. This is followed by an evaluation of the roles of school leaders in sustaining the change and the support required. Then an evaluation of the different theoretical underpinnings of using activity theory is presented. By highlighting the various activities that can be implemented, this section concludes by emphasizing the issues and challenges affecting a successful implementation of activity theory as a lens with which to view the English learning curriculum globally, with a particular focus on the UAE. Lastly, teachers' beliefs and perceptions are discussed, with a focus on how they can impact the curriculum practices in the UAE with respect to the teaching of the English language. Notably, the literature review is adopted in later stages of this research (analysis and discussions) as a foundation for evaluating the potential areas for an enhanced implementation of the English language education in the UAE.

2.1   Globalization and the Need for Enhanced English Language Education

Globalization is defined by Steger (2013) as: "the interconnections of global economic, political, cultural and environmental processes that continually transform present conditions". One of the major consequences of globalization is the increased spread of

languages and in particular the English language, which has come to be associated with modernity, economics, secularism, and material status, and predominates in the fields of business and education (Mouhanna, 2016). Thus, due to the role of globalization, the English language has become more desirable to ministries of education and it is widely accepted in the global linguistic market and has become the dominant language of international communication worldwide (Phillipson, 2008). Nowhere in the Middle East might globalization impact the local more than the United Arab Emirates where the local population is a tiny fraction of the large-international melting pot that is found it is major cities. This dissertation will explore the impact that the increasingly internationalization of the Gulf region has had on the roll out of the English language curriculum in the UAE.

To appreciate the role of globalization and demand for enhanced English language education, it is ideal to examine the economies of the Middle East and GCC countries. According to Gaad and Randeree (2008), Middle Eastern countries are characterized by their limited competition in the global market (Hanh & Daly, 2016). Despite GCC countries being perceived as wealthy nations, local governments acknowledge the need for further improvement (Saxena, 2017). The GCC countries are significantly reliant on oil revenues and tend not to generate income from knowledge-based economic practices (Patrick, 2014). Reliance on a single source of income leaves economies open to instability and the challenges faced by the fall in oil prices. Such nations as the UAE are also concerned with finding ideal employment opportunities for their nationals. One of the approaches being used by the UAE is focusing on creating a sustainable economic base that improves the overall capability of its workforce to compete globally. This is in part undertaken by putting in place measures to ensure that all young citizens are in a position of communicating in English (which is effectively the international business language) as a critical area of the established

strategy (Evans, 2018). The choice of English language curriculum is key to developing an appropriately bilingual workforce of the future.

Education plays a significant role in a country's development. Failure to install a robust education system leads to a loss of economic opportunities for any nation. In the 21st century, therefore, education policymakers appreciate that for the new generation to be equipped with the appropriate skills and competencies for competing globally, educational reforms are necessary (Sushil, et al., 2018). To meet such challenges, schools must be transformed in ways that will enable students to acquire the creative thinking, flexible problem-solving, collaboration, innovative skills and clear guidance on the knowledge in each content area that they will need to be successful in work and life.

In the context of the UAE, the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) was established to offer support to this goal. The ADEC vision was created to support an educational system providing the youth of the UAE with the appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to participate in the UAE economy and the global marketplace (Ibrahim & Al-Mashhadany, 2012).

The immediate changes in infrastructure, tourism, business, healthcare that have been monumental in the UAE's economy have significantly raised concerns about whether or not the young country's population possesses the appropriate skills to be considered employable. The UAE government has, therefore, made efforts to reform the educational system to support the evolution of local and international employment and, as well, to enhance the country's ability to compete in the rapidly emerging global economy. Selecting an appropriate curriculum for English language instruction is a key part of this process.

2.2 The Development of Education and English Language Instruction in the UAE

The formal education system of the UAE is relatively new. It was not until the establishment of the federation in 1971 that the importance of education was recognized. Under the guidance and support of the first president of the UAE, Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the present governmental education system was initiated. The president was concerned about the wellbeing of his people and wanted to use the oil revenue for the benefit of education since he believed this to be the engine of the national development. Zahran, Pettaway and Waller (2016) reported that the UAE government views education as the foundation of human development. Thus, after the federation, the UAE constitution article 23 stated: "Education shall be a fundamental factor in the progress of society. It shall be compulsory in the primary stage and free of charge at all stages, within the Union" (Goodwin, 2006. p. 2).

Being a new nation, having only gained its independence in 1971, the UAE has faced significant challenges in nation-building and economic development. The population has been increasing, and human resources continue to be needed to be able to assist and contribute significantly to the country's development. This was not an easy task especially being that oil production only started in 1961. At that time, there were only 20 schools across the country, with less than 4,000 students. Today there are more than 1,000 schools with more than 3 million students. The rapid growth is a reflection of the government's focus on education to support the acquisition of higher standards of living.

In the early 1970s, the educational structure was created consisting of the four-tier system covering both primary and secondary education. All students enter kindergarten at age 4 to 5 and then spend six years in primary schools and exit primary at age 12. At the end

of primary school, students must decide whether they will continue their education in technical or academic education which also lasts six years, and students graduate their compulsory education at 18 years old (Goodwin, 2006).

While the UAE faces many challenges, education seems to be one of the most crucial tasks and it is believed to be the main tool for human development (Tabari, 2014) especially in this age of globalization and rapid technological and scientific developments. Thus, a well-developed education system is essential in shaping the UAE national capabilities to allow its students to eventually participate in the workforce and contribute to the country's development and allow it to compete in the global market (Randeree, 2007). Consequently, an ambitious programme has been launched to improve the quality of education across the UAE. Underpinning this plan is the idea of continuous improvement and development based on a series of strategic goals (Tabari, 2014).

There have thus been a series of reforms in the UAE education system since its establishment. ADEC was established in 2005 and is considered to be, "the supra-government education body charged with reforming education in the capital city and eponymous emirate of Abu Dhabi" (Gallagher, 2011). His Highness Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan the Minister of Higher Education in UAE enumerated on the weaknesses in the education that required attention in an Al-Ittihad newspaper's press release (Salama, 2005). Thus, shortly after coming into office in 2004, he announced the need to restructure the K-12 school system, explicitly focusing on teaching methods and assessments (Al Nowais, 2004). More significant emphasis was placed on providing training and improving the education system (Goodwin, 2006).

The UAE invested heavily in educational reforms, hoping to bring innovation and change to the education system. The local government also promoted the mandatory teaching of Arabic heritage and Islamic studies to preserve the UAE's cultural and religious heritage (Goodwin, 2006). Despite the reforms, the government school system continues to be regarded as less successful than the private alternatives in the UAE. Despite substantial efforts, the education system has attracted a high level of criticism especially in relation to English language education (Thorne, 2011). Many UAE nationals have chosen to send their children to private schools modelled on the Western education system that are believed to offer better education services and qualifications. As a result, the UAE's MOE believed there was a need for further educational reforms to support the changing needs of the modern economy. The aim is for Emiratis to have a better quality of education in order to meet the changing demands of the economy in terms of being the knowledge-based economy and not be dependent on being an oil-dependent economy (Gitsaki et al., 2014).

2.2.1 Issues and Challenges of the English Language in UAE Schools

In the UAE, the official language is Arabic, despite English being often used as the standard language of communication. Dorsey (2018) argues that English is the language used to communicate across nationalities (intra-nationally) in almost every aspect of daily life in the UAE. Emiratis make up a minority population in their own country and local people are often called upon to use English as a lingua franca (ELF) in their daily lives (Randall & Samimi, 2010). Fussell (2011) gives many examples of how English used in the Gulf region is acquiring its own local flavour and distinctive features. Poole (2006) in a study of English use in Oman points to the impact of Indian English on a neighbouring country.

A study by Choi and Lee (2008) that evaluated the current trends and issues in the English language education in Asia, listed many of the common issues and challenges that are affecting English in countries using English as a second language. They argued that the English language education in Asian countries is an outcome of factors such as political environment, social and individual needs, and resources. The findings from the survey hypothesized that the issues to be resolved to guarantee success in English learning in these countries include: the amount of time allotted for English language education, use of English as the medium of instruction, centralization or decentralization, and stakeholders' perceptions.

Specific research in the UAE by Al Alali (2014) noted that the country is poor in English language teaching. Findings indicate that there is a large achievement gap between Emirati students who are attend private schools and those attending public schools (Gobert, 2018). This gap is so large that even a year of foundation English is sometimes not enough to help students achieve the necessary scores to enter university. In the local schools, there is a lack of flexibility in trying new teaching techniques and also in adapting classroom instruction to English to prepare students to compete at a global level (Zhang, 2012). Hence, to understand these issues, it is important to focus on the aspects of the curriculum and the stakeholders' perceptions with respect to English language education in public schools.

In the context of the UAE, the issues affecting the education system include: the goals and mission in the curricula being unclear, inflexible curricula and programmes, and teaching and learning methods which are not appropriately based on the learner's needs (Mograby, 1999). Thus, the education system is witnessing constant reforms. The most recent reforms were supported by the Ministry of Education in their publication 'Vision

2020' (Al Taneiji, 2006). Phalangchok and Nesrin (2018) review the effectiveness of using English as a language of instruction in the UAE at university level and found that all students and most instructors in their study advocated for the use of English as a medium of instruction.

2.2.2 Vision 2020

Apart from the changes that have characterized the UAE in terms of educational development, the government is continuously raising awareness on the policies and infrastructure updates. This is done to ensure that qualified graduates are willing to aid national development. In 2000, the MOE created the 'Vision 2020' policy document that aimed at outlining an educational development strategy for aiding further development in the education sector up to the year 2020 in the UAE (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006). The authors noted that the vision appreciates the fact that there is a consistent improvement in the education system so as to reflect the constant changes in the society. This vision defined the future steps that need to be adopted for the evaluation.

The pillars which form the basis for decision-making include Islamic heritage, national heritage of the UAE, the country's constitution, and the country's developmental priorities at different times. Additionally, to support these principles, the UAE has developed external and internal environmental factors which are consistently being assessed to guide in making ideal decisions on the need for extended educational or developmental changes. For instance, assessment of internal factors includes: social needs, economic needs, strategic needs, and external factors such as the social and demographic factors globally. Others include economic factors, UAE foreign policy and relations, and the UAE's future position in education. These ambitions are all targeted at enhancing the desire for particular skills that

should be acquired by learners prior to joining the workforce. The relevance of these underlying concepts to the current study is their capacity of orienting curriculum development guidelines that aid the development of new textbooks and teaching materials so as to meet evolving educational needs (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006; Al-Taneiji, 2006.).

'Vision 2020' was designed to improve the education system in terms of introducing advanced education techniques, improving existing innovative skills while focusing on self-learning for students (Al Taneiji, 2006). The focus of the vision is to enhance the mathematics, science, and importantly for this study, the English curricula. Thus, in 2003-4, an improved curriculum in mathematics and integrated sciences was introduced in the first grade for all government schools.

ADEC, in partnership with Zayed University, established an English language pilot programme for elementary school students to enhance their English language skills (Library of Congress-Federal Research Division, 2007). The vision of the programme is to build an oasis for the pursuit of knowledge and discovery, strongly connected to the global society and economy, and yet deeply rooted in the culture and heritage of the Emirates. ADEC aims to advance the education system to a student-centric one through the application of world-class teaching of science and the latest technology which encourages learner to develop creativity, analytical thinking and innovation.

It has been documented that a number of different initiatives have been put in place to improve the education system of the UAE. Despite these efforts, in 2007 a policy speech by the vice president and president of the UAE criticised the education system as weak, with teaching methods and curricula being out of date, and suggested that ministers of education

and higher education should work to find new and comprehensive innovative solutions (Library of Congress-Federal Research Division, 2007).

Evaluating the effectiveness of Vision 2020's capacity to improve on the teaching methods, teacher professional development and the creation of standardized curricula is of the upmost importance, given the failure of previous reforms to meet the desired impact. A study that compares and contrasts different initiatives can contribute to our understanding of the effectiveness of reforms.

2.2.3   The Role of ADEK (Department of Education and Knowledge)

ADEK's aim is to put students first; develop a modern, innovative and world-class system; and help develop the citizens that our future society and economy will need. This section sets out many of the initiatives and programmes involved in meeting such an ambitious goal. It also describes the various types of institutions and curricula provided (ADEK, 2017a).
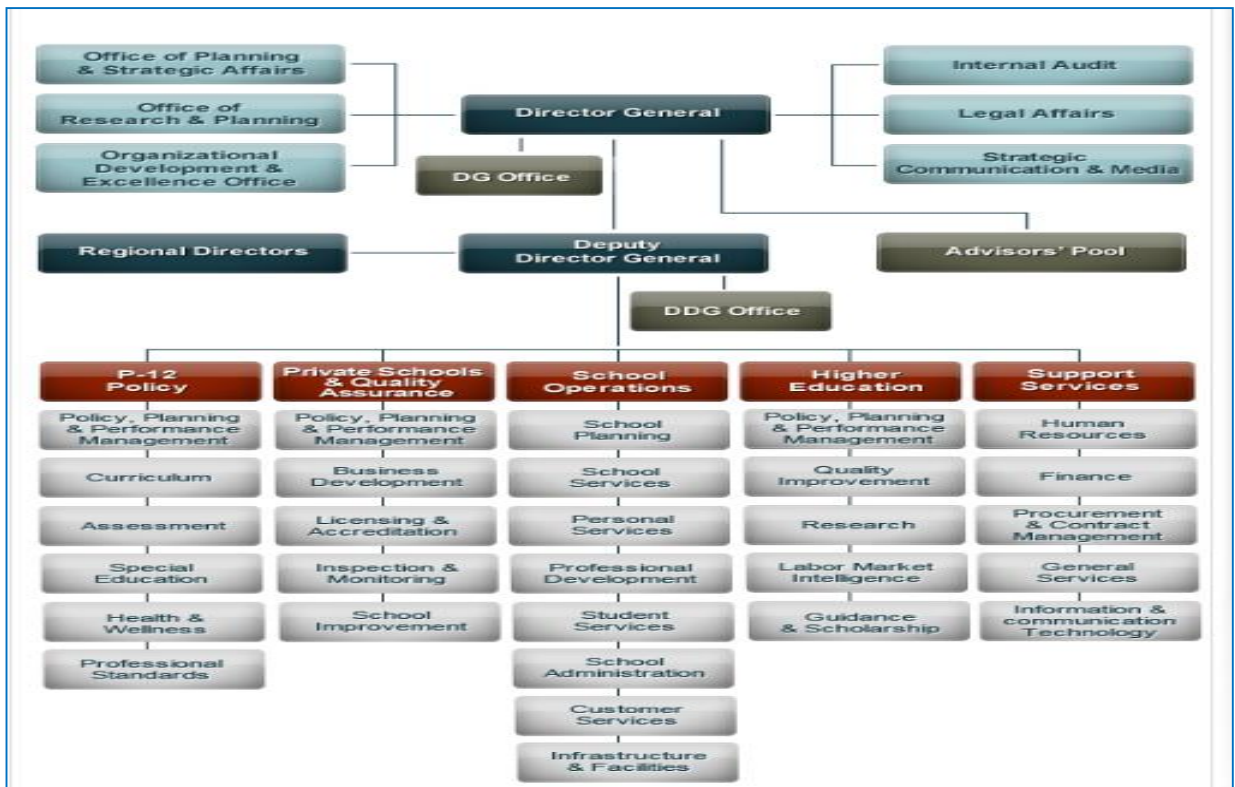
Figure 2.1: Organizational Chart- Source: ADEK (2017, p. 1)

The three main types of education in Abu Dhabi are public schools, private schools and higher education as seen in figure (2.1). A number of key initiatives are also implemented, across a diverse range of areas. ADEK's projects and programmes offer activities beyond the normal curriculum which include sports, summer schools, and parent services. Alongside the ADEK public school system, there are also private schools throughout Abu Dhabi. Higher education is a major growth area in the Emirate. ADEK have 18 higher educational institutions, offering a wide variety of courses and facilities (ADEK, 2017b). ADEK is responsible for the management, direction, adoption and implementation of educational development strategies and initiatives in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

2.2.4   The English Reform Initiative

English reform, referred to in this dissertation, is a process of any planned changes in a curriculum of education in order to meet the global standards. In 1979, the National Curriculum Project was established by the MOE, which aimed to create the UAE Curriculum. The first UAE curriculum was implemented in 1985 but ever since it has been continuously evolving. Since the establishment of ADEC in 2005, whose main aim is to set standards for public schools in Abu Dhabi schools, the English Language curriculum has gone through major reforms (Gallagher, 2011). This thesis will explore two of these reforms, one of which was the introduction of the ECART curriculum, and the next was the new MOE curriculum introduced in September 2018.

The first reform entitled ECART (an acronym which stands for English Continuous Assessment Rich Task, was organized as a pedagogical framework that moves away from the traditional textbook-driven methods of teaching and learning to an inquiry-based approach to foreign language learning. Thorne (2011) stated that the ECART is an innovative curriculum introduced by ADEC in 2009 and oriented on outcomes, or standards, moving from textbooks-driven methods of teaching and learning to an inquiry-oriented approach to foreign language learning. According to Troudi and Alwan (2010), the ECART, which is based on an Australian curriculum, is identified as a programme that is used by teachers in implementing the ongoing and alternative assessments to assess and track Emirate students' language learning progress. It was considered one of the crucial reform initiatives undertaken by ADEC and was applied to grades 6-12. ADEC described the ECART as "an inquiry-based learning process that students and teachers use in collaboration to engage in the study of English to address Abu Dhabi Standards outcomes" (Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2011,

p. 1). Thus, the main purpose of ECART is to integrate continuous assessment into the planning and teaching process and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding against set criteria.

In September 2018, a new curriculum reform entitled Skill Continuum, based on the American Common Core state standards initiative, was implemented by the MOE in Abu Dhabi schools. This new curriculum aims to allow students to engage in practical life cases and encourage them to become lifelong learners. In comparing and contrasting the two curricula, this dissertation will explore underlying key issues related to teaching English in the UAE.

The ADEC vision is used in supporting an educational system that provides the youth of the UAE with the appropriate knowledge and skills, by ensuring that all young citizens are in the position of communicating in English. ADEC's aim with utilizing such consistent standards of education across their different schools is to ensure that the students who graduate from high school can be prepared to enter college and the workforce in the future (National Governors Association (NGA) Center, 2017). The reform that introduced the Skills Continuum curriculum can be contrasted with the other frameworks established in ADEC as the curriculum focuses on the addition of the subject 'media and technology', as well as rigorous assessment to ensure that the model encourages every student from kindergarten to Grade 12 to be literate and achieve basic English competency levels (Common Core Standards Initiative, National Association for the Education of Young Children. NAEYC, 2017). As of 2018, the Skills Continuum curriculum was replaced and the MOE National English Language curriculum was implemented in all Abu Dhabi high

schools. In order to understand why, we will now examine the ideas and theories underpinning curriculum and its design.

2.3   Curriculum

Curriculum can be defined as what is taught in schools, or a specific course or programme undertaken by students (Vars, 1991). Dubin and Olshtain (1986) described a curriculum as: "containing a broad description of the general goals by indicating an overall educational-cultural philosophy which applies across a number of subjects together with a theoretical orientation to language and language learning. …a curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well." It can be speculated from the above description that philosophical and theoretical issues are centre to curriculum development. According to Cullinan (2016), curriculum is the umbrella that encompasses the goals of an educational institution, which needs programmes' evaluation, clearly indicating a change in ideology and reflects critical aspects.

In the context of the UAE, schools traditionally provided textbooks and teachers guided their students through classwork, as Suliman (2000:51) describes: "the curriculum is traditional and textbook-based." However, at present, the educational system requires teachers to be knowledgeable and skilled not only to fulfil their students' educational needs but also to help them understand their capabilities and talents (Vars, 1991). The target of developing a well-informed curriculum is to ensure that teachers know what they need to teach their students. Since the establishment of ADEC, there is a new direction in curriculum, a move away from the dependence on the textbook as the sole transmitter of curriculum content. The Skills Continuum curriculum was adopted as part of a movement to place more

emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving skills rather than memorization (Farah & Ridge, 2009).

When a curriculum is developed, the vision of those involved in its creation takes into consideration social factors, economic factors, religious factors and other factors that influence education in a particular country. In their study on current trends and issues in language teaching, Choi and Lee (2008) noted that most of the curricula in Middle Eastern countries are characterized by being focused on such issues as: class hours, following a standard national curriculum, the use of textbooks, lecture as the medium of instruction, and little use of modern technology. When a curriculum is developed, the vision of those involved in its creation takes into consideration social factors, economic factors, religious factors and other factors that influence education in a particular country. Thus, it is important that textbook writers and syllabus developers keep the curriculum goals in mind. Teachers also have to be aware of the curriculum goals that are the objectives of the educational system. Content as well as the context of the learning environment is key (Gaad, Arif & Scott, 2006). Imported textbooks or curriculum have always been adapted to the local conditions in the UAE.

In the UAE, the MOE dictates the curriculum according to Islamic beliefs. Arabic heritage and Islamic teaching are compulsory courses until graduation. Any topics that are related to sexuality have been removed. However, topics that are related to health education and road safety have been added as these are areas the government is campaigning to improve (Goodwin, 2006). Still, the reformed curriculum is considered to be missing a holistic approach to healthy living by not including health and sports (Goodwin, 2006).

English is a vital subject that cannot be overlooked even in an Arabic-speaking nation. The majority of essential content in almost all professions is stored in English. English has gained a dominant status over all other international languages (Phan, 2008). This can be explained by the fact that English-speaking nations have dominated major global fields, being more powerful politically and economically compared to other nations that do not use English. Learning English in secondary school is meant to help empower the young people of the UAE to attain specific standards, such as allowing them to make ready use of vital materials written in English (Muysken & Nour, 2006). English, unlike Arabic, is perceived to have high economic value (Phan, 2008). UAE plays host to a large number of international organizations that significantly contribute to the country's economic development. In addition, UAE is a desirable tourist destination that receives a large number of English-speaking tourists each year (UAE Country Profile, 2012). Therefore, empowering young people to communicate effectively in English places them in a significant strategic position where they can access any form of employment within and outside the UAE. A strong and successful English language curriculum is part of this process.

As a traditional best practice, evaluation of curriculum has been limited to a focus on the knowledge delivery (Lonigan et al., 2011; Brandon & All, 2010). However, recent studies such as Müller-Christ et al. (2014) and McLean and Gibbs (2010) have focused on demonstrating the issue of the curriculum, including seeing the implementation of the study plan, as being a holistic practice. Studies that examine the curriculum, therefore, need to factor in matters of content and cultural considerations and seeking an integration of students into their future community of practice. This is commonly termed as an activity theory (Liaw et al., 2010; Baran & Cagiltay, 2010). Therefore, this study has selected activity theory as a lens through which to examine the curriculum, and it delivers the potential of undertaking

an in-depth analysis. Activity theory allows for the investigation of the UAE government school English Language Curriculum from several distinct angles. In addition, Schiro's (2013) four framework ideologies are used to examine which ideology the curriculum falls under. Each of his four suggested curriculum ideologies, Scholar-Academic, Social Efficiency, Learner-Centred and Social Reconstruction, has a belief system about the curriculum's intent, content, design, implementation, assessment and evaluation.

2.3.1 Curriculum Innovation in Different Contexts

Across the globe, governments are interested in curriculum innovation and most educational systems periodically review their performance and make recommendations for change. Recent calls are in response to an evolution of modern economies to knowledge societies and the need to support students in obtaining 21st-century skills. In addition and sometimes in contradiction, technology-enhanced education and learning management systems allow for the collection of data to support large-scale and detailed evaluation of student competencies so as to better analyse a variety of variables including: students, teachers, schools, districts and even national performance. Macdonald (2003) argues that there are essentially three difference ways to consider such reforms; a 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' approach or some type of combination of the two 'a partnership'. A focus on improving schools, teaching and student outcomes has been the cited reason for reforms in many educational systems (Kahle, 2007). Our understanding of the ECART and MOE curriculum would be enhanced by using such a rubric to enable deeper insight into the two curricula.

The Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) has, for example, initiated just such a series of reforms, often labeled as Learning To Learn' (LTL), starting in 2000 (Mok, 2009). The proposed changes focused on expanding the student experience, project-based learning

and it stressed formative assessments and student collaboration (Carless, 2010). So as best to measure progress, the TSA (Territory-wide System Assessment) was implemented in 2004 (Cheng, 2009). Assessment was designed to be ongoing and systematic and measure primary and secondary student performance (Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2008). In a move to make the results of schooling more measurable, the DSE (Diploma of Secondary Education) was initiated in 2012 to provide a large-scale public exam the results used to evaluate university preparedness (Cheung, 2015). Some School-Based Assessments (SBA) are include in the DSE results (Deng, 2009). Research indicates that although reforms have been in place for almost two decades many of the more traditional aspects of schooling remain including teacher-centred classrooms, lack of practice in critical thinking and summative assessments (Chan & Yuen, 2014; Leung et al. 2014; Walker, 2004; Kan & Vickers, 2002). Carless (1997) discusses why Hong Kong's target-oriented curriculum initiative failed, arguing that this was because teachers did not implement reforms initiated by centralized-government agencies.

In Australia, the 2007 federal elections were won by a Labor government promising to introduce a national curriculum (Rudd & Smith, 2007; National Curriculum Board, 2008). The election win resulted in the creation of the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Agency (ACARA). ACARA began work on the national curriculum whilst creating the My School website and the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (ACARA, 2011). The new Australian national curriculum was released in 2011 with the stated aim to improving the quality of equitable teaching and learning (Dowden, 2007; Connor, 2011). In 2018, the Council of Australian Governments released the National School Reform Agreement developed jointly by the Australian Government and state and territory governments with the consultation of educators. Several studies have investigated

curriculum implementation (Cowie et al., 2009; Cronin-Jones, 1991; Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; DeMonte, 2013; Fullan & Pomfret, 1977; Hipkins et al., 2011). Common concerns include: improving student as well as community engagement, understanding the key competencies within the curriculum, embedding aspects of implementation or processes into school routines, learning together to build capacity and improve practice, strengthening achievement through evidence-based practice, assessing curriculum resources, leadership, and critical and constructive use of data. The proponents of the new curriculum sought to enhance the Australian national evidence-base by implementing a national unique student identifier. Many studies have sought to address the changes in assessment created by the implementation of the integrated curriculum (Godinho & Abbott, 2011).

In the United States, the Clinton administration promoted the No Child Left Behind Act, indicating national performance standards for science, English language and arts in an effort to improve national performance in these areas in 2001 (Marsh, 2009). As in the case of Hong Kong and Australia, large-scale testing was formalised and in the USA, individual states were expected to test their students (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

Fullan (2007) argues that governments: "can push accountability, provide incentives (pressures and supports), and/or foster capacity building" (p. 236). When governments applied only accountability and incentives short-term, however, superficial results are achieved. There is a need to recognize the fundamental importance of professional development and support for teachers as part of a whole school developmental approach that increasingly lifts teacher knowledge and skills in a gradual and collaborative way (Fullan, 2007). In the USA, success and sustainability are achieved when capacity building is included in the change process (Corcoran, McVay & Riordan, 2003; Spillane 2014). Teacher

expertise is a key component of student learning outcomes in the era of No Child Left Behand. Darling-Hammond and Loewenberg (1997) identified teacher qualifications as the major influence on student achievement. Darling-Hammond and Loewenberg (1997) results that found students in American classrooms with ineffective teachers for three years in a row, scored an average of 50 percentile points lower on international tests.

The UK has implemented similar nation-wide reforms. The Every Child Matters reform was introduced in England in 2005. Following the introduction of a national curriculum in the 1990s (Hancock & Eyres, 2004). Due to concerns about literacy and mathematics levels in primary schools in the UK compared to other countries, the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy were introduced. Reports from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) mentioned criticism of teachers and their teaching approaches. New curricula were based on international benchmarks and stated the specified targets to be met. In such reforms, there has been a concern that teachers' voices have been essentially removed (Earl et Al., 2000).

Spain's series of education reforms can be understood in the context of its political development during second half of the 20th century (Coll & Martin, 2014). Until 1970, Spain was ruled by a political dictatorship. Over the years, a series of laws was enacted on education including the initial Ley General de Educación (General Education Law) in 1970. Spanish reforms have succeeded one after another tied to the present political party in power (Partido Socialista Obrero Español known by the acronym, PSOE, a social democratic party, or the Partido Popular also known as PP, which is a conservative party (Sun & Sun, 2015). Thus in Spain, reforming education has become a political football more than a goal in and of itself (Viñao, 2015). During the 1980s and 1990s, one set of reforms was often overturned

by the next political party in power and the situation became more complex as many regions in Spain became Autonomous Communities (Teasly, 2004).

In 1986, Spain was made a full member of the European Economic Community (Teasly, 2004). The Organic Educational Law or LOE enacted by the PSOE in 2006 encouraged Spanish teachers to aim for many of the competencies recommended by the EU (MEC, 2006). The eight key competences that were specifically set out in the common European framework are: (1) native language communication, (2) at least one additional language, (3) mathematics, (4) digital competence, (5) metacognition (how to learn), (6) social and civil issues, (7) business skills such as enterprise and entrepreneurship, and (8) understanding culture (OJEU 2006). While these aims were laudable there were also integrated in the Spanish education system in a top down manner. A new law, LOMCE in Spanish, was introduced in 2013 with the aim of providing a focus on addressing inequalities and guaranteeing an equality of opportunities and in conjunction with an enriched National Strategic Plan on Infancy and Adolescence (II PENA in Spanish; 2013-2016), a focus on reducing school failure and absenteeism is also key.

Reform in Spain has also been called in response to the scores on international tests, which have become more prevalent in European Countries. Yanez and Moreno, (2013) call for innovation in the Spanish educational system due to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test results. In fact, overall, Spain ranks among the top 13 of almost 80 countries but that did not stop the headlines when in 2018, Spain has received its lowest scores in science of 15-year-old students (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD). Reform initiatives that come from the European Union, however, this type of top-down reform, tends to harder to implement. Researchers also pointed to the

potential problem of long-serving models of teaching mathematics and science for example can clash with new pedagogical developments and models of continual assessment (Leaton, Sandra & Mehisto, 2018). Thus in Spain, educators have become conditioned to swings in curriculum that either reflect the government of the day or a ruling in Brussels but not that rarely seem to be focused on improving the reality of schools and classrooms (Valle & Manso, 2013).

One of the strategies used for curriculum implementation is the top-down approach, also referred to as the "teacher-proof curriculum" (Macdonald, 2003). The aim of this strategy is to minimise teachers' influence over curriculum design and delivery. The top-down approach to curriculum implementation is in line with the "Curriculum as Product" view, where by the objectives, content and assessment instruments are all assembled by experts who are remote from the schools where the curriculum is delivered (Fullan, 1972; Tsafos, 2013). The challenge or difficulty posed by this is that the designed curriculum, in most cases, is not sensitive to the realities of the classroom. If the teachers are not involved in the process of curriculum development, it is usually difficult for them to implement the curriculum effectively. Commenting on this, Fullan (1991) argues that even though a reformed curriculum may be designed and developed by the very top of the cadre of a nation's educational administration and highly educated elite, it is uncertain that any curriculum change can totally control or prescribe how the teachers acts in their own classroom. In other words, it is highly likely that teachers will avoid the prescribed curriculum and do what they consider effective so as to aid their students learn. Strictly rationalised approach can put pressure on teachers and reduce their individual autonomy and creativity while teaching (Marsh, 2009). Ryder, Banner and Homer (2014) argued for flexibility with reforms and science curriculum change to allow teachers to adapt the new

requirements to their local contexts. Luk and Chan (2013) in a small-scale study of curriculum reform in Hong Kog point to the importance of support for bottom-up implementation with respect to reform.

2.4. Curriculum Ideologies

Schiro (2008) proposes that *ideology* is the knowledge that academic disciplines contain. The curriculum philosophies (Scholar-Academic, Social Efficiency, Learner-Centred, and Social Reconstruction), differ by how they advocate the purpose of schooling. Moreover, each provides a different method of achieving the particular target. The underlying premise is the type of knowledge that should be taught in schools, what constitutes a learning institution, how teachers should instruct their students, and the design and the assessment techniques applied. Our understanding of the ECART and MOE curriculum would be enhanced by using such a rubric to enable deeper insight into the two curricula.

2.4.1 Scholar-Academic Ideology

The scholar-academic ideology is derived from the 'perennialism curriculum philosophy'. The scholars who utilize this practice believe that acquiring an understanding of academic knowledge is the fundamental process of schooling. Fundi (2016) developed the idea that the theory entails the understanding of the content, an applied conceptual framework and, more so. the aspect of the approach of the learner's thinking. Moreover, the scholar-academic ideology stipulates that the primary purpose of education is to help learners obtain the accumulated knowledge of human society. Similarly, Schiro (2012) argued that scholars believe that culture has accumulated valuable knowledge which, in turn, motivates

the application of this framework. The focus of this ideology is underlined by the primary aim of ensuring children become good and productive citizens.

The intent of schools that support the scholar-academic ideology is to support academic disciplines by transmitting their significance to the students. Schiro (2012) claimed that there is a transformation of the students as the initial receiver of knowledge but, eventually and with academic success, there will be a change in the hierarchy from the bottom to the top. Subbing (2013) adds that those who believe in scholar-academics utilize three main teaching methods to convey the knowledge: didactic discourse, Socratic discussions, and supervised practice. Didactic discourse is an approach that uses pictures and demonstrations. The Socratic discussions occur when teachers include in their practice regular questions so as to encourage children to think deeply about a topic, while the supervised practice entails children learning 'how to' (Subbing, 2013). The teaching methods are examples of the scholar-academic belief that giving instruction is more than imparting content but is also understanding that learners possess diverse interests, abilities, and backgrounds.

This ideology has a strong emphasis on assessment. Its proponents argue that learning should shape the students to become academicians within their specific disciplines. Hence, testing and assessment results are fundamental to the ideology. The evaluation of the learners is considered important in ranking them (Subbing 2013). Assessment does not focus on separating the learners based on what they know, however, but on who knows the content best.

The scholar-academic ideology is one that is traditionally associated with the UAE. Imparting content has been the standard classroom goal since the initial schools opened.

More recently, however, reforms have attempted to build on this model and explore other goals for schooling.

2.4.2 Social Efficiency Ideology

Social efficiency ideology promotes the primary function of schooling as adequately meeting the needs of the society. Such goals are achieved by training children to function as future adults and contributing members of the community (Fundi, 2016). Schools that are underpinned by the social efficiency ideology are places where students are helped to develop skills that can be used to fulfil social needs. Kondakçı (2014) argues that the ideology is based on the teachers and educators controlling every activity in the classroom. For instance, educators decide what students are supposed to learn, what assignments will be done, and the books that will be utilized. Furthermore, educators have the responsibility of finding the most appropriate approach to passing the acquired knowledge to the learner efficiently with an understanding of how to contribute to their society in the future.

The philosophy adopts behaviourism as its central theory. Therefore, Schiro (2012) argued that to obtain the observable skills required by the society, the educators must first determine the needs of the community before creating a curriculum. Several aspects underline social efficiency ideology. Foremost, Schiro (2012) was clear that classroom learning results in a change of the students' behaviour as entailed in the sequencing of learning experiences. Lastly, Schiro (2012) states that there is the accountability to the client which is the students for whom the teachers and educators work.

The intention of the social efficiency ideology is to prepare the students for a productive adult life. The practice aims to form a future society that is superior to the existing

one while maintaining the continuity of its functionality. The ideology is designed to make the education curriculum more practical compared to other ideologies (Kondakçı, 2014). Unlike the scholar-academics ideology, the social efficiency ideology places less emphasis on the individual's needs. Instead, it focuses on the capability of each child to become a productive member of the society.

The social efficiency ideology incorporates two main aspects in its assessment, accountability and standards. The assessments are set to be objective and ensure common criteria are reinforced (Mnguni, 2012). As the curriculum is practically oriented, student test results are evaluated as either successes or failures. According to Schiro (2013), the primary purpose of the evaluation of the social efficiency ideology is to compare the learner's performance with an external standard; there is a comparison of the student's achievements against the set objectives. The government of the UAE has long been interested in the positive role of its citizens. Sheikh Zayed, the father of the nation, famously said: "The nation expects so much from us, and the people are looking forward to the results of our work. We are all partners in shouldering that responsibility" (Nahyan, 1986).

2.4.3 Learner-Centred Ideology

Learner-centred ideology is based on 'progressivism education', which puts the needs of the learners as a priority. Schiro (2008) referred to learner-centred ideology as the ideology that considers the needs of learners as paramount. The learner-centred classroom is one in which the teacher role is minimal or in which the teacher finds ways of motivating students to become actively engaged in their own learning. The belief of this ideology is that schools should be an enjoyable place where students develop naturally. Marulcu and Akbiyik (2014) clarified that the argument that people should be allowed to grow unimpeded is based

on the belief that individuals contain their own capabilities for growth and more importantly they are the agents who can fully actualize their capacities. Due to these distinctive beliefs, the needs and interests of learners are of primary importance to the learner-centred ideology (Schiro, 2008; Alanazi, 2016). The student's desires must be identified and incorporated into the learning process. This has the profound benefit of helping individuals to develop their critical skills. Learner-centred ideology, therefore, requires school systems to develop curricula that support educational goals that ensure freedom of learning and teaching (Alanazi, 2016). The learner-centred ideology is the main ideology stressed in educational reforms world wide and the UAE is no exception. Of the two curricula reviewed here, the ECART curriculum has the strongest learner-centred ideology.

Kondakçı (2014) indicated that according to this ideology, the aim of education should be to facilitate the growth and development of the learner through schooling. The argument fundamentally impacts the design of the curriculum as it focuses on exposing students to experiences through which they can be stimulated to pursue their interests. All elements of the curriculum are adapted and tailored towards meeting the needs of the learner. This model does not impact the UAE particularly.

Fundi (2016) identified the unique working of the practice as one that incorporates the function of the teachers to provide consultations with the child. The discussion helps the child in growing and developing their individual interests. The teaching involved in this ideology incorporates different primary steps. McCombs and Whisler (1997) state that the teacher should observe the needs and interests of the students, develop the aspect of the learning environment in the realms of their physical, social, and emotional gains, and facilitate growth as the final component.

Kondakçı (2014) was also of the idea that the ideology intends to help the students create meaning; it aims at developing the learners in all aspects such as social, physical, and intellectual. In fact, no specific knowledge must be learned, but individuals are responsible for constructing their meaning in their unique ways (Kondakçı, 2014). It is implemented through a curriculum enactment approach where the implementation is carried out after an agreement with the learners. As opposed to other ideologies, the assessment is performed continually by the teachers to evaluate learner development (Kondakçı, 2014). The ways for the evaluation entail portfolio assessment, observation, and self- assessment.

2.4.4 Social Reconstruction Ideology

Social reconstruction ideology is based on the reconstructionist philosophy of education. The ideology is based on two significant assumptions: first that society is at its heart unhealthy, and second that education can save society from destroying itself. From these base assumptions, the ideology stipulates that the purpose of education is to facilitate the construction of a more just society that offers optimal satisfaction to its members (Cotti & Schiro, 2004). Both the role of the individual and that of the society are essential elements in the ideology. Moreover, Cotti and Schiro (2004) support the belief that there is no good person or good education, but that through education, individuals are reconstructed and in return they build a better society.

The social reconstruction ideology intends to eliminate the undesirable aspects of the society and replace them with desirable ones (Schiro, 2008). Children are regarded as products of society. Thus, it ascertains that the learning of various academic disciplines is crucial in solving the problems. Kondakçı (2014) states that the curriculum design most commonly utilized is a problem-centred one. As the ideology focuses on reconstructing the

society, it gives individuals problem-solving skills and practice to solving existing problems. In line with the beliefs of the ideology, curriculum enactment is the most suitable approach to its implementation. Kondakçı (2014) concluded that the method allows both the educators and students to use educational tools to enact experience and form a curriculum that complies with the needs of the society.

