

**AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE  
IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

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**An Analysis of English Language Teachers’  
Perceptions of Curriculum Change  
in the United Arab Emirates**

Submitted by Fatima Hamad Ali Alwan, to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education, in teaching English as a Foreign Language, May, 2006.

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I certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

F.H. Alwan

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## **Abstract**

This is a qualitative study of English language female secondary school teachers' perceptions of curriculum change in the United Arab Emirates. It aimed at understanding curriculum change from the teachers' perspective. The sample consisted of sixteen female teachers in three secondary schools who had experience teaching the former and the current English language curricula. The study was conceived within the interpretive paradigm. This research method was selected on the basis that people's perceptions and issues related to curriculum are more suited to an interpretive approach, which provides thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study and generates theory. Data collection methods included repeated recorded face-to-face semi-structured interviews, member-checking group interviews and document reviews. Interpretation of the data revealed that according to the research participants, curriculum was synonymous with the materials. Participants agreed that nothing else had changed other than the books. Teachers had contradictory affective reactions to curriculum change since they approved of some aspects of change but were disturbed by other aspects. Their feelings evolved with time to become more positive with familiarity.

Expressions that teachers used conveyed their low morale and their perceptions of their role in curriculum change as marginal, inferior and passive; and indicated that they were excluded from the process of curriculum development. Several curriculum development processes were found to be lacking. Teacher's voice was not active in the context of the study due to lack of job security, and issues of hierarchy and control. The study recommends giving voice to teachers in curriculum change by involving them in curriculum development processes. The study also recommends eliminating factors that lead to current defects in the English language curriculum such as the nature of student assessment; and the unimplemented elements in the curriculum, such as needs analysis, curriculum evaluation, teacher training and curricular support.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Developing the curriculum is a priority in education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Through the curriculum, the country can manifest its stated educational goals to achieve its own development (Educational Policy, 1996). Considering that curriculum change is a healthy sign of development (The 2020 Vision, 2000), in the past three decades, which constitute the whole history of modern education in the country (Al Hai, 1990), several attempts have been made to develop curricula that reflect the growing educational needs (Al Housani, 1996). Curricula in basic subjects like the Arabic language, religion, mathematics and the English language have been updated several times (Abu Hussein, 1999).

Like the other basic school subjects, the English language (EL) curriculum, which is the focus of this study, has undergone several attempts at change (see 2.2.1). But unlike other subjects, the EL curriculum faces several challenges. First and foremost, EL teaching methodology should be in accordance with international trends in foreign language teaching, as the development of methods that suit the local context requires research that is beyond the capability of a country whose educational system did not exceed undergraduate

education, where research could be supervised, until recently. Doing research, other than for academic purposes, is not a common practice in the UAE (Alwan, 2000).

Second, learning a foreign language not only is dependent on providing the means for learning it but transcends this to be contingent on the individual's capabilities for learning a foreign language (Khanji, 2000). As English is a compulsory school 'subject', efforts are directed at making the students 'succeed' at it (Ghareeb, 1996). This includes helping individuals with low language learning capabilities to 'pass' or they would not be able to move up the grades (Alraway, 1988).

The third and fourth challenges are to have teaching materials that are flexible enough to allow teachers to go beyond what is prescribed, and have teachers who are capable of understanding learner needs and delivering the curriculum in ways that are compatible with learning styles (Khanji, 2000). Consequently, the EL curriculum should be continuously revised to reflect the emergent learning needs. This, undoubtedly, requires constant monitoring of all aspects of the curriculum as well as definite plans for change.

The way change is introduced determines the success in achieving the goals of the curriculum. While blueprints for change do not exist, planning is essential (Fullan, 1993 & 1999). Apparently, very little is known about the process of curriculum development in the UAE as part of curriculum change since documentation is weak (Shaw et al, 1995), and very little has been done to research this issue (see 3.3). Previous studies in the UAE focus on single aspects of curriculum and mostly on teacher training and evaluation of teaching (e.g. Al Mansouri, 2001; Al-Nayadi, 1989; Azzari & Mansour, 1998; Badri, 1991). This

investigation is an attempt to fill in this gap in knowledge by portraying a picture of curriculum change in the UAE.

## **1.1 PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

There are various reasons why I was interested in the topic of this study. In this section, I shall explain the practical and personal purposes as well as the rationale for carrying out this investigation. Before doing this, I think that a personal profile of my experience with curriculum will be helpful to the reader in understanding the underpinnings of my intentions.

### **1.1.1 Personal Profile**

My previous experience with the EL curriculum makes me eligible for carrying out this study using the selected methodology. To help the reader understand the underpinnings of dealing with the topic from its current perspective, this overview contains my personal profile in this regard. In this brief account, I shall integrate reflections related to the focus of the study within the description of my experience.

I worked as an EL teacher from 1985 to 1990, and a senior teacher from 1990 to 1992. Throughout these years, I have not seen people who were interested in my views of the curriculum. Even when I had experienced change in curriculum from one to another in 1990 (see 2.2.1), nothing was done to obtain feedback from teachers. Nonetheless, I took the initiative in writing a detailed report about the new curriculum (Alwan, 1990). From my

experience, the teaching materials had been the only signal for that change since the other aspects of the curriculum, such as assessment and teaching methodology, remained the same.

From 1993 to 2003, I took the position of a supervisor and was responsible for following up the curriculum through evaluating and training teachers, and monitoring students' results. Since I had experienced frustrations earlier in my career with regard to a perceived lack of interest in my opinions from curriculum developers, I tried to give voice to my teachers by encouraging them to express their views about the 'materials' as the aspect of the curriculum which was pivotal to their work. In spite of my attempts to communicate their views to the people in charge of developing the curriculum (Alwan, 1995), no action was taken with regard to the documented feedback. At that time, the curriculum materials remained without modifications (see 2.2.4), like other aspects of the curriculum which had received the least or no change at all (see 2.2.3).