The assessment of the social reconstruction ideology is different from that of other theories. Assessment is carried out by recording how a particular student or curriculum measure performs in a specific circumstance. This is because the problems facing the society continually change (Kondakçı, 2014). Moreover, the assessment is undertaken in real-life situations. Thus, it is also employed outside the school. As the student's performance is not compared with others or with any standard measure set, the humanistic and naturalistic curriculum evaluation model is more appropriate for the social reconstruction model. This model does not impact the UAE particularly.

2.5   Theories that have informed the Study of Curriculum

There have been a variety of definitions of curriculum, and all of them are characterized by positive contributions for guiding designers, teachers, and learners to best practice in their teaching and learning. For instance, Richards (2013) defined the term curriculum as the overall design or plan for a course. Thus, a curriculum sets out how the content for particular courses are transformed into a blueprint for learning and teaching purposes as well as enabling the desired learning outcome to be achieved. The traditional understanding of curriculum is either limited to 'recommended content' or instead to a 'prescribed course' (Doll, 1993).

Looking back to the history of the implementation of curriculum, Peter Ramus, an influential French reformer, is recognized as having used the word first in the late 16th century (Doll, 2008). Poulson (1998) describes curriculum as: "a whole body of courses offered by the educational institution or one of its branches" (p.8). In a different definition, Richards (2001), defined curriculum as inclusive of all planned school programmes, including physical education, clubs, and drama.

The majority of the theorists derive a definition of curriculum from four key perspectives. First, a fundamental aspect is to consider the learning events that are typically experienced by students (Null, 2011). Such events include the experience of the students in the classroom and additional other activities such as field trips or even simulated ones as in role-plays and experiments (Walker & Soltis, 2004). A second perspective on the curriculum is that of vital knowledge presented through experience (Richards, 2001). Curriculum as knowledge goes beyond simply examining the learning activities experienced by students, recommended by individual school or set by teachers themselves (Walker & Soltis, 2004). The third view of curriculum, as the majority of the theorists have supported, is an intended programme or plan of instruction (Bediako, 2019). Critics of this perspective consider the definition narrow in scope (Null, 2011; Walker & Soltis, 2004), as it fails to define essential aspects of the curriculum (Casey & Upton, 2008). In particular, it fails to address actual experiences and the vital process of actualization which most of the learners encounter.

Lastly, from a broader perspective, curriculum is viewed as a process, or better still, a framework of a process (Null, 2011). In the fourth perspective, the curriculum is seen as a decision-making process which involves the following: the decisions made with regard to setting objectives and goals (Walker & Soltis, 2004), the teaching method to be employed,

the content area to be covered, and an evaluation of the process. As Bediako (2019) argues, the curriculum is more of a process than a rigid and inflexible product. Hussain, Connor, and Mayo (2011) propose six partial and coupled facets that illuminate any curriculum by exploring ways in which they simultaneously interconnect. They suggest the following: curriculum as, 1. structure, 2. process, 3. content, 4. teaching, 5. learning, and 6. activity. Their definition informs this study in that through triangulation of data collection, all six areas are explored in this study. The relevance of the above literature to the current study could be attributed to the view that the curriculum can be changed, modified, and developed to adapt to new conditions. This final perspective is utilized in this study so as to allow for a fuller investigation of the phenomena of changing one curriculum for another.
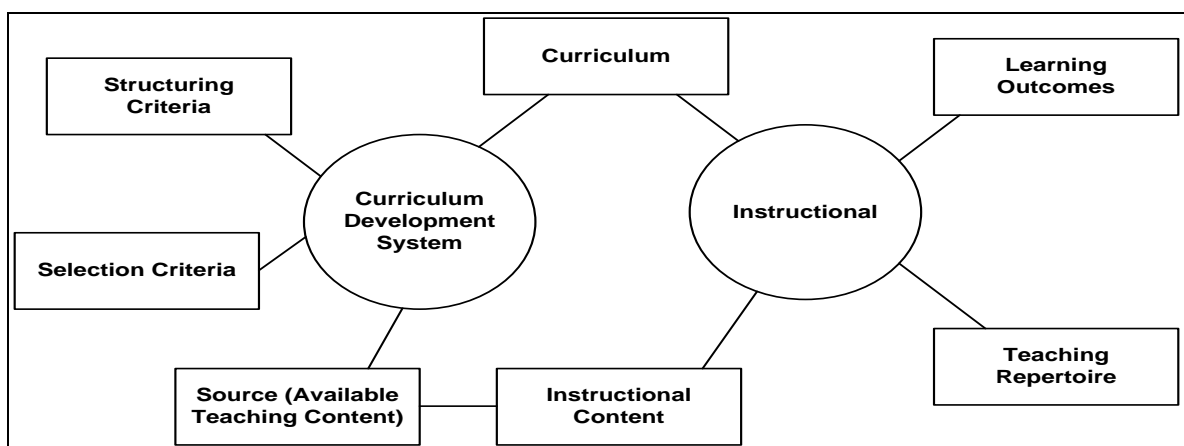
Figure 2.2: Theoretical framework of English Curriculum Development: Richards(2001, p. 159)

Curriculum formation involves several processes, as conveyed in figure (2.2) above. Curriculum development systems evaluate the sources available for teaching; create selection criteria and set criteria for the structure to develop an encompassing curriculum (Richards, 2001). Key people such as teachers and leaders in the education sector are included in the system to facilitate curriculum development. There are instructional systems that evaluate instructional content, learning outcomes, and teaching repertoire to test the

validity of the curriculum (Richards, 2001). Richard's model has informed the research design of this study by offering different perspectives on the complex nature of curriculum that were then incorporated into the data collection. Alyami (2014) argues that successful reform and development of the curriculum depend on the acceptance of change by teachers and students. Therefore, teachers' and students' perceptions should be taken into consideration when making changes. In his study, Stalling (1998) states that teachers' involvement and role in curriculum reformation is critical for the proposed amendment to be successful. When teachers are not involved, it can negatively impact how they grasp the new instructional changes introduced with the new curriculum. This can result in reduced implementation (Han et al., 2015). Teachers' perspectives thus form an important part of any study of curriculum and this dissertation sought also to capture their voices.

Understanding the processes by which curricula are developed aids in developing more effective future courses of study. Anderson and Helms (2001), for example, noted that the curriculum ought to be analysed systematically while appreciating all the underlying obstacles. With reference to the reviewed research works above, none have identified an elaborate procedure that can be followed to aid in implementing the education sector reforms. This, despite the relevancy of supporting a particular framework as a critical dimension of educational reform.

Despite the existence of a broad variation in terminologies and definitions, it can be appreciated that the field is gravitating towards a more open and flexible approach to both the design and delivery of a curriculum. This more flexible approach exists while at the same time operating in an area of increasing complexities owing to the needs of different accrediting bodies and an increasingly global landscape.

One of the factors repeated by a number of theorists is the national socioeconomic environment, where the social and economic priorities of a country are translated into educational strategies. Additionally, the operational structure, such as a vibrant educational sector and good governance, and appropriate funding must be available. The UAE is no exception and the research in Chapter 1 points out. Lastly, the educational infrastructure of any region guides in achieving educational goals that include the quality of teachers and curricula, a healthy learning environment and reliable assessment measures. Ideally, all three theories can reliably be adopted in the analysis of a curriculum. In the analysis of a curriculum, it is optimal to appreciate in creation and design the context in which learning takes place, and whether the approach is appropriate in the context of the UAE. These questions form a critical component of the current research.

2.6 Theoretical Underpinning of EFL Curriculum and Teaching Methods

Taking into account the significance of the different definitions identifying the concept of curriculum, it is worth examining the language teaching and learning practices. Teaching language is a reflection of seemingly bewildering arrays of approaches in course design and delivery. Some focus on learning targets (such as the Common European framework). Some create a focus on the particular syllabus issues, while others reflect on new proposals or trends in the methodology adopted (such as a task-based approach).

According to Carreira and Kagan (2011), the development of the English language curriculum has been mostly underpinned, explicitly or implicitly, by two leading conceptual models. The first model is the behaviourist model, as proposed by Edward Lee Thorndike. This model is product-focused and linear in its approach (Richards, 2013). A surrealistic approach is normally employed in this model. Learning typically takes place in manageable

steps, with each level expected to produce specific results. Learners tackle a subject systematically, building from known to unknown in a linear, step-by-step approach. The second frame is the information-processing model postulated by Kurt Lewin (Billig, 2015). The general assumption in this model is that meaningful information is quickly learned and remembered (Richards, 2013). The approach requires intrinsic motivation, where the learner is expected to be self-motivated. This model has its basis in the cognitive theory and considers the constructivist theory as well. Cognitivism is founded on the principle that learning develops through significant exposure to information that is presented in a logical manner (Richards, 2013).

As a result of globalization, the number of people learning English is expanding in many countries. It is a significant benefit for social and economic exchange between countries. English is spoken by many as a foreign language (EFL) or a second language (ESL) and has become a core course of education instruction worldwide (Herther, 2006; Wedell, 2008; Yamananka, 2006). Thus, for historical and economic reasons, English is adopted as a second language in the school curriculum in the UAE. Many believe that it is a robust language but teaching English in the UAE faces many challenges and difficulties, including curriculum quality and teaching, unsuitable pedagogical approaches, curriculum reform incongruent with the local context, and policies that impede the growth of ESL practices in the UAE.

According to Crandall et al. (2002), in order to develop students' literacy skills and language, the cognitive strategies have to be engaged in developing the academic content. The authors believe that developing a language is not enough and there should be literacy development across the curriculum. The authors list five significant strategies that should be

taken into account when developing a curriculum. First, there has to be building of a conceptual framework, which helps students understand the relationship between ideas. The use of interpretive frames and schemas, such as graphic organizers, can organize connections between ideas. Secondly, there should be use of learning strategies that allow students to learn to monitor their learning and to see their progress. This can be done when teachers come up with an approach, explain to students, demonstrate it, and provide an opportunity for practice for students to see if it is useful. Thirdly, there should be a focus on reading in all classes. Teachers can teach to all grades levels the types of activities that good readers undertake. Fourth, the use of free reading, where students choose to read materials of their interest and at their own level, helps build vocabulary and reading habits. Lastly, moving beyond the text, where students are asked to analyse, reflect on, and rethink concepts, which helps to get a deeper understanding. Such cognitive strategies will be considered when reviewing the two curricula covered in this dissertation.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) believe that when building a curriculum for learning a language, there should be a focus on a language-through-content approach. Classes should be content-based language units that will allow students to be up to date with the content knowledge while developing academic language proficiency. The primary goal is to have language learners transition into mainstream academic classes gradually. The teaching strategies should focus on making the content material comprehensible for students and not so much the linguistic development. Teaching should also focus on implementing regular activities such as the use of physical activity, visual aids, comprehension checks, etc. Some researchers believe that there should be integration between content and language that can be carried out through thematic teaching (Gianeli, 1997). Thematic teaching is useful because it can promote difficult concepts to be learned since it engages both language and

content. Thematic teaching can take place by developing appropriate themes and following a step-by-step approach: 1. Selection of themes, 2. Identification of concepts, 3. Identification of skills, 4. Identification of strategies, 5. Gathering of materials, 6. Writing of model lesson plans (Gianeli, ibid). Thematic teaching is explored in both curricula and findings will explore how ECART and MOE curriculum focused on different themes.

Chamot et al. (1994) argue that when teaching ESL, the curriculum should follow a 'cognitive academic language learning approach' (CALLA). The CALLA is a curriculum framework that focuses on the learning process as opposed to teaching strategies. CALLA aims to build high learner expectations, integrate the cognitive academic language processing (CALP) model, and develop assessments that are consistent with the modes of instruction, and further professional development of teachers. The three principles on which CALLA's theoretical framework is based are: 1. learning is active; 2. there are three types of knowledge: declarative, procedural, and metacognitive, and 3. students must become independent learners. As will be expanded upon in more detail in a later section of this dissertation, Vygotsky's writings have much to offer with respect to the study of language learning. Lantolf (2000) argues that language learning is a process of mediation that features activities, concepts, and cultural artefacts that are aided by tools such as language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

A review of the literature on the development of teaching ESL points to a number of issues. First is that none of the above literature focused on the issues raised with respect to English hegemony as a threat to local cultures which speak other languages. The studies in this section have also not addressed the increased concerns of whether or not learning English assists learners to value education and to understand the meaning of bilingualism.

This has been an issue of focus by some researchers such as Nguyen (2011) who has argued that it is challenging for a curriculum to avoid having bias. English has assumed a dominant place in the UAE educational system and will consistently be a critical component of the UAE educational system and local practices for the foreseeable future. Additionally, Al-Murabit (2012) has argued that educators in the academic institutions tend to actively participate in the reproduction of the economic and ideological forces in the society consciously or unconsciously through the concept identified as 'the hidden curriculum'. Apart from these criticisms, different leaders in the UAE are concerned as to the extent in which they can efficiently ensure their young citizens are learning English effectively enough to ensure that the UAE can continue to compete internationally. A stated aim of the ECART curriculum focused on the evolution of students as independent learners, this research will uncover the impact of such a strategy.

2.7   Learning Theories of ESL Teaching

The study of English in different contexts is dependent on the environment in which the teaching takes place and all stakeholders involved (Kirkpatrick, 2011). In this case, there are multiple approaches and methods used in teaching, learning, and assessment of English as a second language. An approach can be identified as, "consisting of theories on the nature of language and language learning that are then serving as a source of practices and principles in language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p.16). On the other hand, "methodology identifies the level at which a theory can be put into an active practice and at which the choices are made, as well as on the specific skills to be taught, the content to be informed and the order in which the material can be presented to targeted audiences" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 15). The fundamental purpose of any foreign language teaching

approaches is ensuring that the learners end up improving their language capabilities (Boumová, 1998) but this study explores to what extent other factors are considered when choosing an appropriate curriculum.

2.7.1 Traditional Approach to Language Learning

The traditional approach to learning involves the teachers being in control of the overall learning environment (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). The 'sage on the stage' is an adage that illustrates how a teacher is actively engaged in holding the entire power in the classroom environment when it comes to the control of content and lectures. Novak (1998) confirmed that the teachers held the perception that they have to have the appropriate level of knowledge to offer the required knowledge to their students. Owing to the fact that teachers are perceived as the knowledge dispenser, the learners tend to position themselves in a manner that they are listening to the teachers disseminating their knowledge. Underpinning the traditional approach is the belief that if the students sit and look at the teacher, they end up gaining knowledge in a manner in which they are in a position to use. The educator plays the role of the source of knowledge, with the "learners acting as passive receivers" (Kuzu, 2008, p. 36). Since the educator is in charge of the learning process, there is less collaboration: the entire focus is towards the teacher tasked with the learning process.

The approach of traditional teaching, as opposed to the modern approach, is based on the fact that the teacher breaks down the integrated process into subsets of skills and knowledge areas with all being isolated and focused distinctly. In the context of language teaching, traditional approaches tend to delve into the language skills linked to particular course content. This implies that the content is limited to specific vocabularies and grammar instead of being included in the overall communicative English process (reading, writing,

speaking and listening). Also, the focus is more limited and does not include other vocabularies such as the sample sentences and phrases from different fields and activities (Boumová, 2008). To affirm this, White (1988) noted that this approach has its demerits, since it offers: "language as a body of esteemed information suitable for learning instead of means of communication" (p. 8). In this process, the practice is governed by rules that focus on specific skills, which include grammar and vocabulary. Learners are not necessarily involved in understanding the different rules which demand the learners to speak and appreciate the taught language.

2.7.2 Behaviourists' Approach to Language Learning

The behaviourism theory argues that learning is affected by changes in the environment. Behaviourists believe, therefore, that the right environmental influences can help all learners learn and acquire the same information and understanding. Educators following the behaviourist approach will examine the environment to understand how it will influence the content to be learned (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). Behaviourist theory postulates that learning is the result of habits that are reinforced by rewards or punishments. The "infants learn oral language from other human role models through a process involving imitation, rewards, and practice. Human role models in an infant's environment provide the stimuli and rewards (Cooter & Reutzel, 2004).

The behaviourist learning theory argues that external conditions such as rewards and punishments determine a student's behaviour in the future. In other words, the outside environment shapes the student's behaviour because it triggers a particular behaviour. This in turn affects whether the behaviour will occur again depending on how the individual was influenced by that behaviour (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). In schools, teachers can use positive

or negative reinforcement to reward or punish students. In terms of motivating students and replicating the same results in students' performance, teachers can use prizes, privileges, and grades (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). Additionally, with regard to the learning process, the behaviourist theory has a common belief that learning takes place when different habits are perceived as being correct or incorrect on the basis of whether they are rewarded or punished (Lally et al., 2010).

As demonstrated by Hassad (2011), teachers following the behaviourist approach can use a linear fashion method when presenting lesson objectives to their learners. Thus, students can be guided by hints and clues given by the teacher to achieve the desired behaviour, and if the desired behaviour is not obtained it can be reinforced by using punishment (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). One issue with this type of instruction is that lessons teach skills in isolation. In such a phenomenon, Avalos (2011) noted that similar to the traditional approaches, teachers tend to be the source for results as they are teaching in isolation and assessing students' learning practices on the basis of sourced results in both written and oral tests. This is because they are characterized by a limited focus on the issue of collaboration and solving the underlying problems. Students often start learning language with using behaviourism as a way to make initial progress while moving to a cognitive approach once basic skills are assimilated so that a curriculum may move from one approach to another.

2.7.3   Cognitive Approach to Language Learning

A cognitive theoretical underpinning to learning takes into account second language acquisition as a conscious and reasonable thinking process (O'Donnell & King, 2014). There is deliberate use of learning strategies. These learning strategies are unique ways to involve

the processing of information and enhance compensation as well as to retain information. Wenger (2014) argues thaNicot this explanation of language learning with the help of cognitive theory contrasts strongly with the account of behaviourist language learning. Sternberg et al. (2014) added that the behaviourist accounts of language learning are mostly seen through an automatic as well as an unconscious process. For instance, this view taken into the classroom focuses on learning strategies and identifies successful language being observed. In addition, considering the viewpoint of the learners in the classroom results in the information processor viewpoint. On the other hand, the information processor viewpoint accounts for limitations that mainly involve retention of the information along with the transfer of information into memory (Cormier et al., 2014).

When considering the classroom practice, relevant activities involve revision and review, as well as the use of a scaffolding approach towards the young learners. The inductive approach and the discussions and analysis of the topics and language are also relevant activities (Daniels et al., 2013). The cognitive approach of language learning acknowledges the role of mistakes, while on the other hand, takes into account the measures that need to be taken in order to ensure that the number of mistakes are reduced. The prime aspect of the cognitive approach to language learning is to provide a continuous supply of information and to aid the motivation of learning for the learners.

In the words of Wenger (2014), the cognitive approach to language learning is to be taken as a type of learning strategy that is used by the learners to ensure that learning is more successful. Despite contradictions with the behaviourist theory, the suggestions as to organizing new language and use of the imagery for memorization have been positive outcomes of work on second language learning. Also, the cognitive approach to language

learning involves individualization of instructions, encouraging learners to think and imagine by trying out a quiz, or other alternative ways (Schmeck, 2013). The cognitive approach to language learning involves teaching grammar through either deductive or inductive approaches. Moreover, it also emphasizes the fact that pronunciation can be artificial, while on the other hand, it recognizes that errors are regarded as an essential part of the learning process.

The cognitive approach to language learning briefly highlights expectations about students and teachers (Peña-Ayala et al., 2014). Concerning the teachers, it is believed that they have an advance proficiency in the language that is being taught. Moreover, that teachers have the ability to analyse the different and varied needs of the various students. As to the students, they are expected to take responsibility for their own learning while ensuring that they come to class with an open mind for gaining knowledge (Lea & Nicoll, 2013). The cognitive approach to language learning involves individualization of the instructions, while also encouraging the learners to think and imagine. Both of the two curricula will be examined with relation to the cognitive approach to language learning.

2.7.4   Constructivist Approach to Language Learning

The constructivist theory is based on the study of cognitive development by two theorists: Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, and Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist. Learners construct their knowledge, and through their personal experience they develop their understanding (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). Knowledge is acquired when the individual is active in their learning process. Piaget referred to his work as 'cognitive' constructivism in which he states that cognitive development is achieved by observation and experimentation, which is affected by ages and stages. This means that there are things that can and cannot be

understood and, therefore, learned, based on the age and phase of the individual. Vygotsky (1978) referred to his work as 'social' constructivism in which he states that social process affects the cognitive development because development occurs when individuals interact with more knowledgeable members of society (Rey, 2011).

When it comes to teaching and learning, the teachers are the facilitators and guides who encourage collaboration by posing questions for students to reflect on and try to solve. Active engagement is encouraged, where students work together to share their opinions, challenge each other to try to solve the problem by coming up with an answer, and present their work. Here students are learning and discovering on their own by interacting with others (Young, 2010). Of the three approaches discussed, it is this approach that mostly focuses on problem-solving methods and group work. In short, the theory can be summed up as follows: "Cooperative learning, hands-on activities, discovery learning, differentiated instruction, technology, distributed practice, critical thinking, and manipulated elements that embrace the constructivist educational philosophy" (White-Clark et al., 2008: 41).

The studies of Vygotsky (1978) further focused on sociocultural approaches to learning and development. In this approach, the author emphasizes the role of social exchange on learning. He developed the 'zone of proximal development' concept to explain the way social and participatory learning takes place (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Vygotsky (ibid) defines the idea as, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined through independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In other words, this concept states that learning is interactive, distributed, contextual and the result of learners taking part in communities of practice (Flum

& Kaplan, 2012). The social cultural approach is one way to approach studying the differences in curriculum and can add depth to a comparative study.

To apply sociocultural approaches to learning as Brown et al. (1989) suggest is to involve people, both children and adults with a different degree of expertise so they can collaborate and learn from each other (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Also, learning should include artefacts such as: videos, books, wall displays, labs and science equipment, so that the environment supports intentional learning. Brown (ibid) equally noted that the classroom environment should be viewed as a place of learning communities where all members with different levels of knowledge can contribute. Reciprocal teaching can take place where the teacher and students take turns in discussing reading text. As noted by John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), this method of structured dialogue between teachers and students cultivates a learning community.

Language acquisition has been the primary concern for sociocultural theory since Vygotsky was faced with the social task of educating a largely illiterate population during the 1917 Russian Revolution. Different theorists introduced their findings on how to create the right learning environment for literacy to be acquired. Vygotsky (1978) argued that in order to create a learning environment that supports literacy, "…That writing should be meaningful…That writing is taught naturally…and that the natural methods of teaching reading and writing involve appropriate operations on the child's environment" (Vygotsky, 1978: 117-118). These considerations presented by Vygotsky have influenced the new sociocultural approaches to literacy instruction (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The relevance of the above theory is based on the fact that sociocultural theory takes into account a need for bridging ESL students with their new environment which can be done using the method

of written communication. In such a phenomenon, students can keep a dialogue journal to build knowledge by writing about their own experiences and expressing their own voice (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

2.7.5 Impact of Theories on Curriculum Development and Instructional Design

With respect to curriculum design, there are three learning theories that are seen as fundamental to the field. All theories, will be considered in this study. According to Barker (2008, p. 130), the three critical learning theories that are perceived as "being critical information of the learning design model are the ones based on behaviourism, cognition, and constructivism (including both socio-constructivism and communal constructivism)". To affirm this, Yilmaz (2011) argued that when it comes to the behaviourist view in curriculum development, it is believed that learning is the result of the connections created from a stimuli-response relationship, and these relationships drive the desire to learn. The instructional methods are framed in behavioural, specific and observable terms. The classrooms are teacher-centred: the teacher is the primary focus and students focus on the teacher who only provides individual help if needed. The presented assignments are linked to learning objectives. The success and mastery of activities and concepts by learners are seen in the results of assessments and evaluations. The teacher can encourage students to repeat the same habits and results by providing them with stimulating remarks, certificates, and so on. The behaviourist theory can be seen as a route of memorizing more than experimentation (Weegar & Pacis, 2012).

A curriculum which is designed for a constructivist learning model focuses on engaging the students. The students in this learning process are expected to construct knowledge from their interaction and experience with their classroom environment. Students

are seen as responsible for their learning and classroom is learner-centred (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). The way the instruction is to be carried out is to ensure that there is bridging between theory and practice. The teacher is the facilitator and students are guided by their teacher to come up with new concepts based on the prior knowledge provided by their teachers. Students are expected to process information, give meaning to the information provided and make decisions. Students are seen as responsible for their own learning, thus, the constructivist pedagogy has to provide the right instructional strategies to guide students' growth in a way in which students learn to have control of their learning environment. Such a student is encouraged to approach learning as problem-solving and reflect on what is taught. It can be seen this model encourages experimentation rather than memorization which many believe is an ideal approach in today's educational practices (Richards, 2013).

The cognitive approach to language learning's role in the curriculum is to ensure that there exists a continued supply of information as well as an aid to the motivation of learning for the learners. Here the students to play a vital role as well. In addition to this, the cognitive approach's role in the curriculum also involves practices that would allow the assimilation of the information that has already been learnt and that has been partially taught (Daniels et. al., 2013). The cognitive pedagogy has to provide the right instructional strategies by using techniques such as observational learning since it is believed that people learn from observing which also alters their behaviour. Also, this theory believes students are more productive and effective when they are in a comfortable environment, with access to available material, because this will motivate them to learn. Also, since it is believed that students' learning is affected by their self-concept which is formed by their environment, teachers should use positive thought and remarks such as "you are great," and "you will be something," to motivate them (Sincero, 2011).

As a result of these theories, "education policies, education models and education practices focus on constructivism" (Brown, 2006, p. 109). Despite the focus on constructivist models of learning, there is debate about whether the teachers are practising behaviourism or constructivism when dispensing knowledge (Weegar & Pacis, 2012). Looking into the UAE curriculum models, one can state that the English language curriculum is designed based on a constructive learning model. This constructive learning has begun to be one of the priorities in ADEC and specifically the MOE's academic goals. The model focuses on problem-solving and encourages students to become actively involved in their own learning. This helpful approach to instructional design is different from the traditional, behavioural and cognitive approaches. According to Tam (2000), constructivist learning may be particularly valuable where the teaching of complex skills, such as problem-solving or critical thinking skills, is concerned. Hence, any constructivist learning environment must provide the opportunity for active learning and an effective learning experience.

To analyse the English language curriculum, activity theory can be used as the framework. It is the most convenient framework because activity theory assumptions are consistent with those of constructivism (Jonassen & Murphy, 1999). In the curriculum design process, the sociocultural and activity theory adopted in the design of publicly funded Canadian Language Benchmark-based ESL credential programme and curriculum for immigrant and international students can be adopted (Campbell et al., 2015). In the programme, Campbell and others used the specially designed curriculum to prepare the students in navigating from the multiple pathways in the settlement process from postsecondary education to the workplace, community participation, and citizenship behaviours. Ideally, the effectiveness of this programme can be attributed to the innovation of the curriculum design which later contributed to the establishment of a systematic

reinterpretation of situated cognition and task-oriented design through the adoption of activity theory. Owing to the fact that both situated and task-oriented learning share intersecting theoretical lineages with activity theory, the approach guides in the establishment of an improved learning process.

2.8   The Evolution of Social Constructivism and Activity Theory

Now that a review of relevant theories has been presented, this section will examine the way in which the theories evolved. Behaviourism was a popular theory in the 1930s. This theory considers the learner's behaviour to be reinforced by positive or negative reinforcement. Positive indicates learners will most likely repeat the behaviour whereas negative will have the learners withhold that behaviour. This theory might be used to analyse to what extent the curriculum encourages students' behaviour in class with respect to learning. Once the theory had become widespread, educators began to question some of its proponents. Critics of behaviourist approaches have thus long argued that humans are more complex than behaviourism acknowledges. The theory does nothing, for example, to explain learning that occurs without consistent positive reinforcement. The theory does not take into account the context of learning and its individual and cultural dimensions. Thus, theories continued to evolve while researchers searched for a new approach.

Vygotsky's work (published in 1978) was a departure from the behaviourist theories of the 1930s and '40s that had played a dominant role in learning theory. He argued that learning occurs when a stimulus creates a response and this has become ingrained. He became one of the best-known proponents of the role of language in learning by arguing that language shapes human knowledge acquisition, along with cultural, historical and societal factors. Vygotsky (1978) proposed a two-way relationship in which the individual engages

with others and tools such as language to build new knowledge. Vygotsky's contributions are referred to as a 'sociocultural' approach (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Hence, this theory offers solutions to the issues of internationalization of higher education, the desire of accommodating increasing numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners, addressing the contextual needs beyond the disciplinary knowledge, and lastly enhancing a shift of the outcomes or competency-oriented instructional design and overall assessment process.

The view of learning as a social process has had many proponents over the past four decades with an outpouring of research in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Greeno, 1997; Salomon & Perkins, 1998; Wenger, 1998; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Learning, it is argued, is a communal process and needs to be situated in context and involve active knowledge construction through interaction with others. Learning is seen as being facilitated by participatory collective practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Three central tenets emerge that inform this research. First is that learning is mediated with artefacts that are part of a broader cultural context. Second, students learn as members of a community, and third, the situated activity can serve as a component of the analysis. When we participate, our minds are linked to society, and we connect thought and activity (Brown & Adler, 2008).

As researchers seek to build on the work of Vygotsky, there emerged a theory with a social-cultural base proposed by such researchers as Rogoff and Lave (1984) and Scribner and Cole (1981) who have contributed to developing the area of sociolinguistics and so have informed the design of research. Lave and Wenger (1991) presented the idea that optimal learning takes place in a community and thus proposed communities of practice in which

learning is mediated by both the social and language context. Learning a language was evolving from the model of an expert teacher imparting information to the integration of language, culture, and socialization (Fuller, 2007) so as to encourage learners to engage with an integrated curriculum.

The constant reform of the English language curriculum in the UAE explores how best to ensure learners do not simply learn a language in isolation as a series of formulas or rules but instead acquire tools that will enable them to take part in building a bilingual identity? Two fundamental theories, Kolb's (1983) proposed experiential learning cycle and the model of learning processes proposed by Jarvis (2004), call for the addition of experiential learning as a critical component to a cycle of activity, analysis, and reflection. Translating such practices into the modern English language curriculum can take place when students are supported in using English to accomplish their learning tasks and activities, using both strategies and insights gained through real-life applications of English in academic and international contexts.

The concept of 'situated activity' was proposed by Engeström in 1987. He examined both the individual and social aspects of thought through activity, and in further work (Engeström, 2009) he made a connection between these key ideas of social constructivism and activity theory, noting that society consists of individuals who both use and then produce tools and language as artefacts. The curriculum as a product of situated activity is, therefore, considered an intersection of the areas of language, culture, and socialization. Activity theory argues for curriculum development to connect the classroom to real-world activities and look beyond the need to master specific aspects of language to taking one's place in communities of international speakers of English. Learning English is learning to participate in a larger

international cultural practice (Gifford & Enyedy, 1999). The intended outcomes are more than just a set of skills or tasks, but instead a mastery of higher-order activity. Leont'ev (1978), a leading component of the theory, has defined the relationship between languages, tools/signs, objects, formal and informal rules, community, and tasks as an activity system (Roth & Lee 2007; Roth, 2009).

Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) employed activity theory to design a new type of curriculum. Here, students experience culture (at the top activity level), which is supported by the practice of consciously enacted tasks (considered to be the action level) that are created by practicing semiconscious skills (the day-to-day operations level). Linguistic skills are not considered separately from cultural skills and habits, and it is recognized that they require explicit learning to develop. Activity theory forms a rich lens through which to compare and contrast the ECART and MOE curricula.

The critical characteristics of activity theory, and the researchers who contributed to its evolution, have been examined in this section. The overarching framework of this dissertation is underpinned by the understanding that rather than merely following a route, modern learners succeed by participating in a community of practice in which they undertake activities that situate them as members of a community. In this case, the community is the international set of speakers of English that surround the students in the UAE. In the following sections, activity theory will be applied to curriculum design and implementation.

2.8.1 Activity Theory Today

Nikolajeva (2014) argued that activity theory is not a methodology. Rather, it can be taken as a philosophical framework for studying the different forms of the personal practice

in the developmental process. This involves both the social as well as the individual levels, which can be interlinked. In addition to this, O'Donnell and King (2014) argued that the study of the individuals would be linked to that of the groups at the same time, while ensuring that the parameters for the knowledge were maintained at the paramount level. Some common and most relevant examples of activity theory involve curriculum and teaching, information technology, design, geography and cognitive science, etc.
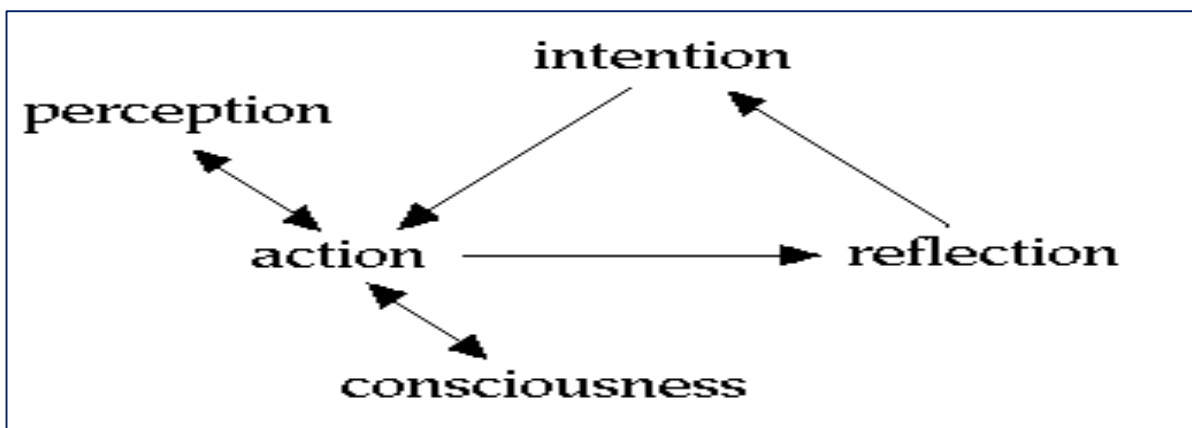
Figure 2.3: Learning as Intention –Action-Reflection: Jonassen (2000, p. 3)

Many theories try to make sense of how learning takes place. First, learning is seen as an activity, which takes place in an integrated and purposive activity system. The activity theory analyses the activity systems. Activity theorists believe that conscious learning and performance are interdependent and interactive which means individuals cannot act without thinking (Figure 2.3). It is assumed that learning and thinking happen when acting on an entity which could be social, physical, or mental (Jonassen, 2000).

Learning is a way in which individuals make meaning of things. Humans interact with other artefacts such as language and try to make sense of them. Producing meaning generates confusion, curiosity, frustration and cognitive dissonance. It is the dissonance that

raises knowledge in individuals with their attempts to solve and bring meaning. Knowledge is what is brought about by individuals, socially co-constructed or personally constructed. Here perceptions, actions, mind, and behaviour are all integrated (Jonassen, 2000). Context is an essential part of the activity system because it adds meaning.

Learning theorists focus on the social nature of making meaning. Behavioural and cognitive theorists believe that individuals are the main agents of learning: individuals retrieve, store, apply and processes information differently. Social constructivists believe that learning and making meaning is a result of social interactions in any activity (Huang et al., 2012). Learning happens in an activity system which can be as simple a 'system' as a classroom studying Shakespeare. It is the activity system that can help define the extent learning and analysis can take place in the English language curriculum (Jonassen, 2000).

Activity theory is a form of sociocultural analysis. It focuses on systems as a unit of study. To ensure learning occurs, the activity system has to take into consideration many elements such as object-oriented, historically conditioned, dialectically-structured, and tool-mediated human interactions. The activity system affects how learning occurs and what is learned because it poses its own goals, beliefs and processes (Cross, 2010).

Activity systems have interacting components, which are: subjects, tools, objects, and a division of labour, community, and rules. Figure (2.4) shows these interacting components, which are situated in such a way as to accomplish the activities of the activity subsystems that are higher-order functions (production, distribution, exchange, and consumption) (Jonassen, 2000).
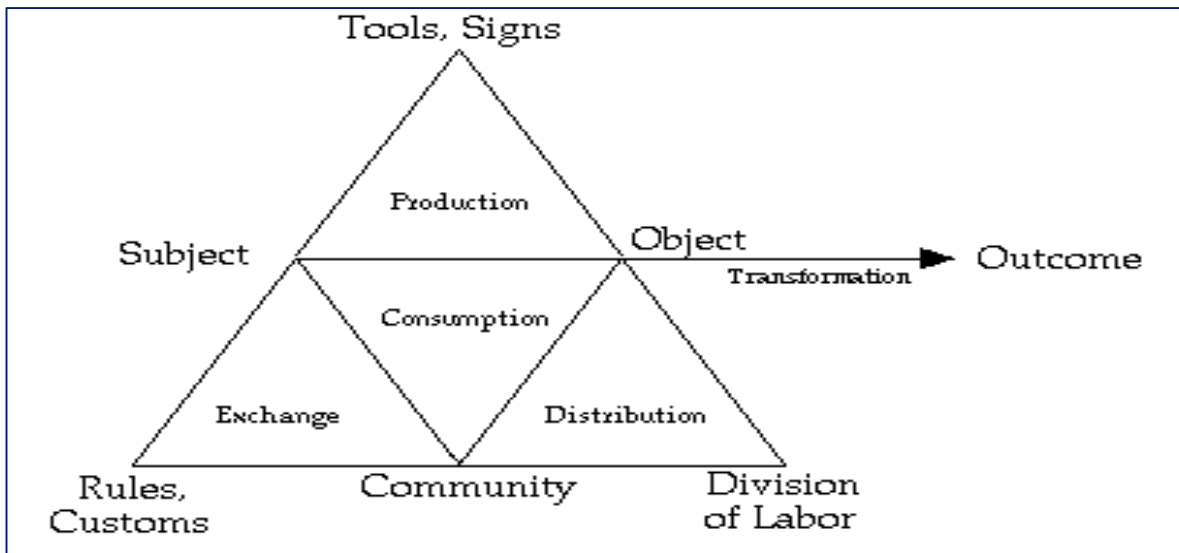
Figure 2.4: Learning as Intention –Subject-Outcome: Jonassen (2000, p.5)

In the activity system, the actions are in the goal directed hierarchy that is used to achieve the object, tasks, actions, and operations which will transform object (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Hierarchical natures of activities, actions and operations: Jonassen & Murphy (1999, p.65)

If the activity, for example, is to design instructional material, this is considered the performance of conscious actions that requires chains of actions to achieve. The chain of actions required to achieve the activity (which is to design instructional material) is: needs assessment, objective writing, drawing graphics, shooting video, etc. These actions are chains of operations such as camera operations, telephone calls, spreadsheet entries. Also,

all operations can be considered as actions because they need effort to perform. Further, actions can become activity as they are completed. So, the relationship between activity, movement, and operations are all interconnected and none can happen without the others (Jonassen & Murphy, 1999).

2.8.2   Applying Activity Theory to Curriculum Design and Implementation

This section introduces the concept of activity theory as a tool for research, including examples of the use of the theory within educational research and as a unit of analysis for inquiry. As we seek insight into two different curriculum, studies that have undertaken to use activity theory as a measure of analysis will help frame the present research questions. Activity theory neither proposes a particular research method (Jonassen, 2000) nor does it claim to predict (Nardi, 1996). It has, however, provided a unit of analysis that supports a wide variety of rubrics across a range of fields including educational technology (Jonassen, 2000; Nardi, 1996), and learning in the workplace (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Engeström, 2001). A number of aspects of the theory have, therefore, been used to illuminate different angles on learning in a range of contexts. Gillette (1994) used the theory to research the history of French students' language learning, for example, to measure potential impact in how they understood their learning experiences in the present.

Activity theory has also proved useful in theoretically framing the ESL Pathways curriculum and defining the curriculum model. In addition, Campbell, MacPherson and Sawkins, (2014), adapted Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy's (1999) six-step approach for using activity theory in curriculum design in the context of an ESL Pathways Project for Canadian immigrants:

- Clarify the purpose of the activity system;
- Analyse the activity system;
- Analyse the context;
- Analyse the activity structure;
- Analyse tools and mediators; and
- Analyse activity system dynamics.

Bell (2011) developed their six-step approach while searching for a solution to how not only to construct learning environments but also how to analyse them. Such steps were keys in improving the learning experience in a constructivist learning environment. Usability is a critical concept in computer design, and research-designed or analysed educational technology would also be concerned that educational artefacts met the needs of the intended user concerning ease of skill acquisition, use, and then how useful and efficient the tool or software is found to be. The constructivist theory argues that learners construct their learning, rather than simply act as vessels to be filled by learning imparted by others. Thus, an appropriate learning environment would be one that not merely delivers information but instead develops activities that build internal learning. Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy (1999) argue that: "the conscious process of meaning-making for any actor or group of actors in the network emerges from activity or the personal reflection on activity" (p. 64). These six steps will now be explored in more detail, bridging to the following section on methodology. as they have been chosen to inform this study due to their history of producing nuanced understanding of complex phenomena.

2.8.3 Clarifying the Purpose of the Activity System: Examining the Driving Forces behind the Evolution of the UAE's Curriculum

The first step that Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy (1999) propose is that of seeking to find the goals and motives of those involved in the development of the present English language curriculum in the UAE. What are the contexts in which these activities occur? The authors suggest analysis of formal and informal documentation. This dissertation seeks to follow Campbell et al.'s (2014) lead in moving from traditional EFL/ESL measures to adding in references to the post-EFL/ESL academic success, future work, and community contexts in which high school students will need to succeed. Activity theory here provided the framework to guide the evaluation of the UAE curriculum with respect to its underlying concepts and how it has been designed to enable Emirati students to take part in the world stage. Each stage of the activity proposed as part of this dissertation has its analytical framework and underpinning where appropriate.

Unlike other primary subjects such as Arabic language and mathematics, the English language curriculum, which is the focus in this study, has undergone several iterations in the UEA (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2009). Several reasons have led to the continuous development of the English language in contrast to other subjects in UAE high schools. First, EFL is closely linked to international trends, which compels the government to reflect the changing global environment (Phan, 2008). Second, it is a challenge to acquire appropriate teaching materials that have some degree of flexibility in order to allow English teachers to go beyond what is prescribed (Richards, 2013). Getting teachers who are able to understand students' needs and deliver the curriculum in a manner that is compatible to the learners' style is a challenge in the UAE (Holsgrove et al., 1998).

Developing a curriculum is a significant priority in the education sector in the UAE (Macpherson et al., 2007). Through the curriculum, the government is able to manifest its stated educational goals that significantly influence the living standards of the citizens (Holsgrove et al., 1998). There is a significant need to change and develop curricula in order to adequately meet the growing modern dynamic (Low, 2012). There have been several attempts to establish curricula over the past years (Crabtree, 2010; Muysken & Nour, 2006), with the English curriculum being revised several times. The blueprint of Education Vision 2030, which acts as an educational guide map, places a strong emphasis on the need to continuously improve evaluation policies and methods (Low, 2012). This document also emphasized educational programmes, development of curriculum, and institutional evaluation that should be based upon evaluation criteria such as responsibility, accountability, and performance.

The continually evolving world in the modern era demands a flexible system that can frequently be altered in order to cope with the changing of economic demands (Ibrahim & Al-Mashhadany, 2012). Typically, as the set curriculum dictates, teachers are supposed to stick to the prescribed material despite many weaknesses that it might project. Considering the slow rate of upgrading the curriculum, the vital current aspect is not appropriately captured (Crabtree, 2010). The fact that, for example, changing a curriculum is a lengthy and demanding process, prescribed material remains in use for several years without necessary modification (Macpherson et al., 2007). In 1993, a new set of materials for the new curriculum, English for Emirates, was introduced for the high schools. However, the process of change had taken 12 years, during which the previous materials remained without any formal modification. This means that the teaching materials prescribed in the former curriculum were used for eight to ten years without amendments or review. Such

inconsistency is not likely to capture the vital concepts in the continually changing modern world (Muysken & Nour, 2006). This has compelled teachers to employ other methods and different materials for teaching in order to meet the learners' needs.

Participation, as defined in activity theory, is both fluid and flexible and thus allows for multiple perspectives (Cole & Engeström, 1993) including supporting a flexible subject such as a student, groups of students, a teacher, an administrator, or policymaker. Thus, the theory can provide a lens into the dynamic interactions of the teacher in this study as a scaffold, designer of activities, and facilitator of the learning as well as the student as the mediator of content and negotiator of meaning.

2.8.4 Analysis of the Activity System: Identifying Target Activities and Tasks

The second step that Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) suggest is an analysis of the targets and tasks of the system. The authors argue that understanding the subject is critical and they ask the researchers to consider the agents who will operate within the local community of practice. In the case of the UAE curriculum, the issue of how oriented it has been towards exams has been raised in this area of analysis. Several studies have criticized the exam-based system, which tends to be more discouraging to the students than other systems which promote understanding of critical concepts rather than use cramming techniques (Markaz al-Imārāt, 2011). This survival technique used by the students to escape consequences associated with failing exams results in misconception of vital concepts (UNESCO, 1999). Studies that support examination systems, however, claim that it is a vital system that measures input validity (Vlaardingerbroek & Taylor, 2009), that engages the students and ensures that they become responsible for what they have been taught by the

teacher. To some extent, it monitors the level of students' understanding of the subject (Vlaardingerbroek & Taylor, 2009).

Reports show that students from Arab countries, especially the Gulf, are lagging behind international standards. The UAE is among the countries that struggle with the challenges to improve teaching in public schools. In the UAE, most higher education degree programmes are delivered in English and even the few Arabic programmes have entry requirements for English proficiency. Thus, most public school graduates participate in the UAE's CEPA test, which is provided by the MOE. The score required in the CEPA is 180 or above which is equivalent to IELTS band 5 and above. A large number of Emirati high school student graduates (70% in 2016) were not able to gain administration directly to undergraduate study programmes delivered in English because they were not able to obtain the required CEPA test score. Those students who do not pass the CEPA have to attend five semesters of intensive English classes in federal tertiary institutions to raise their level of proficiency in the English language. After visiting the intensive English classes, students must take The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and obtain a score of 5 and above to enter the English language programme (Bourini et al., 2013). Here, content analysis of curriculum will be used to support this point.

2.8.5 Analysis of the Activity Context: Developing an Integrated Outcomes Framework

An integrated framework is presented which calls into place all of the activities that the subjects will engage in within the context of the system. It will inform the data collection of this study. Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy (1999) and Leont'ev (1981) proposed three levels

of activity and a multi-layered approach that will inform the development of a classroom observation form. What do the students engage with? How do they communicate with others in their groups? Activity theory recognizes that learning is both facilitated by and shared with others. This is sometimes referred to as 'distributed cognition' (Thorne, 2003).

Communicative techniques are normally employed to enforce the four necessary skills of writing, reading, listening and speaking (Markaz al-Imārāt, 2011). Teachers are normally encouraged to make use of educational aids in order to complement the prescribed teaching materials (Holsgrove et al.,1998). However, several studies have indicated poor enforcement of the communicative approach as a result of teachers abandoning many aspects of this approach. In this research, all teachers are actively preparing students for all language and subject issues of typical English language tasks. These include the fill-in-the-blank assignments from textbooks, essay assignments and lectures on grammar issues. They equally move beyond their traditional outcomes to engage in preparing students for the overall range of activities such as formal, informal and non-formal that comprise and support a broader oriented and real-world competency.

2.8.6   Analysis of the Activity Structure

This phase will analyse the activity structure that gives the purpose of the activity system. To do so we will examine all the activities within the activity system that engage the subject. The activity structure includes the following hierarchy: the activity, actions, and operations. The activities are made up of individuals, chains of operations and cooperative efforts. The events used have the intention and motive to reach the goal of the activity system. For example, the activities that engage students and educational administration can be field trips, attending tutoring, teacher training, etc. There are many examples of actions

such as planning, conducting needs analysis, designing presentations, and much more, all of which are used to fulfil the activity presented, and at times the same actions can be used to satisfy different activities. It is essential to take into consideration the context in which the activity occurs. Operations are behaviours that are automated or routinized. Services can be gathering surveys, interviewing, observations and many others. Such activities can assist in achieving 'a move'. Thus, all these three levels, activity, movement, and operations, make up the activity structure. Individual questions and activities can be used to identify activity structure (Jonassen & Murphy, 1999).

2.8.7 Analysis of Tools and Mediators: Using Standards and Current Research

The most common understanding of a mediator in activity theory is that of a tool. Such a tool may be considered a machine such as a computer, or a resource such as a textbook. A curriculum is full of such tools often prescribed. The UAE's adapted ECART and MOE curricula are no exceptions. According to Liaw et al. (2010), activity theory tends to emphasize the view that human activities are mediated by tools in a broad sense. In this case, the tools are normally established and transformed into the development process of the activity itself and carry with them specific cultural and historical remains from their development: the use of the tools is an accumulation and transmission of social knowledge. This is due to the fact that the tool adopted influences the nature of the external behaviour and also the mental functioning of individuals. Challenges such as schedule of class times and the length of the learning period include the issues of a formative experiment combining active participation with a monitoring of the developmental changes faced by the study participants. Cleveland (2015) supported this concept in that educators have a potential of influencing learning positively or negatively and an individual or professional attitude will

immediately alter the awareness of the students towards their classes. Also, it is not advisable for educators to encourage students in the development of appropriate cognitive and socio-emotional strategies if they fail to succeed with the model adopted. Hence, it is the role of language teachers to deduce best practice in improving and enriching their experience of delivering to their own learners for the sake of ensuring that as a teacher they are undertaking to teach their students to the best of their ability.

2.8.8 Analysis of Activity System Dynamics: Analyses of the Context for Implementing the Curriculum

According to McKernan (2008), teachers are role models who should enhance understanding and acceptance between students from different backgrounds, be fair, just, provide equal opportunities to students, and be innovative and creative. Thus, the teachers' role is important in the development and implementation stages of the curriculum. This is important for teachers to be more effective in class and be able to meet students' needs. However, according to a study done in the UAE, when asked: "Are you aware of the national goals for the UAE educational system?", none knew the answer out of 27 teachers questioned (McKernan, 2008). It seems not many teachers are directly involved in the development of the curriculum. The UAE's MOE is aware that there is a lack of coherence between the curriculum development and delivery. Such findings informed our decision to gather data from both teachers and curriculum designers.

Burnett (2012) argues that a majority of the English teachers have expressed their disapproval of material recommended to aid teaching in high school. The majority of those who disapprove of the materials claim that they lack relevance in the current world system (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). The materials prescribed in the curriculum are normally

introduced to schools without proper training and piloting (Burnett, 2012). As a result of unfocused guidelines to enforcing the material, teachers tend to use their individual approaches to enforce the curriculum in public schools (Holsgrove et al., 1998). Lack of proper coordination to ensure proper transition in enforcing a new syllabus creates a distorted curriculum approach in public schools. Thus, it is very crucial teachers are involved along with experts and other stakeholder in the curriculum development process (CDC, 2012) and this thesis has sought to gather and analyse their opinions.

2.9   Teachers' Beliefs and Perceptions

Individuals perceive the world in unique ways. The differences in perception are caused by the distinctive beliefs of each. The term 'belief' has been defined in various ways regarding the context in which it is applied. Pajares (1992) defines the term 'beliefs' as an individual's personal conviction concerning a specific subject, which shapes an individual's way of both receiving information about a subject and acting in a specific situation. According to Pehkonen and Pietilä (2003), a belief is a kind of knowledge that is subjective and experience-based. In regards to this work, a belief is a proposition, which may be consciously or unconsciously held and is accepted as true by the individual, thus serving as a guide to thought and behaviour (AlAlili, 2014).

Teachers portray various beliefs and perceptions which impact their teaching and their classroom practices in general. Teachers' beliefs, attitudes and philosophies influence educational processes. This means that teachers' beliefs are closely connected to their strategies for coping with daily challenges and influence the educational outcomes. According to Gilakjani & Sabouri (2017), teachers' beliefs play a key role in classroom practices and their professional development. The authors added that teachers' beliefs

identify their real behaviour towards their learners. They concluded that what educators believe will have a high impact on forming active teaching methods and will bring about a considerable amount of progress in learners' language capabilities. It is, therefore, teachers' beliefs that have a significant role in the success of any reforms. Van Driel et al. (2001) argue that reform efforts have often been unsuccessful because of top-down approaches, which failed to take teachers' beliefs and perceptions into account. Research into the implementation of curriculum should therefore seek to uncover teachers' beliefs.

2.9.1 Features and Characteristics of Beliefs

Researchers have identified several distinctive characteristics of beliefs. Foremost, they can be existential presumptions. This trait constitutes the personal truth that one holds which is not universal. Personal beliefs are based on either chance or the intense experience of the individual. According to Eichler & Erens (2015), a teacher's individual reasoning is why select specific content and why he/she prefers a specific teaching style. A teacher may genuinely believe that didactic explaining prompts learning, as outlined by Kind (2016). Alternatively, ideals are the second characteristic of beliefs. The author clarified that it also involves creating fantasy worlds without any direct experience (Kind, 2016). Teachers may generate ideal environments, for example, to prompt children's learning.

Belief systems incorporate effective and evaluative loading. Nespor (1987) assumed that beliefs exist beyond an individual's control or knowledge and that they include effective and evaluative components that are more powerful than knowledge. The feature stipulates that feelings, moods and subjective evaluation which are determined by personal preferences critically influence a person's belief systems (Savasci-Acikalin, 2009). For instance, a teacher can use personal choice to determine how long to teach a particular topic. The last

distinctive characteristic of belief is the episodic structure. It entails that a person has an episodic memory that stores their past experiences which has an impact on the present (Savasci-Acikalin, 2009). For example, a teacher may use episodic memories to replicate the method that was used when he/she was originally taught similar material and apply it to their own students. Bräunling and Eichler (2015) identify aspects of a belief system which were explained as follows*:* "beliefs systems could be organized hierarchically including primary beliefs and derivative beliefs."

2.9.2   Sources of Beliefs and Perceptions

Teachers' beliefs and perceptions originate from various aspects. Foremost, personal experience is a significant source of an individual belief. The argument by AlAlili (2014) is that the personal experiences may develop from gender, ethnic background, culture, social-economic status, and the upbringing of an individual, among others. The interactions of a person with the environment create images that go into an individual's mind creating a belief. Personal experience will dictate how he or she handles a particular topic. A teacher from a minority race may, for example, treat a racism topic differently compared to that from the majority race.

Their experience with schooling and instruction is a significant source of teachers' beliefs. A personal prior experience as a student highly impacts beliefs and perceptions of how teaching should be done (AlAlili, ibid). When former pupils become teachers, they tend to use the same models and approaches that they were taught. However, this source of beliefs is hazardous as the models and strategies used in earlier years may not be applicable in the current days perhaps due to the advancement of the technology or curriculum changes. In their study, Abdi and Asadi (2015) summarized the sources of teachers' beliefs as follows:

i. Teachers' experience as language learners: Teachers know that they were previously learners and how they were taught and these experiences help in forming their beliefs about teaching.

ii. Teaching experience: Teaching experience is the main source of teachers' beliefs in how a specific method is used for a specific group of learners.

iii. Teachers' personality: Some teachers prefer a particular method because it corresponds to their character.

iv. Education-based or research-based principles. Teachers can get their beliefs from learning principles of second language acquisition research, education, or schools of thoughts such as psychology.

AlAlili (ibid) also identified that the experience with formal knowledge is a fundamental source of individual beliefs. Mostly the practice is generated from the pedagogical knowledge. Similarly, Gilakjani (2012) describes a process by which pedagogical knowledge obtained from teaching results in a gain of pedagogical beliefs which are essential in informing the teaching practices. Teaching decisions, approaches, and classroom practices such as how to respond to students' questions are as a result of beliefs. According to Richardson, (1996), three main sources of teacher beliefs are personal experience, experience with instruction, and experience with formal knowledge. Such studies have therefore informed the selection of the questions asked of teachers in this study.

2.9.3   Factors Shaping Teachers' Beliefs and Perceptions

Various factors shape teachers' beliefs and perceptions. Foremost, contextual factors fundamentally form one's beliefs, which relates to where the teacher works (Garrison, 2013). Classroom experiences are crucial in developing the beliefs of an individual. Kind (2016) provides an example that if a teacher encounters a group of students that do not concentrate on the last lesson of the week, an evaluative belief will be developed. A similar conclusion

would see the teacher avoid teaching the final lesson. Additionally, the school in which the instructor works can shape personal beliefs; a particular school culture can result in the development of a belief. Eventually, the reform policies in place shape the beliefs and perceptions. A reform policy, for instance, of having compulsory continuous assessments tests each week will cause an experience that leads to a personal conviction regarding the assessments.

Previous teaching experience shapes teacher beliefs. Through previous teaching both as an in-service and pre-service teacher, various experiences are encountered which contribute to beliefs. The indication is that the more the years of experience, the higher the number of beliefs that have developed. Professional coursework in teacher preparation can also shape beliefs and perceptions. The level of education attained by a teacher will lead to beliefs that will differ at various levels of education (Badia et al., 2014). Technology used during the preparation will, moreover, impact the views and perception of the current technology in use. Badia et al. (2015) reported that the factors that best predict the dependent variables are: the area of study, digital literacy, ICT training, and the frequency of Internet access, both inside and outside the school. The authors suggested that the integration of digital media in the classroom is not an isolated objective to be achieved separately from pedagogical goals, but is closely interrelated with teachers' educational aims. Recording the previous experience of teachers in this study was considered key when designing the data collection instrument.

2.9.4 Impacts of Teachers' Beliefs and Perceptions on Their Practice

The teachers' beliefs and perceptions have a significant effect on their classroom practices. A teacher's practice will be affected either negatively or positively by the nature

of the belief or perception. The beliefs and perceptions differ in each person due to factors such as previous experiences or personalities. Jimoyiannis (2008) provided an illustration that teachers have different perceptions towards formative assessments of students and use of technology in the learning process, among other educational issues. Peña-López (2009) was also clear that beliefs that promote and motivate ethical practices result in higher performance to the students being taught. The contrary belief leads to low performance.

The teachers' beliefs and perceptions influence their behaviour in the classroom. Hence, if a particular belief is contrary to an issue, the desired results would not be met as the teacher will have no moral duty or sense of obligation to teach the topic thus resulting in low student motivation (D'Elisa, 2015). For example, if a teacher believes that formative assessment cannot be used to improve learning, he/she will put less or no effort in implementing it in the class (Karim, 2015). As was discussed earlier, beliefs are gained through experiences, therefore inappropriate classroom practice by a teacher due to a particular belief will have impacts on the students' opinions and future characteristics (Beswick, 2004). Evidently, the teachers' beliefs and perceptions have a critical impact on students. In the conclusion of her study, AlAlili, (2014) remarked that teachers' beliefs not only affect their teaching practices, but also filter new input, which has significant implications for how teachers react toward and implement new educational reforms and innovations.

2.10   The Main Theoretical Framework

The activity theory is used as the main theoretical framework for this study. It is the theory that incorporates and adds on to the three main learning theories (behaviourist, cognitive and constructive). Activity theory was chosen, as it is richly detailed lens through

which to study the complexity of an English language curriculum in the UAE. Each of the learning theories focus on one aspect of learning, for example, the behaviourist theory believes that learning is as a result of reinforcement of negative or positive behaviour. It does not take into account context and cultural dimensions, whereas the activity theory builds on each on these theories and takes into account factors from the individual, contextual, and cultural level that have an effect on learning. The activity theory builds on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning which states that learning takes place when there is interaction between people and culture. This theory continued to grow and received further contributions from many theorists mentioned in this chapter such as Lave and Wenger and Engestrom who presented communities of practice and situated activity. This theory was applied in research when the subject area was new or work-based learning.

When it comes to curriculum design, theorists Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) believed the activity theory is the basis to design a dynamic curriculum. They proposed a six-step approach for using activity theory as a driving force in curriculum design. Each of the learning theories have an impact on curriculum development and instructional design, as discussed earlier. Choosing the activity theory as the main theoretical framework for this study allows for a deeper analysis of the many factors incorporated for a better understanding of how each factor affects the learning process.

When looking into all these theories one can see that curriculum is integration of culture, language and socialization. The activity theory provides a conceptual framework for curriculum analysis allowing for a greater level of understanding between all components: actions, activities, operations, subject's motives, and aspects of the social context. Thus, the activity theory is used because it provides a structure for inquiry and analysis for each of the

components all of which have an impact on curriculum development and the learning process.

When applying the activity theory six-step approach to analyse the curriculum and identify challenges, curriculum ideologies and learning theories discussed in the chapter will be included to have better understanding. For example, the first step of the six-step approach in analysing the curriculum is to clarify the purpose of the activity system, and to do so Schiros framework ideologies will be applied to identify which of the ideologies the curriculum aligns with. Knowing which curriculum ideology the curriculum aligns with provides an understanding of which learning theory has the most impact on curriculum development and instructional design. For example, if it is identified that a curriculum is aligned with social reconstruction ideology then it is most likely the curriculum will be designed in a way that wants students to think and solve societies' problems, which is more of a cognitive learning approach. Therefore, the activity theory is the main theoretical framework of this study and it is the umbrella that encompasses all the theories discussed in this research (Figure 2.6).
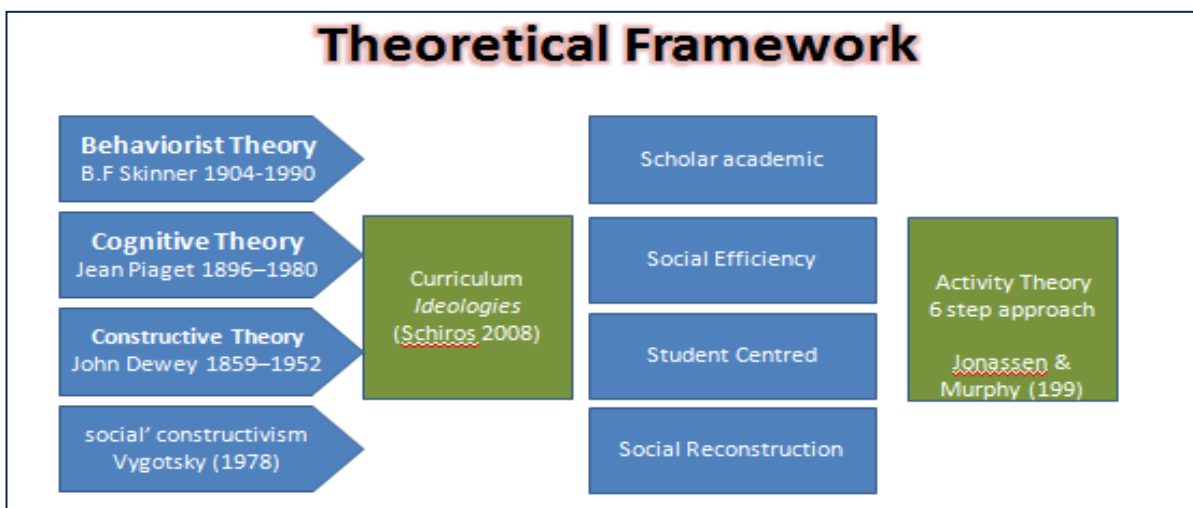
Figure 2.6: The Main Theoretical Framework (By Reseacher)

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the theoretical review pertaining to the English curriculum, use of activity theory and other basic concepts related to the current study. In addition, the review has highlighted teachers' beliefs and perceptions and their factors and impacts on educational processes. Generally, teachers' beliefs are crucial aspects of education as they impact on the classroom practices. For the successful implementation and use of a particular curriculum ideology, the teachers' and educators' beliefs and perceptions must comply with the distinctive beliefs of the ideology. On the other hand, teachers will consciously and unconsciously jeopardize the success of the curriculum and the learning process at large. Thus, any research on curriculum design and implementation would be best served by including data on teachers' beliefs.

After reviewing the literature, a gap is evident. There have been limited efforts to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the underlying issues and approaches for improvement in order to help students meet global standards for English proficiency in the UAE. Therefore, the researcher intends to fill the gap by investigating the current English curriculum in the UAE public schools. The next chapter offers details on the methodology adopted, revisits its philosophical underpinnings and explains how data were collected and analysed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

Research is considered to be the systematic grouping and logical analysing of knowledge for a given purpose (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed explanation of the research methodology adopted in facilitating the collection of data on the efficacy of the English language curriculum in UAE schools. Specifically, the research methods will explore how theory and ideological classification facilitate a deeper understanding of the UAE English curriculum including: the key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs towards the English language curriculum in the UAE and ongoing changes, key themes underlying the different curricula, and the main characteristics of the English language curriculum in the UAE before and after the reforms (ECART and MOE curricula).

Research methodology in the field of education was characterised during the last quarter of the 20th century by the qualitative versus quantitative debate.   Table (3.1) provides a summary of the primary differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Table 3.1: Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches: Creswell (2013, p.115)

Research agenda	Quantitative	Qualitative
Focus	Describe, explaining and predicting the nature of relationships between the study variables	Understanding and interpreting the research variables
Researcher	The investigator has minimal involvement in order to reduce bias	The investigator actively involved as either a participant or catalyst
Purpose	Seeks to test existing theories	Seeks to create in-depth understanding and build new theories or complement existing one
Sampling design	Makes use of probability-based sampling techniques	Utilizes non-probability-based sampling techniques

Researchers were once encouraged to choose one side or the other but there emerged a recognition of the benefits that using both could provide. Firestone (1986) argues that although the rhetoric of the approaches was very different, the results can complement each other and enhance our understanding of complex research topics.

The result of the understanding of the different methods is an increase in 'mixed methods' in which quantitative and qualitative data are integrated in order to strengthen investigative studies in educational research (Creswell, 2013). The most important aspect of any chosen method is that it suits the research question. Mixed methods research, therefore, tends to be used at present by most researchers unless the scope of the study is very large (national questionnaires) or very small (such as single-case medical studies). Sami (2016) argues that positive benefits are not as possible when utilising singular approaches in isolation compared with the greater and breadth of data yielded when a variety of approaches are used. At its most basic, a mixed methods approach supports researchers in highlighting trends through numerical investigation, and then exploring the findings in more detail (Sami, 2016).The resulting shift in educational research has seen a rise in triangulation of data that

involves the purposeful collection of data with dissimilar methods. This, it is hoped, will achieve a more accurate and valid reflection of results for a particular phenomenon.

In this study, it was important to investigate a variety of methods to best uncover the complex issues underpinning the reform of the English language curriculum. This chapter will thus explore the selected methods that best suit the key research question of this study summarised here: How best to uncover the key issues and underlying themes in the implementation of the English language curriculum in UAE government schools? Specifically, what theories or classifications can be used to deepen our understanding? And, what are the key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs towards the English language curriculum and ongoing changes?

The ideal choice of research methodologies are those endorsed through the study of relevant literature of research methodology. Data collection methods help in reaching the appropriate results that have an impact on the overall findings. This section describes the choice of instruments that were adopted to gather the relevant data. In this research, primary and secondary data collection methods are used (Connaway & Powell, 2010). The primary data method is used to gather information about a particular group using semi-structured interviews carried out by the researcher. Secondary data, on the other hand, is the description of the already existing data provided by previous researchers in a similar context (Creswell et al., 2003). It is a convenient way of collecting data to support the primary data. For this purpose, different search engines and databases were accessed (Goddard & Melville, 2003; Kothari, 2008). This study thus utilizes a mixture of methods, including survey questionnaire, content analysis and semi-structured interviews (Kumar, 2008).

3.1   Research Methods Overview

Following best practice in research, the study's objectives in collaboration with the designated philosophical positions seek to inform an ideal strategy to be adopted. As noted later in this chapter, this study adopts the use of both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Hence, the research strategy ought to be in tandem with the paradigms adopted to facilitate testing of the hypothesis and identification of the underlying relationships between the variables. The research strategy can be described as a path and plan of actions utilized by the investigator to facilitate a systematic research process (Saunders & Lewis, 2009) (Figure 3.1). Similarly, Cargan (2007) posited that possessing an ideal research strategy is normally critical to facilitate that the appropriate answers to the research questions are successfully identified. Research strategies from which the researcher can select are case study, action research, survey, and ethnographic studies. It is important to note that there is no strategy deemed superior; instead the strategy that suits the research question is considered to be the best. The selection is dependent on the nature of the study objectives, the ability to access data, and type of collected data (Saunders et al., 2012).

The present study is based on a mixed methods research approach. In order to facilitate an in-depth study, a case study strategy was selected. The case study supports the existence of an ideal study scope with broad coverage of the samples of study. However, the limited number of respondents in the study reduces the efficacy of this approach in sourcing a large amount of information. To examine the UAE education system, cross-case analysis of four chosen curriculum developers was used, where their beliefs and prescriptions regarding the English language ECART and MOE curricula are compared and contrasted.

This section offers a detailed exploration of methods that underpin this research study. It explains the research design that was selected in consideration of the research questions and purposes. This section also gives specific details on the quantitative and qualitative approaches used to collect and analyse the data collected using survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, audio recording, and content analysis. The study used the case study method to allow for an in-depth focus on the comparing and contrasting of two different curricula. Data collection was carried out using survey questionnaires, focus group interviews and content analysis. A discussion on the implementation of research and sampling methods is also provided. Further, ethical issues and considerations are discussed.
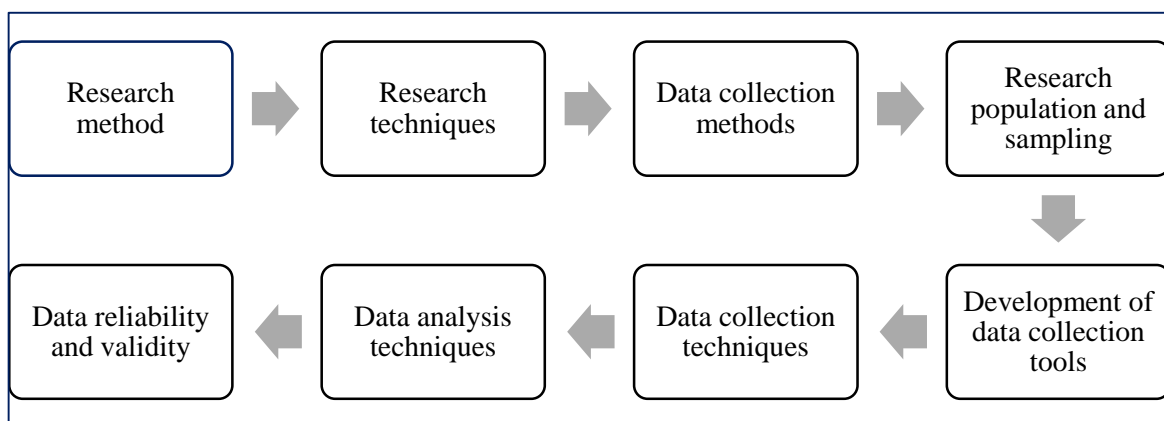
Figure 3.1: Research Methods Outline: Saunders & Lewis (2009, p.516)

It is instrumental to deduce the appropriate reasoning (that is, research approach) behind the choice of the specific research methods to be taken into account (Luton, 2010). In this study, a deductive approach is taken where a comprehensive review targeting the already available literature and documents along with interviews was carried out with the purpose of supporting elaborate theoretical positions.

3.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to researching the English Language Curriculum

What methods have been used to study the English language curriculum to date? How have researchers compared and contrasted different curricula? Have there been many researchers that sought to carry out studies within the UAE high schools? What theories and categorizations will allow us a deeper understanding of the curriculum document?

It is tempting to theorize that one can compare and contrast curricula by having two offered at once with a test group taking curriculum A and a control group taking curriculum B. A final test would indicate the effectiveness of one over the other. However, even when the same teacher is instructing the same grade cohort at different times in the week, the students' results can differ widely: school, family and student variables all impact curriculum delivery (National Academic Press, 2004). For such reasons, even a quasi-experimental approach was not considered as the conditions (such as both curricula being offered at the same time) were not present. Here, instead, qualitative research methods using content analysis techniques were utilized to compare and contrast the ECART and MOE curricula (as well as teachers' beliefs and perspectives). The qualitative research was carried out under closed and controlled settings (Luton, 2010). The outcome of this is an enhancing of the richness and depth of the sourced information. Qualitative data collection is equally highly effective in the areas characterized by diversity and conflicting theoretical perspectives in active existence as they manage to explain all the underlying issues explicitly (Miller & Tsang, 2011).

The qualitative approach emerged in the latter half of the 20th century in response to the need to ask 'why' as well as who, what and when. The approach was considered to be

more in-depth, more subjective and more focused on the complexity of human interaction. The research is inductive in nature, and the researcher seeks to add interpretation to human interaction in natural settings. In an ethnographic research study, the researcher enters the teaching and learning space and observes in order to understand the social and cultural underpinnings, not from the viewpoint of an outside observer, but instead from within. The research methods proposed in this study draw on both ethnography and phenomenology (Bryman, 2004) as a deeper understanding of English language classroom activity is sought in order to enhance our understanding of how English is taught and learned in the UAE. Qualitative research helps in understanding the research phenomena in an in-depth way. It will also identify effective techniques to examine the area or event, which is not easy to quantify or measure correctly (Lavrakas, 2008).

3.2.1 Comparative Case Study Approach

For both qualitative content analysis and cross-case analysis, a constant comparative method is considered effective because it allows pieces of different and the same data sets such as interviews, field notes or documents to be compared. Categories can be formed allowing for better understanding of how teachers' beliefs and perceptions, curriculum ideologies and theories are supported. In this study, the construction of categories is carried out through content analysis of the curriculum and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative knowledge analysis involves organising, accounting for and creating a sense of the information in terms of the participants' replies, noting patterns, themes, classes and regularities (Cohen et al., 2007). It should also be noted that there is no single means of analysing and presenting the info, except that it should 'fit the purpose'. The intention of my study is to contribute to the prevailing data on the English language curriculum and to come

back to the literature to examine if the findings are still applicable. As such, the theoretical framework underpinning the study is particularly focused on curriculum analysis. Exploitation of important keywords from the data enables the researcher to contextualise knowledge analysis in the existing analysis, and additionally enables the search for similarities and/or disparities.

The aim of employing a case study approach is to achieve a detailed and elaborated understanding of a specific case by examining aspects of it thoroughly. This is in line with the aims of this study in supplying an in-depth understanding and outline of teacher leadership development. The one key characteristic of case study analysis lies in delimiting the article of the study, specifically the case (Merriam, 2009). As Cresswell (2008) states, a case study is an in-depth exploration of a finite system. Being finite suggests being distinctive, in step with place and time and participant characteristics (McMillan & Schumacher, 2011). It is one entity, a unit around which a boundary is placed (Merriam, 2009). No matter whether or not the term 'system', 'event' or 'case' is employed, the stress is on one instance of one thing or one entity, not on a technique. In line with these definitions, it is possible for a case study to be either quantitative or qualitative in nature, or both. During this study, a qualitative case study is conducted.

One of the strengths of the case study approach is that it permits the researcher to use a range of sources, of information and of analysis strategies as a part of the investigation (Scapens, 2011). This, in turn, facilitates the validation of information through triangulation. The case study additionally offers a way to explore complicated social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomena (Vega, 2018). The best thing about employing a case study approach is that it permits the researcher to

contend with the subtleties and intricacies of complicated social things (Vega, 2018). This leads to an in-depth and holistic account of the case. Lastly, a case study is versatile, neither time-dependant nor unnatural by technique. A researcher carrying out a case study is alert to shifts and can uncover unlooked-for consequences (Scapens, 2011).

A case study refers to the study of the singular, the actual, the distinctive (Simons, 2009). Within the literature on case studies, different authors identify the case study as a technique, a method and an approach. For the purpose of this analysis, Simons' (2009) definition will be utilized, given his preference for the terms he uses in his approach. In other words, the case study features an analysis of intent and method that affects the areas of unit that have been chosen to assemble information. The first purpose for selecting a case study is to explore the quality of one case, in this instance, curriculum reform. Simons (2009) defines the case study generally as that method of conducting a systematic, vital inquiry into development of selection and generating understanding to contribute to additive knowledge of the subject. In addition, Thomas (2009) and Lichtman (2006) assert that a case study involves an in-depth analysis of one case or a limited set of cases. The 'case' that forms the idea of the investigation is often something that already exists (Descombe, 2007); it is a 'naturally occurring' development principle. In step with Merriam (1998), the qualitative case study is outlined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of one entity, phenomenon, or unit. Merriam's (2009) definition also informs this study: specifically, a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a finite system. Part of the confusion between the different types of cases results from close case studies which is the method of conducting a case study which is conflated with each unit of the study (the case) and, therefore, the product of this kind of study (Merriam, 2009). Also, when analysing curriculum, our primary focus is on the current National English language curriculum which

is set out by MOE, and the ECART, which was set out by ADEC. As these curricula are standard and national, we are able to sample 100% of the existing curricula. Related information such as the curriculum texts, lesson plans, test samples and so on were obtained for analysis. Samples from the public schools in Abu Dhabi Emirate were selected because only the public schools in Abu Dhabi have implemented the ECART curriculum and as of Sept 2018, National English Language Curriculum was implemented in all schools in UAE including Abu Dhabi's.

Although an extensive, in-depth description and analysis is desired, researchers might not be able to dedicate continuous research time to such interactions in such an endeavour. Qualitative case studies are also restricted by the sensitivity and integrity of the scientist (Rosalie & Hilde, 2017). As a result, subjective bias may be a constant threat to objective information-gathering and analysing. Any limitations involve the problems of responsibility, validity and generalisability. Case studies are typically perceived as manufacturing 'soft' information and lacking the degree of rigour expected of scientific discipline analysis (Rosalie & Hilde, 2017). Access to documents, individuals and settings will result in moral concerns such as confidentiality. Lastly, it is tough for case study researchers to obtain results as they naturally occur with no impact arising from their presence. Observer effects have to be taken into consideration throughout information sorting and analysis.

Content analysis allows the researcher, through the analysis of human communication, to gain insight into human behaviour (Fraenkel et al., 2011). In this case, the actual curriculum document is the text on which analysis is performed. The research is conducted through developing appropriate categories to use for subsequent comparison so

that the researcher can illuminate what is being investigated. Thus, it is through the content analysis one is able to see trends in schooling, teaching, teachers' beliefs and perspectives, and gain a better understanding of any patterns that arise in the curriculum as it is documented.

3.2.2 Theories or categorizations which will deepen our understanding of curriculum

In the context of this study, the focus is on the government's high schools' English Language curricula, the Continuous Assessment Rich Tasks (ECART) in 2009 by ADEC, and the MOE National English Language Curriculum introduced in September 2018. The curriculum information was collected using a qualitative approach of content analysis, which is considered as secondary data. Qualitative techniques are used to explore content analysis for both comparing and contrasting the curriculum. With respect to curriculum analysis, rubrics are used to provide a classification system and measurement of the textual data, based on an adaptation of the work of other researchers who have undertaken syllabus analysis. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Schiro (2008) proposed four distinct ideologies curriculum philosophies, which have been reviewed and selected to inform this study: Scholar-Academic, Social Efficiency, Learner-Centred, and Social Reconstruction. By testing the two curricula as to which ideology informs their design and development, we are provided with insight into how the documents compare and contrast. Such a categorisation illuminates the underlying premise such as the type of content that should be taught, the nature of the learning institution, how instruction should be carried out, and which assessment techniques are appropriate.