After completing this study, I plan to join the EL department at the Curricula Development Centre in the MoE and start a new career in curriculum development. Prior experiences in this field include my involvement in the Project for Evaluating National Curricula in 1999 (Loughrey et al, 1999), the Project for Writing the new English Teaching Curriculum Document in 2000, and the Thematic Maps of the Curriculum in 2001. I had also participated as a materials writer in the Curricula Development Centre for three consecutive years (2000- 2002) during which I had co-authored three sets of materials; two of them had been for the secondary stage, Grades 10 and 11. Additionally, in these three years, I had been in charge of the nuclear training for supervisors, which is the first stage for cascade training. Such training aims at orienting a representative group of supervisors to the new

materials, and familiarising them with the training materials that included handouts and worksheets for training the teachers in their educational zones. This prior experience as an EL teacher, a supervisor and a curriculum writer lead me to the focus of this study. Simply put, I wanted to understand how EL teachers perceive curriculum change. The practical and personal purposes for doing this inquiry are explained below.

### **1.1.2 Practical Purpose**

Curriculum development in the UAE does not appear to be systematic (Alwan, 2003a; Loughrey et al, 1999). According to Loughrey et al (1999), several components of the curriculum seem to be lacking within the process. For instance, curriculum goals and objectives do not seem to be based on actual students' needs. Also, whether commercial or locally prepared, materials do not usually respond to feedback from teachers who call for adaptation of content to students' needs. Further, there is no definite strategy to ameliorate assessment and teaching methods or even teacher training. Obviously, in the history of curriculum change in the MoE, the Project for Evaluating National Curricula in 1999 was the only comprehensive project to research the field in this regard since it included all the basic subjects taught, among which is the EL curriculum (Loughrey et al, 1999). Prior to this, it is claimed that a needs analysis survey had been conducted before embarking on the production of the current set of materials in 1992 to which there is no evidence except in the English Language Curriculum Document of 1994 (1994 Curriculum Document henceforth). Obviously, such attempts had been rare events rather than continuous processes.

Therefore, I plan to investigate how the EL curriculum is developed and changed from the teachers' perspectives. I believe it is a suitable starting point to investigate the topic from the perspective of those who are supposed to be key players in developing the curriculum (Markee, 1997). Therefore, I aim to understand what is done to integrate teacher voice in the EL curriculum development in the UAE.

### **1.1.3 Personal Purpose**

At this point, I would like to make it clear that this study is not an evaluative one. Although a good part of the data obtained from the informants falls into this category, I am not planning to consult other people who are concerned in the whole process of curriculum change such as curriculum developers, administrators, students and parents, as in the tradition of evaluative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). On the contrary, I seek to outline the process of curriculum change from the point of view of teachers only. Since I am with the view that research is a cycle where no end is reached as the outcomes raise other questions (Popper, 1970), I shall outline issues that require further investigations and present hypotheses that may emerge from this inquiry. Thus, by investigating the topic, I seek self-development for myself.

### **1.1.4 Rationale of the Study**

In consideration of the above research purposes, and with reference to the fact that there is a lack of empirical research in this field, the study is underpinned by the rationale to understand curriculum change in the UAE. Thus investigating the issue is expected to lead

to the identification of potential weaknesses and strengths in the process. Doing it from the teachers' perspective eliminates potential bias if other individuals are included. In my opinion, curriculum development is too critical an issue to be left without investigation. While the 1999 project for curriculum evaluation (Loughrey et al, 1999) had been illuminative, I think that empirical research should continue to be the basis for curriculum change. Up to date, no other study in the UAE has been carried out to understand the process of curriculum change. This inquiry is an attempt to unravel areas in which other investigations can be done. Thus by investigating curriculum change and outlining the process or framework adopted in curriculum development from the teachers' perspectives, this study is expected to inform current practice.

## **1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) warn against the assumption that investigating non-researched topics would evidently make the study important. Bearing this in mind, I piloted the topic of the study while working on another research project related to managing innovations in the UAE. The findings of the study showed dissatisfaction with the management of curriculum change; that teachers were excluded from the process and that training was not provided to teachers (Alwan, 2003b). With intensive reading, I decided on teachers' perceptions of curriculum change as the main focus of the investigation. While there is ample research around the world on the topics of curriculum development and change (e.g. Burns, 1995; Elliott et al, 1999; Gibbs, 1998; Ling, 2000; Nunan, 1988; Sharkey, 2004; Webb, 2002), still some questions remained unanswered. I expected that the study might

lead to useful knowledge (Burton, 1996; Frankael & Wallen, 2000), as little is known about the topic of curriculum change in the UAE.

To sum up, the study focusses on understanding EL teachers' perceptions of curriculum change in the UAE. The purpose of the study is twofold: practical and personal. On the one hand, I am particularly interested to learn about curriculum change and teachers' roles in curriculum development. On the other hand, I need to gain more insight into the subject area for a prospective career. The inquiry is also guided by the rationale that no previous research has been carried out in this area. Therefore, I hope to contribute to knowledge through investigating a topic that has not been considered from the current perspective, by answering the research questions presented in the next section.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study sought to answer the following three major questions and their subordinate ones:

1. How do English language (EL) teachers in public secondary schools in the UAE perceive curriculum change?
  - a. What do EL teachers understand by 'curriculum' in the UAE context?
  - b. What do EL teachers understand by 'curriculum change' in the UAE context?
  - c. How do EL teachers feel about 'curriculum change' in the UAE context?

2. How do EL teachers perceive their role in the process of curriculum change?

- a. How do EL teachers perceive their role in developing the curriculum?
- b. How do EL teachers perceive their role in implementing the new curriculum?

3. How do EL teachers perceive their training in implementing the new curriculum?

- a. How do EL teachers perceive support during curriculum change?
- b. How do EL teachers perceive their training during curriculum change?
- c. What forms of professional development do teachers engage in in relation to curriculum change?

#### **1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

**Chapter One** has introduced the study. It has explained the purpose, rationale and significance of the study.

**Chapter Two** provides the background information necessary to familiarise the reader with the context of the study.

**Chapter Three** presents a literature review relating to the focus of the study, and aims to provide a framework for understanding curriculum change in the UAE.