The curriculum was analysed through the use of content analysis in which special attention to the phrases, words, and statements that are within the curriculum of Shiro's

(2008) framework ideologies. It was also possible to evaluate how curriculum characteristics are embedded in all the ideologies, including intent, content, design, implementation, assessment and evaluation.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), content analysis is a technique by means of which researchers gain an insight into human behaviour through an examination of communication. Such an investigation is an indirect way of researching human behaviour. The research is conducted through developing appropriate categories to use for subsequent comparison so that the researcher can illuminate what he or she is investigating. Content analysis is widely applicable in educational research especially curriculum design. Some applications of content analysis in educational research involve describing trends in schooling, gaining an insight into how teachers feel about their job, and understanding organizational patterns of a school (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

After reviewing the literature on comparing and contrasting the English language curriculum and teachers' perceptions and beliefs, activity theory was adopted as an appropriate framework alongside Schiro's (ibid) ideologies. Activity theory is identified as more of a descriptive approach as opposed to the prescriptive method of analysis. As has been discussed, it covers a wide range of viewpoints with which to compare and contrast curricula. It is also the culmination of the evolution of related theory. In this case, the six steps proposed by Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy in 1999 offer a rubric used to support different research methods. There are equally affordances and limitations used in selecting the theory, with the first one being the assumption that all studies are a recommendation of ethnographic research focused on the real-life studies within a natural context.

In order to compare and contrast the English language curricula used in UAE schools (supported by the Emirati government, they are often called 'local' schools) it is also essential to evaluate the research paradigm or philosophy. Bryman (2004) described the research paradigm as: "the set of beliefs that prescribes the process of implementation of the research within a particular discipline and the extent to which the results are interpreted" (p. 353). As Bryman (ibid) suggests, the research paradigm is comprised of a distinct set of beliefs influencing the selection of research theories affecting research approaches and their subsequent interpretations. The most common paradigms in research include positivism and interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.2.3 Research Tools, Methods and Paradigms of Positivism and Interpretivism

The current study employs a mixed methodology reach design in which both positivist and interpretivism paradigms are adopted. First, the positivism paradigm is based on the assumption that the reality pertaining to the research phenomena is both stable and can be evaluated or investigated objectively. This paradigm is most commonly linked to natural sciences. Considering a different perspective, the paradigm can be used in predicting on the research phenomena, which can be isolated, repetitive and consistent with the set of observations regarding the relationships made in traditional practice. Nevertheless, modern practice can adopt this approach as it is effective in different areas of the study of languages. The increased preference to integrate the positivism paradigm in the research of another nature other than natural sciences is attributed to its capacity of generating objective, solid and reputable results in a systematic manner.

The interpretivism paradigm is adopted due to its capacity of countering the research motives of predictions, controls and viewing studies, which are linked to social sciences. The

interpretivist approach emphasizes that distinct procedures employed in understanding that individuals and their entities ought to be distinctly unique, as opposed to those in the area of natural sciences, since it is believed all individuals have different views and perceptions in understanding and interpreting the world around them (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The use of an interpretivism approach in this study leads to contending that the aspect of reality should be understood comprehensively through a subjective interpretation and intervention. The interpretivism paradigm was adopted in the current study as the study variables under evaluation are all socially constructed (English as a foreign language, medium of instruction, learning English, the reform of the English curriculum). Consequently, the impact of investigating the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of the social actors are eminent (Grant & Perren, 2002).

In the current study, when comparing, contrasting and looking for a relationship or correlation one can see that a positivist approach would be superior. When comparing and contrasting the curricula using tables, diagrams and such methods, the researcher is looking for a relationship and correlation between two or more variables. Thus, the positivist approach is employed in exploring a relationship or correlation between the ECART and MOE curriculum ideologies to see to which extent both curricula are aligned to curriculum ideologies. Whereas, the interpretivism approach is employed through the interview with curriculum developers because the researcher is assisting in uncovering a range of different factors which may be leading to the success or failures of the English language curriculum reforms and the teaching and learning processes in the UAE education sector. Through this process, it becomes possible to deduce on the causal relationships on an empirical basis or facilitating testing of the identified hypothesis. Table (3.2) shows the paradigms, methods and tools.

Table 3.2: Paradigms, Methods and Tools: Collis & Hussey (2003, p.48)

Paradigm	Methods (primarily)	Data collection tools (examples)
Positivist/ Postpositivist	Quantitative. Although qualitative methods can be used within this paradigm, quantitative methods tend to be predominant (Douglas, 2018)	Experiments Quasi-experiments Tests Scales
Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Qualitative methods predominate although quantitative methods may also be utilised	Interviews Observations Document reviews Visual data analysis
Transformative	Qualitative methods with quantitative and mixed methods. *Contextual and historical factors described, especially as they relate to oppression* (Bruno 2014; Douglas, 2018)	Diverse range of tools - particularly needs to avoid discrimination. Eg: sexism, racism, and homophobia
Pragmatic	Qualitative and/or quantitative methods may be employed. Methods are matched to the specific questions and purpose of the research	May include tools from both positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Eg. interviews, observations, testing and experiments

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Content Analysis: Distinguish Main Characteristics of English Language Curriculum

An ideology is seen as a set of ideas, beliefs, and values a person or groups of people have on how the world should be organized and function (Kondakçı, 2013). There are a number of curriculum ideologies, which were tested using the qualitative data collected. They include scholar-academic, social efficiency, learner-centred and social reconstruction. Each ideology has its own different system consisting of content, design, intent, assessment, evaluation and implementation (Kondakçı, 2013).

In the qualitative method and use of content analysis, each curriculum is compared and contrasted to distinguish the main characteristics and explore any correlations and relationships between the ECART and MOE curricula based on Jonessen's 6 steps. In addition, to see to what extent ADEC and MOE curriculum aligned to each of Schiro's ideologies. This was done by adapting an instrument from Schiro's (2008) validated standard inventory for curriculum analysis. The instrument consisted of six questions, the answers to which were entered onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was used in order to sort and shift words, phrases, and statements. Each statement, phrase, and word was classified according to the characteristics of the two curricula which helped distinguish which of Schiro's ideologies ECART and MOE aligned with. Thus, each curriculum was analysed with particular attention to phrases, words, and statements using Schiro's framework of ideologies. The data analysis included an evaluation of the characteristics of the curriculum, with reference to: intent, content, design, implementation, assessment, and evaluation.

3.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews: Key Issues and Underlying Themes in the Implementation of English Language Curriculum

Interviews were also used to generate data in the present study. As has been discussed, collecting data on teachers' beliefs is essential. Data was collected through the adoption of semi-structured interviews with ADEC curriculum developers to point out their beliefs and perceptions of the curriculum reforms, the ECART curriculum and the MOE curriculum which is now implemented in all high schools. The use of semi-structured interviews targeting the curriculum developers is considered to be primary data.

The purpose of open-ended questions is not to place things in someone's mind, instead it is to access the angle of the person being interviewed (Gordon & Bang, 2002). It

is crucial for the questioner to confirm that the person being interviewed clearly understands that the investigator does not hold any preconceived biases concerning the result of the study. As compared to a form, individuals are a lot more willing to speak regarding their experiences than to record them on paper. Once rapport is established, the interviewee may be willing to share that which they might be reluctant to place into writing. Another advantage of interviewing is that the questioner is ready to clarify the aim of the investigation. Further, if queries are misinterpreted, the questioner could follow up with an instructive question. Throughout the interview, there is potential for the questioner to gauge the sincerity and insight of the responder. It is possible that the questioner could stimulate the subject's insight into his or her own experiences, thereby exploring vital areas not anticipated within the original range of the investigation (Best, 2006).

The semi-structured interview questions were adopted from previous work by Al Alili (2014) in which she examined teachers' beliefs and practices in regard to curriculum reform. Her interview questions were relevant because they were designed in such a fashion to replicate the ideas found in the literature. Knowledge from semi-structured interviews and document analysis were categorized in line with the key themes of the study. The themes that emerged from the content analysis were seen in the interview questions designed by Al Alili (2014). The results are given in the graphs and analysis that follow in Chapter 4. Knowledge analysis targeted the respondents of all of the analysis queries by specializing the data collected from the triangulation of data.

For the interviews, four curriculum developers working for ADEK were selected to be interviewed. The interviews took about 40 minutes each (Appendix B). Not all questions were asked from the questionnaire, only those that were most relevant to the specific

curriculum developer. The interviews were conducted back to back within the same day. They were recorded and later the recordings were transcribed and coded to identify any recurring themes across all interviews. The transcription and coding took a few hours for each interview. Appendix C contains the transcription of one of the interviews.

3.3.3 Survey Questionnaire: Key Stakeholders' Beliefs towards the Ongoing Curriculum Reform

In a quantitative approach, the researcher uses primary sources to demonstrate the phenomena of interest through the exploitation of the available data in numerical form. This type of data can hence be analysed through the use of statistical-based approaches. Regarding appropriateness, quantitative data is ideal in research contexts where the fundamental focus is on the provision of answers to link to questions related to how often, how much, how many and who. As noted by Cargan (2007), these forms of questions demand the presence of numerical data. One of the most significant characteristics distinguishing a quantitative approach from others is its capacity to focus on precise measurements of the topic under investigation (Saunders et al., 2012).

The data was collected from those involved in teaching English in UAE high schools. A survey questionnaire was designed and developed to collect the research data (Appendix A). The same questions from the semi-structured interviews were adopted in survey questionnaire form. The survey questionnaire comprises three parts: the first part contains the demographic information about the respondents; the other parts contain the research questions. Table (3.3) shows the distribution of the survey questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire was handed out to about 40 high school English teachers of which only 14 have completed the questionnaire. The teachers were given a week to complete the questionnaire.

Table 3. 3: Distribution of the Survey Questionnaire

Part	No. of Questions
Demographic information	6
Past experiences as an EFL learner	9
Past experiences in postsecondary education	5
Past teaching experiences	4
Current beliefs about EFL teaching and learning	7
Current beliefs about EFL assessments (to be completed by Grade 9-10 teachers)	21
Current beliefs about EFL assessments (to be completed by Grade 11-12 teachers)	21
The context of teaching and assessment	14

The survey questions use the Likert scale as: 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

3.3.4 Activity Theory: Identify Issues that Affect or Influence Learning Process

To identify issues that affect or influence the learning process, the activity theory was used as the control group in the analysis process. However, as activity theory is more of a descriptive lens than a prescriptive method of analysis, the six steps proposed by Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy provide a rubric for supporting a variety of different research methods. In this study, the activity theory six-step rubric was adopted to further analyse the curriculum in identifying issues that affect or influence the learning process.

The activity theory six-step approach provides a conceptual framework analysis for the study because it allows for the analysis of all components in the activity theory figure (2.4) in which when trying to understand, we will have to include the results collected from the three data collection methods used: content analyses, semi-structured interview and survey questionnaire.

The activity theory is used for analysis of the MOE and ECART curriculum with the adaption of Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy's six-step approach, in which they have used the activity theory in designing a dynamic curriculum. Thus, the six-step approach used the activity theory to design a curriculum and in this study it will be used to analyse existing curricula for deeper understanding and identifying issues and challenges in the curriculum and learning process. It is the overarching theory that allows for discussion and the analysis of the entire process of curriculum reform of the English Language Curriculum in the UAE. Table (3.4) below outlines the connection between the six steps proposed by Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy in 1999 and the data collection and analysis of this research study.

Table 3. 4: The Conceptual Framework adopted to Analyse the Data (By Researcher)

Six steps proposed by Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999).	Will focus on…	Data collection and Analysis
Clarify the purpose of the activity system	Examine driving force behind the evolution of UAE Curriculum. -Goals and motives behind the development of the English Language curriculum ECART and MOE	-Introduction to the work and presentation of an overview of the context of English language curriculum reform in the UAE - Literature review - Content analysis- Supported Schiro's Ideologies & mapping inventory tool. -Semi-Structured Interviews

Analyse the activity context	Developing integrated outcomes framework	- Content analysis- Supported Schiro's Ideologies & mapping inventory tool.
	-All activities subject engages with the context of the system. (For example, communicative techniques, 21st century skills etc.)	-Survey Questionnaire
Analyse the activity system	To accomplish activity purpose through interacting components.	- Content analysis- Supported Schiro's Ideologies & mapping inventory tool.
	-Exam system -Classroom Practices	-Survey Questionnaire
Analyse the activity structure	All Activities the subject engages in within the system.	-Content analysis- Supported Schiro's Ideologies & mapping inventory tool.
	- why subjects are doing things and how they are being done.	- Survey Questionnaire
Analyse tools and mediators	-Tools used as mediator in activity system such as computers, class schedules etc.	-Content analysis- Supported Schiro's Ideologies & mapping inventory tool.
Analyse activity system dynamics.	How all components interact with one another.	-Content analysis- Supported Schiro's Ideologies & mapping inventory tool.
	-Teachers role	- Survey Questionnaire -Semi-Structured Interviews

The first step in the approach is to clarify the purpose of the activity system. This requires a deeper look into the curriculum aims and objectives, which can be classified through the content analysis method where Schiro's ideologies-curriculum mapping is used. This can help identify if the MOE and ECART curricula align with their purpose. Step 2 is the analysis of the context where it looks at all the activities the subject engages with in the context of system inorder to fulfill aims/ purpose of the overall system. Step 3 requires analysing the activity system, which is analysis of all components involved in the curriculum figure (2.4). The data collection methods used will help give a better understanding of each component in the activity system and see whether there are challenges that arise in each component. Step 4 analyses the activity structure, which gives purpose to the activity system.

The content analysis applied in Schiro's curriculum mapping allows for a look into all the activities, actions and operations, which engage the subject (in this study, the learner). Step 5 analyses the tools and mediators that mediate human activities. We can identify the tools used to mediate and control outcomes through the data collection methods used in which was content analysis as stated in table (3.4). The last step analyses the dynamics of the activity, which looks at how all components affect each other. Here we can focus on teachers' roles from all data collection since it is believed that their role is most crucial in the learning process and curriculum success. By analysing all the components in the activity theory, the study will be able to facilitate improvements to the English Language curriculum.

The figure (3.2) below is an example of how the activity theory sets out the complex interrelationship that exists within Entrepreneurship education. Here one can clearly see that benefit of using a multi-lens approach to uncover a wide range of factors that are involved in the process. As shown in figure (3.2), similarly the Activity theory was applied to uncover a wide range of factors of ECART and MOE curriculum as shown in figure (3.3) and figure (3.4). The activity theory provided a variety of ways to look at a curriculum focused from the rules and customs, the tools, the outcomes and the subjects covered etc. When compared to the curriculum below the difference in the two is more pronounced.
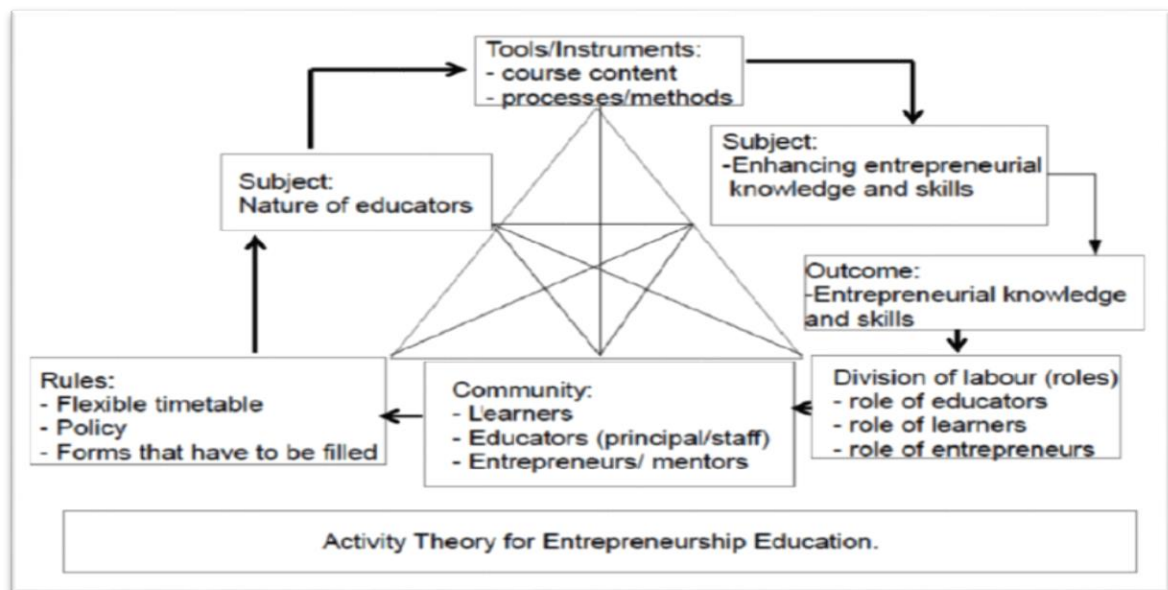
Figure 3.2: Activity Theory for Entrepreneurship Education: Nchu, Tengeh and Hassan (2015, p.513)
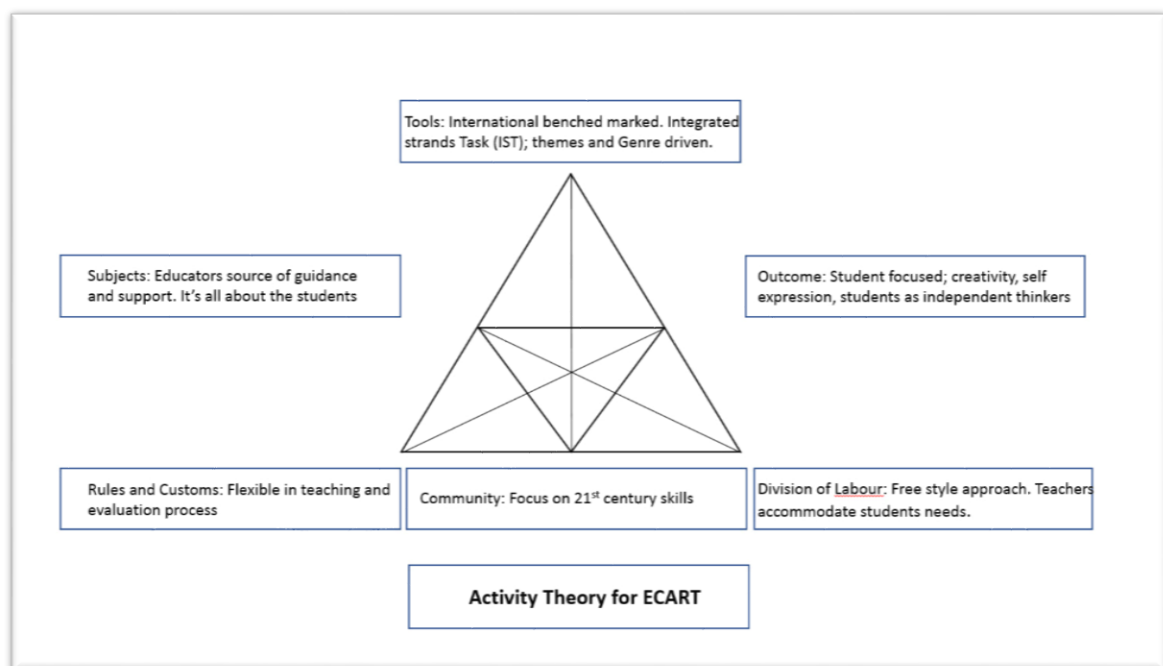
Figure 3.3: Activity Theory for ECART (By Researcher)
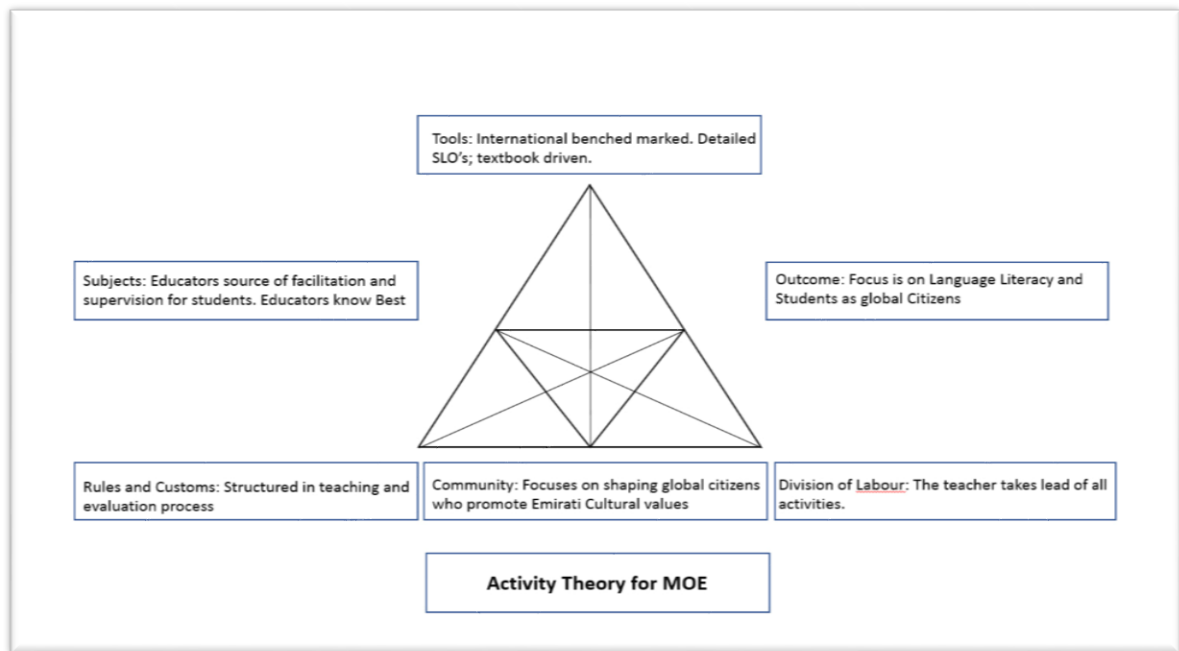
Figure 3.4: Activity Theory for MOE (By Researcher)

3.4 Research Setting, Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Research Setting

In research, the sample comprises a representative subset of the targeted population. In this case, such a subgroup is sampled as a representative of the overall population. The study focused on the UAE education sector; the primary population of interest was curriculum developers involved in design of curriculum and the English teachers involved in the implementation of the English curriculum. The schools involved in the study have based their operations in the education sector in UAE offering a broad set of learning options. Additionally, the setting of the study was in Abu Dhabi in the UAE, a city currently categorized as the leading economy in the Middle East. The education sector is perceived in this study as a critical enabler of the success of the UAE economy and continues to play a significant role owing to the diversifications of the country's economy. Also, a rise in the

number of expatriates in the country has influenced the need for local players to increase their learning scope to gain improved potential to work for different companies in the country's employment industry.

The use of the form permits the researcher to gather a high proportion of usable answers from an outsized sample. There are square measures and three procedures for eliciting opinions and beliefs that are used extensively in opinion research, specifically (1) the Thurston technique; (2) the Likert method; and (3) the linguistics differential. Within the present study, the Likert methodology was used as this was the most applicable level for the scope of the study, based on a review of the literature. The questionnaires comprised 25 questions and consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. This enabled the researcher to collect factual information, and allowed for insight into the respondents' frame of reference and the exploration of the reasons for their responses. The second methodology of knowledge assortment used was semi-structured interviews.

3.4.2 Population Sampling Process

As mentioned above, a sample can be defined as a group of individuals that could represent the targeted population and ensure the generalization of the results. The sampling has two parts, sampling technique and sample size (Kothari, 2008). A sample that meets the purpose of the research is essential. The participants were English language teachers from the public high schools and curriculum developers from ADEK. When choosing key participants, the perspective is selective, limited, and biased (Patton, 2001). Thus, triangulation with other data is needed so as to bring in different perspectives to crosscheck and validate findings. The participants were selected based on specific criteria. For example, the teachers chosen are teachers who teach the English language.

Sampling of Schools

For the survey questionnaire, the teachers who were interviewed were all from National Public High Schools in the Emirates of Abu Dhabi. I went to a couple of schools (both boys schools and girls schools) which were situated in different areas. Since all they were all public school, most of the teachers and students were UAE nationals. I met with the school principal and provided my ethics form and introduced myself. I requested their approval to get their teachers involved in completing a survey questionnaire about "Teachers Beliefs about ongoing Curriculum Reforms". All of the school principals asked me to leave the questionnaire behind and they will have their teachers complete it on their own time. After a week, I went to collect the questionnaires and found a few of the schools decided not to complete the questionnaire despite it being confidential. At the time, I collected my data, MOE curriculum was being introduced at grade 11 and 12 while grade 10-11 still followed ECART. This made my data collection richer because I was able to get information from teachers who had experience with teaching both the ECART and MOE.

In carrying out the Semi-Structured interviews, I went into Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), which at the time was known as Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) before their merger with MOE in 2018-2019. I called ahead of time and booked an appointment with all 4 of the curriculum developers, all of which are expats. Once I met them, I explained the aim of the interviews. All of the curriculum developers were very pleasant and open, but at times were reluctant to answer some of the questions. In addition, they provided me with all the curriculum documents and samples I required for my content analysis.

Sampling of High Schools Teacher and Curriculum Developers

For the survey questionnaire, teachers who taught English Grade 9 to 12 were chosen for the study. The reason I choose teachers from 9-12 is that they provide a more comprehensive understanding of the English language curriculum in freshmen and senior years. Also, the teachers who were selected all have experience teaching both ECART and the MOE curriculum resulting in an enhanced comparison between the 2 curriculums. For the semi-structured interviews, I choose all the 4 curriculum developers working in ADEC and interviewed them all for better understanding of issues raised in the design, implementation and reforms of the curriculum.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

The level to which a particular study finding can be perceived as either valid or reliable is dependent on whether the questionnaires or interviews used in the data collection are valid and dependable. According to Drost (2011), the validity is the level to which the research instruments adopted in measuring the research aspects are intended to be measured by a researcher. Reliability identifies the degree to which the results sourced in a study comprise an accurate representation of the targeted population and their consistency over a set period (Silverman, 2016).

The current study adopted the recommendations by Saunders et al. (2012) to ensure that the study is valid and reliable. This included addressing content, construct and external validity. For the content validity, the researcher opted for providing that all the critical dimensions and elements of the considered concepts were delineated efficiently. Content validity was attained by referring to a comprehensive review of literature, thereby ensuring

that all the items used in the interview and questionnaire were a reflection of the successful change of the English curriculum in the UAE. With regard to reliability, all the information about each curriculum was collected from institutions, websites and ADEC itself and all the information was consistent with each other.

3.5.1 Reliability

Reliability is problematic within the social sciences as human behaviour is not static. Dependableness in analysis is predicated on the idea that there is one reality and that learning repeatedly can manufacture equivalent results. This can be incongruent with qualitative, case study analysis where researchers look to justify and explain their world (Jun-Hwa et al, 2018; Merriam, 2009). As there are several interpretations of what is happening, there are no normal means by which to determine dependableness.

The vital question for qualitative analysis is whether or not the results are in keeping with the information collected. This phenomenon can be called dependability or consistency. With relevant information sorting procedures, a measure of dependableness can be applied. The dependableness of questionnaires is also supported by a second administration of the instrument with a subsample and the scrutiny of the responses, together with those of the primary data collection instrument. Dependableness may be calculable by scrutinizing responses of associate degree and/or alternate type with the first type (Sunder et al, 2015). In this case, a questionnaire form was administered. The dependableness of the form was established by correlating the findings with different sources. The variables which were identified in the questionnaire were supported by previous studies and were cross-checked with responses to the interview questions. Within the interview method, dependableness is also evaluated by restating a matter in a different way, at a later stage in the interview. Re-

interviewing might give another estimate of the consistency of responses. During this study, a semi-structured interview was used because it is the primary means of obtaining a variety of knowledge. It was difficult to confirm dependableness, thanks to the deliberate strategy of treating every participant as a distinct respondent. Additionally, the distinctive context of every college makes it tough to confirm dependableness in the exploitation of semi-structured interviews for analysis (Sunder et al., 2012). However, the dependableness of the semi-structured interview in this case was assessed by having two coders operating in isolation to elicit the required themes. Lastly, the dependableness of content analysis, which is all the information that is collected, was cross-checked with information gathered from websites, institutions and further reliable academics sources.

3.5.2 Validity

A measure of *internal* validity is the extent to which the analysis of findings accurately represents the development under investigation and to which they can be applied to alternative things (Merriam, 2009). It is vital that the study is internally valid. As has been established, the most important aspect of case study analysis is to supply a deep understanding of the phenomena being investigated. Case study analysis does not aim to generalise findings to alternative phenomena. Therefore, the *external* validity of this study is low. In terms of internal validity for each data collection method used, different verification procedures can be carried out. In regards to semi-structured interviews, three verifications of validity were applied. First, the interview was adapted from a previous study in which data was previously piloted. During the interviews, questions were simple and straightforward; as stated by Best (2006) key to the validity of the form is asking the correct questions phrased in the least ambiguous way. The interviews were recorded and thus when

coding, the research was able to go back and further analyse allowing for greater descriptive validity. The survey-questionnaire and content analysis data collection methods both used a criterion-based validity. Both the survey-questionnaire and content analysis (Schiro's Curriculum Mapping) were adapted and piloted from previous studies. Lastly, triangulation of all three methods was be collected and compared which allows for further validity of findings.

3.6   Ethics

The research ethics adopted in this research were in order to protect the rights of the research participants (Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001).

i.   To avoid plagiarism, the researcher of this study included the proper in-text citation of original authors along with a bibliography list (Goddard & Melville, 2001).

ii.   Conflicts of interest occur when the individual's obligations that are relevant to the research conflict with their personal interests and obligations. The researcher, in this study, maintained the attention of the participants by identifying the possible conflicts of interests (Marczyk et al., 2010).

iii.   Informed consent forms were given to the participants to ensure they would be cognisant of the research process and any associated risks. Therefore, informed consent was sought initially to grant permission to proceed further (Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001).

iv.   The confidentiality of the participants is maintained, and they were assured that their personal information gathered during the research work would not be made available to any party not directly associated with the research work (Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001).

126

In addition to this, that confidential data would be destroyed as soon as the research is completed.

3.7   Conclusion

This mixed method study was designed to compare and contrast two very different English language curricula recently adopted in the UAE. This chapter specifically delineates the methodology and style of the analytical study. The present research crosses over many fields including comparative education, curriculum design, teachers' perceptions, teaching English as a second language, and school reform. The research design, therefore, necessarily involves multiple methods and is referred to as mixed methods. A review of the literature informed this study as to the most appropriate methods to uncover meaningful data in the present context. The drivers behind this research include the recognised need to support the UAE entities in the drive to enhance the present learning of its students and the future opportunities open to them. Throughout the research process, bias was always considered as the researcher has had a long history of teaching English. The fact that those who took part in the interviews and questionnaires had commonalities of experience and practice with the researcher supported the research endeavour. Assumptions about the teachers, classroom practice or curriculum were avoided, and if in doubt, clarification was sought.

Data was sourced through the adoption of rubrics, which were used in the analysis of the English language curricula. Through this process, it was possible to enhance the overall credibility level of this study. This was particularly the case since no previous research study has tested the hypothesis identified in Chapter Two. The nonexistence of other studies to compare with this one increased the demand for precise data collection. Secondly, the results of quantification of data sourced through the rubrics analysis are more straightforward when

comparing curricula with each other and with other approaches such as semi-structured interviews. Thirdly, the choice of the rubrics facilitated the analysis of the English language curricula used in the UAE. The rubrics were used in the provision of a classification system and measurement of the textual data on the basis of adaptation of the work of other researchers undertaking curriculum analysis. This offered an ideal opportunity to analyse the data through the adoption of specific scientific approaches and as such to enhance the objectivity level of the study findings.

The chapter began by restating the key research questions. Analysis was designed to best suit each question and included a qualitative and quantitative case study that was informative in nature. A process characteristic of case study analysis is the ability to use a mixture of strategies to gather knowledge. This study also uses content analysis to compare and contrast the ECART English Language curriculum with the MOE English Language curriculum to ensure a triangulation of data collection. As such, a multi-method approach was used and knowledge was collected using a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and textual and document analysis. These processes yielded a wealth of research data. The chapter additionally outlined the information that would be given and analysed. Problems with reliability and validity as they pertain to the information sorting procedures were examined. Lastly, the moral concerns for the study were highlighted. Although the time given to implement the ECART curriculum may have been rather limited, the teachers in the public high schools of the UAE are now in a strong position to adapt any curriculum to the changing needs of their students by having had experience creating their own materials and supporting a student-centred culture. These extensions, in addition to a solid grounding in English fundamentals and an increased understanding of the UAE, may help students prepare for their future careers.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The aim of the study is to carry out a comparative investigation of the English language curriculum of two educational programmes in UAE public high schools. The curricula selected for analysis are the ECART, and the MOE's National English Language Curriculum. This chapter outlines the research analysis according to the key research objective which was selected so as to best explore the English language curriculum in the national schools of the UAE:

To explore how theory and ideological classification facilitates a deeper understanding of the UAE English curriculum including:

a) key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs towards the English language curriculum in the UAE and ongoing changes,

b) key themes underlying the different curricula, and

c) the main characteristics of the English language curriculum in the UAE before and after the reforms (ECART and MOE curricula).

The analysis of the data is discussed here, followed by a discussion of each key finding. There is a triangulation of data collected including the analysis of questionnaires, interviews and content analysis of the curriculum itself. Chapter 5 will take the findings presented here back to the literature and includes an exploration of their significance. The

ECART curriculum is studied first, followed by the MOE curriculum. When examining the two English language curricula, I focused on sections, as suggested by Schiro (2008).

The data collection and subsequent analysis was carried using methods designed to answer the key questions of this research. In order to best explore the impact of the of the English language curriculum reforms in the UAE education sector, for example, questionnaires were administered to 40 high school English teachers from the public high schools.

Quantitative analysis was carried out focused on key themes that have been identified in the literature. To undercover beliefs and perceptions of the ECART curriculum and the MOE curriculum, semi-structured interviews were carried out with ADEC curriculum developers. The responses were then categorized in line with the key themes of the study. Content analysis, using activity theory as an underpinning, served to compare and contrast the text of the MOE syllabus and the ECART syllabus.

4.1 Curriculum Content Analysis

This section will, therefore, turn to an organized analysis of the actual text of the document of the curriculum, utilizing relevant theory. All curricula share a theoretical underpinning, often clearly stated in their introductory texts, but without in-depth interviews or using questionnaires to explore the opinions of those who teach to the curriculum we would not uncover the layers of meaning and complexity that underpin curriculum design and implementation.

By examining the objectives of both ECART and MOE curricula, for example, it is easy to recognize a call for a sociocultural approach. In fact, however, based on the survey

data, there is an indication that both the ECART and MOE curricula assessments and teaching practices are actually supporting a constructive approach in learning.

We have selected to examine content analysis using Schiro's (ibid) curriculum ideologies to compare and contrast and explore to what extent each curriculum (MOE and ECART) followed the approach they originally intended to, and what is missing or needed in order to implement the approach they aspired to. This analysis will benefit teachers in that they will know the educational philosophies behind the curriculum they are implementing; and curriculum developers will benefit when revising their curriculum. In addition, some of the challenges are presented.

We will examine how the curriculum ideologies hold up a vision for implementation across a wide variety of subjects, including a structure for teachers to present knowledge and students to undertake activities.

The 'scholar-academic ideology' concerns the transfer of discipline-specific knowledge so that students learn not only facts but develop the thinking ability in a specific area of knowledge. 'Social efficiency ideology', on the other hand, aims to prepare students to be productive members of society as adults (Schiro, ibid). Bobbitt's work (1918:42) inspired this ideology by stating: "education that prepares for life is one that prepares for the specific activities".

The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of attaining those objectives: "...that series of things which children and youths must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life; and to be in all respects what adults should be" (Bobbitt, 1918: 45). A

third, student-centred, ideology, supports the belief that a student's growth is facilitated by education, which helps them further develop their skills and abilities. Lastly, the 'social reconstruction ideology' argues that the world's social problems can be solved when people use their intelligence, knowledge and skills (Lindelani, 2013). The table (4.1) below sets these ideologies out in more detail.

Table 4.1: A comparison of Curriculum Ideologies (Schiro, 2008): Lindelani (2013, p. 3)

Curriculum features		Scholar academic ideology	Social efficiency ideology	Student-centred ideology	Social reconstruction ideology
Aim of the subject	Purpose for knowledge	Understanding	Doing / action	Actualizing oneself	Interpret and reconstruct society
Content knowledge	Nature of knowledge	Didactic statements	Capabilities for action	Personal meanings	Intelligence and a moral stance
	Source of knowledge	Objective reality as interpreted by academic disciplines	Normative objective reality as socially interpreted	Individuals' personal creative response to experience	Individuals' interpretation of society's past, present and future
Instructional process	Learning viewed from	Transmitter	Transmitter	Receiver	Transmitter
	Primary function of learning	Social transmission	Social transmission	Growth	Social transmission
	Result of learning	Changed mindset	Changed behaviour	Changed mindset	Changed behaviour
	Primary actor during learning	Agent	Agent/student	Student	Agent/student
	Student readiness	Simplification of difficult topics	Providing prerequisite behavioural capabilities	Stages of growth	Gestalt of prior experience
The student	Role during learning	Passive	Active	Active	Active
	Teacher focuses on	Child's mind	Child's behaviour	Child's mind	Child's behaviour
	Teachers concerned with children	As they ought to be	As they ought to be	As they are	As they ought to be
	Viewing children	In relation to standardized norms	In relation to standardized norms	As individuals	In relation to standardized norms
Teaching	Role of teacher	Transmitter	Supervisor	Facilitator	Colleague
	Standards used to measure teacher effectiveness	Accurate presentation of discipline	Efficiency of student learning	Facilitation of growth	Effective transference of the vision
	Teachers stimulate	Uniformity	Uniformity	Diversity	Uniformity
	Teachers	Directly implement curriculum	Directly implement curriculum	Adapt curriculum (according to children's needs)	Adapt curriculum (according to social concerns)
	Media used during learning	Didactic discourse	Programmed instruction	Child-environment interaction	Group dynamics
	Intent of teaching	To advance students in a discipline	To prepare students to perform skills	To stimulate child growth	To acculturate students into educators' vision
Assessment	Purpose of evaluation to the evaluator	Rank students for a future in the discipline	Certify that students have the skills	Diagnose students' abilities to facilitate growth	Measure student progress with respect to ability
	Nature of assessment tools	Norm reinforced	Criterion reinforced	Informal subjective diagnosis	Informal subjective diagnosis
	Assessments are	Objective	Objective	Subjective	Subjective
	Point of assessment	After instruction	After instruction	During instruction	During instruction

4.2 Main Characteristics of the English Language Curriculum

An inductive curriculum analysis approach was used to determine the main characteristics of the two English language curricula. There are various methods that can be used to analyse curricula. After reviewing the literature, we found the method that best suited this research was to closely tied to the 'ECART English language curriculum framework'

and MOE 'national English language curriculum framework' i.e., to examine the content and structure. Also, a thorough review of the components of the curriculum documents (curriculum mapping) was undertaken. Curriculum mapping is used in order to examine sections of the English language curriculum document to identify specific emerging themes and subthemes, which are typical of curriculum ideologies. For curriculum mapping, a validated instrument was adapted from Schiro (2008). The instrument (see table 4.2) has been validated by a panel of experts who determined its content and face validity with regard to its suitability for the intended purpose (Lindelani, 2013). The emerging themes and subthemes that were found were then classified into specific curriculum ideologies as guided by table (4.1).

When examine the English language curriculum, we focused on sections as suggested by Schiro (ibid):

1. The aims or purposes of education
2. The nature of the child or student
3. The way learning must take place
4. The role of the teacher during instruction
5. The kind of knowledge that the curriculum is concerned with
6. The nature of assessment

In the adapted instrument there are six open questions which were adopted from Schiro's (2008) validated standard inventory for curriculum analysis.

Table 4.2: An instrument used for reviewing components of the English curriculum (Adapted from Schiro, 2008): Lindelani (2013, p. 4)

Purpose of analysis	Data sources	Open-ended questions used to analyse the curriculum document
To examine the English language curriculum ECART and MOE in order to determine each curriculum ideology	National English Language Framework Curriculum (MOE, 2019); ECART English Language framework (ADEK, 2012/2013)	a) What is the aim of the curriculum? b) What kind of knowledge is prescribed in the curriculum? c) How is learning supposed to take place? d) What is the nature and the role of students in the learning process? e) What is the role of teachers during instruction? f) What is the purpose of assessment?

The answers to the questions in table (4.2) above were used to make inferences regarding the curriculum ideology of English language that is best represented in the curriculum document. This inferencing was based on the characteristics of the curriculum ideologies in table (4.1) and is presented directly after each quote from the curriculum statement.

4.3 ECART Curriculum Analysis

Table 4.3: Typical characteristics of the ECART Curriculum Ideology (By Researcher)

Ideologies	Themes	Subthemes
Scholar Ideologies	Aim	- Acquire Content Knowledge - Develop and Understand English literacy skills/Competencies
	Knowledge	- Understand 21st century skills - Make connections
	The teacher	- Transmitter -Ask questions - Provides - Scaffolding and guidance - Gives direction
Scholar Efficiency	Aim	- Application of knowledge -Equipping students to participate in workplace and community - Supervisor
	Teacher	- Implements curriculum

	Assessments	- Evaluates progress
Student-Centred	Aim	- Application of knowledge
	Instructional Process	-Task based
	Student	- Facilitated learning - Collaborative and active - Actively inquiring, information analysis, develops questions
	Teacher	- Facilitator of growth
	Assessments	- Diagnoses abilities
Social Reconstruction	Aim	- Application of knowledge

The data showed that the four curriculum ideologies presented in table (4.1) are present in the ECART English language curriculum. In response to the questions of curriculum inventory from curriculum analysis in table (4.2), there appeared six themes as seen in table (4.3) which are indicative of the curriculum ideologies in table (4.1). The subthemes are identified under each theme. The subthemes are concepts of typical characteristics of the curriculum ideologies that are presented in table (4.1). The subthemes under each theme are discussed in detail and they were used to determine the ideology of the English language curriculum.

4.3.1 The aim of the subject of the ECART curriculum

The main aim of the ECART English language curriculum is:

1. Enhancing the English language learning experiences of national students.
2. Incorporating the Emirati culture into education.
3. Enhancing the assessment methods for students.
4. Using higher-order thinking skills, engaging in critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and collaboration with peers while developing language in context.

Thus, the key aims of the ECART curriculum are heavily oriented to student-centred ideology and social efficiency ideology; the curriculum aims to enhance the language

learning experience, which is all about the student, i.e., a student-centred ideology. Also, the emphasis of incorporating Emirati culture into a course relates well to social efficiency ideology. Scholar-academic ideology is not as evident as the other two ideologies but there is an emphasis that students should develop the language when interacting with peers using higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving. Building on the issues raised above, the English language curriculum has four subject- specific aims of which two relate to student-centred ideology, one related to social efficiency ideology and one to scholar-academic ideology.

Table 4.4: A Summary of the Aims of the ECART Curriculum (By Researcher)

AIM	Components and skills
1. Enhancing the English language learning experiences of national students 2. Incorporating the Emirati culture into education. 3. Enhance assessment methods for students 4. Use higher-order thinking skills, engage in critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and collaboration with peers while developing language in context	-Making links to Emirati culture and heritage, and a contribution to humanity. -Planning for teaching, learning and assessing ECART starting with the level of the students' skills, knowledge and understanding . -Setting challenging tasks for students to work collaboratively leading to independent learning. -Planning learning experiences to support students to develop knowledge of their chosen idea within the theme. -Providing students with opportunities to engage in critical and creative thinking, collaboration and problem-solving. Link to 21st Century Support Document. -Providing students with opportunities to transfer knowledge and skills to demonstrate understanding.

4.3.2 Content Knowledge in the ECART Curriculum

In the ECART curriculum, content knowledge should be taught in a student-centred way. The scholar-academic and social efficiency ideology are also very evident. Implementation of the English curriculum includes curriculum content, English language development and 21st-century skills in an integrated approach within an inquiry-based process. During the implementation process, appropriate themes are given, guiding focus

questions and vocabulary for the year and for each grade. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure visual literacy is included in the teaching, learning and assessing cycle. Teachers make plans for teaching, learning and assessment using the choices given with the course design. The grade 12 learning plan is provided below and the themes are provided with related vocabulary. Teachers then will decide in collaboration with other teachers what kind of text type and what kind of genre to use for each trimester. For example, Grade 12, trimester 1's theme is Ancient World, Modern World and teachers choose the text type:

- Narrative - Stories to make sense of the world around us.
- Information - Questions and answers.
- Critical responses - Interacting with our own and other ideas.

All three of the above areas will need to be covered in the course of the year. Then, teachers choose a genre from the many genres included in each text type. Within the narrative text type there are many areas to choose from, such as short story, drama script, film, poetry, etc. Teachers must incorporate visual literacy in all text types. There are three trimesters; in each trimester one text type is chosen and more than one genre can be covered under each text type. Poetry must be covered in each trimester. There are 12 integrated strand tasks (ISTs): rich tasks that develop specific skills. The integrated strands tasks are as follows:

- Compare and contrast
- Reading and /or listening for meaning
- Analyse language and structure
- Description-creative writing
- Writing for purpose
- Editing
- Telling stories

- Adapt spoken language

- A narrative study

- Persuasive speaking

- Synthesis – write and graphically represent

- Electronic task

All ISTs are to be completed, two each trimester or six a year. They are all to be covered during grade 10 and 11. In grade 12, teachers decide to cover two each trimester, which is a total of six in the year. Each IST is to include content points (talking, listening, reading, and writing). For each IST teachers use rubrics to put together criteria and expectations for students. As an example, for 'IST Compare and Contrast' below, teachers set out their expectations of students (Figure 4.1). The rubrics will also be used to assess the students' competency and understanding.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Content Points from Abu Dhabi Standards Document:	Create a task that meets the following outline:
Reading and Viewing:	compare and contrast 2 texts (reading, listening or viewing) related to the Learning Plan themes that leads to a conclusion about the similarities and differences in the texts
Writing:	
Talking:	
Listening:	**skills, knowledge and understanding:** • identifies ideas/features to compare • sorts and classifies information appropriately • explains how the 2 texts are similar and different • makes a concluding statement about the comparison

Figure 4.1: An Example, for 'IST Compare and Contrast: ADEC (2012, p. 28)

Grade	Trime ster	Theme and guiding focus questions	Text type focus
12	1	**Ancient World Modern World** **Guiding focus questions to consider and explore:** • How do ancient societies impact on the modern world? • Why are the structures of ancient societies important to the modern world? • How will the world today impact on the world of the future?	**Visual Literacy** **Plus** **School English Department collaboration when choosing the text type and the genres** **Narrative** **OR** **Information** **OR** **Critical response** **Cover all three text types over the year** **Choose different genres over the cycle so that students cover a range**
12	2	**Free theme and focus questions choice**	
12	3	**Exploration and Discovery** **Guiding focus questions to consider and explore:** • Why do individuals and nations want to explore? • How has exploration and discovery changed lives? • Why is it important to keep exploring and discovering?	

Figure 4.2: The lesson plans for grade 12 in the ECART curriculum:ADEC (2012, p. 14).

Table 4.5: Themes for each grade ADEC (2012, p. 16)

Grade	Themes
Grade 9	-Adventure -From school to work
Grade 10	-The cultural family -The world around us
Grade 11	-Healthy society -Citizenship and Responsibility
Grade 12	-Ancient World Modern Word -Exploration and Discovery

From each of the text types chosen by teachers, they will have to select three language features to focus on and teach in depth in each trimester (Figure 4.2). There are nine language features to cover: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, connectives, prepositions, phrases and clauses, and tense. Teachers will create learning activities to teach the language feature. Thus, skills are expected to be learnt from a variety of texts, which cover different genres, the incorporation of ISTs and guiding of focus questions, which use the themes provided (Table 4.5).

One can see the evidence of student-centred, social efficiency, and scholar-academic ideology here as well. As stated, the content resources used are related to learners' immediate experience and needs as the themes are all related to the individual's family, friends, and school and 21st century themes in order to allow students to make sense of their world. Scholar-academic ideology is evident here as it is expected that students become critical thinkers when answering and solving problems and including the nine language features and so also ensuring to use the 12 ISTs which are rich tasks to develop specific skills.

It is evident that the main overall aim, found throughout the English language curriculum, is to develop English language skills of students and allow them to be independent thinkers. In addition, there is strong emphasis for to ensure that students use all these skills within a context of Emirati culture and 21st century themes. The scholar-academic ideology is evident from curriculum's prescription of content knowledge. The ECART English curriculum framework indicates that the English language content knowledge is divided into three strands: texts and genres; twelve integrated strand tasks (ISTs); and themes and guiding focus questions (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Content knowledge extracted from ECART Curriculum Framework ADEC (2012, p. 23).

Strands	Content
Texts and Genres	-Narrative - Stories to make sense of world around us -Information - Questions and answers -Critical responses - Interacting with own and others' ideas. -Within each text type many genres should be covered, such as short story, drama script, film, poetry, etc.
12 integrated strand tasks (IST)	-Compare and contrast -Description – creative writing -Reading and/or listening for meaning -Analyse language and structure -Writing for purpose -Editing -Telling stories

	-Adapt spoken language -A narrative study -Persuasive speaking -Synthesis – write and graphically represent -Electronic task
Themes and Guiding Focus questions and core vocabulary	-Adventure -From school to work -The cultural family -The world around us -Healthy society -Citizenship and Responsibility -Ancient World, Modern Word -Exploration and Discovery -21st century

4.3.3 ECART Instructional Process

With regards to the ECART instructional process, there is a strong emphasis on implementing the instructional process through inquiry-based process (Figure 4.3). ECART encourages students to engage in and develop new and/or different understandings. This curriculum expects students to question what they are being taught.
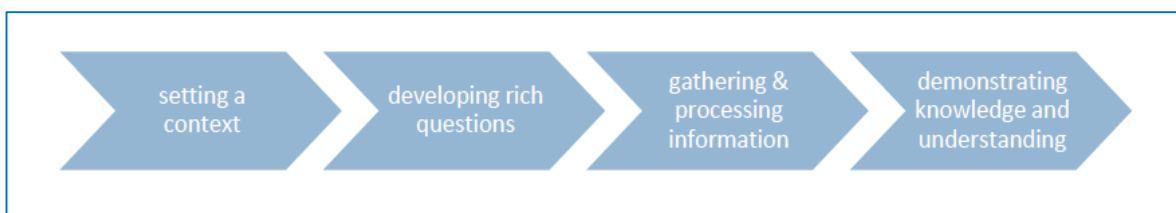
Figure 4.3: ECART Instructional Process: ADEC (2012, p. 6)

It suggests that teachers set the context by choosing the texts and genres, then they develop questions for students where ISTs stated above are incorporated. For ISTs, students are expected to gain the skills expected. Criteria and rubrics are designed to measure their performance and are put in place by teachers. The teachers set the criteria and the students demonstrate their understanding and knowledge by meeting the set criteria.

We can see here that according to table (4.1), Curriculum Ideologies, that social efficiency, scholar-academic and student-centred ideology are evident. Here the criteria and

rubrics put in place by teachers to measure how well students complete the task can be seen as a structure related to social efficiency ideology because completion of the tasks depends on students' 'behaviours'. Also, the gathering and processing of information where teachers are seen as 'transmitters of knowledge' by presenting students with topics to work with and integrating them in different semesters is evident of the scholar-academic ideology. This ideology views learning as being 'transmitted' and students' readiness depends on 'simplification of difficult topics'. In addition, one can see that when teachers incorporate tasks at different periods of time they are meeting students' needs and thinking of their development which suggests that student-centred ideology is at play. With all the knowledge acquired from teachers who 'facilitate' and 'supervise' the learning process, students are required to be creative and demonstrate their understanding and learning through the creation of a final product. The product must be an example of the focus text type and genres within that text type. If the product is a spoken text or visual text there must be a written component as well such as the speech script or an explanation and/or reflection on a 3D model. The product must be a student's original work. This is evidence of the student-centred ideology where the instructional process's primary function of learning is the student's growth.

4.3.4 The Role of ECART: Students and Teachers in the Instructional Process

Table 4.7: The Role of ECART: Students and Teachers in the Instructional Process: ADEC (2012, p. 48)

Students will	Teachers will	21st C Skills	Purpose
-Organize own files of work -Engage in ISTs -Read and review texts -Work and rank ideas -Analyse texts, grammar, vocab, ideas, and information -Develop research questions and plans	-Scaffold planning components -Confer with individual students -Ensure students understand the criteria and requirements of the rich task process -Time manage the teaching and learning process and product	-Taking responsibility -student-directed -Creative thinking -Problem-solving -Collaboration -Task management -Critical thinking -Risk-taking	-Understanding the task -Build awareness and knowledge -Understand concepts -Develop and build skills (in S, W, R, L) -Build knowledge from peers -Make sense of worlds -Develop culture of reading

-Work with different research skills -Make connections between ideas -Work with relevant vocab. -Peer discussions -Engage in reading, making notes, and apply reading strategies. -Reflection -Brainstorming -Peer assessments/review -Conferencing -Making decisions -Integrate ICT tools -Presentations	-Support students to link ideas -Model and guide activities -Choose the IST for the trimesters -Set tasks -Guide readings -Promote and ask questions to encourage higher order learning -Set expectations -Provide opportunities for students to read, visit libraries, lab communities, share information -Provide tools to do work expected -Develop discussions to motivate students to engage with classmates -Ensure all meet assessment timelines -Develop schedules -Choose texts, vocabulary for students to work on each trimester. -Provide opportunities for reflection.	-Higher order thinking -Adaptability -Making decisions -Connecting	-Enhance communication -Self-reflection, to become a lifelong learner -Develop ideas how they benefit humanity -Allow for constructive feedback -Work together as teams and move forward -Build knowledge and skills around themes, topics.

Teachers and students play a role in every part of the curriculum implementation process. They play a role in organization, integrated strand tasks, context, research, strategies, reflection and review, e-learning and the final product and oral presentation. The table above (4.7) illustrates examples of the roles students play in the learning process, and teachers' role in teaching.

Regarding the role of students, the ECART English curriculum encourages interactive learning. This demonstrates that the student-centred ideology is favoured. The curriculum emphasizes elements of student-centred ideology as it states that students are expected to 'engage, brainstorm, make decisions, and self-reflect, to become lifelong learners'. There is evidence of social efficiency ideology at play here, as it is expected that students demonstrate skills learnt by coming up with ideas that benefit humanity and work together as teams to bring ideas to fruition. Thus, here one can see strong evidence of

student-centred ideology and social efficiency ideologies when it comes to the students' role in the instructional process: Role of Students and Teachers.

Regarding the teachers' role during instruction, the ECART English language curriculum states it is to 'guide', 'support' 'provide' and 'develop' students and opportunities for students to move forwards (ECART framework, 2012). This statement is a characteristic of scholar-academic ideology. Teachers are seen as a source of guidance that is needed to ensure students are moving forwards and meeting required outcomes. Also, the scholar-academic ideology is evident because themes, guiding focus questions, and vocabulary for the year for each grade is given. Thus, teachers make plans for teaching, learning and assessment using the choices given. Educators will only have a choice when deciding what text types to use for each trimester. Thus, the role of teacher is related to the scholar-academic and social efficiency ideology.

4.3.5 The Purpose of ECART Assessments

This section discusses assessments (formative, ongoing, and continuous assessments). The rationale behind assessment for learning is that every student should know how well they are doing and understand what they need to do to improve and move forward. Assessment is based on the principle that students will improve most if they understand what it is they should be learning and what skills or knowledge they are trying to achieve. Thus, the purpose for assessments in ECART:

1. Provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding against set criteria at a given time with a view to showing students where to make improvement.
2. Provides opportunities for meaningful feedback.

3. Shows what the student can do along a continuum of learning using the rubrics.
4. Informs planning of teaching and learning, and
5. Embeds assessment in the teaching and learning cycle.

There are different forms of assessments used by ECART.

1. Use a range of strategies to gather information about students' progress against the set criteria, e.g. observations (formal and informal), interviews, peer assessment, checklists, journals, samples of work.
2. Map student progress throughout the trimester against the rubrics (provided for each cycle).
3. Provide relevant and timely feedback referring to the set criteria in the set rubrics.
4. Use gathered information about students' learning to inform planning decisions.

Three assessment techniques are used each trimester and each has specific criteria students must meet, with rubrics provided to teachers. All the marks are recorded in eSIS (electronic student information system). In addition, students evidence-file store all their work, using such as a ring binder, a notebook, and an electronic folder.

The three assessment techniques are:

1. Process-inquiry: process-rich task evident file-evidence to show students ideas.
2. Product-matter-evidence to show knowledge, skills, and understanding-include oral presentation.
3. Integrated strand task - specific to IST.

With regards to ECART, a number of assessments are used. It is evident that formative assessments are preferred which are used to check the understanding of students and support teachers' 'planning of teaching and learning'. This shows evidence of student-centred ideology because here teachers might change their ways of teaching if they felt they needed to, depending on students' results. There are also formative continuous assessments

which is continuous assessment used to see if the students have 'acquired the necessary skills' which are measured by a set of rubrics, which is a feature of the scholarly academic ideology. It is evident that there are such features because everything is assessed based on rubrics and to what extent students are meeting required outcomes. In addition, student-centred ideology is evident because teachers make decisions regarding their teaching when they see students' result. There are three assessment techniques: process-inquiry process-rich task-evident file; product-matter; and integrated strand task, which are support student-centred ideology because they provide students with different ways to show their creativity when assessed.

4.3.6 Discussion: the ECART curriculum ideology for English and its implications

Based on the above results, it can be seen that the ECART English Language curriculum adopts a multi-curriculum approach as (seen in figure 4.4). The curriculum emphasizes scholar-academic, student-centred and social efficiency ideologies. Looking at the curriculum document, scholar-academic ideology is observed because it provides all the texts, themes, vocabulary, and integrated standard tasks that need to be covered and which outlines discipline-specific knowledge that should be taught.

Aim
Content Knowledge
Instructional Process
Role of students
Role of Teachers
Assessments

Scholar Efficiency Ideology

Aim
Content Knowledge
Instructional Process
Role of Students
Role of Teachers

Social efficiency Ideology

ECART Curriculum

Student centered ideology

Content Knowledge
Instructional Process
Role of students
Role of teachers
Assessments

Social Reconstruction Ideology

Content

Figure 4.4: Illustration of the ECART English Language curriculum multi-curriculum approach (By Researcher)

Social efficiency ideology is evident because all the themes are related to Emirati culture and specifically the 21st century. When looking at the instructional process one can start to see that the curriculum does not strictly adhere to scholar-academic and social efficiency ideologies but instead incorporates student-centred ideologies. Even though material is provided, students and teachers decide which text and ISTs to focus on each trimester. Thus, there is flexibility based on interest. Furthermore, the role of student and teachers during instruction was observed in respect to student-centred ideology. There seems to be an obvious overlap between the two ideologies, scholar-academic and student-centred ideology. Lastly in terms of assessment, one can see that student-centred features are evident, but that there is heavy reliance in rubrics, which is a scholar-academic feature.

4.4 MOE Curriculum Analysis

The data below shows the four curriculum ideologies presented in table (4.1) that are present in the MOE English language curriculum. In response to the questions of curriculum

inventory from curriculum analysis (Table 4.2), there appeared six themes as seen in table (4.8) which are indicative of the curriculum ideologies (Table 4.1). There are subthemes, which are identified under each theme. The subthemes are concepts that are of typical characteristics of the curriculum ideologies that are presented in table (4.1). The subthemes under each theme are discussed in detail and they were used to determine the ideology of the MOE English language curriculum.

Table 4.8: Typical characteristics of the MOE Curriculum Ideology (By Researcher)

Ideologies	Themes	Subthemes
Scholar Ideologies	Aim	- Acquire Content Knowledge - Develop and understand English literacy skills/competencies
	Knowledge	- Understand worlds - Make comparisons - Make connections
	Instructional process	-Provision of content
	The student	- Receiver of knowledge. -Listens, reads, understands, identifies, makes connections, produces, describes
	The teacher	- Transmitter - Ask questions - Provides - Scaffolding for guidance - Gives direction
	Assessments	- Evaluates progress - Diagnoses abilities - Ranks students Prescribed format
Scholar Efficiency	Aim	- Application of knowledge - Equipping students to participate in workplace and community
	Teacher	- Supervisor - Implements curriculum
	Assessments	- Evaluates progress - Diagnoses abilities - Prescribed format - Promotion guide

Ideologies	Themes	Subthemes
Student Centred	Aim	- Application of knowledge
	Instructional process	-Task-based - Facilitated learning
	Student	- Group discussions
	Teacher	- Facilitator - Applies strategies
Social Reconstruction	Aim	- Application of knowledge

4.4.1 The Aim of the Subject of English in the MOE Curriculum

The main aims of the English language curriculum in the eyes of the MOE are:

1. Developing English language literacy skills,

2. Preparing learners to compete successfully in international exams,

3. Shaping global citizens while promoting Emirati cultural values, and

4. Equipping learners with the English language competencies to participate effectively in further education, the workplace and the community.

When examining these aims of the curriculum, one can see that the MOE curriculum is heavily related to scholar-academic and social efficiency ideologies (Table 4.8/4.9). The fact that the curriculum aims to develop language skills, and allows for students to be well equipped to deal with international exams, is related to the scholar-academic ideology. The aim to have students become well-rounded individuals as well as shaped into global citizens so as to participate effectively in workplace and community, is related to social efficiency ideology. Thus, the English language curriculum has four subject-specific aims of which two are related to scholar-academic and two are related to social efficiency ideologies.

The aims that are in line with scholar-academic ideology relate to content knowledge, and application of content knowledge in familiar and unfamiliar contexts, in addition to

doing well in exams. Whereas the aims related to social efficiency ideology are to shape students to effectively participate in their community and become good global citizens.

In terms of acquiring the content knowledge, students have access to information from a variety of sources such as teachers, texts, songs, stories, poems, monologues and dialogues, short conversations, informative texts, description and instructions. Here they will use ideas obtained from such resources to recall, write about, discuss, compare, predict, classify, evaluate, create, analyses, summarize, describe, and solve problems. This content knowledge is to be taught in a typical scholar-academic ideology, where knowledge is organized in didactic statements that represent the English language discipline and is acquired by students (Cotti & Schiro, 2004).

The knowledge and skills that students need to acquire as stated in the MOE English language standard framework are content and cognitive knowledge and skills (Table 4.10) in accordance with Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 4.5).

Table 4.9: A summary of the Aims of the MOE curriculum

AIM	Components and skills
1. Developing English language literacy skills	-Understand overall meaning of texts (simple and complex).
2. Preparing learners to compete successfully in international exams	-Write sentences (simple, compound, complex) about similar/concrete topics.
	-Initiate and participate in interaction on familiar/unfamiliar topics.
3. Shaping global citizens while promoting Emirati cultural values	-Communication (academic and interpersonal).
	-Produce clear detailed/extending/structured texts.
4. Equipping learners with the English language competencies to participate effectively in further education, the workplace and the community	-Use language flexibly and effectively for social and academic purposes.
	-Summarize information from different sources.
	-Develop language skills through a variety of texts.
	-Read and comprehend print and digital resources (such as English language newspapers or websites) to increase their content knowledge.
	-Deliver in clear standard English in a variety of different accents at a good speed.

	-Research, evaluate, and synthesize information from a range of sources. -Describe and compare. -Use technology and digital media. -Express ideas. -Produce speech using intonation and rhythm Interpret. -Apply language skills learnt in connection to 21st century themes.
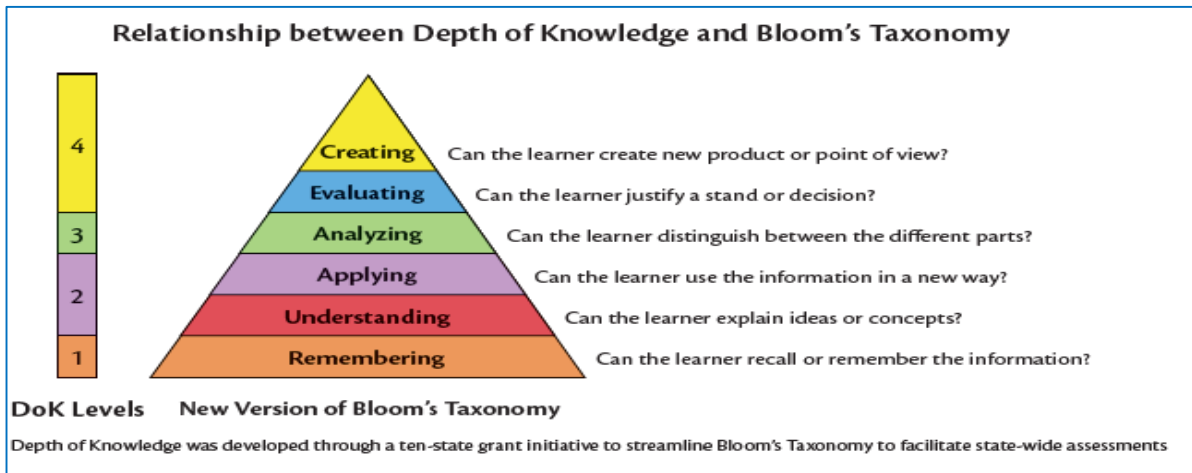
Figure 4.5: Relationship between Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy: MOE (2014, p.12)

Teachers are given a set of skills and student learning outcomes (SLOs) for students to attain as well as the level of the SLO in terms of its cognitive complexity (see below). Each SLO weights differently at each grade level and in addition are at different levels of cognitive processing. This information helps teachers to understand how demanding a particular skill (SLO) is for students to develop and, therefore, how much effort will be required to ensure that students acquire the targeted skill (Figure 4.6).

Figure 1. Cognitive Levels

Level	Name of level	Definition of level	Common skills by level
1	Recall and reproduction	Focused on recall of facts, definitions, terms, etc. or performance of simple process	List, locate, describe main features, determine, identify
2	Skills and concepts	Use of more complex skill demonstrating conceptual understanding, or performance of more complex multi-step process	Explain, describe details, classify, predict, compare main features
3	Strategic and extended thinking	Requires deep understanding and reasoning of complex and abstract information	Solve, propose, evaluate, explain, generalize, create, develop, compare details, analyze, summarize

Note: Based on the Depths of Knowledge research of Norman Webb at the University of Wisconsin, United States[5].

Figure 4.6: The level of the SLO in terms of its cognitive complexity: MOE (2014, p.12)

The curriculum is weighted in two parts: the content domain which concerns the SLO skills related to foundations skills, productive skills, and receptive skills; and the cognitive domain that covers recall and production (knowing), skills and concepts (reasoning) and strategic and extended thinking (applying) (Figure 4.7).

		Content Domains			Cognitive Domains		
		Foundational Skills	Productive Skills	Receptive Skills	Recall & Reproduction (Knowing)	Skills and concepts (Reasoning)	Strategic & Extended Thinking (Applying)
% Weights by Grade	K1	20	40	40	10	80	10
	K2	20	40	40	7	53	40
	Grade 1	21	43	36	0	71	29
	Grade 2	19	38	43	0	50	50
	Grade 3	20	40	40	0	40	60
	Grade 4	20	40	40	0	40	60
	Grade 5	0	50	50	0	50	50
	Grade 6	0	50	50	0	58	42
	Grade 7	0	50	50	0	42	58
	Grade 8	0	50	50	0	50	50
	Grade 9	0	45	55	0	64	36
	Grade 10	0	38	62	0	54	46
	Grade 11	0	50	50	0	42	58
	Grade 12	0	50	50	0	50	50
% Weights by cycle	(K-5)	18	41	41	2	54	44
	(6-9)	0	49	51	0	53	47
	(10-12)	0	46	54	0	49	51
Total % Weights	K-12	9	44	47	1	52	47

Figure 4.7: Illustration of the domains the curriculum is weighted on (Content/Cognitive): MOE (2014, p.28)

One can see that the skills that fall under the content domain and cognitive domain are equally balanced in grades 11 and 12 (50% each). Students are expected to be able to use the skills presented in each domain. It is key that the skills learnt by students are applied, and students can apply these skills at different levels, as shown below. The skills learnt will support students in being able to participate and fulfil all of the four aims of the curriculum.

4.4.2   Content Knowledge in the MOE English Language Curriculum

In the MOE curriculum, prescription of content knowledge to be taught (a scholar-academic ideology) is very evident. As the 'Learning Standards Framework' document indicates, the English language content knowledge is divided into two domains, the content and cognitive domains, where each has strong emphasis on obtaining English language literacy skills. These skills are developed through a variety of text types including poems, stories, monologues and dialogues, descriptions, informative texts (diagrams and graphs) and lists and instructions.

One can also see that social efficiency ideology is evident here. As stated, the content resources used are related to learners' immediate experience and needs, such as family, friends, and school, and 21st century themes, so as to prepare them to be effective members of society. The content domain skills related to foundations skills, productive skills, and receptive skill falls under the social efficiency ideology where there is a focus on the students' communication skills (academic and interpersonal), engagement, discussions and presentations skills. All of the skills are required in order for students to become effective members of the community and global citizens.Whereas, the second domain which is the cognitive domain that covers recall and production (knowing), skills and concepts

(reasoning) and strategic and extended thinking (applying) falls under scholar-academic ideology. Here is it teaching students discipline-specific thinking abilities. Here students are expected to evaluate, identify, understand detail, research, make predications, produce and deliver.

All the content that is covered should include 21st century themes and teachers should include these themes in connection to learned skills that ensure college and career readiness.

1. Financial, Economic and Business Literacy
2. Health Literacy
3. Global Awareness
4. Community Literacy
5. Environmental Literacy
6. Life and Career Skills
7. Learning and Innovation
8. Information, Media, and Technology skills
9. Digital Literacy
10. Self-Development

Even though SLOs focus mostly on scholar-academic ideology, there is evidence of all three ideologies in the content that is to be covered. Social efficiency ideology, student-centred and social reconstruction ideologies are found in all the themes covered.

Table 4.10: Content knowledge within the two domains extracted from National Unified K–12 Learning Standards Framework 2014: MOE (2014, p. 9)

Domain	Strands	Outcome	Content
Content Domain			Stories
Foundational skills	Interpersonal/ academic communication	Engage actively in conversations and discussions, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions, social issues. easily conversing on wide-ranging academic, social, or personal issues	Written texts Plays Videos Movies
Productive skills	Focused on recall of facts, definitions, terms, etc. or	Understand and interpret information presented in diverse media and formats or from informal and social conversations and discussions; interpret others' feelings, emotions and opinions, and express their feelings, opinions and emotions in fluent oral or written English	Digital media Essays Scripts Scholarly presentations
Receptive skill	performance of simple process	Analyse major English language media outlets	Poems Oral media Listen to discussions
Cognitive Domain			
Recall and production	Use of more complex skill demonstrating conceptual	Understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics, for a variety of academic purpose	
Skill and concepts	Understanding, or performance of more complex multi-step process	Gather, develop, and present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of academic and school related topics and in multiple modes, showing increasingly strong English lexis and control of the conventions of English spelling and grammar, demonstrating only occasional errors or flaws	

| Strategic and extended thinking | Requires deep understanding and reasoning of complex and abstract information | Understand and interpret written and spoken academic English, in multiple genres, from multiple periods, and language on a variety of topics, for a variety of purposes; students use reference tools such as translation software and spelling and grammar checks to ensure their written and oral production is correct.

List ,locate, describe main features, determine, identify. Explain, describe details, classify, predict, compare main features.
Solve, propose, evaluate, explain, generalize, create, develop, compare details, analyse, and summarize. | |

While it is recommended that teachers to include all the themes that complement both ideologies, it can be seen that students are not assessed on how well they understand the content - it is more about the concept. There is an emphasis on making the connection to 21st century themes but the learning of concepts is considered more important. For example, one outcome is to 'understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics'; here students are assessed on how well this is achieved in terms of levels (Table 4.10).

It is recommended that teachers use content based on the 21st century themes given. This does not emphasize, however, how well students should know the topic. For example, the theme 'environment literacy' states that students should be able to investigate and analyse environmental issues, and draw accurate and effective solutions, but it does not mention at which level. The focus is more on being able to 'investigate' and 'analyse' (Table 4.10).

Based on the findings above, one can draw the conclusion that the ability for students to understand the concepts and to think critically is most important and that all outcomes are based on that premise, which is in turn related to the scholar-academic ideology. Having the knowledge of concepts, it is then recommended to connect 21st century themes to learning which includes student-centred, social efficiency, and social reconstruction ideologies. Thus,

in terms of content knowledge, the MOE curriculum is predominantly scholar-academic, social efficiency ideology.

4.4.3 MOE Instructional Process

In regards to the instructional process, it appears that the MOE English language curriculum adopts elements of a scholar-academic ideology. This evident because it mentions that teachers should 'orchestrate and convey instructional tasks' and 'give directions'. For scholar-academic ideology (as stated in Table 4.1), learning occurs when there is a 'transmitting' of knowledge with the purpose of 'understanding' an 'objective reality as interpreted by academic disciplines' (Table 4.1).

The English curriculum states that teachers should 'give feedback', 'provide grade appropriate texts' and 'create opportunities for collaborative work'. These statements suggest that as part of the instructional process teachers should 'supervise' and 'facilitate' learning. The idea of 'guiding' students to 'acquire' knowledge while providing 'grade appropriate tests' suggests that the curriculum integrates both scholar-academic and student-centred ideologies. In addition, the curriculum features a student-centred ideology, as once students retain the knowledge they can be creative in understanding it and applying it in different ways to meet required outcomes.

Furthermore, it is stated in the MOE English curriculum document that there is the aim of 'shaping global citizens while promoting Emirati cultural values'. This means that the curriculum is not always to be implemented as scholar-academic and student-centred ideology: it can be adapted to meet the needs of students and their societies, which is a feature

of social efficiency ideology. There is a final recommendation to connect all learning skills

to 21st century themes.

4.4.4 Role of Teacher and Students in the MOE Instructional Process

Table 4.11: The role of the Students and Teachers in the MOE Instructional Process: MOE (2014, by researcher)

Role of the Students in the Learning Process	The Teacher's Role During Instruction
-Listen and identify meaning of complex texts	-Allow for mistakes as part of development process
-Listen to identifying details, main points, make predications on familiar/unfamiliar concrete topics	-Ask questions to encourage understanding and allow them to elaborate
-Read a wide range of texts and genres	-Provide feedback
-Research, evaluate, and synthesise information from a range of sources	-Encourage discussion
-Read and understand simple and complex texts	-Provide informal tasks that occur during everyday communication
-Read and understand detail from simple and complex topics/texts	-Orchestrate and convey instructional tasks
-Make meaning when reading	-Give directions, instructional grouping,
-Identify writer's attitude	-Scaffolding to model correct use of English
-Express and justify own ideas	-Reviewing and debriefing
-Produce speech using intonation and rhythm	-Match assignments to students' levels of preparation and needs.
-Speak at length with ease and natural speed	-Provide access to grade-appropriate English digital text models
-Control complex language structure when speaking	-Create opportunities for collaborative work and social and academic conversations and discussions
-Be able to respond to others and justify ideas	-Encourage students toward bilingualism
-When writing has to maintain degree of accuracy	-Provide a variety of opportunities for the development of vocabulary for different discourse purposes
-Produce structured texts, paraphrase, synthesize and reference information from variety of sources	
-Describe advantages/disadvantages	
-Use functional language	
-Use technology and digital media strategically and capably	

Regarding the role of students, the MOE English curriculum emphasizes elements of

student-centred ideology as it states that students are expected to: "Engage actively in

conversations and discussions about personal or social issues, provide and obtain

information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions, in the process of

developing a strong lexis and language base." Here one can see that there is strong evidence

of scholar-academic and social efficiency ideologies at play. Scholar-academic is evident, for example, because the document states that student discussions are to take place so as to develop a "strong lexis and language base", and social efficiency ideology is evident where it is stated that when discussions happen they should be about personal or 'social issues' and 'exchange opinions'. Furthermore, one of the four aims of the English language curriculum is: "equipping learners with the English language competencies to participate effectively in further education, the workplace and the community" (based on Table 4.1). The role of the student here in the English language learning process can be regarded as a student-centred ideology.

According to the English language curriculum, teachers are: "responsible for encouraging, promoting, guiding, and facilitating student learning and achievement" (Learning Standard Framework, 2014). This statement is a characteristic of scholar-academic ideology. Teachers are seen to be a source of knowledge and they must spend time with students to ensure that students "achieve the expected standards and student learning outcomes".

The curriculum also adopts a student-centred ideology in that teachers must choose assignments to match "students' levels of preparation and needs" and choose "grade-appropriate English texts" (Learning Standard Framework, 2014), thus taking into account student abilities. This was further emphasized with respect to planning effective lessons and providing teachers with formatted lesson plans focusing on student learning outcomes (SLOs) and taking into consideration students' needs. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the curriculum to students' needs and abilities. However, we can see that there is also strong emphasis on the scholar-academic ideology because lesson plans given to teachers clearly

mention that learning must "align with the standards and SLOs presented". Teachers also have to ensure that the skills learnt are applied to make connections to 21st century skills.

4.4.5   MOE Assessments

In terms of assessing their students, teachers are provided with a variety of assessment practices; however, it is stated that: "a good teacher should know the kind of assessment to use to improve both student learning and their own teaching." As an example, "students may at times demonstrate serious difficulties in their learning, at which point a teacher might administer a diagnostic assessment to determine possible problems and identify which skills to emphasize or remediate so as to help students overcome potential skills deficiencies". Also, formative assessments are used to provide "feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning in order to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes". All of which aim to ensure that students acquire the necessary skills required at their grade level. Summative assessments are used to "determine quantitatively how much learning has taken place". Thus, due to the ideologies, one can see that according to Table 4, the nature of assessment tools is normative, criterion reinforced, and to diagnose students' abilities to facilitate growth. Overall, the teachers overlap between scholar-academic, student-centred, and social efficiency ideologies when it comes to instruction.

With regard to the English language curriculum, diagnostic assessments are utilized when a problem arises and are also used by teachers to identify problems. The main assessments that are used in the MOE for the English language curriculum are formative and summative assessments for learning. Formative assessments aim to "check for understanding and guide teacher decision-making about future instruction". They also provide feedback to

students so that they can improve their performance. Formative assessments help us differentiate instruction and thus improve student achievement. This kind of assessment is continuous. Thus, MOE assessments are used to see if the students have "acquired the necessary skills", which is a scholar-academic feature, and is guiding teachers to "make changes to the instruction" if required, "to help students", which is a feature of student-centred ideology.

In addition, summative assessments are used to "measure how much students have learned up to a particular point in time". These assessments are employed so as to see if the standards set by the government or the classroom teacher are met after a unit or certain amount of time. Teachers give grades to students and ask for them to be accountable, and for them to show readiness to move to the next level. This kind of assessment is a typical characteristic of scholar-academic ideology, where students are ranked and only those who achieve a certain level are ready to progress to the next grade. Therefore, when it comes to assessments scholar-academic and student-centred efficiency ideologies are favoured.

4.4.6   Discussion: Comparing Curriculum Ideology for ECART and MOE

Based on the above results, the MOE English Language curriculum adopts a multi-curriculum approach as seen in figure (4.8). The curriculum emphasizes scholar-academic and social efficiency, and a student-centred ideology. Looking at the curriculum text, scholar-academic ideology is observed as it outlines how discipline-specific knowledge should be taught. In addition, the curriculum has a focus on social efficiency with the aim of having students be effective members of society and global citizens, which is a feature of social efficiency ideology.

When examining the instructional process, one starts to see that the curriculum does not strictly adhere to scholar-academic and social efficiency ideologies but also incorporates student-centred ideologies. Furthermore, the role of students and teacher during instruction was observed in respect to student-centred ideology. There seems to be an obvious overlap between the three ideologies; the least evidence shown is in social reconstruction ideology.