**Chapter Four** explains the methodology of the study, its design and the philosophical standpoints that underpin the choice of methods.

**Chapter Five** reports the findings of the study and discusses them in the light of published literature. It also draws conclusions based on the data.

**Chapter Six** summarises the main findings and recommendations of the study. It also gives suggestions for further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter gives the background information needed to understand contextual issues related to the topic under investigation. It is divided into two parts. The first part has a threefold perspective. First, it gives a brief history of general education in the country. Second, it describes the structure of the educational system. Last, it highlights the status of the English language in the country. The second part of the chapter is concerned with the EL curriculum in general. It gives an overview of issues related to the EL curriculum such as the materials used, the structure and the methods used for teaching English, and curriculum evaluation. Finally, it discusses the issues related to the EL teachers in the UAE

#### **2.1 A GENERAL BACKGROUND**

##### **2.1.1 Education in the UAE: A Brief History**

The UAE is a young state that was founded in 1971 after the British colonial withdrawal from the Arabian Gulf. It constitutes of seven emirates: Abu-Dhabi, which is the capital, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ras-Al Khaimah, Umm Al Quwain and Ajman. The modern educational system is recent but well-financed compared to other developing countries (Suliman, 2000). Started in the early fifties with financial support from Kuwait, a

neighbouring Arab country, a few schools formed the foundation for developing the system of education in the UAE. Teachers were sponsored by other Arab government aid programmes as well (Alraway, 1988; Bel Fekih, 1993; Khlalifat, 1992). After the federation of the emirates in 1971, and with the impact of oil revenues, education gained better support and the number of schools increased (Alraway, 1988; Khlalifat, 1992). In 1977, the development of education reached a turning point with the establishment of the UAE University in Al-Ain, in the emirate of Abu-Dhabi (Al-Hai, 1990; Badri, 1991). With the increasing demands for higher education opportunities for citizens, four Higher Colleges of Technology were opened in 1988 (Badri, 1991) with branches in several emirates. Nowadays, education has expanded at all levels, as there are other state-funded and private higher education institutions all around the UAE (Khlalifat, 1992).

### **2.1.2 Structure of the UAE Education System**

The MoE is in charge of offering educational services throughout each of the seven emirates (Badri, 1991). It is also responsible for the planning and development of the UAE educational system (Al-Taneiji, 2001). Currently, there are ten local authorities known as educational zones in the UAE. Each zone supervises public and private schools within its authority. The zones have direct contact with the main offices of the MoE and all educational decisions are centrally made (Badri, 1991; Sulaiman, 1987; Al-Taneiji, 2001).

Formal education is comprised of four levels: kindergarten, elementary, secondary and tertiary (Al-Hai, 1990; Al-Nayadi, 1989). The kindergarten stage consists of two years before the elementary stage and is optional (Alraway, 1988). Students are admitted to the elementary level when they are 5 years old. The elementary stage, which is currently

known as the Basic Education Cycle starting from the beginning of the school year in 2003, is from Grade 1 to Grade 9. In this basic stage, students are taught general subjects which include Arabic, English, Mathematics, Islamic education, social studies and general science (Alraway, 1988). The secondary education cycle, which started in 1958-1959 (Al-Araj, 1999) and which the study focusses upon, consists of three years. In Grades 11 and 12 students are divided into two main streams: Arts and Science according to their preferences. English, Arabic and Islamic Education are taught in both streams. The Arts students learn simplified Mathematics and Physics beside History, Geography and Social Studies while the science students learn Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Geology and Chemistry (Alraway, 1988; Balfakih, 2003). In Grades 10 and 11, the end-of-semester exams are unified among schools at the zone level only, whereas a general secondary school leaving exam is administered to students of Grade 12, which is unified at the state level (Alraway, 1988).

### **2.1.3 Status of English in the UAE**

English maintains a privileged position in the UAE as it is taught as a compulsory foreign language from Grade 1 in state schools, as explained above, and from kindergarten in private schools. With the increasing public awareness of the importance of English, the language has gained the status of a second language. It serves as the lingua franca in various government offices and the majority of private companies (Al Mansouri, 2001; Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000; Loughrey et al, 1999). It is also the main medium of instruction in tertiary education. Nonetheless, in public schools, it is considered as a school subject (Alwan, 1995 & 2004; Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000; Zaidan, 1995).

In the late seventies, English was taught starting from Grade 4. However, with the expanding awareness of the importance of improving students' performance in the language to equip them for the labour market as well as for pursuing undergraduate studies; and following the results of a needs analysis and a successful experiment on teaching English to young learners, English started to be taught from Grade 1 in 1992 (Al Housani, 1996; Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000). Currently, students in Grades 1 to 3 take an average of 70 hours of English during one academic year; while students from Grades 4 to 6 take an average of 100 hours, and the rest of the classes have about 120 hours of English per year (Owais, 2005).

## **2.2 THE EL CURRICULUM IN THE UAE**

In the history of education in the UAE several curricula were adopted for teaching English, some included commercial teaching materials, and others were locally prepared. This section gives an overview of the EL curricula adopted in the country from its early formation up to date. It then moves to list the goals for teaching English in the state. After that, it gives a description of the curriculum used in the secondary stage as it is the focus of this study.

### **2.2.1 History of the English Curriculum**

The first unified curriculum in the UAE public schools evolved in 1972 (Al-Hai, 1990). As Suliman (2000:51) describes it “The curriculum is traditional and textbook-based. The

teacher and the textbook are often the only source of knowledge”. The normal procedure is that the MoE prescribes one set of books: a textbook and a workbook for each grade, and provides the schools with copies for all the students and their teachers. This is applicable to all the state schools throughout the state. Initially, the first EL course adopted in the late 1960s was based on the Grammar-Translation Method and was produced by Longman. It was then replaced by a new set of books by Longman in the early 1970s. Then, in the late seventies, the Crescent English Course (*Crescent* henceforth) was introduced. It was based on the Communicative Approach. The course was replaced in 1987 with new sets of books that were more eclectic as they were not purely communicative but catered for grammar as well, meeting the demands of local needs.