This overlapping view of ideology is supported by studies by Porolfsson & Larusson (2010), and Kliebard (1986) which state that there will always be an overlay among ideologies. Whereas Schiro (2004) believes that each subject area should have a distinctive curriculum ideology to follow, in which content knowledge, instructional process, assessments strategies, and learning outcomes should follow accordingly. This allows for easier attainment of objectives.
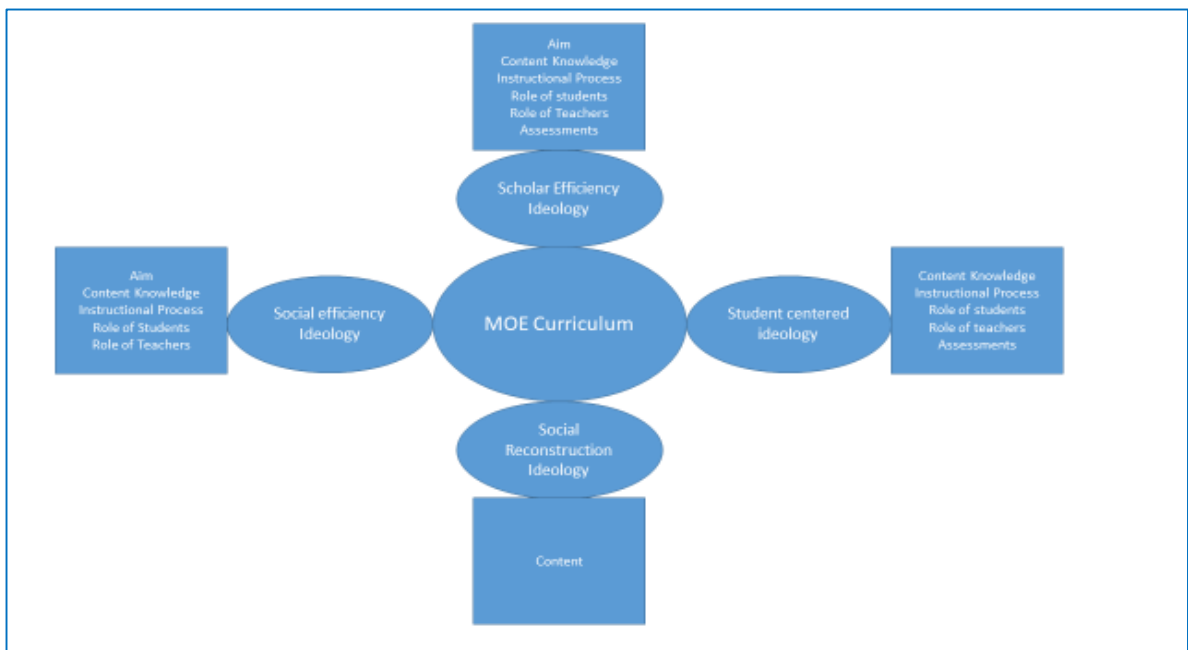
Figure 4.8: Illustration of the MOE English Language curriculum multi-curriculum approach (By Reseacher)

It is evident here that there is consistent evidence of scholar-academic ideology. The ideology appears in all aspects of the MOE curriculum: in its aim, content knowledge, instructional process, roles of students and teachers, and its assessments. It is the main underlying ideology and according to Kliebard (1986) is crucial because through its instructional process and assessment it teaches students content knowledge related to the discipline and ensures continued presence of the discipline. Thus, students will have understanding of the fundamental principles of the discipline and will be able to use them in carrying out the four skills (Cotti & Schiro, 2004).

It is evident that there is a student-centred ideology in the subject matter. This supports students' growth and development because students are provided with the support and experience that allows them to meet their needs and interests (Schiro, 2008). Also part of the requirements is that the students are required to apply skills learnt to relevant 21st century themes, which allows for creativity and application of knowledge. Thus, here the adoption of student-centred ideology in the English language curriculum is evident in the requirement of application of language skills using 21st century skills that would have students be more creative in the quest for self-growth and increased discipline.

There seems to be a lack of distinct curriculum ideologies in which teachers, students and parents define for themselves the objectives of the curriculum. Thus, based on the finding of the MOE curriculum, it is evident that the document is designed to have students advance in the discipline and become aware of social issues; however, there seems to be a lack of evident student empowerment and support in society.

After analysing both curricula, many aspects seem similar and each had similar features of each ideology. Despite this, each relied more on one ideology than the other. It was evident that the MOE curriculum relied heavily on scholar-academic and social efficiency ideology. It focused more on ensuring students have the necessary skills and knowledge required to move forward and become global citizens. Whereas, the ECART was more focused on student-centred and social efficiency ideology. Even though had scholar-academic features in terms of content coverage, it allowed flexibility for teachers and students when making a choice on what material to cover and how to cover it. Thus, though assessments had rubrics in place, there was flexibility and a chance for creativity for students to express what was learnt differently, not just be judged through text scores. These are student-centred features.

The MOE curriculum seems to be looking at the long run. They understand the fact that English plays an important role in the UAE's knowledge-based economy. The curriculum is aimed at equipping the learners with high standards of English language proficiency to communicate effectively in the community, workplace and further education and compete as global citizens and be successful in international exams.

The ECART English Curriculum Framework on the other hand has the aim of enabling the students to express themselves in English as they communicate with other people in UAE, because there is strong emphasis on national identity. The curriculum is also aimed at developing the 21st century skills through the English language. The other aim is to enable the people to respond to various texts using the English language and to develop literacy and language skills.

Thus, it is evident that the MOE English Language Curriculum Framework focuses on equipping the people in the UAE with English language proficiency skills that will enable them to communicate with the people in the world. It focuses on developing English language literacy skills. On the other hand, the ECART English Curriculum Framework focuses on equipping the citizens with proficiency skills in English, creativity and self-expression.

Even in term of assessments, the MOE English Language Curriculum Framework has a four-skill exam system as well as project work that is used in the assessment of whether or not the learners have learnt the skills that are required. An assessment blueprint is put in place to ensure that all the SLOs are covered in the study. The guides and marking rubrics are made available to the teachers. The teachers are also required to use continuous and summative assessments as ways of measuring the progress of each student. The ECART English Curriculum Framework on the other hand, provides a framework for enabling the students to engage in the creative and critical thinking as an assessment of how the curriculum has helped. Tests are provided to examine the problem-solving skills of the students. Feedback is also provided promptly to the students.

Supporting a constructive theory of learning and applying a constructive approach to learning a language is one of the priorities of ADEC and listed in the MOE's strategic plans. The newly implemented curriculum of 2018 focuses on problem-solving and encourages students to become involved actively in their own learning.

Based on the analysis above, however, there is no strong indication that in the initial implementation, curriculum learning is moving towards the sociocultural approach to learning and development. As discussed previously, this approach emphasizes the

importance of the social exchange in learning. The ideology supports the belief that learning is interactive, distributed, contextual and the result of learners taking part in communities of practice. Learning should include artefacts such as videos, books, wall displays, labs, and science equipment so that it can be an environment that supports intentional learning. Classroom environments should be viewed as learning communities where all members of different levels of knowledge can contribute.

Based on objectives of both curricula, ECART and MOE, one can see that an aim of each curriculum is to move toward a sociocultural approach. Based on the content analysis above both ECART and MOE curriculum assessments and teaching practices are taking a constructive approach in learning.

4.5 Key Stakeholders' Beliefs about the English Language Curriculum

Personal beliefs of key stakeholders are critically important when it comes to implementing change. The following section will document the opinions of teachers as they compared their experiences with the ECART and MOE. It is only by soliciting the judgement of the educators at the chalk face that we can best understand the nature of the difference in the two curricula. Would there be a positive shift when answering questions about MOE compared to the same questionnaire that examined experience with the skills continuum curriculum?

Demographic data was first collected concerning the teachers in order to appreciate how typical they were as a population sample and to better understand their reflections on their own teaching in light of their classroom experience. The teachers were asked how many

years they had been teaching EFL in UAE. Collecting background data with respect to teachers is an important part of fleshing out a case study (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: How many years have you taught English as a foreign language in UAE?

Question 4	Frequency	%
Less than 5	2	14.3%
5-9	5	35.7%
10-14	4	28.6%
15-19	1	7.1%
20-24	1	7.1%
Above 25	1	7.1%
Total	14	100
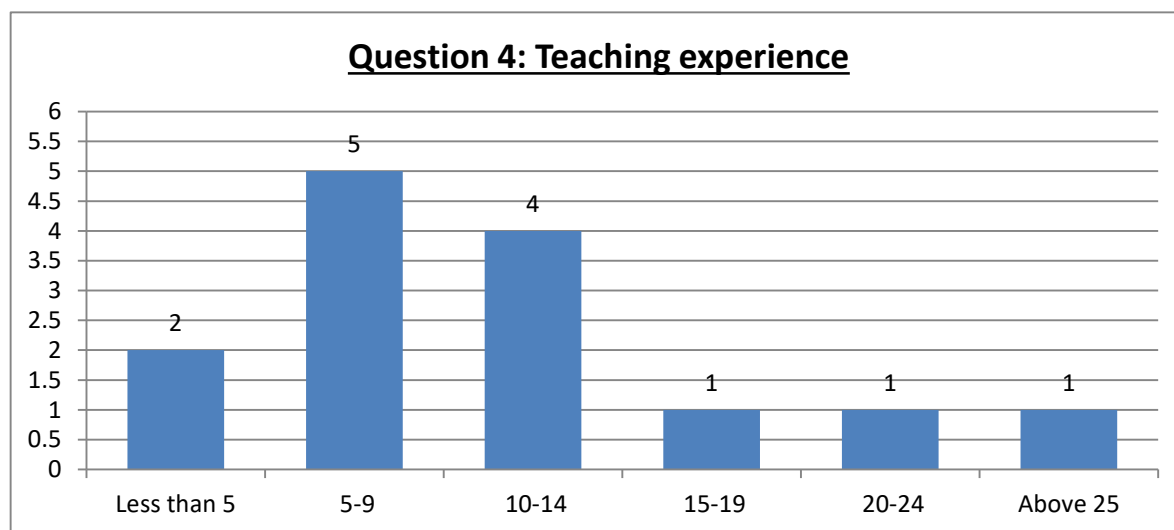
Figure 4.9: Years of Teaching Experience

The graph above represents the number of years of teaching experience among the respondents. A large number of respondents claimed that they had taught 5-9 years. Another significant portion claimed to have taught between 10-14 years. Another large percentage was those who had taught less than 5 years. An equal presentation was seen among individuals who had taught between 15-19 and 20-24, and above 25 years. According to these findings, we can see that half of the sample has extensive years of experience in

teaching English. Over half of the teachers (8 in total), have 10+ yes of experience in teaching English as foreign language. As expected, there is a correlation between years of experience and age group. According to the data, 60% of the teachers are aged 40+ and assuming all have 10+ years of experience teaching EFL. One can see that although all the teachers have experience in teaching EFL for a long period in their career, as discussed in the literature review, this may indicate more traditional beliefs, old teaching practices and less use of new teaching methods.

Table 4.13: What grade are you teaching?

Grade teaching	Frequency	%
Grade 9/10/11	1	7.1%
Grade 10	3	13.2%
Grade 10/11	1	7.1%
Grade 10/12	1	7.1%
Grade 11	1	7.1%
Grade 11/12	1	7.1%
Grade 12	4	28.6
Grade 9	1	7.1%
Grade 9/11	1	7.1%
Total	14	100
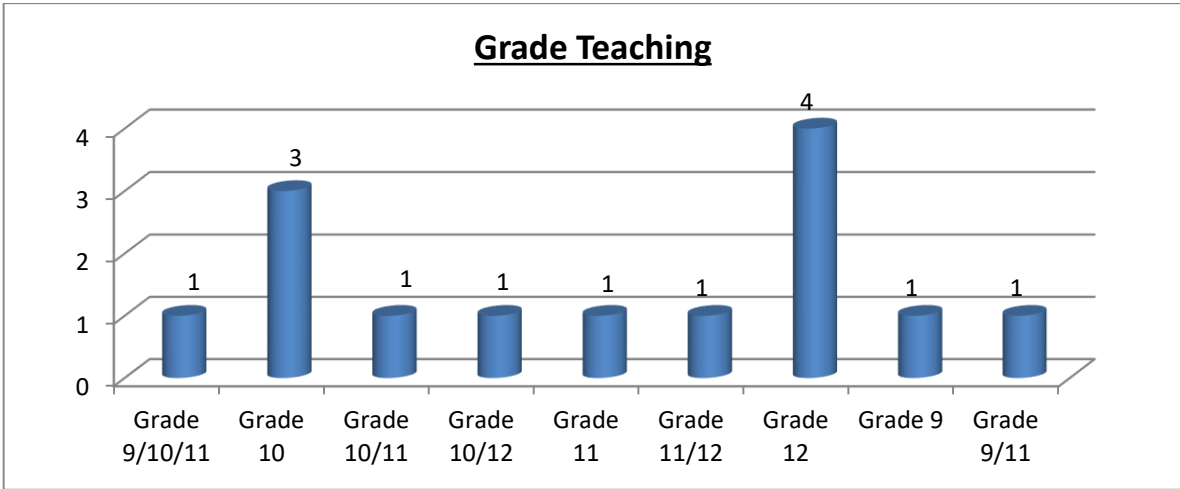
Figure 4.10: Grades Taught by Respondents

In the above chart, the grades which the respondents teach are indicated. The majority teach a single grade: the highest percentage teaching grade 12 and the next grade 10. All the other grades were equally represented among the respondents.

Table 4.14: Distribution of Sample According to Educational Level

Educational Level	Frequency	%
Bachelor	7	50.0%
Master	6	42.9%
PhD	1	7.1%
Total	14	100
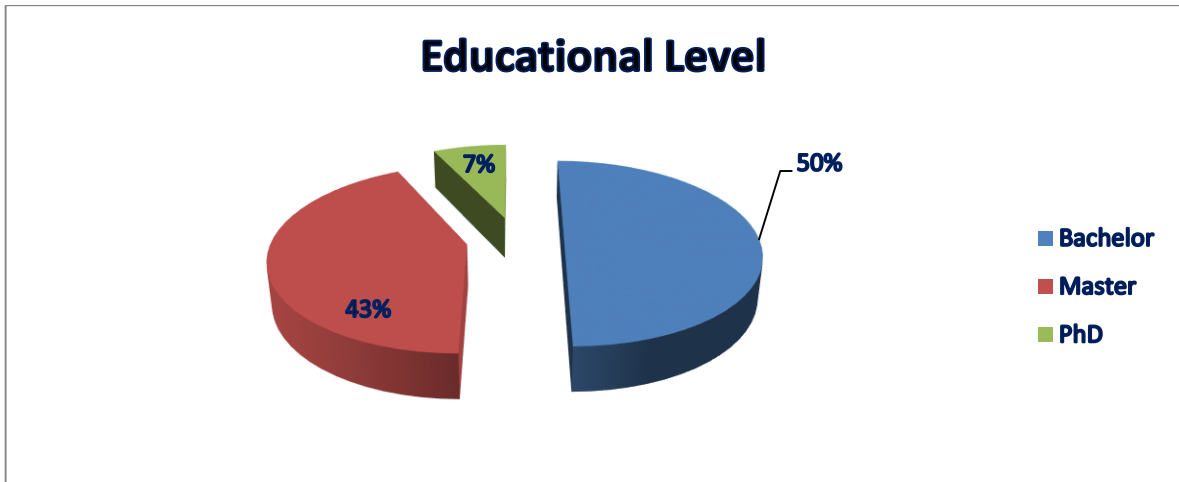
Figure 4.11 Educational Level of Respondents

In this chart, the educational level attained by the individual teachers is represented. It was clear that half have attained a bachelor's degree (50%). In addition, there was a significant portion of participants who had attained a master's degree. The smallest portion is the single teacher who had earned a PhD. This chart indicates that the educational background of the individuals was very significant. A background of the key stakeholders will be presented here in order to have an understanding of who they are within their own cultures and their experiences in teaching ESL. Also, the characteristics of the participants help in understanding how representative they are of teachers in the UAE. They majority of English teachers in the UAE are female and most Emirati women over 25 are married. The teachers in this sample, therefore, look to be a good sample for this study.

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	5	35.7%
Female	9	64.3%
Total	14	100
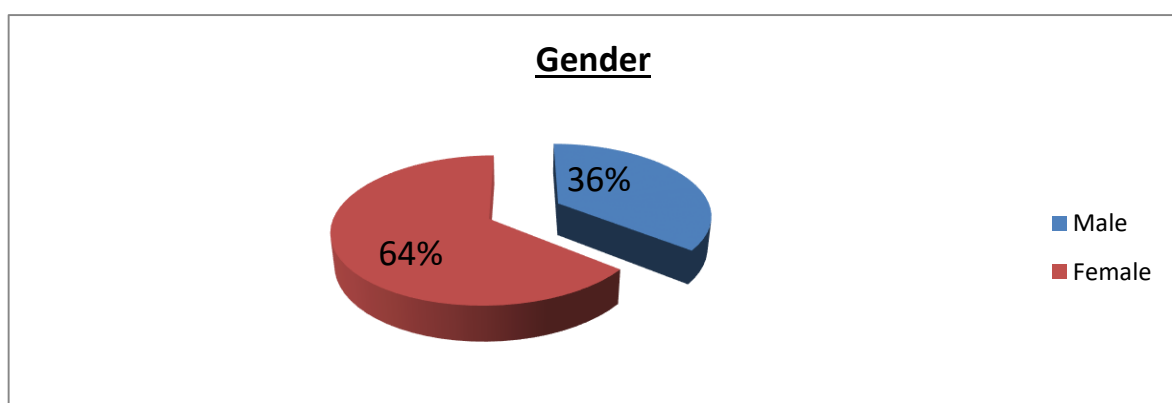
Figure 4.12: Sample According to Gender

This chart clearly indicates that the number of female teachers who took part in the investigation was very high compared to males. It indicates that females are purported to have various interests in the English curriculum. This is further supported by data found on the MOE website. The data indicates there are more female than male teachers. Thus, there is no under-representation of one gender over another.

Age Group	Frequency	%
31-35	3	21.4%
36-40	3	21.4%
41-45	2	14.3%
46-50	4	28.6%
51-55	1	7.1%
Above 55	1	7.1%
Total	14	100
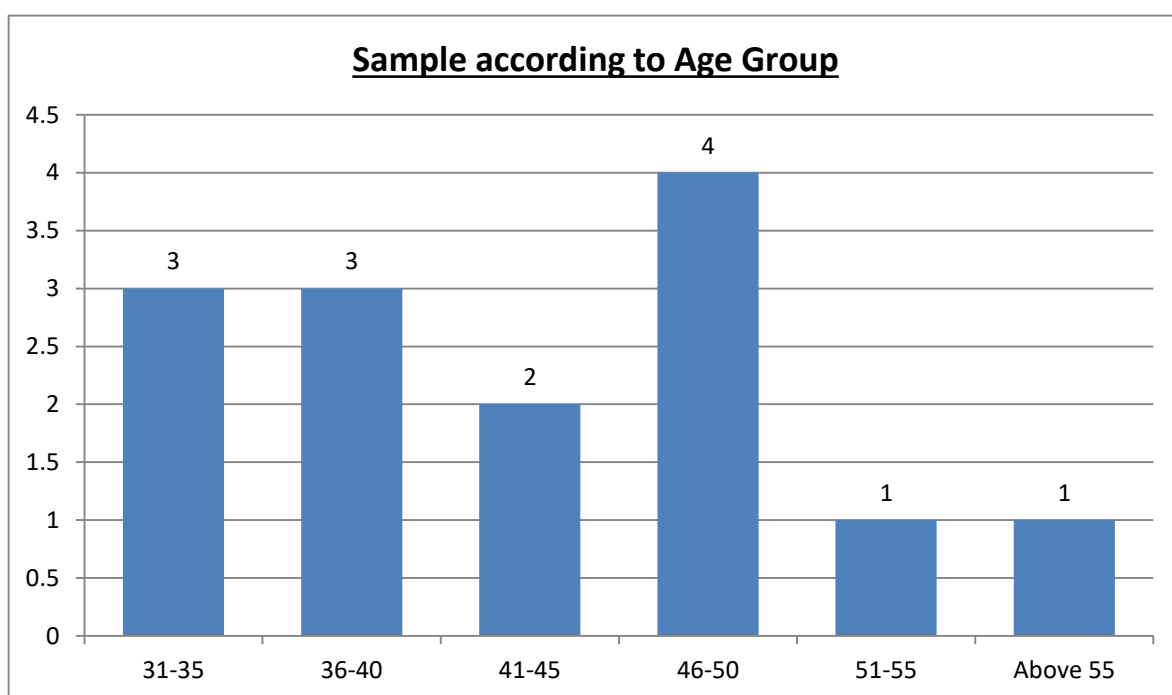
Figure 4.13. Sample According to Age Group

This graph presents the different age groups who took part in the study. It is clear that the highest proportion were aged between 46-50 years. There was an equal representation of two age groups, 31-35 and 36-40. Another significant proportion was represented in the 41-45 category. The lowest representations were between 51-55 and above

55 years. From the overall sample, there were no teachers in their 20s. Even though the highest portion of teachers were in their late 40s, one can see there is an equal number of teachers in their 30s and 40s. All in all, six teachers in their 30s and six teachers in their 40s.

Table 4.17: Distribution of Sample According to Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Divorced	2	14.3%
Married	8	57.1%
Single	4	28.6%
Total	14	100
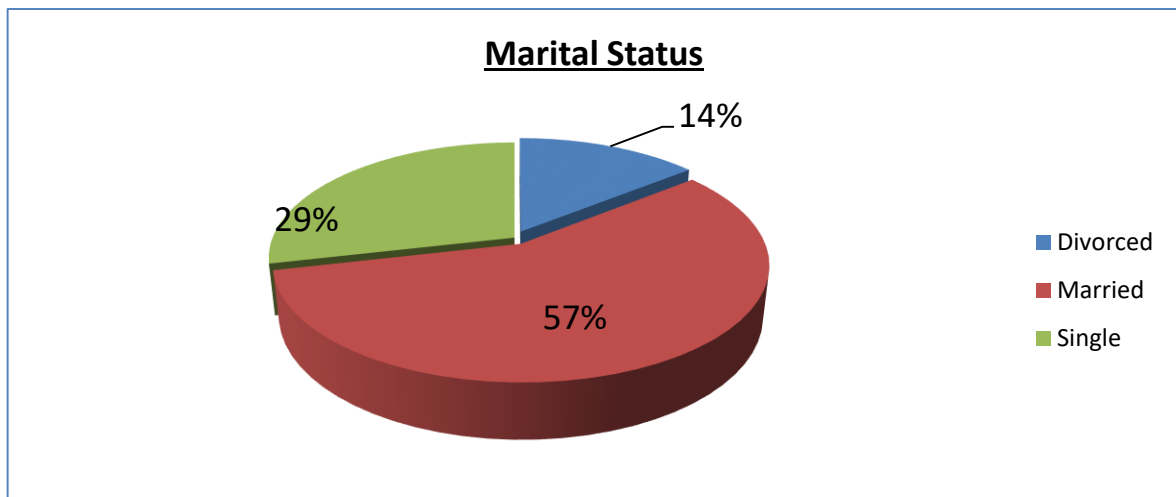
Figure 4.14. Sample According to Marital Status

The chart represents the participants' marital status. It is clear that the largest portion of participants are married (57%) while single participants made up a significant portion at 29% and there were only two divorced teachers (14%).

Table 4.18: Past experiences as an English Language Learner

S	Past experiences as an EL learner:	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	My early experience of learning English in school was great/wonderful	2 (14.3)	1 (7.1)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)
2	My previous English teachers used more than one teaching approached in class such as student-centred approach and teacher-centred approach	2 (14.3)	3 (21.4)	2 (14.3)	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)
3	In class I was expected to behave as an independent learner	2 (14.3)	1 (7.1)	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)
4	In class I was expected to completely rely on and obey my teacher	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)
5	My teacher in the classroom was my role model	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	6 (42.9)	4 (28.6)
6	My teachers used many ways to assess performance such as tests, quizzes, projects, group work.	2 (14.3)	1 (7.1)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)
7	I feel the assessment methods my teachers used were successful and reflected knowledge about the course	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	7 (50.0)	2 (14.3)	3 (21.4)
8	My overall experience as an English language learner is satisfactory	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	7 (50.0)	3 (21.4)
9	Based on my experience as a foreign language learner, today I will teach and assess my students differently than how my teachers taught and assessed me.	2 (14.3)	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)

The data in this table has illuminated the past experiences of the teachers in this study as English language learners. It addresses various perspectives of the English language to determine the relative experiences of each respondent. The data above illustrates that more than half of the teachers had a positive experience when they were learning English. Half of

174

the cohort found that their teachers used more than one method of teaching. This finding, however, is contradicted by the data collected from question 3 in which 65% of the teachers felt that they had not been expected to behave as independent leaders, even though half (50%), believed their teachers used different methods of learning such as student-centred learning which expected the students to be independent learners. This finding is further supported as 65% of the former learners answered that they were expected to rely on and obey their teachers and 70% percent saw their teacher as a role model. Approximately 60 % felt that their teachers used different methods to assess them but only 35% felt that that the assessments reflected their knowledge. Overall, 71% felt that their overall experience as an English language learner was satisfactory, and 15% felt it was neutral. Even though most of the teachers felt that their experience was satisfactory, approximately 50% wished to assess and teach their students differently than they had been taught themselves and 28.6% were neutral, with 21% who will follow the way they were taught.

From the analysis above one can see, based on how teachers answered, that even though they felt their teachers used different approaches in teaching, they had had to heavily rely on their former teachers and so saw them as role models. This is a strong indication that traditional approaches to learning were used in the classrooms of their youth. When it comes to learning approaches, therefore, such results indicate that most of the teachers were introduced to the traditional approach of language learning in which the teacher plays the role of passing on knowledge and students are considered passive learners. This was the image of an English teacher that many respondents indicated were their role models. In other words, their ideal teachers did not expect their students to act as independent learners.

Another indicator that many teachers were exposed to the more traditional approach occurred when they felt that assessments methods did not reflect their knowledge of the course. The reason is that in traditional teaching, teachers focus on subsets of skills and knowledge areas that are linked to particular course content. This implies that the content is limited to specific vocabulary items and aspects of grammar instead of being included in the overall communicative English process (reading, writing, speaking and listening). This could, therefore, be an indicator of why many felt their assessments did not reflect their knowledge of the course. Lastly, is that although the majority found that their own experience was satisfactory, 50% do not wish to teach the same way with their students. This finding indicates that the subjects believe there are better teaching approaches than those they themselves were exposed to in the past.

Table 4.19: Past Experiences in Postsecondary Education

S	Past experiences in postsecondary education:	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Your programme promotes a particular way of teaching and assessing students	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	8 (57.1)	4 (28.6)
2	There is conflict/similarities between what you were taught in your education courses regarding teaching and assessment	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)	4 (28.6)	4 (28.6)	4 (28.6)
3	The curriculum delivers its promised benefits to students	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	2 (14.3)	7 (50.0)	2 (14.3)
4	UAE students are still unable to show proficiency in English	2 (14.3)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	4 (28.6)	1 (7.1)
5	The current curriculum Skills continuum has been improved to raise English language proficiency levels among UAE students	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)

This data in this table records teachers' perceptions of their past experiences of postsecondary education. It has defined various parameters that define the relevant experiences. Here the questions address teacher experience in teaching postsecondary education, and 86% of the respondents stated that they were expected to teach and assess in a particular way. This indicates that the teachers themselves did not have much autonomy in their classroom in such areas. About half of the teachers (56%) believed that there was conflict in how they were taught and how they are expected to teach. Despite what can be perceived as negative responses in questions 1 and 2, 74% felt that the curriculum they use has accomplished what it intends to do – i.e. benefit students. When it came to answering as to whether or not students are proficient in the English language, however, only 28 % agreed, while 35% believed students are still unable to show proficiency, and the rest were inconclusive. For the current curriculum, only 47% believed there has been an improvement while 28% disagreed. The results indicated that more teachers believed that students still are not proficient in the English language yet 74% believed the curriculum delivers its promised benefit. This could mean that the teaching approach has shifted from how these teachers were taught. As learners, it was shown that the curriculum they learned from used the traditional approach to learning with the aim of learning the language skills and knowledge. However, here the curriculum has shifted to more of a constructive approach to language learning. In this approach to learning, the teachers play the role of facilitator and guide and encourage the students to work together to share opinions, challenge and solve problems. The main purpose of activities is for students to interact and discover on their own. This could be why teachers believed that the curriculum has delivered what it has promised yet students are still unable to show proficiency in the English language.

Table 4.20: The Evolution of Teaching experiences

S	Past teaching experiences	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I have memories about my earliest teaching experiences	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	9 (64.3)	4 (28.6)
2	I used many kinds of teaching and assessment methods	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (57.1)	6 (42.9)
3	I use some different sources when designing assessment activities	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	5 (35.7)	8 (57.1)
4	I have changed my teaching and assessment approach since then	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	9 (64.3)	4 (28.6)

The table above illustrates the evolution of teaching experiences. Various respondents indicated that they had a variety of experiences in the teaching paradigm. Many teachers have taken the initiative to assume a more proactive role in the classroom. As shown above, all the teachers have tried and used different assessments and teaching methods. Of the total number of teachers, 92% have sought different sources when designing assessment methods and 93% have changed their teaching and assessment approach. This can indicate that most of the teachers are moving away from the way they were taught, though some do still wish to continue with what was the traditional approach to learning.

Table 4.21: Current Beliefs about EFL Teaching and Learning

S	Current beliefs about EFL teaching and learning	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I currently use more than one teaching approach/mode in my classroom. For example, teacher-centred, student-centred, communicative…etc.	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	10 (71.4)

178

S	Current beliefs about EFL teaching and learning	SD	D	N	A	SA
2	More than one method/approach should be used as a best way to teach English	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	6 (42.9)	8 (57.1)
3	As a teacher, I give independence to my students	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	8 (57.1)	4 (28.6)
4	I base my teaching on the text and curriculum	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	9 (64.3)	3 (21.4)
5	All aspects (reading, writing, listening, communication …etc.) of teaching English are equally important	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (50.0)	7 (50.0)
6	Teaching English I experience more frustrating classroom occasions than successful ones.	3 (21.4)	5 (35.7)	4 (28.6)	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)
7	My students take responsibility for their learning process	1 (7.1)	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	7 (50.0)	0 (0.0)

This table lays out the perceived beliefs of EFL learning and teaching. The data highlights whether or not teachers believed the curriculum was appropriate and if it was helping fulfil their goals as teachers. These answers further support the initial findings that indicate that teachers are moving away from the traditional approach to teaching to more of a constructive approach to teaching. However, even when considering the constructive approach in which teachers are facilitators and guide students by posing questions, we can see that a majority of teachers' questions are guided by the text of the curriculum and they are covering all aspects of the language since they believe all are equally important. The majority of teachers (85%) give more independence to their students than was given to themselves as students. The teachers interviewed expect students to be active in their

learning process and 50% believe that their students are taking responsibility for their own

learning process.

Table 4.22: Current beliefs about EFL assessments (To be completed by Grade 9-10 teachers)

S	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	There are many ways and methods of assessment	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)	4 (28.6)
2	I use different types of assessment methods in my classroom? For example, traditional/alternative methods.	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (35.7)	4 (28.6)
3	There is no best was to assess my students' English language learning	6 (42.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)
4	It is important to assess throughout the year	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	6 (42.9)
5	There has to be a purpose for assessing my students	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	2 (14.3)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)
6	My students are engaged in the assessment process	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	5 (35.7)	3 (21.4)
7	For different lessons, I use different assessment methods	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	8 (57.1)	1 (7.1)
8	I use the results/outcomes of my assessments to make changes and improvement to my instructions	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)
9	'Skill continuum' and old ECART curriculum assessment practices are very different	5 (35.7)	2 (14.3)	3 (21.4)	4 (28.6)	0 (0.0)
10	My assessment practices have changed after the implementation of skill continuum curriculum	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.1)

S	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
11	Skill continuum influenced my thinking about assessment practices	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	6 (42.9)	0 (0.0)
12	Skill continuum influenced my teaching practices in class	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)
13	Skill continuum taught me something different about language assessment and teaching practices	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)
14	My role as a teacher changed after the implementation of skill continuum compared to ECART	6 (42.9)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	2 (14.3)	0(0.0)
15	I have made changes to my instruction, practices as a result of implementing the skill continuum	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	6 (42.9)	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)
16	I feel my beliefs about language teaching and assessment have changed as a result of incorporating the skill continuum framework in my classroom	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)	4 (28.6)	1 (7.1)
17	I believe the skill continuum has provided me and my students benefits in terms of English language assessment and teaching practices compared to ECART	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	6 (42.9)	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)
18	There are certain language areas, skill continuum is successful when assessing my students	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)	4 (28.6)	0 (0.0)
19	There are difficulties and obstacles I encountered using the skill continuum framework in assessing students	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	4 (28.6)	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)
20	My assessment practices reflect the principles of the skill continuum	1 (7.1)	4 (28.6)	3 (21.4)	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)
21	Skill continuum gives me information about my students' language learning progress	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	5 (35.7)	1 (7.1)

The table above assessed the beliefs about the current assessment methods used in EFL. The questionnaire was constructed to determine whether or not the respondents perceived that learning theories have an impact on the curriculum development and

instructional design. The answers to the first few questions indicate that more than half the teachers believe there are many different ways to assess. This answer can further support that underpinning the current curriculum is the constructive approach of learning. This is due to the fact that teachers feel they should use a variety of assessments since they will be teaching complex skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking and necessarily need a variety of ways to assess. Approximately 50% of teachers believe there no single best way to assess and 65% believe that different lessons require different assessment methods. Such answers further support the belief that a constructivist learning environment is the best fit for the opportunity for effective and active learning experience which can be supported by the different methods that about half of the teachers are implementing. Thus, the results support the hypothesis that the ECART curriculum is achieving its stated aims when implemented. One of the reasons, for example, that ECART was implemented was to improve assessment methods and the data here indicates that more than half of the teachers are proactive in using different assessments methods.

In 2017, the 'skill continuum' curriculum was introduced in grade 9/10. Half of the teachers believe that the assessment practices were not different after this; however, about 57% said that their assessment practices have changed since. Even though 57% said that their assessment practices have changed, 50% said that the skill continuum has not taught them anything different about language assessments and teaching practices. Also, approximately 65% feel their role as a teacher has not changed and most of their teaching practices and beliefs have not changed after implementation of the skill continuum. Approximately 50% of the teachers believe that the skill continuum curriculum did not bring any benefit to students and that it was less successful in assessing students than the ECART curriculum.

Based on the above results, it seems that skill continuum is considered a curriculum that seeks to move from a constructive approach to more of a sociocultural approach to learning. The new skill continuum curriculum included media and technology because those who designed the curriculum believed that students need the skills related to media use and technology as they are part of a student's everyday life. In addition, sociocultural approaches support learning that includes artefacts such as videos and computer labs, and so allow for a connected and international learning environment.

The MOE skills continuum included a new assessment system. The data suggests that even though 50% of teachers did not believe that the assessment practices were similar to that of ECART's assessment practices, 57% said they have changed their assessment practices. The assessments focus on summative assessment in which students are assessed as to whether they have attained the necessary level of proficiency to fully engage at the next level.

It seems that the teachers were not very supportive of the introduction of skills continuum as it did not change their role in the classroom. Also, the introduction to the new curriculum did not change their beliefs about their teaching and assessment practices. The follow-up interviews conducted with the teachers point to a lack of support of the curriculum, and the interviews that were carried out with the curriculum developers indicate that there had been a lack of time to create it and for teacher training in advance of its implementation. This could also be the reason that many teachers supported their old beliefs about teaching practices and assessments and half of them faced difficulties using the skills continuum framework.

Table 4.23: Current beliefs about EFL assessments (To be completed by Grade 11-12 teachers)

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	There are many ways and methods of assessments	0	0	0	5 (50)	5 (50)
2	I use different types of assessment methods in my classroom. For example traditional/alternative methods	0	0	0	4 (60)	5 (40)
3	There is no best way to assess my students' English language learning	1 (10)	2 (20)	3 (10)	4 (60)	0
4	It is important to assess throughout the year	0	0	0	4 (30)	5 (70)
5	There has to be a purpose for assessing my students	0	2 (10)	3 (10)	4 (20)	5 (60)
6	My students are engaged in the assessment process	0	0	3 (10)	4 (90)	0
7	For different lessons, I use different assessment methods	0	0	0	4 (70)	5 (30)
8	I use the results/outcomes of my assessments to make changes and improvement to my instructions	0	0	0	4 (70)	5 (30)
9	MOE curriculum and old ECART curriculum assessment practices are very different	0	2 (10)	3 (20)	4 (50)	5 (20)
10	My assessment practices have changed after the implementation of MOE curriculum.	0	2 (10)	3 (20)	4 (60)	5 (10)
11	MOE influenced my thinking about assessment practices	0	2 (10)	3 (60)	4 (30)	0
12	MOE influenced my teaching practices in class	0	0	3 (40)	4 (50)	5 (10)
13	MOE taught me something different about language assessment and teaching practices	1 (10)	0	3 (50)	4 (40)	0
14	My role as a teacher changed after the implementation of 'MOE Continuum' compared to ECART	0	2 (10)	3 (60)	4 (30)	0

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
15	I have made changes to my instruction practices as a result of implementing the MOE curriculum	0	0	3 (30)	4 (70)	0
16	I feel my beliefs about language teaching and assessment have changed as a result of incorporating the MOE framework in my classroom	1 (10)	0	3 (50)	4 (30)	5 (10)
17	I believe the MOE has provided me and my students benefits in terms of English language assessment and teaching practices compared to ECART	1 (10)	0	3 (40)	4 (40)	5 (10)
18	There are certain language areas, MOE is successful when assessing my students	0	0	3 (20)	4 (70)	5 (10)
19	There are difficulties and obstacles I encountered using the MOE framework in assessing students	1 (10)	2 (20)	3 (50)	4 (20)	0
20	My assessment practices reflect the principles of the MOE	0	0	3 (10)	4 (80)	5 (10)
21	MOE gives me information about my students' language learning progress	0	2 (10)	3 (30)	4 (50)	5 (10)

This table assessed the beliefs about the current assessment methods used in EFL by grade 11 and 12 teachers. This table is different than a previous table (4.22) which assessed grade 9-10 teachers, in which only ECART and skill continuum curriculum were implemented. The MOE curriculum was introduced in grade 11-12. The teachers questioned here were questioned about ECART and MOE. The first few questions asked teachers about their beliefs about assessment and the answers were very similar to those of the teachers in grade 9-10. In answering the first eight questions, the teachers indicated they believed there are many ways of assessing their students, many used different assessments for different lessons and that assessment should have a purpose. Teachers indicated that they were also proactive in their assessment in terms of assessing throughout the year and engaging their students in the assessment process, and using the assessment results to make changes to their teaching methods.

When questions were introduced with regard to comparing the ECART and MOE assessments, it was interesting to see that seven out of fourteen teachers strongly agreed or agreed that MOE and ECART curriculum assessment practices are very different, and that their practices have changed since the implementation of MOE curriculum. The majority (about 60%) believe that the introduction to the MOE has influenced their teaching practices and 40% feel MOE has taught them something new about assessments, which only means that MOE has introduced new assessment practices, which needed teachers to change teaching practices in order to assess them accordingly. This point was further supported when 70% of teachers answered they had to change the instruction practices when implementing the MOE curriculum which could only mean there would be a need to change assessment practices. In this study, 80% of teachers believed there are different assessment methods for different lessons. This further indicates that the curriculum is very different than the ECART curriculum. Half of the teachers (50%), believed that the MOE curriculum has benefitted them and their students in assessment and teaching practices compared to ECART. Also 80% of the teachers believed that in certain areas, the MOE was more successful for assessing their students. A few teachers (30%) experienced difficulty when using the MOE framework in assessing students. It seems that the majority of the teachers are happy with MOE assessment practice, which was indicated with 90% agreeing assessment practices reflect MOE principles, and 60% feel MOE gives them enough information about the progress of student learning. The results of comparing the new MOE curriculum to ECART seem very positive. There seems to be a constructive change and teachers state they were accepting and implementing this change.