The curriculum before the *Crescent* was a continuation of that which was introduced by Kuwait and its educational missions in the UAE. The *Crescent* may be considered the first curriculum to address the local needs for acquiring practical communication skills in English to meet the demands of the country’s growth (Suliman, 2000). The *Crescent*, which was also used in other Gulf States like Qatar and Kuwait, was based on a functional syllabus. It was claimed to have been designed specifically to suit the Gulf States (Nunn, 1996). Although the communicative approach was the prescribed method, teachers did not abide by it (Al-Nayadi, 1989). This might have been for cultural reasons, as in other parts of the world (Holliday, 1997; see section 2.2.3).

In 1990, the textbooks were replaced with the National Curriculum *English for UAE*, based on the intention to have national curriculum materials (Owais, 2005). Consequently, a committee of supervisors was formed. It was headed by the Undersecretary of Education, and several sub-committees were formed to produce a set of materials for every stage. At

that time, English was taught from Grade 4 to Grade 12, so nine sets of materials were prepared in all. These included a textbook, a workbook and a class cassette for every level. In addition, flash cards, pictures and posters were included for levels 4 to 6. *English for UAE* has been criticised for its unclear approach as the sets of materials did not include a teaching manual for teachers. Rather, there had been one general guide that listed the goals and methods recommended, which were based on the communicative approach. Research during this period shows that the teachers abandoned many aspects of the communicative approach (Alwan, 1995; see 2.2.3 below). Although teaching a foreign language benefits from learning about its culture, the Arab culture rather than the foreign culture was the basis for *English for UAE* (Owais, 2005).

As Loughrey et al (1999:31) observe, *English for UAE* “reflects the content of the Crescent...(but) the design and organisation of the course components (are)...incomplete”. As the materials were all authored hastily within almost nine months, they were introduced directly into schools without piloting or training. They remained in use for several years without modifications other than corrections of misprints (Loughrey et al, 1999).

In 1992, a new set of materials was prepared for Grade 1 within a new curriculum: *English for the Emirates* (the 1994 Curriculum Document) which claims to have taken the recommendations of a needs analysis survey (see 1.1.2 and Appendix I-B). In the following years, a new set of materials was introduced to each subsequent stage from Grade 1 to Grade 12. The course was completed in September 2003 with the final set of materials for Grade 12. The process of change took 12 years, during which the previous materials remained without modifications. This meant that the teaching materials of the former curriculum were in use for 8 to 10 years in the secondary stage without reviews. This new

curriculum also suffered from the same drawback as the previous one which was lack of significant modifications (see 2.2.6.2 below).

The methodology recommended for *English for the Emirates* was eclectic with a bias toward the communicative approach. The curriculum materials included a teaching manual for every level but the teaching suggestions were found to be merely general directions rather than specific ones (Gardner & Abu Libde, 1995). As in the previous curriculum, this one did not cater for the foreign culture as well (Owais, 2005). The following table summarises the sets of materials according to the levels. The years in which *English for the Emirates* was introduced are provided.

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b><i>Crescent</i></b>	<b><i>English for UAE</i></b>	<b><i>English for the Emirates</i></b>
1	-	-	Book 1 1992-1993
2	-	-	Book 2 1993-1994
3	-	-	Book 3 1994-1995
4	Book 1	Book 1	Book 4 1995-1996
5	Book 2	Book 2	Book 5 1996-1997
6	Book 3	Book 3	Book 6 1997-1998
7	Book 4	Book 4	Book 7 1998-1999
8	Book 5	Book 5	Book 8 1999-2000
9	Book 6	Book 6	Book 9 2000-2001
10	Book 7	Book 7	Book 10 2001-2002
11	Book 8	Book 8	Book 11 2002-2003
12	Book 9	Book 9	Book 12 2003-2004

Table (1) Sets of materials prescribed in the three main EL curricula in the UAE.

It is worth pointing out that the main apparent aspect of the curriculum in the review above is the preparation of material. There is no indication that any sort of needs analysis had been prepared before setting the goals of the current EL curriculum in the

UAE (Loughrey et al, 1999). However, a needs analysis survey was carried out in 2000 on which two important documents were based. The first one was a new curriculum document that was also prepared in consequence to the recognised deficiencies as a result of the Curriculum Evaluation Project (see 1.1.1). The second one contained the curriculum thematic maps. I participated in both of these projects, as mentioned earlier. Both documents are still undergoing revision. While both of these are developmental projects for the secondary school curriculum, I shall not refer to them again as they do not concern the current study.

### **2.2.2 The Goals of the EL Curriculum in the UAE**

Although the general goals for teaching English in the UAE (see Appendix I-A) reflect the importance of English, they do not seem to have been based on any needs analysis (Owais, 2005). Based on my previous familiarity with the curriculum materials in all levels and as a review of the curriculum materials reveals, there is a serious gap between the curriculum goals and the curriculum embedded in *English for the Emirates*, which is the current curriculum in the country (also Owais, 2005). The basis on which the goals were established could not be identified in any of the MoE documents. In addition, the 1994 curriculum document cannot be claimed to have been the basis for at least the first two sets of materials as it was published two years later, nor had it been the basis for the other sets of materials (Loughrey et al, 1999).

### **2.2.3. The Context of Teaching English in the UAE**

Schools in the UAE are gender segregated. The school year, from September to June, is divided into two semesters with a two-week spring holiday in January. All schools operate five days a week, Saturday to Wednesday, with a two-day weekend except during end-of-semester examinations during which the weekend holiday for schools is on Friday. The day at school starts from 8 a.m. for girls schools and 7:30 a.m. for boys schools, with a morning assembly that lasts for 15 minutes. The school day consists of 7 lessons per day of 45 minutes each. There is a 30-minute break after the first three lessons and a 10-minute break before the final lesson. This is also considered a prayer break in some schools. There are also 5-minute breaks between lessons to allow teachers the time to move from one class to another. The last class finishes at 2:30 p.m. in girls schools and 1:30 p.m. in boys schools. In some schools, the five-minute breaks are cancelled to allow one extra class for extra-curricular activities, unified exams, remedial work classes or extra lessons for classes that are behind in the coverage of the syllabus of certain subjects. In the secondary stage, students learn English in 6 classes a week. The total number of hours in each semester is approximately 60 hours (Owais, 2005).