The answers here were very different from those at the comparison of the ECART and skill continuum. There was an indication that the assessment practices were not very

different than that of ECART and many teachers' practices did not change. They did not feel it changed their beliefs or benefited their students. Teachers were not much in favour of the skill continuum. Also, the answers at times were not strong indicators when it came to taking one side or another, in other words, agreeing or disagreeing, and at times many answered by choosing a neutral option. This kind of pattern, of not answering some questions or selecting the neutral option, seem to indicate a lack of interest and that there was no strong indication of change. Whereas when it came to comparing the ECART and MOE, it seemed many teachers had the same opinions as their peers when it came to answering questions, and their answers indicated there had been a change. The MOE curriculum has brought about changes and that was indicated by the teachers' responses. There was a positive shift when answering questions about MOE compared to the same questionnaire that examined experience with the skills continuum curriculum. The feedback about the skills continuum could be one of the reasons that indicate why it only lasted for one year (2017-2018), and as of Sept 2018 all Abu Dhabi school from grades 9-12 started following the MOE curriculum. It seems that MOE has brought positive changes, at least from the perspectives of the teachers at the chalk face, and we will look at how the MOE curriculum is different from ECART.

Table 4.24: The Current Context of Teaching and Assessment

S	The context of teaching and assessment	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	My students are motivated	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)	9 (64.3)	1 (7.1)
2	I would say my students have a good English background knowledge	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	6 (42.9)	5 (35.7)	0 (0.0)
3	My students are respective to the new curriculum and find it useful	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.1)
4	My students complain with the amount of work they have	0 (0.0)	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)	5 (35.7)	2 (14.3)
5	I like teaching in this school	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	6 (42.9)
6	I have a good relationship with colleagues, staff, and administration	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	7 (50.0)
7	I have discussions with school personnel regarding ESL assessment methods	0 (0.0)	1(7.1)	0 (0.0)	12 (85.7)	1 (7.1)

8	I have discussions with school personnel regarding ESL teaching methods	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)	11 (78.6)	1 (7.1)
9	The discussions I have with colleagues impacted my assessment practices and teaching practices in the classroom	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	11 (78.6)	0 (0.0)
10	I am supportive of the current reform of English language teaching and assessment adopted	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.1)	12 (85.7)	1 (7.1)
11	I do not agree with this reform	4 (28.6)	2 (14.3)	4 (28.6)	4 (28.6)	0 (0.0)
12	This reform is impacting the methods I use when I teach and assess my students positively	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	3 (21.4)	8 (57.1)	2 (14.3)
13	ADEC supported me in order to implement the ECART framework in my classroom in the past	2 (14.3)	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.1)
14	ADEC supported me implementing the new curriculum	0 (0.0)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	6 (42.9)	1 (7.1)

This table has accessed the current context of teaching the EFL curriculum. It identifies whether or not people perceive that the curriculum is as comprehensive as needed. When it came to answering questions about their beliefs of context of the curriculum, 64% say their students are motivated but only 35% believe their students have a good level of English background knowledge. When it came to acceptance, 57% of teachers believed their students seemed to be receptive to the new curriculum and not many have students complaining about the amount of work. When it came to teaching in school, 70% of the teachers like the school where they teach and 86% had good relationships with their colleagues, which indicates that they are happy with their environment. This is crucial because work environment plays a large role in engagement and contribution. This was supported by a large number of them (92%) are engaged in discussions with their colleagues when exchanging ideas about assessment practices and 85% share ideas about teaching practices. The majority of the teachers (78%) feel their engagement with other colleagues impacted both their teaching and assessment practices. In addition, the majority of the teachers (93%) are supportive of the current reform of English language teaching and assessment adopted; even though it is changing ways teachers teach and assess, 71% feel it

has a positive impact. Overall, the question about support from management to implement previous and current curricula did not get much of a response.

The answers to the questions about the context seemed to further support the MOE curriculum. While it is bringing about changes in terms of assessment and teaching methods, teachers seemed in favour of these changes because they seemed to be more engaged with their colleagues and believed there was a positive impact on students.

4.6 Key Issues and Underlying Themes in the Implementation of the English Language Curriculum in the UAE Government Schools

In addition to the questionnaire method, a semi-structured interview was used to uncover the motivations behind the design of the curriculum. Four curriculum designers and developers from the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) were interviewed in September 2018. The interviews were carried out in order to seek to uncover which ideologies supported the development of the MOE and ECART curriculums. Interviews allow for a detailed focus on Schiros ideologies (scholar academic, social efficiency, learner-centered, and social reconstruction) while at the same time their semi-structured nature maintained a two-way flow of information. Those interviewed could, for example, add additional information with respect to their own opinions as to whether or not the MOE curriculum was more teacher centered than the ECART curriculum. Interviews allowed a more in-depth focus on the issues raised in the questionnaires so that the researcher can explore if their interpretations of such data make sense. The designers could also highlight their concerns to the researcher and reflect on their own practice.

Based on the data analysis from the interview questions, we can better understand the perceptions of the key stakeholders of the curriculums ECART, skills continuum, and MOE. The interviews were utilized to record the views that the developers held on the evolution of the curriculum in the UAE, specifically Abu Dhabi, and also to provide a snapshot of the present state of development in ADEC. The interviews were assessed to add to the findings as to the question of which ideological umbrella the different curricula (ECART and MOE) fall under. The interviews were also important in illuminating the challenges that curriculum developers are facing. Each interview was carried out for 60 minutes and recorded using voice recorded on mobile. The style of interview was semi-structured which was chosen to support thematic analysis. Patterns of meaning were identified through a rigorous process of data familiarization, data coding, and theme development and revision (University of Auckland, 2019). The method was used in analysing qualitative data. It focuses on identifying themes and patterns of meaning that reoccur in the interview, so as to help provide answers to questions that are connected to theory. Through all four interviews, the patterns and themes that were identified as enhancing our understanding of the main characteristics of the curriculum are as follows:

4.6.1 ECART Instructional Process and Assessment Supports Student-Centred and Social Efficiency Ideology

The interviewees stressed that the curriculum was designed so that students are assessed around key themes. The students choose inquiry-based questions and they are free to develop their own themes, with appropriate teacher guidance. Students will then carry out their own research and work in groups. Considering a task to produce a letter, the whole trimester can be given to produce that product. As a teacher, utilizing this curriculum, you

would ask yourself: "What do I need to guide my students in this task? What language, information, skills, what listening, what reading and writing is needed to support the ultimate completion of that task? The students can choose the final product to be a letter, play, or movie. Thus students have a choice in how to tackle their own learning."

Outcomes are aligned with 2020 Vision in the Abu Dhabi strategic plan. Students are expected to 'work independently' and be 'innovative'. As stated in the interviews, "That's what the world needs". In other words, all skills taught are needed to operate in English in the real world. In addition, the assessment process further supports this instructional process.

ECART supported a process of working through a curriculum using continuous assessments. All activities undertaken by the students were underpinned by the key question, "How do I work in a group?" The curriculum designers summarized this in a series of questions outlined as follows: "How do I present my information? What is my attitude? How can I create my first draft? How do I mark my first draft by getting feedback from teachers and friends? What do I do with feedback?" To the designers, the focus was on the process over a particular final product. Students were, therefore, expected to assess and work from the beginning of a task all the way to the last step. The focus is on building skills towards an outcome, and thus the ECART approach is very student-centred. There was a common consensus that there is more work for the teacher in following an ECART curriculum and accommodating all students in the class.

In the words of the designers: "At the time there were two rubrics. [A] compliance rubric on how do I communicate with my team and how best to cooperate in class; what do I bring to my team?". It is all about collaboration and cooperation. The ECART curriculum is very heavily dependent on 21st century skills so that work is not carried out in isolation.

There are other rubrics, such as using the correct language, grammar, structure, presentation of work, and audience perception of student work. The rubrics are not the same as in the traditional curriculum in which the final products (such as exams) are marked but in general are about the process.

Over all, the changes brought about by introducing the ECART were an evolution of assessment and teaching methods. It is a manifestation of the practice of having an in-depth task that groups of student work together to develop and explore what they want in English. Consider the following: if I am a student with limited English, maybe I will make a poster and I will have 12 words on that poster. However, that will be great because I developed those 12 words. Maybe my English is good, so I will make a short movie with a great deal more information. There is a lot of emphasis on meeting students where they are and using that place as a starting point in developing them, but not having restrictions on how the task will be executed. It is the teacher's job to facilitate the whole process of working forward on a process.

The teachers' job, therefore, is all about working with and accommodating students. As a teacher, I ask myself, for example: what do my students need to make a menu? I look at products, search ingredients, and I ask myself should I send students to supermarkets to research real-world examples? The activities are all about building the skills of language (reading, speaking etc.), while the process of inquiry is still there. In the process of achieving products, we build language skills along the way.

Teachers also had rubrics here to judge progress. Each trimester, there were a number of speaking and listening outcomes, reading and writing outcomes, and language and grammar outcomes. The majority of the student's marks were on their product. Students

were 75% assessed based on the product they produced. Unlike traditional assessment, this 75 % weight was on continuous assessment in class work.

The ECART continuous assessment supported the instruction process to see if students are gaining the right skills day by day. Such assessment allows for students to think, be independent and apply skills. The process of continuous assessments supports this method of independent study.

4.6.2 MOE Content Knowledge Supports Scholar-Academic Ideology and Teacher-Centred Classrooms

The MOE curriculum, in contrast, is much more structured. It is based on the student books for each trimester and an overall teacher's guide. The MOE curriculum provided books and text, whereas ECART consisted of a gathering of loosely connected materials. As one curriculum developer stated: "the MOE provides resource and a good guide". Also, the outcomes of the curriculum as stated were: "very detailed and now even more so. There is a cautious effort to up the skill level every year", which is evidence of a feature of the scholar-academic ideology. While teachers still have freedom to look at other material and branch out as long as outcomes are covered, the approach is much more structured than the student-centred approach of the ECART. The MOE prescribes classroom assessment as 75% exams and quizzes. As one interviewee stated of the MOE curriculum: "It is all about pedagogy and it should be student-centred but this new curriculum lacks that aspect. We should keep it student-centred. It's all about exams and one small in-class task". There are no continuous assessments as there were in the ECART curriculum: "here it is exam-focused".

Interestingly, the MOE curriculum also supports the social efficiency ideology but in a different way from the ECART curriculum. In the voice of the developers: "There is always a strong focus on Emirati identity in this curriculum, and we designers make a cautious effort to add in such material when creating course content. We use local names and local pictures, etc. There is a big drive to localize material and then add a little flavour of the international. Consider that when bringing in the skill continuum learning outcomes, we use a book from National Geographic, we have to go over the book and take out some material. Thus, over 70% of the content was localized in the course textbook. Outcomes were benchmarked internationally with countries such as Canada, China, and Scotland, etc. In designing previous curricula, traditionally content was benchmarked internationally to a certain extent but this new curriculum was benchmarked extensively."

According to the interviews, it can be concluded that the new MOE curriculum focuses less on students' creativity and more on their literacy skills. According to one curriculum developer: "It seems like worldwide that they are going back to texts and exams. For me it's a pity because I loved the student-centred curriculum and I believed it allowed students to grow, develop etc.". "This curriculum is not as student centred. Now it's teacher directed [and] text based".

4.6.3 Support for Teachers and Developers during Rapid Changes

The fact that both teachers and developers were experiencing rapid change was reflected in teachers' opinions on how changes are introduced quickly but less time is given to learn and reflect and improve delivering the curriculum. The new school model (NSM), for example, was introduced year by year, in that at first grade 6 was introduced to the NSM learning outcomes while grade 7 still followed ECART. The ECART was phased out from

the bottom up, but before getting through all the grades and when it reached grade 10, the new 'Abu Dhabi School Model' was introduced and thus the 'skill continuum' is the outcome of the Abu Dhabi school model. Skill continuum are the standards based on the common core standards and introduced within a period of less than eight years.

In Sept 2017, the skill continuum was introduced in grades 6-10. The original plan was supposed to be 6-12 but the MOE decided to take over grades 11-12. When the merge came, ADEC kept grades 6-10 in Sept 2017, "The merger happened suddenly" and there was "no clarity" on how that would work in practice.

A common theme that arose when interviewing was the method of making decisions. The answers were uniformly: "It all takes place at the top level so we don't know". Thus, even curriculum developers are not involved in decision-making and only do what they are told. As stated by one of those interviewed: "We get told 'you will do this and that's how it will be'." Also, teachers and other stakeholders believe: "things happen very quickly here. It is the reform. My opinion doesn't make a difference here. It is what it is". All those interviewed expressed the opinion that they do not have any say even though they are curriculum specialists. The developers were hesitant to commit to one direction or another: "We are on standby, just waiting what directives will be for next year. Since 2007, there have been five major changes. The top management are expecting results and if they don't see immediate results, instead of waiting three years to work on the wrinkles and improvement, they will lead a change quickly, often without feedback from other stakeholders."

It was also believed that there should be one person in charge, and: "with the heart of an educator. Such a person would have wisdom to appoint right people and team to advise

them to implement". One interviewee expressed the opinion that: "people from the community, teachers, a large body of people should have input to that one person or that group of people who have the heart of an educator."

Even in terms of implementation, it was believed by some interviewed that teachers did not take on leadership roles in making the curriculum effective for their students. They could have been more creative: "even though the new MOE curriculum is more textbook-based, teachers can still apply the process of student-centred teaching. However, there seems to be a lack of motivation and creativity from the teacher side." As stated, "Teachers will just follow the book because it is an easy way and I will not have any problems with my supervisors. I believe I am a visitor in this country and getting paid well. I will try to follow the local customs." When asked why the MOE curriculum was implemented in grades 11-12 in Abu Dhabi in 2018, many did not know; as one stated: "decisions are from above."

Despite the acknowledgment of a more burdensome role for the teacher in the ECART system, there was little training or materials provided, in part as the lack of prescribed materials and approach is a hallmark of the system. The lack of structure for ECART teachers meant that in the beginning they had no materials to work with. The teachers started making materials based on the tasks presented in the previous trimester. They created resources to help them raise skills. As one curriculum developer stated: "It was gathering of loose material".

In addition, it was evident there is a lack of teacher support when it was suggested that future training: "would take the teachers coming into the country and put them through tight training for a month. Such a process would tell them this is how we work if we want

inquiry-based learning, projects and all great things. I think it all starts with the teachers. It always does."

It was evident in interviews that training for teachers was limited, while a great deal was expected of them. Even when the MOE curriculum was implemented, however, in high school grades 11-12 as of fall 2018, curriculum leaders in ADEC hadn't received material from the MOE for teacher training and school was about to start in a week. There was no schedule as to when training would be held. This suggests a lack of communication at a crucial time.

Interview data also seemed to suggest that the teachers from within the country, i.e, the Arab teachers are not getting the support they need in order to be effective teachers. This statement was supported when a developer mentioned the new MOE curriculum is more text-based than student-based and said: "Arab expat teachers are familiar with content-based learning. It is easier for them since they never have had a method of teaching. In university, the teachers learn language rules but do not learn how to teach. The Western world is big on pedagogy."

4.7 Activity Theory: Analysis of UAE English Curriculum

Here we turn to content analysis, the third type of data collection used in this dissertation to allow for triangulation of data. Content analysis allows for valuable insight into a categories and chunks of information and relationships that can be found within the text. We have chosen to employ activity theory as scaffold for analysis after a review of the literature. We have previously discussed the complex nature of activity theory. Activity theory was selected from a wide variety of theories that attempt to illuminate the teaching of

English as a second and/or international language; as such a theoretical perspective can provide insight into the types of activities engaged in, and the people who undertake the activities, as well as the wider community of practice. In addition, the theory can help understand the products (such as curriculum and activity within the curriculum) as well as the rules and norms (such as in this case the teachers' beliefs) (Jonassen & Murony, 1999). This research explores the effectiveness of activity theory as a method to effectively analyse curricula.

Scholar-Academic Underlying Philosophy

The scholar-academic philosophy focuses on learners obtaining accumulated knowledge of the subject matter. This is the philosophy that, on the surface, dominated the UAE's teaching of ESL until the ECART curriculum was introduced. Teachers in this study indicated uncertainty with such a move, specifically the reduction of a stress on scholarly academic performance. The MOE curriculum, in contrast, focused on examinable knowledge (the four skills) and moved away from the focus on rich tasks, which were harder to measure for successful completion of student learning outcomes.

Social Efficiency

Social efficiency is a curriculum ideology designed to ensure that schooling meets the needs of society. The ECART's vision of what society needed included self-motivated learners capable of sustained research on a topic of their own choosing. The MOE curriculum instead focuses on the need to integrate Emirati-related topics into over 70% of its English language content.

Learner-Centred Ideology

Learner-centred ideology is based on progressivism education, which puts the needs of the learners as a priority. This ideology was discussed in the section above that covered beliefs and then compared and contrasted that of the teacher-centred classroom with the learner-centred one. Although learner-centred teaching methods are now encouraged across the globe, this is just one study that illustrates the challenges that teachers encounter in implementing such techniques.

Social Reconstruction

Social reconstruction ideology is based on the reconstructionist philosophy of education. The ideology is based on two significant assumptions: first that society is at its heart unhealthy, and second that education can save society from destroying itself. This ideology has not emerged in this study partly due to the fact that, although policymakers in the UAE decry the level of English of their student graduates, the country as a whole has witnessed decades of growth and development, with high living standards for its people, especially compared to other countries in the region. Educational reforms in the UAE, therefore, take place in a positive national context. In this study, policy documents and the aims of the curriculum attest to the importance of English fluency as a positive force in social reconstruction to ensure that Emirati youth are prepared to represent their country internationally.

4.7.1 English as a World Language and Implications for Activity Theory

The curriculum designers, interviewed in this study, alluded to their design of the ECART curriculum as encouraging students to be 'innovative', as "that's what the world needs". The concept of English as a world language has two challenges: the first,that language used locally may start to move so far away from its roots as to be unrecognizable to mainstream users (undermining the point of the world language) (James, 2008). The second challenge is that children of native speakers of other languages (such as Arabic) may grow up using English as a first language to the detriment of their ability to speak their mother tongue while at the same time perhaps never becoming fully fluent in their (dominant) second language (Karam et al., 2017). Inherent in the answers to the questionnaire in this study is the idea that there is a correct way to use English.

The MOE curriculum in contrast was much more structured and so did not encourage the use of non-standard forms of English. According to the developers, this approach suited "Arab expat teachers who are familiar with content-based learning". Instead, a focus on the use of English around the world was found in a different place, according to the developers interviewed: "the use of the curriculum to support knowledge relating to Emirati identity. We use local names and local pictures, etc.". Developers are recorded in this study as stating that in comparison to ECART, "there is a big drive to localize material… Over 70% of the content was localized." Findings in the literature also support the integration of authentic materials into the language class. Although such a step can be challenging and time-consuming, it can provide both effective and interesting materials.

4.7.2 The Key Purpose of the Sytem and its Context

Both the ECART and MOE curricula stress that learning English is more than simply studying a language, and instead includes knowledge about culture and socialization. The social aspects of the ECART curriculum are influenced by a stress on English as a world language and the aim of teaching English and 21st century skills. The MOE socialization focuses on Emirati-related topics and the role of the new generation of Emiratis on an international stage, or specifically: to shape the global citizens who can promote the Emirati cultural values. The context of the reforms, as has been discussed in this study in Chapter 1, is the understanding of the role that English will play in the future in the Gulf region as well as in the individual lives of the students.

4.7.3 Analysis of the Activity System

Both curricula focus on what Campbell, MacPherson, and Sawkins (2014) label as 'identity in practice'. Both the descriptions of the curricula and the designers and teachers' comments point to the participation of students in semi-structured (in the case of ECART) and more formally structured (MOE) social practices of learning within a classroom community rather than just depending on the 'sage on the stage' dissemination of knowledge from subject experts. The lack of structure and training are cited by the participants of this study as a reason for the failure of the ECART curriculum to be implemented exactly as designed, rather than the lack of appreciation for the in-depth real-world tasks it provided. By addressing the same issues, but providing more form and detailed assessments, the MOE curriculum has been able to better meet the needs of the changing society, policymakers and teachers, as well as their students. Both curricula sought to make a difference outside the classroom. Effort was made to prepare students for success in future studies and the world

of work as confident users of English for communication and further study. The MOE curriculum sought to further enhance this performance by stressing the culture and heritage of the UAE while exploring avenues for students in service to their country.

4.7.4 Analysis of the Activity Structure

The MOE and the ECART curriculum have very different structures that guide how activity is to take place. Following the route prescribed by ECART is to ensure that sections that make up the unit 'weave together' and are applied in context where and when appropriate. Unlike the majority of curricula across the globe, neither the teaching, learning or assessment cycles of ECART are designed in a sequential order. The structures of the activities may also change from year to year as they are designed to be flexible and include the interests of the department, the teacher and the country. The day-to-day structure of the class is also fluid in ECART as the participants can decide to write poetry, organize a debate, write narratives, etc. There is an overarching umbrella of the Abu Dhabi Standards within which teachers should map student achievement but this is meant to support rather than dictate activity. The structure of the MOE curriculum takes place around supporting and documenting the number of student learning outcomes (SLOs) achieved throughout the year. As has been discussed, SLOs fall under two domains: content or cognitive, with students undertaking a wide range of prescribed activities including communication strategies around general themes such as people, places, jobs and the environment.

4.7.5 Tools and Mediators

Both the ECART and MOE curricula are benchmarked against international standards that are used as tools to ensure appropriate activities and student learning

outcomes. In the case of the ECART, however, the localization and adaption of the curriculum was carried out rather quickly compared with the longer, more iterative process that the MOE team was able to undertake. The MOE has, therefore, a very detailed series of target achievements and supporting tasks and activities as well as indicators of success across all four of the key skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening).

4.7.6 Activity System Dynamics

The efficacy of the two curricula are very different. Although the ECART was designed with the best intentions in mind, its 'freestyle' approach to classroom activity and its stress on the student locus of control meant that for many teachers its edicts were more suggestions. Without the structure they were accustomed to, teachers returned to implementing practices they were familiar with from their own student days or early teaching experience. Many teachers did try to implement at least some aspects of the approach and this new undertaking served them in good stead when the MOE curriculum was introduced. Teachers in the Abu Dhabi school system now had the enhanced skills to use real-world materials to extend and enrich the experience of their students.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined all the research analysis according to the main research question. Three data collection methods were used to analyse and discuss the main objectives of this research. The first method of analysis used was content analysis. The ECART and MOE documents were contrasted and compared with the support of Schiro's ideologies and curriculum mapping, which involved six questions that guided the understanding of the main components of each curriculum. Through the understanding of each component of the

curriculum, we were able to identify which of Schiro's ideologies each ECART and MOE curriculum aligns with in terms of aim, content knowledge, instructional process, role of teachers and students and assessments. It was found that each ECART and MOE curriculum adopted a multi-purpose approach. The ECART was heavily reliant towards student-centered ideology, whereas MOE was heavily reliant on scholar academic ideology. However, each of the other Schiro's ideologies were seen to play a role in other components of the English Language Curriculum.

The survey questionnaire was used to understand teachers' beliefs and perceptions. It involved: demographics of teachers; their past experience as learners; past and current experience in postsecondary education. Based on the analyses, a few points were identified which might have had an impact on their teaching and assessment practices. As learners, the majority viewed their teachers as role models, did not expect them to act as independent learners and only exposed them to traditional approaches to learning. This can be an indication that ECART which was mostly student-centered was difficult to implement for many teachers. The majority of the teachers believe that there are better teaching methods than they were exposed to as students. Teachers believe that the curriculum is moving towards more of a constructive approach where teachers are supposed to encourage students to share their opinions, challenge, and solve problems on their own. Thus, teaching approaches have shifted from the way they were taught and the majority of teachers are willing to try new methods of teaching, assessments, and giving independence to their students in the learning process. In regards to assessments, the majority believe that there are many ways to assess and that different lessons require different assessment methods. Thus teachers' beliefs were seen to be supported by ECART continuous assessment methods that were put into place. When it came to teachers' beliefs about the skill continuum that was

implemented, teachers believed that it did not add any value to teaching and assessment methods. This could be an indication of why it was only implemented for one year. However, in regards to the MOE curriculum, teachers were supportive and they felt it brought change to their teaching and assessment practices. The majority of the teachers are highly in favour of the MOE curriculum because they feel it is more structured than ECART, which made its implementation easier. When it came to the school context, most teachers felt that their interaction with other teachers has an impact on their teaching and assessment practices. Lastly, when teachers were asked about support they have received from management in implementing the curricula, there was not much of a response.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with four curriculum developers. The recorded sessions were then transcribed and coded to identify any reoccurring themes for a better understanding of key stakeholder perceptions and curriculum characteristics. The key themes that were identified during the interviews further supported the findings from content analysis and teachers' survey questionnaire. The findings supported content analysis in the indication that the ECART instructional and assessment process supported student- centred and social efficiency ideology, whereas, MOE content knowledge supports scholar academic ideology and teacher-centred classrooms. Also, a reccurring theme that was identified from all interviews is that there is a lack of support for stakeholders' involvement in decision making and curriculum implementation. This point was also supported earlier by results from the teachers' questionnaire.

Lastly, the three data collection methods used and discussed above, supported the analysis of the activity theory six-step approach. The first step which is to clarify the purpose of the activity system was supported with the findings in the content analysis, to the last step

which analysed activity system dynamics looking at how all components are interlinked and

affected each other, which was supported by all of the three collection methods.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the theoretical contributions and major findings of the research study. First, the focus of the chapter is described and its structure outlined. Next, we review the aim of the entire research study including revisiting the research question, aims and objectives, the theoretical underpinning that served to frame the study. The research design is reviewed and methodology highlighted. Finally, the limits of the research study are presented.

This study has examined in detail two instances of curriculum reform, specifically the ECART and MOE curricula. The youth of today have more opportunities than ever before and nowhere is this more evident than in the UAE. The leaders of the country are very aware that their young people will need not just to have learned English in school but will undertake to use English in leadership positions both at home and abroad (Gifford & Enyedy, 1999). For this reason, most of the programmes in higher education in the UAE are offered only in English and even in the few programmes that are taught in Arabic (Islamic law, for example) students still have to fulfil an English entry requirement. The final years of high school English language instruction are thus crucial to positively influencing the success of future generations of Emirati students. Partly in response, and as has been mentioned previously, in 2018, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi replaced departing Arab teachers with over 500 native speakers of English from countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia. Studies show, however, that despite such efforts, Emirati students graduating from high school are often unprepared to study academic subjects in English in the first instance and take part in

international research in their advanced degrees at a later stage. Rising to the challenge of addressing this lack of English fluency, the UAE governments have undertaken to carry out reforms of the high school ESL curriculum.

In order to compare and contrast the two different initiatives, key questions were formulated in order to support a detailed analysis. These questions were based on the main research focus which was to explore how theory and ideological classification facilitates a deeper understanding of the UAE English curriculum.

i. Which theories facilitate a deeper understanding of the recent reforms in the UAE English curriculum?

ii. Are there other rubrics, such as ideological classifications, that help compare and contrast the ECART and MOE curricula?

iii. What are the key stakeholders' perceptions/beliefs towards the changes of the English language curriculum in the UAE?

iv. What are the main characteristics of the English language curriculum in the UAE before and after the reforms?

These four questions contributed to deciding on the theoretical framework for the research design, projected analysis and the supported methods of data collection. There were thus two sets of participants in this study who responded to questions or took part in focus groups in order to share their personal beliefs about the impact of new curricula on language instruction in the UAE in general and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in particular. Thematic analysis added an additional layer of reflection by examining the actual text of the curriculum and measured key themes related to the role of the teacher, student, activities, and assessments, etc.

Data collection and analysis was triangulated and the different perspectives and narratives uncovered challenges and opportunities that teachers experienced as they implemented reforms in their classrooms. In some instances, the teachers' beliefs were challenged by the new developments and in others the teachers were able to rely on implementing language teaching in ways similar to how they had been taught. This study contributes to knowledge with respect to curriculum reform and change, and the complementary methods of questionnaire, focus group and text analysis contribute to methodology.

This thesis has, in addition, contributed to a deeper understanding of curriculum ideologies as it the only study to date that has compared the UAE's MOE curriculum to that of the ECART using Schiro's (2008) four philosophies, specifically scholar-academic, social efficiency, learner-centred, and social reconstruction. This study also addresses the wider implications for English language teaching in the UAE and Gulf region. Limitations of the study will be addressed and areas for future research identified.

5.1 Highlights, Summary and Overview of the Research Findings.

5.1.1 Theory as lenses of illumination of curricula

Question 1 focused on the theories could be used to enhance our comparisons of the curricula. This research also explored the ways in which theoretical perspectives can provide appropriate rubrics for comparing and contrasting two different curricula. Schiro's frameworks have been previously successfully employed in the literature and this study also found that even when the aim was the same (such as in the social efficiency framework) that the techniques for achieving such goals often differed. Few studies have used activity theory

to analyse curricula. We would posit, however, that this is a fruitful field of study that will allow researchers to conduct a 360 degree, in-depth analysis of all aspects of the curricula from the document itself, the teachers' perspectives, the schooling system and finally to the social and national contexts.

5.1.2 Rubrics in the Literature Illuminating Issues Raised

The second question that motivated this study was: were there other rubrics and key themes that would help us understand the complexities of integration of curriculum reform? One issue that came to light using Schiro's curriculum ideologies as a lens, was the need for professional development. Teacher training was identified as being important in introducing the ECART curriculum when it was new. Closely related to addressing the role of the teacher in implementing curriculum reform is the need to provide well-structured and ongoing professional development as well as pre-service teacher training. Although the ECART curriculum was challenging and much less structured than curricula with which the teachers had experience, the fact remains that many countries (such as Australia) have implemented the student-centred research focus with success.

5.1.3 Marrying the Curricula with Teacher's Beliefs and Practices

The third research question was stated as: How did teachers marry the new curriculum with their beliefs and practices? Past experience in postsecondary education is a rich area of international research. This study adds to the literature in reporting that the results of teacher questionnaires indicate that past experiences as an EFL learner were mostly positive and that they saw their own teachers as role models. This is despite the fact that the teachers reported that, when they were students, they had been expected to follow their own

teachers and for the most part were not encouraged to behave in an independent manner. In Chamot et al. (1994) call for the CALLA approach, learner independence was key to 'cognitive academic language learning but difficult for teachers to achieve even when supported by the ECART curriculum.

Additionally, the complexity of the interaction between past experience and present teaching practice is supported by the varied answers the teachers in this study had to the statement: "Based on my experience as a foreign language learner, today I will teach and assess my students differently than how my teachers taught and assessed me." A slim majority of the teachers strongly agreed but many of their colleagues felt this question was best responded to with a neutral answer. When teachers responded to a series of questions that sought to uncover their past experiences in postsecondary education, the majority acknowledged that the curriculum they are presently using has a particular way of teaching and assessing students (with no teachers disagreeing).

5.1.4 The Main Characteristics of the English Language Curriculum Before and After the Reform

This section reviews and articulates the findings in each of the key questions. The fourth of the research questions identified a need to examine in detail the two curricula researched in this study: What exactly are the curricula that the ministry sought to implement? The conclusions drawn from the data included the fact that the introduction of the MOE curriculum in 2018 is a move back to a teacher-centred model. The curriculum 'got back to basics' by focusing on equipping students with English so as to encourage them to communicate on an international stage. English language literacy skills are important at present. This is in contrast with the ECART curriculum, which stresses creativity and self-

expression and self-exploration. ECART was also designed to be student-centred rather than teacher-driven. The students were given choices in what they wished to produce as the final product of their own original research. As has been highlighted in this research, the initial shift to student-centred learning was not without issues and they are most probably the route of the introduction of the MOE curriculum in 2018. The move to the MOE curriculum, however, was a move away from Crandall's (2002) five cognitive strategies, including the use of free reading and student textual analysis and more in keeping with Freeman and Johnson's (1998) language-through-content approach. Challenges included a change in the role of the teacher and the student. In the words of one of the curriculum designers interviewed in this study, the teacher should now provide scaffolding and support: "As a teacher, utilizing the ECART curriculum, you would ask yourself: 'What do I need to guide my students in this task?'" The ultimate aim of ECART matches other similar curricula across the globe in that the designers sought to inspire and motivate students to actively take part in class activities and discussions. Students are the main actors on the classroom stage this in keeping with Thorne's (2011) definition of ECART supporting inquiry-based learning.

5.2 Key Findings and Contribution to Theory

Here we articulate the main conclusions as extrapolated from the three data sources, questionnaires, interviews and textual analysis. How does this study compare to and in turn contributed to the literature?

While a number of theories have been discussed in this work, the main contribution to literature has been the test of activity theory as a method to effectively analyse curricula. This dissertation has explored a number of key ESL learning theories including the

behaviourist approach, cognitive approach, constructivist approach, and socio-culture approach. Of the theories reviewed, activity theory, combines many of the earlier beliefs, arguing for both thinking and action as part of an interdependant learning performance and so has been used to provide a lens on the ECART and MOE curricula. In seeking to measure such systems, researchers reflect on interacting components including: the subject, tools used, objects studied, and the division of labour of learning, the community of learners, and rules governing interaction. The following section will discuss the results from each stage of the activity theory.

The scholar-academic philosophy also emerges in the literature as missing from an analysis of the ECART curriculum. Traditional teaching cultures have been oriented towards studying from textbooks and passing tests. Enhancing student motivation has not been a priority. Final grades are very important in the Arab world and some would argue that many students consider grades more important than truly learning course material. The use of ongoing and continuous assessment supports a move away from a culture of final testing and forces students to learn materials rather than memorize answers. The ECART curriculum may have simply been too much of a change from summative assessment and the previous grade-driven culture. The literature on local teachers supports this finding. While confident, skilled and inventive teachers may enjoy creating new materials and experimenting with new teaching methodologies in the classroom, they may not wish to be forced to do so, due to a lack of resources. Students' motivation will be impacted if they sense that the teachers have simply copied and pasted materials from the internet. The students, after all, are often accused of doing the same. Other studies point to teachers reverting to the more traditional scholar-academic practice rather than continuing with the open nature of the curriculum.

Both the curricula studied here incorporated aspects of social efficiency: the ECART in seeking to produce students who are capable of independent research, and the MOE by incorporating Emirati-related topics. Here every effort was made to ensure that the English language materials were relevant as recommended by Burnett (2012) and Mahboob and Elyas (2014).

A learner-centred or student-centred approach to teaching may seem like a contradiction in terms but attempting to move from a 'sage on the stage' to 'a guide on the side' is a worldwide phenomenon. This study highlights the hurdles that teachers face shifting to a learner-centred classroom. Zhang (2012) also reported that teachers can find it difficult to try new techniques and focus on students own learning. The teachers in this study in the UAE expect students to be active, however, in their learning process. Thus, we would argue that the UAE's educational system has made significant progress since 1999 when Mograby, (1999) stated that methods in UAE classrooms with respect to teaching and learning are not appropriately based on the students' needs. With respect to assessment, the answers were divided with approximately half of the teachers believing there no single best way to assess and 65% believing that different lessons require different assessment methods.

The social reconstruction ideology is based on the idea that education is key to saving society. This underlying philosophy is a driving force in English language curriculum reform in the UAE. Interviews with designers of the ECART curriculum encouraged students to be 'innovative' in keeping with the constructivist approach to learning as outlined by Weegar and Pacis (2012). The MOE curriculum, in contrast, was much more structured but the subject matter included topics of local interest. Thus, local students were learning to describe Arab phenomena in English.

The introduction of both the ECART and MOE curricula were based on a similar need to address such challenges with the exception perhaps that the students were for the most part of a similar culture and background and that the MOE curriculum strengthened the stress on assessment potentially, in reaction to the ECART system that preceded it.

The descriptions of, the designers' comments on, and teachers' feedback point to the participation of students in semi-structured (in the case of ECART) and more formally structured (MOE) social practices of learning within a classroom community rather than just depending on the 'sage on the stage' dissemination of knowledge from subject experts. Here the ECART and MOE curriculum supports the ideological beliefs of the Australian and UAE curriculum designers as Cullinan (2016) suggested is the goal of a curriculum. As has been previously mentioned, the lack of structure and training were held to be ultimately responsible for the lack of success of the ECART curriculum. Both curricula sought to make a different outside the classroom; to prepare students for success in future studies and the world of work as confident users of English for communication and further study.

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, analysis suggests that very different structures guide the MOE and ECART curricula with respect to how activity takes place. ECART is a more open weave than the MOE's more structured scaffolding. ECART is more in keeping and the MOE more in contrast to the experiential learning models proposed by Kolb (1983) and Jarvis (2004). From the point of view of the activity structure, the process of creating generic competencies (MOE) is not as powerful as when the student creates their own knowledge and finds their own place in keeping with the assessment cycle of ECART, which, as has been discussed in Chapter 4, is designed to be flexible, reflecting student, teacher and local interests. Findings support Farah and Ridge's (2009) assertions that the

ministry has sought to emphasize problem-solving in the implementation of both curricula albeit more within ECART.

Both the ECART and MOE curricula are benchmarked against international standards that are used as tools to ensure appropriate activities and SLOs. In the case of the ECART, however, the localization and adaption of the curriculum was carried out rather quickly compared with the longer more iterative process that the MOE team was able to undertake. The MOE has thus a very detailed series of target achievements and supporting tasks and activities as well as indicators of success across all four of the key skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening).

The literature suggests that activity theory can help shed light on the concept of educational innovation as a whole. Thus, teachers might add in an examination to the ECART curriculum or give students more highly-structure research assignments when they believed students were not at the level to benefit from a more learner-centred approach. While Lave & Wenger (1991) argue that learning is facilitated by participatory collective practice the students struggles in the ECART curriculum point to a lack of a level of student knowledge to be able to participate.

5.3 Implication of the Findings to Policy, Practice and Future Research

As we have argued, a theoretical analysis is key to a deeper understanding of curriculum. Gifford and Enyedy (1999), posit that the right theory is key to the success of classroom implementation and when design does not fit with classroom practice there is little chance of change. The next section takes the results from each stage of Schiro's (2008) ideologies activity theory and take the findings of this dissertation back to the literature so

to explore the implications of the research with respect to policy, practice and future research.

The scholar-academic philosophy was traditional in the UAE. The study's findings point to teachers returning to the ways in which they were taught when faced with the uncertainty of the ECART curriculum. When interviewed, Alali's (2014) teachers, working in the UAE, pointed to the loss of time spent covering subject matter as the reason for returning to traditional methods of teaching and the re-introduction of final exams focused on reproduction of memorized material. Teachers found it difficult to follow what Subbings (2013) identifies as the didactic discourse teaching method. Alali (ibid) also reported that teachers in her in-depth study stated that they tried to modify the ECART assessment and include final tests so as to support students studying from their textbooks.

A social efficiency curriculum is one designed to ensure that schooling meets society's needs. Research has demonstrated that courses that only serve to forward social efficiency are not often successful. Wraga (2009) in a study of the re-emergence of Latin in the 1920s points to the course of study being brought back as a source of status and class identity and that, as a result, a movement to uphold the return of Latin failed to make a significant impact. Kim (2013) studied the use of activity theory and social efficiency so as to determine how effective Korean immigrants were in incorporating English into their daily activity (mediation tools and others in the community). They concluded that belief (or the lack thereof) and in turn motivation was key in determining the successful integration into a Canadian community with new activities.