### **2.2.4 The Current EL Curriculum in the UAE**

The curriculum used in the secondary cycle when the study was conducted and this review was written was *English for the Emirates*. The sets of materials for each level are referred to as 'Book'. Book 10 was introduced for Grade 10 in 2001, Book 11 for Grade 11 in 2002 and Book 12 for Grade 12 in September 2003 (see table in 2.2.1). The current set of

materials of each level consists of three books: the Pupil's Book, the Workbook and the Teacher's Book in addition to one or two cassettes that contain a recording of all the texts in the Pupil's Book. Although the materials were meant to be for one cycle, each set of them takes a different design to some extent regarding the structure of the content (see Appendix II for a brief overview of the content of each set of materials).

### **2.2.5 Methods for Teaching English in the UAE**

The 1994 Curriculum Document states that *English for the Emirates* has benefited from previous courses used for teaching English in the UAE in becoming eclectic. It has “a general ‘approach’ rather than a specific ‘methodology’” (Curriculum Document, 1994:22). As the communicative approach has been in use for many years, the 1994 Curriculum Document recommends a continuation of the practice. It recognises that the teachers have also been employing other methods of teaching to meet the needs of the learners, thus it recommends the use of other methods as well. It also highlights the successes of the Grammar-Translation Method in teaching the reading and writing skills and the suitability of the Direct Method for teaching highly motivated students. Successes of other methods like the Structural Method and the Humanistic Methods are also appreciated in serving the purposes of teaching the language from certain perspectives. Consequently, eclecticism is thought to be the ideal solution as it recommends using the best of every method. The 1994 Curriculum Document states the following: “Our approach is eclectic or balanced because we continue to draw inspiration from any method that has produced results” (Curriculum Document, 1994:25). Thus grammar is recommended to be taught when relevant in accordance with the Grammar-Translation Method, and learning by doing is emphasised as in the tradition of the Total Physical Response Method. In addition, a variety of techniques

are recommended for teaching vocabulary depending on the nature of the words. For this the following techniques are recommended: realia, models, pictures, miming, definition, translation, deduction or synonyms and antonyms. Communicative techniques are recommended for teaching the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, co-curricular activities are emphasised especially at the secondary level. Further, the teachers are also encouraged to prepare educational aids to accompany the prescribed teaching materials (see more excerpts from the 1994 Curriculum Document in Appendix I-B).

While this is the case in policy, according to research findings, teachers had abandoned essential features of the communicative approach even before the introduction of the *English for the Emirates* (Al Mansouri, 2001; Alwan 1995; Gardner & Abu Libde, 1995). With the absence of a detailed teacher's manual, the choice of techniques was left to the discretion of teachers. Generally, the dominant techniques were inductive ones based on input from teachers (Suliman, 2000) or those based on Grammar-Translation (Alwan, 1995; Ghareeb, 1996; Loughrey et al, 1999).

### **2.2.6 Assessment in the UAE Curriculum**

Assessment in the curriculum involves assessment of students' proficiencies as well as evaluation of the materials used. This section explains how students' performance in the language is assessed in general. Then it proceeds to argue against the inefficiency of the evaluation of the curriculum material.

### **2.2.6.1 Student Assessment in the Curriculum**

As the *Directory of Distribution of Marks* (1998) demonstrates, the system of assessment consists of 50 marks based on written exams and 50 marks based on oral assessment of the student's performance in the language, centred on his or her participation in the classroom, and his or her responses to the teacher during oral discussion. However, final examinations depend on written exams only and are believed to be the basic systematic method for monitoring students' progress (Hokal, 1999). There are two main assessments in each semester that are to be averaged with the students' results in their final exam at the end of the semester. Generally, promotion from grade to grade is based on students' obtaining the minimum average; otherwise, they repeat the class. The secondary stage suffers high percentages of students repeating classes when they fail in three subjects or they fail in the repeated exam even for one subject (Hokal, 1999; Shaw et al, 1995; Tantawi, 1995).

Loughrey et al (1999) observe that exam results are misleading as they show average high scores while the students' attainment is basically low. This supports the findings of Hokal (1999) and Shaw et al (1995) who report the high percentages of students repeating classes. Similarly, Al Mansouri (2001) and Guefrachi and Troudi (2000) report that students have low standards of achievement in English. In general, examinations in the UAE are believed to have a washback effect on learners as they encourage rote learning (Suliman, 2000; Tantawi, 1995). Khanji's (2000) research findings show that certain measures are not catered for in exam formats. Similarly, Altraifi (1999) states that there are negative aspects associated with exams such as focussing on memorisation of texts. Likewise, Zaidan (1995) observes that English language exams test the students' ability to memorise rules

and vocabulary items rather than their ability to express themselves in English as a foreign language (also Gardner & Abu Libde, 1995). Most students who reach the secondary cycle are not able to use even simple sentences to express themselves (Loughrey et al, 1999). Consequently, there is a need for introducing alternative means of assessment to combat exam washback effect and unsatisfactory attainment (Khanji, 2000; Owais, 2005). An overview of the type of exam questions shows how the test paper encourages memorisation (see Appendix III).

#### **2.2.6.2 Evaluation of Curriculum Materials**

Several researchers have found that evaluation of curriculum materials in general was not systematic as there are no clearly specified channels for teachers to convey their feedback (Loughrey et al, 1999; Shaw et al, 1995). As Alwan (2003b) points out, volunteer teachers complete open-ended questionnaires about the ‘books’ on an annual basis. However, studies show that no inherent modifications are normally noticed as what gets to be corrected is mainly the printing errors (Loughrey et al, 1999). Perhaps the only significant evaluation project, however, is the Curricula Evaluation Project in December, 1999, which stands out as the only attempt to formally evaluate the curriculum materials as mentioned earlier.