Researchers have found similar challenges to those highlighted by teachers in this study. Faridi, Seful and Sita (2016) identified two issues when studying the application of a

student-centred curriculum in Indonesia. A reformed 2013 curriculum encouraged teachers to conduct their teaching and learning process based on student-centred learning. The researchers found that the majority of the teachers (60%) stated that they needed a large number of samples of student-centred syllabus as guidelines in designing their own syllabus. Thus, because they had limited samples of student-centred syllabus as the guidelines, 50% of teachers stated that they more often designed a teacher-centred syllabus instead of student-centred syllabus. In implementing the student-centred syllabus, the teachers faced two problems. The first is that the teachers found difficulties in encouraging their students to be active during the teaching and learning: 55% of teachers stated that their students were very difficult to encourage to participate actively in the teaching process. The second challenge is that 60% of teachers needed a lot of time in implementing the student-centred syllabus. However, in fact they had a large number of units in a semester to be taught to their students in order to prepare them for the summative assessments at the end of the semester. Thus, they worried that if they applied the student-centred syllabus in each lesson, they would not have enough time to finish teaching all the material. Moreover, they stated that many teachers tended to use the teacher-centred syllabus because it was simpler and more practical. They just explained the material and then asked the students to do the exercises related to the material. Assessment then was also simpler.

In contrast, the teachers in this study in the UAE expect students to be active in their learning process. The ECART curriculum was based such recommendations as Marulcu and Akbiyik (2014) who argued that individuals need opportunities to fully actualize. With respect to assessment, the answers were divided: approximately 45% of teachers believe there is no single best way to assess and 65% believe that different lessons require different assessment methods. The teachers of this study were more open to adaption and this

flexibility is supported by the research findings. A study on a learner-centred classroom in the UAE by Gregoryan (2018) indicated that when language learners were in charge of their own learning and feedback through the use of ipad-based tasks their satisfaction was increased along with their perceived usefulness of the tool. Gregoryan (ibid) describes this as a 'chain reaction', as perceived usefulness then helped students overcome difficulties and led to higher levels of student motivation and in turn positive learning outcomes.

The social reconstruction ideology is based on the idea that education is key to saving society. This in keeping with Cotti and Shiro's (2004) belief that education delivered within the context of social reconstruction ideology can build a better society. In a study of a tertiary institution in Australia, Xu (2018) points to the evolution of teaching practices that are taking into account 'World Englishes' or English as an International Language (EIL). Xu (bid)argues that changes are essential now that English is a global language which when spoken abroad may be very different from the Anglo-American English traditionally considered as standard. The lack of a national or cultural base (Sung, 2014) allows a curriculum to be tailored to meet local needs and interests (Nancy & Canagarajah, 2005). This finding follows Fundi's (2016) assertion that training students to contribute to the community in the future is key.

As has been stated previously, the concept of English as a world language has two challenges: the first that the language used locally may evolve so that other speakers of the same language may not understand it (undermining the point of the world language) (James, 2008). Inherent in the answers to the questionnaire in this study is the idea that there is a correct way to use English. Large-scale studies of teachers' attitudes towards English support this outcome. Liou (2010), for example, found that 126 ESL teachers preferred to use the

standard variety of English over other varieties. Research reports that the implementation of EIL is, therefore, challenging and limited (Marlina, 2013; Matsuda, 2012; Zacharias, 2014). The second challenge is that children whose parents are native speakers of other languages (such as Arabic) may grow up without the ability to properly communicate in their mother tongue while at the same time perhaps never becoming fully fluent in their (dominant) second language (Karam et al., 2017). Albiladi (2018) studied the materials used by 16 adult English language learners who undertook an intensive English programme and the findings include an increase in student cultural awareness and motivation when materials were specifically chosen with the Arab learner in mind.

Examining studies that fall under Schiro's four ideologies, we can see that teachers around the globe are facing similar challenges with respect to curriculum reform. The next section concerns activity theory.

Researchers have previously studied the potential of activity theory to analyse aspects of education as the theory covers so many phenomena. Jonassen (2000) argues that activity theory can give insights into the social, physical, and mental aspects of learning that all take place within the classroom. Researchers have argued that to achieve a deeper understanding, first we must clarify the key purpose of the system and then analyse the content, activity system and structure, and the tools, as well as the system dynamics (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Relevant literature will be used to illuminate the findings of the research in this area.

When examining the 'key purpose of the system and its context', Campbell, MacPherson, and Sawkins (2015) designed an award-winning curriculum to prepare Canadian immigrants to take part in education, succeed in the workplace and ultimately

participate in their new community. They integrated the multifaceted approach of activity theory and task-based activities to address four key challenges: (a) the internationalization of the system of education, (b) the diversity of their learners in terms of culture and linguistic ability, (c) the need to go beyond a focus on disciplinary knowledge, and (d) the shift to a competency-based instructional assessment model. Both the introduction of the ECART and MOE curricula were based on a similar need to address such challenges with the exception perhaps that the students were for the most part of a similar culture and background and that the MOE syllabus strengthened the stress on assessment, potentially in reaction to the ECART system that preceded it.

With respect to the analysis of the activity system, both curricula studied here focus on what Campbell, MacPherson, and Sawkins (2014) label as 'identity in practice'. Both the descriptions of, the designers' comments on, and teachers' feedback point to the participation of students in semi-structured (in the case of ECART) and more formally structured (MOE) social practices of learning within a classroom community rather than just depending on the 'sage on the stage' dissemination of knowledge from subject experts.

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, analysis suggests that very different 'activity structures' guide the MOE and ECART curricula with respect to how activity takes place. Billett (2003) argues for more support for apprenticeships or cognitive apprenticeships (such are prescribed in the ECART system) to help strengthen the breadth of the knowledge of the students while at the same time allowing them to embed their activity into cultural practice. Billet (ibid) cautions against providing students with experiences so remote from actual practice as to render them meaningless. While the structural aspect of activity theory has been largely explored through vocational education and workplace training (Engeström,

1993), it can be argued that the study of English language bears many similarities in that its future actual use is the ultimate test of student success.

With respect to 'tools and mediators', both the ECART and MOE curricula are benchmarked against international standards that are used as tools to ensure appropriate activities and SLOs. The literature points to the successful use of activity in analysing the use of additional tools such as computers (Clemmensen et al., 2016) and providing a conceptual framework for understating the approaches of teachers to computer-assisted learning (Karasavvidis, 2009).

The literature suggests that activity theory can help shed light on the concept of educational innovation as a whole when studying the 'activity system dynamics'. The success of the implementation of an innovative curriculum and the challenges teachers faced was studied with activity theory in four cities in Missouri, USA (Russell & Schneiderheinze, 2005). Like the present study, which suggested that teachers reverted to traditional practice when they believed it would help their students, Russell and Schneiderheinze (2005) found that the effectiveness of the teachers in implementing change in their classrooms was based on their initial goals. Thus, teachers might add in an examination to the ECART curriculum or give students more highly-structure research assignments when they believed students were not at the level to benefit from a more learner-centred approach. It can be argued, therefore, that examples from the literature support activity theory as an appropriate framework for the current study because it provides an analytical tool "for understanding constraints and barriers to innovations in schools as well as possible new means to overcome them and to support sustainable innovative change efforts" (Sannino & Nocon, 2008). Here

teachers began to follow Walker and Soltis (2004) definition of curriculum as 'a decision-making process' in that they began to change the teaching method, content and evaluation.

In this study, curriculum designers illuminated the processes by which they mixed local content with international standards to tailor curricula to local contexts. For researchers, another fruitful avenue of exploration are the comparisons of the two curricula using a number of ideologies such as activity theory (Jonassen, 1990) and Schiro's (2008) validated standard inventory for curriculum analysis. Using such techniques such as analysing text according to specific rubrics, the key differences in underlying values stand out clearly. Although both curricula seek to prepare students to compete internationally, the ECART method is to focus on imparting generative skills in English communication while the MOE curriculum seeks to support a strong foundation of local culture and heritage. In focusing on the acquisition of English to enable students to one day contribute to their country, the MOE curriculum supports the work of Müller-Christ et al. (2014) and McLean and Gibbs (2010) in studying curriculum as a holistic practice in terms of content and culture.

With respect to the contributions of this research to methodology, the study explored using Schiro's categories for curriculum mapping. This has resulted in the creation of an adapted instrument. Rich data was collected by identifying themes and subthemes, which are typical of curriculum ideologies. Although many aspects of the curriculum seemed similar, an analysis of Schiro's four ideologies showed that each relied more on one ideology, in that the MOE curriculum was predominantly dependent on scholar-academic and the ECART was more focused on student-centred, but interestingly they both shared social efficiency ideology. This study also contributes to knowledge by being the first study to use

triangulation of data to compare and contrast the MOE and ECART curricula with respect to teaching ESL.

5.4 Contribution of the Research

In terms of its significance and contributions, the present study has both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical perspective, the use of activity theory helps provide additional support pertaining to the efficacy of the theory in identifying issues that affect or influence the learning process. The choice of activity theory for this study was as a result of its focus on understanding 'who is doing what, how and why'. In greater detail, activity theory provides a conceptual framework that helps in providing a greater level of understanding of inter-relationships between actions, activities, operations, subjects' motives, and aspects of the social context within which the activities or actions are framed (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999; Sharples et al., 2010). In the context of the current study, the theory is instrumental in assessing what key stakeholders think about the existing English curriculum and what can be implemented in order to achieve improvements.

At the practical level, the study is highly significant given that the UAE and other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are keen on using English as a means to ensure that citizens are able to compete with their international counterparts. The findings of the research will help provide reliable recommendations pertaining to how the existing curriculum can further be improved to enhance language proficiency among high school students in UAE government schools. There has been very little research that has focused on this category of students, yet they are the most affected when they are required to spend additional time in an English foundation programme prior to gaining admission to federal tertiary institutions. The study also helps identify curriculum solutions, and problems such

as poor teaching skills that are based on rote learning and a curriculum that lacks adequate levels of systematization and progression. There is a need for a curriculum that takes into consideration the student's ability to learn as well as the language interests at each phase of the educational system.

This section discusses the implications of the literature. How do the results of this study compare to other related studies? It will examine each of the findings of the key questions that were asked at the start of this study. This research highlights a number of implications for various stakeholders including teachers, curriculum designers, and professional development providers.

The research on curriculum reform is abundant and points to the increasing need to meet social and economic demands, as well as teachers' expectations (Boyle, 2012; Ibrahim & Al-Mashhadany, 2012). Many studies have also been carried out with respect to the evolution of the syllabi in ESL classes. This research has contributed to our understanding of how the current UAE English language curriculum is designed to enhance English language development. The result constitutes an important area of investigation given the investment by the government into curriculum reform. In addition, our understanding of curriculum in a Middle Eastern context has been enhanced. Choi and Lee (2008) have noted that to many in the Middle East, the key aspects of a curriculum document are the number of contact hours, examination dates, identification of textbooks, etc. Our research supports this finding. Some researchers, such as Fitch (2017), have pointed to the fact that curriculum needs to be more flexible as language is in constant flux and is a complex subject that must include instruction in the manipulation of words and phrases as communication cannot simply be learned through memorization or repetition. The curriculum designers interviewed

in this study spoke of the ECART curriculum as having the flexibility needed to allow for such adaptation.

Research studies point to similar shifts taking place across the globe and record the results that both teachers and students are struggling with their changed classroom environments. Tani (2005) studied the participation of Asian students in class and highlighted the axiom that students in Asian countries tend to be quieter than in other parts of the world due to the 'loss of face' that occurs when they (quite naturally) make mistakes. Teacher-centred classrooms contribute to what Tani (ibid) terms as a "culture of silence" that stresses memorization and repetition rather than original production of sentences and expression of ideas. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, this method of second language acquisition is being replaced by one that stresses more interaction in the classroom (Razfar et al., 2011). The research and discovery approach supported by the ECART curriculum is in keeping with such research, in that a teacher poses an interesting, complex problem and then acts to scaffold students in researching and responding (Pedersen & Liu, 2003). This aim of implementing learner-centred classrooms was not achieved in full during the tenure of the ECART curriculum, which is in keeping with international findings. Tani (2005), for example, entitled his research on Asian students: 'Quiet, but only in class'.

Teachers' own positive feelings of success in the classroom when they were learners may explain such results. In a study that explored why teachers chose mathematics as a field to teach, conducted by Latterell and Wilson (2016), all 16 of the participants pointed to positive previous experiences learning the subject. The pre-service math teachers also indicated that they sought to share their success in the classroom with their future students. The rewards for choosing teaching as a career for those who have successfully learned a

subject in the past have been intrinsic and this may be the case in the present study. It is clear to see that the teachers in this research study sought to create positive experiences for their own students and this is in keeping with the research. Blazar's (2016) exploration on the impact of teacher and teaching effects, for example, found that the teachers in his study had a significant impact on a range of students' attitudes and behaviours in addition to their academic performance.

When examining the question of whether or not the curriculum has been improved, however, so as to enhance the English levels of the students the results are mixed, with almost as many teachers choosing a neutral answer and 21% disagreeing. This mixed response is supported by findings from the literature. In a study that focused on the introduction of the ECART curriculum, Alali (2104) found that while teachers reported that the ECART curriculum was seen as a positive progression, the teachers' underlying beliefs of what effective language teaching was were incompatible with curriculum's underlying principles including the ability of students to carry out advanced research or 'rich tasks'. This lack of belief in student ability is not supported by the literature elsewhere. Rich tasks have been used successfully in the teaching of mathematics contributing to positive student achievement in Canada through undertaking tasks that support multiple representations (McDougall, 2004) for students who have a strong background in the subject. Alali (ibid) states that the teachers she interviewed believed: "the idea of the ECART is excellent but doesn't fit the language proficiency of the students," and it "treats the students as if they are fluent in English but they are not… the students need a great linguistic support in order to reach the proficiency level ADEC hopes for" (p.158). Such teachers argue that it is unfair to the students to follow the curriculum word for word; that it was difficult to ask students to carry out a research project on their own, for example. Teachers in Alali's (2014) study spoke

of the need to develop such advanced skills gradually supporting the claim of Vlaardingerbroek and Taylor (2009) that exams shift responsibility for learning to the student. Thus, when faced with a new curriculum as a result of curriculum reform, research points to teachers cherry-picking its best features and combining them with those that in according with the teachers' beliefs and previous classroom practice have led to success for their students.

Many studies over the years point to a positive link between beliefs of what worked in a teacher's past and present teaching practice. The relationship, is, however, considered a complex one. Sanger and Osguthorpe (2011), describe a 'moral belief contributing to the calling of teaching' indicating that beliefs can be very firmly held. Variations in the results in Sanger and Osguthorpe's study on the moral work of teaching indicate, however, that teachers within the same school system and indeed within the same school can hold a variety of different beliefs. This finding from the literature is supported by the answers recorded in this study. Teachers with different beliefs would, it is assumed, undertake different choices and classroom practices than their colleagues. This would explain findings such as the majority of teachers, (85%), give more independence to their students than was given to them as students, while 50% believe that their students are taking responsibility for their own learning process.

There were three key themes from the literature that have implications for research. The first was the finding of the analsysis that pointed to the underpinning of the ECART curriculum by the student-centred and social efficiency ideology. The ECART stress on student-centred learning is in keeping with the literature on the evolution of classroom teaching methods. UNESCO (2009) calls this a global trend and a major paradigm shift in

the field of education. The second key theme is that the MOE curriculum supports a scholar-academic and social effeciency ideology. The aspiration to return to a scholar-academic oriented curriculum has been documented in the literature related to curricula in the UAE by Alali (2014). Both curricula studied here focus on what Campbell, MacPherson, and Sawkins (2014) label as 'identity in practice'.

With respect to professional development, Lai (2011) studied the results of a professional development programme developed in China to help local teachers move from a teacher-centred to a student-centred class. She argued that the introduction of an educational reform and curriculum change offers an opportunity for professional development to have a meaningful impact. Her findings in China do not suggest this was the case despite an extensive programme being offered. Lai's (ibid) results are in keeping with those of this study, although a similar programme was not put in place.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have set out a roadmap to the chapter itself in the introduction by outlining the chapter's five sections and highlighting the contents of each. Section 5.1 provides an overview of the research findings by tracing the four initial research questions and the extent to which they have been achieved. Section 5.2 explores the key findings in more detail and 5.3 explores their implications to policy and future research. Section 5.4 expands the impact of the findings to literature, theory and methodology. This final section highlights the conclusion of this research project.

'The only constant is change' is a well-known axiom and nowhere is this more evident than in the area of education and curriculum reform. While change is a constant

feature of educational systems, the literature does not suggest that the results are always positive (Fullan, 2007). The literature suggests that the top-down approach of instilling change has not been as successful as hoped (Hargreaves et al., 2010) and there has evolved an emphasis on supporting the emergence of schools as learning organizations. Mulford and Silins (2011) suggests that this evolution is not complete. In the literature, a myriad of educational change initiatives are examined and subsequently frameworks are proffered claiming to have the potential to support the initiation, implementation, and continuation of educational reform (see ; Hargreaves and Goodson, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2009). Although a great deal of time and money has been invested in large-scale educational change, historically many of the reforms have had little impact on the performance of school systems or on the life chances of young people (Harris, 2011). Cimer (2018) lists the most common reasons for the lack of success of a new curriculum as: lack of 'buy in' by teachers, a surface understanding of the key principles of the reform, a worry that the reforms will not actually lead to the innovation sought, lack of time to learn new teaching methodologies, and lack of in-depth professional development. All these aspects were found in the present study despite the willingness of teachers to step out of the comfort zone of their past experiences and try to teach in ways in which they themselves were not taught. Of the reasons listed by Cimer (ibid), Emirati teachers were most concerned with the wellbeing of their students and Alali (2014) cited the fact that teachers believed that the students lacked the foundation to undertake the higher-level work that was needed in the ECART curriculum.

The hallmark of successful research is a contribution to knowledge. In this case, the study uncovers the reaction to the ECART curriculum and highlights the more widespread acceptance of the MOE's most recent syllabus. The four research questions and one key research focus underpinning this study have all contributed to an increased understanding of

the key issues and underlying themes of implementation of two very different curricula. A number of theories and methods of comparing and contrasting the actual curricula have resulted in a deeper knowledge of the fundamental differences. As in Gregoryan's study (2016), activity theory was found to provide an interesting lens through which to view human activity in its most complex form.

This is the first study to use a triangulation of survey questionnaires, semi- structured interviews, and content analysis to compare and contrast the ECART and MOE curricula in the UAE. The study has uncovered rich data that explores the relationship between teachers' beliefs and present practice, the intentions to use new methods of teaching and assessment, and reflections on the changes that the introduction of new curricula have brought into their classrooms. This investigation is one of only a handful of studies that have investigated the English language curriculum in high schools in government schools in the UAE and the only one to compare and contrast ECART and MOE curricula to date using three different data collection instruments. The experience of having undertaken to implement three difficult curricula in almost as few years is also captured as teachers reflected on the change in their own knowledge and practice.

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Research Title: An Application of Activity Theory in the Investigation of the United Arab Emirates' Government School English Language Curriculum

Dear respondents, you are invited to answer the questionnaire on a voluntary basis. This survey is conducted as part of the Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) at the British University in Dubai. The purpose of this study is to identifying contextual issues that may constitute obstacles to the effective implementation of English curriculum in the UAE government school with the aim of offering plausible solutions. The respondents being assessed as part of this survey questionnaire are among the employees of Abu Dhabi public Schools. This survey consists of two parts of information; demographic information, and research main parts. All information will be treated with confidential and no attempt will be made to identify any individual and organization in any of our publications.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at or +97155-7295158 for further information pertaining to this research. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Huda

Supervisor: Dr. Abdulahi

Faculty of Business Management

The British University in Dubai

UAE

Part One: Demographic Information

1. Gender ☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age ☐ Less than 25 ☐ 26 – 30 Years ☐ 31 – 35 Years ☐ 36 – 40 Years

☐ 41 – 45 Years ☐ 46 – 50 Years ☐ Above 51 years

3. Marital Status ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

☐ Divorced

4. How Many year are you teaching English as a foreign language in UAE

☐ Less than 5   ☐ 5 – 9 Years   ☐ 10 – 14 Years   ☐ 15 – 19 Years

☐ 20 – 24 Years   ☐ Above 25 Years

5. What grade are you teaching

☐ Grade 9   ☐ Grade 10   ☐ Grade 11   ☐ Grade 12

6. Educational Level   ☐ Higher Diploma   ☐ Bachelor Degree

☐ Master   ☐ Doctorate   ☐ Others:_____

Part Two

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	Past experiences as an EFL learner:	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	My early experience of learning English in school was great/wonderful.	1	2	3	4	5
2	My previous English teachers used more than one teaching approach in class such as Student Centred approach and Teacher Centred Approach	1	2	3	4	5
3	In class I was expected to behave as an independent learner	1	2	3	4	5
4	In class I was expected to completely rely and obey my teacher	1	2	3	4	5
5	My teacher in the class room was my role model	1	2	3	4	5
6	My teachers used many ways to assess your performance such as tests. Quizzes, projects, group work.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I feel the assessment methods my teachers used were successful and reflected your knowledge about the course	1	2	3	4	5
8	My overall experience as an English Language learner is satisfactory	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Past experiences as an EFL learner:	SD	D	N	A	SA
9	Based on my experience as a foreign Language learner, today I will teach and assess my students differently than how your teachers taught and assessed me.	1	2	3	4	5

Past experiences in postsecondary education:

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	Past experiences in postsecondary education:	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Your program promote a particular way of teaching and assessing students	1	2	3	4	5
2	There a conflict/similarities between what you were taught in your education courses regarding teaching and assessment	1	2	3	4	5
3	The curriculum delivering its promised benefits to students	1	2	3	4	5
4	UAE students are still unable to show proficiency in English	1	2	3	4	5

S/N		SD	D	N	A	SA
5	The current curriculum has been improved to raise English language proficiency levels among UAE students	1	2	3	4	5

Past teaching experiences

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	Past teaching experiences	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I have a memories about my earliest teaching experiences	1	2	3	4	5
2	I used many kind of teaching and assessment methods	1	2	3	4	5
3	I use some different sources when designing assessment activities	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have changed my teaching and assessment approach since then	1	2	3	4	5

Current beliefs about EFL teaching and learning

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL teaching and learning	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I currently use more than one teaching approach/mode in my classroom. For example, teacher-centred, student-centred, communicative…etc	1	2	3	4	5
2	More than one method/approach should be used as a best way to teach English.	1	2	3	4	5
3	As a teacher, I give independence to my students	1	2	3	4	5
4	I base my teaching on the text and curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
5	All aspects (reading, writing, listening, communication…etc) of teaching English are equally important	1	2	3	4	5
6	Teaching English I experience more frustrating classroom occasions than successful ones.	1	2	3	4	5
7	My students take responsibility of their learning process	1	2	3	4	5

Current beliefs about EFL assessments (To be completed by Grade 9-10 teachers)

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	There are many was and methods of assessments	1	2	3	4	5
2	I use different types of assessment methods in my classroom? For example traditional/alternative methods.	1	2	3	4	5
3	There is no best was to assess my students' English language learning	1	2	3	4	5
4	It is important to assess throughout the year	1	2	3	4	5
5	There has to be a purpose for assessing my students	1	2	3	4	5
6	My students are engaged in the assessment process	1	2	3	4	5
7	For different lessons, I use different assessment methods	1	2	3	4	5
8	I use the results/outcomes of my assessments to make changes and improvement to my instructions	1	2	3	4	5
9	Skill continuum and old ECART curriculum assessment practices are very different	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
10	My assessment practices have changed after the implementation of skill continuum curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Skill continuum influenced my thinking about assessment practices	1	2	3	4	5
12	Skill continuum influenced my teaching practices in class	1	2	3	4	5
13	Skill continuum taught me something different about language assessment and teaching practices	1	2	3	4	5
14	My role as a teacher changed after the implementation of "skill Continuum" compared to ECART	1	2	3	4	5
15	I have made changes to my instruction, practices as a result of implementing the Skill Continuum	1	2	3	4	5
16	I feel my beliefs about language teaching and assessment have changed as a result of incorporating the Skill continuum framework in my classroom	1	2	3	4	5
17	I believe the Skill continuum has provided me and my students benefits in terms of English language assessment and teaching practices compared to ECART	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
18	There are certain language areas, Skill continuum is successful when assessing my students	1	2	3	4	5
19	There are difficulties and obstacles I encountered using the skill continuum framework in assessing students	1	2	3	4	5
20	My assessment practices reflect the principles of the skill continuum	1	2	3	4	5
21	Skill continuum gives me information about my students' language learning progress	1	2	3	4	5

Current beliefs about EFL assessments (to be completed by Grade 11-12 teachers)

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	There are many was and methods of assessments	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
2	I use different types of assessment methods in my classroom? For example traditional/alternative methods.	1	2	3	4	5
3	There is no best was to assess my students' English language learning	1	2	3	4	5
4	It is important to assess throughout the year	1	2	3	4	5
5	There has to be a purpose for assessing my students	1	2	3	4	5
6	My students are engaged in the assessment process	1	2	3	4	5
7	For different lessons, I use different assessment methods	1	2	3	4	5
8	I use the results/outcomes of my assessments to make changes and improvement to my instructions	1	2	3	4	5
9	MOE curriculum and old ECART curriculum assessment practices are very different	1	2	3	4	5
10	My assessment practices have changed after the implementation of MOE curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
11	MOE influenced my thinking about assessment practices	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
12	MOE influenced my teaching practices in class	1	2	3	4	5
13	MOE taught me something different about language assessment and teaching practices	1	2	3	4	5
14	My role as a teacher changed after the implementation of "MOE Continuum" compared to ECART	1	2	3	4	5
15	I have made changes to my instruction, practices as a result of implementing the MOE curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
16	I feel my beliefs about language teaching and assessment have changed as a result of incorporating the MOE framework in my classroom	1	2	3	4	5
17	I believe the MOE has provided me and my students benefits in terms of English language assessment and teaching practices compared to ECART	1	2	3	4	5
18	There are certain language areas, MOE is successful when assessing my students	1	2	3	4	5
19	There are difficulties and obstacles I encountered using the MOE framework in assessing students	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	Current beliefs about EFL assessments	SD	D	N	A	SA
20	My assessment practices reflect the principles of the MOE	1	2	3	4	5
21	MOE gives me information about my students' language learning progress	1	2	3	4	5

The context of teaching and assessment

Please circle the appropriate number that indicates your agreement or disagreement to the following statements.

1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 =Neutral (N), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)

S/N	The context of teaching and assessment	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	My students are motivated	1	2	3	4	5
2	I would say my students have a good English background knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
3	My students are respective to the new curriculum and find it useful	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	The context of teaching and assessment	SD	D	N	A	SA
4	My students complain with the amount of work they have	1	2	3	4	5
5	I like teaching in this school	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have a good relationship with your colleagues, staff, and administration	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have discussions with school personnel regarding ESL assessment methods	1	2	3	4	5
8	I have discussions with school personnel regarding ESL teaching methods	1	2	3	4	5
9	The discussions I have with colleagues impacted my assessment practices and teaching practices in the classroom	1	2	3	4	5
10	I am supportive of the current reform of English language teaching and assessment adopted	1	2	3	4	5
11	I do not agree with this reform	1	2	3	4	5
12	This reform is impacting the methods I use when I teach and assess my students positively	1	2	3	4	5

S/N	The context of teaching and assessment	SD	D	N	A	SA
13	ADEC supported me in order to implement the ECART framework in my classroom in the past	1	2	3	4	5
14	ADEC supported me implementing the new curriculum	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX ii **Interview Guiding Questions**

Background Questions:

1. How many years have you been teaching English as a foreign language in UAE? What grades are you teaching?

2. Have you taught English as a foreign/second language in other countries? If yes, what are the similarities and/or differences between the two contexts?

3. How did your past teaching experiences affect your teaching practices in UAE?

Past experiences as an EFL learner:

1. Tell me more about your early experiences of learning English in school.

2. What teaching approach did your past English teachers use in the classroom?

3. How were you expected to behave as an English learner in the classroom?

4. What role did your English teacher play in the classroom?

5. What kind of assessments did your past English teachers carry out in the classroom? Do you think they were successful? Why?

6. Can you give me an example of a good language teacher that you had? What did you like about her/his teaching/assessment methods?

7. How would you describe your overall experience as an English language learner? Why?

8. Thinking back to your experience as a foreign language learner, what influence did it have on how you teach and assess your students today?

Past experiences in postsecondary education:

1. Why did you decide to become an English teacher?

2. What undergraduate/graduate degree do you have? Do you have a certificate for teaching English as a foreign/second language?

3. Describe for me your formal teaching training experiences.

4. What kind of teacher education courses have you taken as an undergraduate student? What impact did they have on your views of English teaching and learning?

5. What kind of assessment methods courses have you taken as an undergraduate student? What impact did they have on your views of assessment?

6. Did your program promote a particular way of teaching and assessing students? Give me examples.

7. Are there any points of conflict/similarities between what you were taught in your education courses regarding teaching and assessment and what you are currently doing in your classroom?

Current beliefs about EFL teaching and learning

1. How do you describe the current teaching approach/mode you use in the classroom? For example, teacher-centred, student-centred, communicative…etc

2. In your view, what do you think is the best way to learn English as a foreign language?

3. How do you describe your role in the classroom as an EFL teacher?

4. What role do you think your students play in their language learning process?

5. What guides how and what you teach in the classroom? For example, a specific textbook, curriculum…etc

6. What do you feel are the most important aspects of teaching English in your classroom? For example, reading, writing, listening, communication…etc

7. Describe for me a successful classroom occasion that you recently had? What factors do you think contributed to the success of this particular lesson?

8. Describe for me a frustrating classroom occasion that you recently had? What factors do you think contributed to the frustration you or your students experienced in this particular lesson?

Current beliefs about EFL assessment

1. When I say "assessment", what do you think about?

2. What types of assessment methods do you usually use in your classroom? For example, traditional/alternative methods. Could you give me examples

3. In your view, how can you best assess your students' English language learning?

4. When do you grade your students' work? When is it not important for you to grade your students' work?

5. In your view, what are the purposes of assessing your students?

6. In what ways does your assessment impact your instruction?

7. Describe for me the different ways in which you use the results/outcome of your Assessment

8. What is the role of feedback in your assessment practices?

9. To what extent is it important for you to engage your students in the assessment process? Why?

10. How much thinking do you typically do in advance of a lesson regarding the assessment you will use? What factors determine your use of specific assessment tasks?

11. How different is the "Skill continuum" different from the old curriculum ECART?

12. How different are your assessment practices before and after the implementation of the skill continuum?

13. In what ways did the Skill continuum influence your thinking about assessment practices?

14. In what ways did the "skill continuum" influence your teaching practices in class?

15. What have you learned about language assessment and teaching practices from the Skill continuum?

16. In what ways, do you believe, your role as a teacher changed after the implementation of "skill Continuum" compared to ECART?

17. Can you tell me about any kind of change that you have made in your instruction, practices as a result of implementing the Skill Continuum?

18. Do you feel your beliefs about language teaching and assessment have changed as a result of incorporating the Skill continuum framework in your classroom?

19. What benefits do you believe the Skill continuum has provided you and your students in terms of English language assessment and teaching practices compared to ECART?

20. How valuable, do you believe, the skill continuum framework is in assessing your students' language learning progress compared to ECART?

21. In what instances and/or language areas, do you believe, the Skill continuum is successful when assessing your students?

22. What kind of difficulties or obstacles do you encounter using the skill continuum framework in assessing students?

23. What kind of information does the Skill continuum give you about your students' language learning progress? What information does it leave out? How is it different the ECART.

24. How much do you think your assessment practices reflect the principles of the ECART framework or skill continuum.

The context of teaching and assessment

1. How do you describe the student population in your classroom? For example, their Language abilities, background knowledge, and motivation.

2. To what extent are your students receptive to the Skill continuum? What do they find useful? What do they complain about?

3. How do you assist them in the transition from a traditional mode of assessment to an alternative one?

4. How do you like teaching in this particular school?

5. How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues, staff, and administration?

6. Do you have discussions with school personnel regarding ESL assessment methods?

7. Do you have discussions with school personnel regarding ESL teaching methods?

8. How do such discussions affect your assessment design and teaching methods? Could you give me examples where school requirements and or discussions with colleagues impacted your assessment practices and teaching practices in the classroom

9. Would you describe for me the teaching and assessment philosophies and teaching philosophies endorsed by your school? How does such philosophies impact your teaching and assessment.

10. How does your school support your use of alternative assessment?

11. What do you think about the current reform of English language teaching and assessment adopted by ADEC?

12. What do you agree with? What do you not agree with? In this reform

13. How does such reform impact the methods you use when you teach and assess your students?

14. What kind of support do you receive from ADEC in order to implement the ECART framework in your classroom in the past and what support have you received in implementing the new curriculum Skill Continuum?

The context of Curriculum

1. What were the major issues and problems that led to the design of this curriculum?

2. What solutions did the new curriculum design promise to offer?

3. Was the new curriculum successful in achieving its goals? How? To what extent?

4. What were the obstacles that faced the implementation of the new curriculum? Were they avoidable? Why or why not?

5. To what extent were the outcomes satisfactory after implementation? What went wrong?

6. What could/should have been done differently in the design and implementation of the new curriculum?

7. What modifications or changes does the current curriculum need? How can these be implemented?

8. Any further comments you would like to add.

*Note: Data collection instrument is a semi-structured interview. So if there are opportunities to ask new questions that were unexpected, based on something that the interviewee said, then its permissible to ask.

APPENDIX iii   Sample Interview with Curriculum Developers

Julie

Title: English medium section manager for curriculum.

Did you have input in the curriculum development? Yes grade 6-12 and the reform happened.

What were reasons of reform? Reform started before I joined ADEC, to be internationally recognized and meet international standards. Joined 2011. Before I was school principal.

I joined 2014 where Abu Dhabi New school model was implemented.

Now skill continuum how is if different then New school model? Grade 6-10 we align to common core standards before it was international benched marked curriculum.

2017 curriculum based on common core from US, not much of difference what we used before because before internationally benched marked aswell.

So what the reason for switching and implementing new curriculum if its not much of a difference to the old?

Just a change of focus, biggest difference before we used it as English as a second language which was internationally benched marked but this year we are treating them as first language learners. Biggest difference between the 2 curriculums because common core is English as first language standards.

Now more student or teacher centered?

 Its defiantly student centered. Both old and new.

Teaching methods different?

They are really not that different between what they are doing this year and last year. Still doing all the language skills. All that still embedded in the curriculum.

So how is 2017 SC curriculum different then? We are teaching at a higher level now since common core standards are seen as English as first language. So now curriculum of student in grade 6 in AD is the same curriculum as student in California grade 6. Before there was English as a second language emphasis which maybe be a year or 2 below a student in California grade 6.

Who decided this?

Decision of the division manager.

What were the major issues and problems that led to the design of this curriculum?

Properly biggest issue is time, the time given, so we are teaching first language curriculum to second language learners at the same amount of time.

Development of curriculum wasn't difficult because we had standards and framework and everything. But trying to teach all that is difficult.

What solutions did the new curriculum design promise to offer?

We wanted students to be competitive and be strong in language of English. I think we are work towards that and all depends on school you go to see how effective this curriculum is. Some schools are English proficient and they are doing well with this. Other schools have difficulty with English and are still struggling.

Why do you think? I would say it's a combination where schools are located and parents and at home. Many factors that play into it.

Was the new curriculum successful in achieving its goals? How? To what extent?

For this year it's too early to see we just implemented, expect for teachers feed back which seem to be positive. They like the curriculum and like text being used. Nothing from students and parents.

Old curriculum how successful was it achieving its goals? It was success in many areas, again some students did find it difficult.

What were the obstacles that faced the implementation of the new curriculum? Were they avoidable? Why or why not?

Time so much content limited amount of time. Available if more time. Also take into consideration that we may never have students reach English as first language.

Does this new curriculum address these students? Curriculum implemented now doesn't address it as the prior curriculum which did.

Prior curriculum had the emerging, the developing, and Master. Had different levels, taught and graded at these levels of proficiency within the same grade.

Now grading system is flat A B C D and that made curriculum more flat then it used to be and we are learning differentiate more to the teachers.

Now exam based 75%, before students had more opportunity to pass and move on to another grade since they were graded at their level and exam was 25%.

Assessments are flipped in grading. More difficult for students. Talking to the people in the field there are some concerns in terms of assessment.

How long to create this curriculum? Not long time line are always short, we receive directives and we have to follow. It was 3 people that developed the curriculum that was used across abu dhabi schools. We had other people review it and give feedback. 3 main developers.

Previous resources are local based a lot UAE based. Culture, tradition, narratives etc. This one US text book and modified it to be culturally appropriate. But it is not as local, this is more global. Reason now more global, I think because we didn't have time to change much of it to make it local based.

This text was not specifically developed for students, it's a modification not a development. In general I believe it is good to expose to global culture. Some stories we had to take out because not culturally appropriate, and replaced with local ones. I wouldn't criticize the more globaliness of the book.

Before continuous assessment now following MOE assessments. Its test based more then project based.

We adapted all MOE curriculum for math and science but we kept only English 6-10. We weren't told to change our weight of assessments to align with MOE but we were aware that likely we will change to MOE next year Sept 2018. We are developing our own assessments 6-12 but aligning with MOE weight of assessments.

MOE have different standard outcomes for their English. No idea why MOE took over grade 11-12.

What were the obstacles that faced the implementation of the new curriculum?

Time and level this curriculum is at (texts, etc). Its considered as first language curriculum, and many students aren't at this level. Teacher have to work harder, it may be a challenge to work with this curriculum, they have to find ways to deliver.

How can you avoid this challenge? What is ADEC doing to solve this?

From our point of view, we are not doing anything. Maybe develop material, break curriculum into smaller chunks and make accessible. A lot of this is done in schools at

classroom level. We are mandated to write curriculum as first language with common core standards.

Teacher training done before implementing curriculum? I believe there was in aug. We did teacher training literacy kits.

To what extent were the outcomes satisfactory after implementation?

NO data or results seen yet

What could/should have been done differently in the design and implementation of the new curriculum?

We were given directive and he had to follow the directive. If we were given a choice, we would have continued work with English as a second language.

Teachers, community, parents etc involved in decisions?

Not what I am aware of. Only thing teachers gave feedback on standards and outcomes, but we were not allowed to lower outcomes and standards at all.

What modifications or changes does the current curriculum need? How can these be implemented?

I think its strong curriculum, but it is for first language curriculum. We should still need to use EDM's emerging, developing and mastery. Or we can do 2 teir curriculum. Proficient students can do this curriculum and struggling students can do English as second language curriculum.

Do you think these problems will be resolved?

If we adapt MOE curriculum, its English as a second language curriculum. They follow Cambridge.

How should be in charge do you believe?

My recommendation is have a lot of input from students, parents, and teachers. Do intensive study as to what is most appropriate for students. Such decisions of this magnitude shouldn't be one person decision.

How is responsible for these decisions now? I don't know. We are on standby, just waiting what directives will be for next year.

How can we fix these issues? Again strategic planes and studies to see what is most appropriate for students.

Any discussion what will happen next year? No, not recently. When we merged with MOE in Aug they spoke about all courses will be taken over by MOE as of Sept 2018-2019.

Any inputs? Hope u have an idea, here in ADEC curriculum kept changing. Why? I don't know.

Here changes are frequents, In other places it take a year 1or 2 development period and implementation will take over 3 years before any changes to make. It takes about 3 years to see any results when implementing something new.

Here we change all the time. All since 2007 about 5 changes. Bases on leadership decisions. They are expecting results and once they don't see immediate results, instead of waiting 3 years to work on the wrinkles and improvement, they do a change.

This makes us feel frustrated, things we work on don't have time to be properly implemented. instability and can't compare data from year 1 to year 2 because not same curriculum different text etc. can't look at data and do true comparison,. Teachers can't get into the rhythm of teaching because change will come. It's not the best practice to change this much.