#### **2.2.7 The EL Teacher in the UAE**

Basically, the UAE depends heavily on recruiting staff from other Arab countries (Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000; Hokal, 1999). In the academic year 2003-2004, the total

number of teachers reached 10,010 of which 3,275 were EL teachers. There were 1,335 male teachers and 1,940 female teachers (Summary of Educational Statistics, 2004). The minimum qualification required in the past was a two-year teaching diploma in addition to the high school certificate, or a graduate degree in English language from the colleges of Arts (Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000). Currently, diploma teachers are being replaced by teachers who have a graduate degree in education specialising in teaching English (Owais, 2005).

With regard to recruitment, the UAE has defined but unstable hiring procedures. Those hired to teach English need not be graduates of faculties of education. While some teachers who work in primary schools hold teaching diplomas, most of the secondary school teachers are graduates of faculties of Arts with specialisation in English language, English literature or translation. Emirati B.A. holders and other Arab teachers resident in the country (who have a B.A. and a minimum of three years teaching experience in private schools in the UAE) sit for a written exam based on knowledge of educational theories and the English language. After correction, only those who get more than 60 marks out of 100 are called for an oral interview. As a standard procedure, Arab teachers from Egypt, Jordan and Syria resident in their countries sit for an exam organised specially for them. The interviewing committee travels to their countries to interview those who pass the written exam. Those who are recruited travel on the expenses of the MoE for a one year contract. Some Arab countries also send teachers according to the lending agreement that has been established with the governments of both countries based on exchanges of students and teachers such as Egypt and Tunisia (Al-Nabeh, 1982). Starting from 2003, the written exam was cancelled and selection nowadays is based solely on a job interview (Owais, 2005).

As for pre-service training, all teachers are offered a three-day training seminar to familiarise them with the system but this is done about one month after they start their job. National teachers who do not hold a degree in education are asked to attend a one-month training course in the evenings. In their first year, teachers are under probation. Based on a mid-year report submitted in January, the MoE decides whether the teacher is well-qualified or not. In subsequent years, the contract is on a yearly basis and may be terminated without prior notice by the end of the school year. Job security is insecure in this case and teachers are obliged to do their best to retain the job contract (Al-Nayadi, 1989; Alwan, 2003a, 2003b; Suliman, 2000).

As for their professional duties, teachers in the UAE carry out a large number of tasks in addition to classroom teaching. Other non-instructional duties are administrative, technical or disciplinary (Al-Araj, 1999; Al Housani, 1996). According to Altraifi's (1999) findings, teachers in the UAE sacrifice their own leisure time to satisfy work requirements. School administrations require them to do tasks that are not part of the job. Furthermore, work pressures affect the relationships among teachers and result in psychological stress.

In addition, teachers are expected to prepare supplements for the teaching materials. As far as Altraifi (1999) is concerned, this act is considered a sign of distinguished performance. As there are no funds provided by the MoE, teachers believe that the schools' inability to finance the preparation of extra teaching materials weakens their performance, and as a result, they depend on their own resources to fund curriculum requirements.

Most teachers have 3 to 4 classes a day reaching 18 classes a week. With 50 minutes in each lesson, this amounts to approximately 15 hours of actual teaching time. Other non-

teaching time is used for preparing lesson plans or correcting and checking students' homework, notebooks, workbooks and exams. In case of maternity (2 months), Haj (i.e. pilgrimage, 3 weeks) or sick leaves (open), the teachers' loads may rise up to 21 classes per week as they take up classes of their 'absent colleague' since the number of substitute teachers (female only) has been cut back in the past few years. According to my experience, teachers, when not teaching, seem to be doing many routine tasks related to teaching and assessment. There are no studies that reveal the actual workload but Altraifi (1999) found that teachers cannot finish their duties during duty hours and usually take their work home. More background information on issues concerning teacher training and evaluation is covered in the next section.

### **2.2.8 Teacher Training and Teacher Evaluation**

As the majority of the teachers are expatriates, they come from diverse educational backgrounds with regard to their pre-service training. Graduates of the faculties of education are more informed than their peers about English language teaching with regard to current approaches to teaching English and their knowledge of curriculum (Al-Araj, 1999). In most Arab countries, graduates of the faculties of education have their teaching practice in the final year. Some countries offer in-service training to teachers but others do not (Al Nuaimin, 1991).

As most of the others are graduates of the faculties of Arts, they join the service and get their training on their first year of teaching. However, in some countries, they do not get any form of training at all. In Egypt and Syria, for instance, teachers join the service

without any prior knowledge of teaching (Al Nuaimin, 1991; Amro, 2001). In Tunisia, however, teachers have weekly workshops during a two-year intensive training programme before they get a full-time contract as EL teachers. Similarly, teachers in Jordan join the service without pre-service training and they are trained while doing their job during the first year of service (Amro, 2001).

In all cases where there is actual training and in the case of graduates of the faculties of education, teachers are exposed to current trends in English language teaching such as communicative language teaching. However, there is little focus on independent learning or task-based learning. Teachers are trained to implement the lessons according to the suggestions in the teacher's book (Al Nuaimin, 1991; Al Mansouri, 2001; Amro, 2001).

After they are recruited in the UAE, teachers get a short training course to familiarise them with the job requirements such as daily and annual planning and foreign language teaching techniques. Teachers are also oriented with the teaching materials of the cycle they are working with (Alwan, 2000). In addition to this, teachers are familiarised with the new curriculum material every time there is a change. Traditionally, EL supervisors are in charge of training EL teachers in addition to teacher evaluation. Such on-the-job follow-up is considered the major in-service training that teachers receive (Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996). However, supervision is synonymous with inspection as teachers perceive that the main purpose behind classroom observation is to check that teachers are complying with the recommended teaching techniques (Al-Nayadi, 1989; Azzari & Mansour, 1998; Hokal, 1999). Thus the model of training that teachers receive throughout their years of service in the UAE involves merely how to deal with the materials and adapt them to students' needs. Therefore, the supervisors mainly give directions without guidance (Alraway, 1988; Badri,

1991). The training does not deal with the role of the teachers beyond delivering the teaching materials or preparing exams (Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996). It is basically a master-apprentice relationship whereby teachers are expected to obey orders from their superiors (Azzari & Mansour, 1998).

According to the 1994 Curriculum Document, training teachers on how to use the new curriculum is an essential component of the new curriculum. It explains that teachers are encouraged to attend training courses and instructions are given to school principals to release teachers to enable them to attend training activities. In addition, schools are also encouraged to organise demonstration lessons. Other than that, the teachers' opportunities for in-service training are almost lacking (Altraifi, 1999). According to Alwan (2000) and Ghareeb (1996), the MoE does not have a systematic approach to teacher training. Nevertheless, as a result of active supervisory efforts, many teachers have developed awareness for professional development and are encouraged to attend professional development activities organised outside the duty hours and during weekends (Alwan, 2003b). The most significant professional development activities are currently offered by TESOL Arabia, which is a locally based international organisation for teachers who use English as the main language of instruction. Other opportunities include seminars and workshops offered by higher educational institutions which have partnership with schools, such as the Higher Colleges of Technology and Zayed University. Most development activities are held outside working hours or during weekends (Alwan, 2003b).

As for teacher evaluation, which is an annual procedure, this is a shared duty between the school's principal and the subject supervisor. There are supervisors for all the subjects in every educational zone who visit schools regularly to monitor teaching performance and

follow up student results. Supervisors who are locally promoted to take the position are ex-teachers who have been trained to carry out the job of teacher training and teacher evaluation. However, some supervisors are Arab expatriates from Egypt or Jordan, who had previous experience of supervision in their countries (Azzari & Mansour, 1998; Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000). Normally, a supervisor has about 50 to 65 teachers under his or her supervision depending on the size of the zone and recruitment restrictions. The number of supervisors in charge of EL teachers in 2003-2004 in all educational zones reached 70 in total; of which 45 were males and 25 were females (Summary of Educational Statistics, 2004). These are headed by the Senior Inspector who is based in the MoE (Guefrachi & Troudi, 2000).

Teacher evaluation depends mainly on classroom observation followed by a post-observation conference in which the evaluator and the teacher discuss the lesson and suggest points of improvement to the teacher's performance. The evaluator then writes a report on the observed lesson and his or her recommendations. In the past, there had been separate registers for both the supervisor and the principal; however, a comprehensive register for both evaluators was introduced in 2002, in which both evaluators document their visits. The teacher reads and signs the report after its completion on the same day or later at a convenient time. At the end of the school year, there is a confidential appraisal report which is normally written in the month of May. Both the supervisor and the principal give a rating to the teacher in areas of skills and professional development. The report is sent to the MoE and is analysed by the department of human resources. Based on this report, the teacher's contract is either renewed or terminated in severe cases. Normally, a teacher knows about her level of performance as he or she receives an official warning during the year if his or her rating in the previous year was below expectations. Weak

performers are followed up intensively by the supervisors and the senior supervisor and more development activities are arranged to improve their performance.

Recently, several innovations have been introduced in the area of teacher evaluation. In consequence of these innovations, the final report is based on teaching portfolios and student evaluation of teaching. While these have caused wide controversy, they continue to be viewed more capable of covering a wider scope of the teacher's work than classroom observation (Alwan, 2004b; Bird & Owais, 2004). In brief, the teachers are required to display evidence of their work in a teaching portfolio. The criteria for evaluation are similar to the ones in the teachers' register which is used for documenting classroom visits. These are: (1) planning, (2) teaching aids and techniques, (3) students, (4) professional development, (5) curricula and testing (Alwan, 2004b; Bird & Owais, 2004). As for students' evaluation of teaching, a random sample of students is given a questionnaire to evaluate the teacher. Two drawbacks have been observed in this technique: the instrument is thought to be lacking in validity, and the confidential results of this type of evaluation are thought to affect teacher morale (Alwan, 2003b).

In the next chapter, I shall provide a review of the literature on the main focal points of the inquiry. I shall also present a review of studies on curriculum change which are relevant to this study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature pertinent to the topic of investigation. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first one, I shall explain the conceptual framework of the study. In the second section, I shall define the main terminology used in the study and provide a brief overview of the issues around them which are discussed in the literature. They are: teacher perceptions, change, curriculum and curriculum development. In the last section, I will present a review of studies about curriculum change which are of relevance to this inquiry.

#### **3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The study that I report here was conceived within the interpretive paradigm. Within this approach, the aim of the researcher is to understand peoples' perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation. This approach focuses on how participants view reality with the objective of generating rather than verifying theory. It uses a naturalistic research design. Crotty (1998) explains that a 'theoretical perspective' is a philosophical standpoint which underpins the selected methodology. In this part, I shall explain the philosophical,

ontological and epistemological standpoints of social constructivism and clarify basic aspects of interpretive research.

Interpretive research is derived from constructivist ontology (Ernest, 1994). According to constructivist ontology, objects in the world are representations constructed by people or cultures (Fox, 2003). In this sense, knowledge is not found or discovered but is constructed (Bloomer, 2001; Duit & Treagust, 2003; Fox, 2001 & 2003; Schwandt, 1994 & 2001; Warford & Reeves, 2003). As different people construct reality in different ways, there is no single objective reality true to all (Kiviven & Ristela, 2003; Schwandt, 1994 & 2001) but there are multiple meaningful constructions of the world in people's minds (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Williams & Burden, 1999). These representations are complex and change over time (Enteistle & Smith, 2002; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Schur et al, 2002; Watts & Bentley, 1991). Further, they are filtered through shared contextual factors (Reagan & Osborn, 2002; Schwandt, 2001). Hence comes the declaration commonly made by interpretive theorists that there is no such thing as reality (e.g. Burr, 2000; Radnor, 2002). My philosophical standpoint in this inquiry is the same as explained above. As a constructivist, I understand that different people have different perceptions (i.e. constructions) of the world, and that an individual develops different perceptions of the world depending on contextual factors.

As for epistemology, or the view of knowledge and the theory of learning, interpretive researchers believe that knowledge is created as a result of the interaction between the researcher and the object of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). They also view knowledge as the understanding that the knower makes out of it. This 'subjectivist epistemology' determines the methodology of interpretive research. From this perspective

too, there is no such thing as research which excludes the influence of the researcher (Halliday, 2002; Hanrahan et al, 1999; Huberman & Miles, 1994). It is recommended therefore, that researchers state clearly their beliefs and values with regard to their methodological stance. In my overall approach in this study, I was guided by this constructivist standpoint.

The same philosophical standpoint underpins my methodology too. The role of the qualitative researcher, as theorists agree (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Robson, 2002; Woods, 1999), is to discover the participants' perspectives on a particular issue and the meanings they attach to it by building up a picture through thick descriptions which capture the uniqueness of the context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ernest, 1994; Lazaraton, 2003; Radnor, 1994).

As for data analysis, according to the interpretivist researchers, to understand the world or social phenomena, we must interpret the data to clarify the meaning and describe the whole picture (Schwandt, 1994; Radnor, 2002). Consequently, these researchers focus on the social construction of reality based on how individuals interpret the world (Radnor, 2002). Further, interpretivists also assume that the researcher and the participants create the data mutually (Olesen, 1994). This co-creation requires that researchers ground the findings in the informants' constructions of reality (Guba & Lincoln. 1989- see 4.7) to reach a joint construction.

It is important at this point to acknowledge the element of 'reflexivity' in interpretation, which is the acknowledgement of the reflection of the researchers' subjectivity in understanding their role in the research, and that the researcher is a part of the world he or

she investigates (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Atkinson, 2000; Burr, 2000; Marcus, 1994; Punch, 1994 & 1998; Vidich & Lyman, 1994). Subjectivity is an aspect of strength in qualitative research (Holliday, 2001). Instead of attempting to eliminate subjectivity, researchers should capitalise on its ability to make them understand the culture of the studied context. In fact, interpretive research theorists commend subjectivity for the reflexivity it adds to the interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994- see 3.1).

### **3.2 TERMINOLOGY**

As mentioned earlier, this study attempts to explore EL teachers' perceptions of curriculum change in the UAE. In this section, I shall explain the main concepts referred to in this thesis by drawing on the literature. The main concepts are: 'Teachers' perceptions', 'change' and 'curriculum'. As I shall explain later, my definition of 'curriculum' and the focus of the study demand a definition of 'curriculum development' since it is connected to 'curriculum change'. Therefore, I will also clarify what an 'EL curriculum' is and the components of the EL curriculum process. As I shall demonstrate, each of these terms has been a point of argument, and theorists have debated that their meanings are diverse and overlap with other terms used within the same context. In the course of the matter, I shall be giving a brief synthesis of the research findings related to these terms which are essential to understanding some of the findings in chapter 5.

### 3.2.1 Teachers' Perceptions: Definition and Synthesis of Research Findings

This study investigates teachers' *perceptions* of curriculum change. I shall be using the word 'perception' to refer to teachers' constructions of reality in areas related to the educational context. This section aims at clarifying the relationship between the concepts of 'perception' and 'belief', and proceeds to consider research findings which are of relevance to this study. Bearing in mind that the term is broad and is used synonymously with other terms, I shall attempt to define it from a perspective which suits the focus of the study.

According to Pajares (1992:315):

“all broad psychological constructs at some point must come before the reductionist, multidimensional, or hierarchical chopping block to better suit the needs and requirements of the research”.

It is common in constructivist research to use the term perception to refer to constructions that people form of reality. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985): “a perception...is a partial, incomplete view of something that is nevertheless real, and capable of different interpretation when seen from different viewpoints. It is partial and incomplete only because each perception yields experience of only a limited number of *parts* of the whole” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:83). In this philosophical sense, teachers' perceptions are only one side of looking at an issue as there are other persons involved in the situations under investigation who may hold other perceptions. In this sense too, perceptions are subject to change due to contextual factors (see 3.1).

Perceptions are also referred to as 'beliefs', 'conceptions', 'interpretations', 'attitudes', 'values' or 'feelings' (e.g. Beck et al, 2000; Ben-Peretz et al, 2003; Campbell et al, 2001; Collinson & Cook 2000; Dreyfus & Mazouz, 1989; Freeman, 2002; Gibbs et al, 1999;

Lazaraton, 2003; Richards, 1994; Tillema, 1997a, 1997b & 1998; Tillema & Knoll, 1997), or 'lay theories', 'knowledge' and 'theories' (e.g. Golombek, 1994 & 1998; Sugrue, 1997). On the other hand, some researchers, like Nespor (1987) consider 'beliefs' as teachers' ways of thinking and distinguishes 'beliefs' from 'knowledge'. In addition, other researchers use the term 'perception' as a construct of 'belief' (Pajares, 1992). Rokeach (1968- in Pajares, 1992) rightly argues that beliefs are multi-dimensional. To quote Pajares (1992:318): "Beliefs differ in intensity and power; beliefs vary along a central-peripheral dimension; and the more central a belief, the more it will resist change". This implies that there are *central* or *core* beliefs which are hard to change, and that there are *peripheral* ones at the surface that are prone to change. If we consider Lincoln and Guba's (1985) definition, we can reach the conclusion that peripheral beliefs are perceptions, which are constructions of reality. Considering that the term 'beliefs' refers to central beliefs and 'perceptions' are peripheral beliefs, there is a hierarchical relationship between both concepts, which makes the latter a construct of the former. As Pajares (1992:317) puts it: "beliefs influence perceptions that influence behaviors that are consistent with, and that reinforce, the original beliefs".

To begin with, the first major finding in this field is that both beliefs and perceptions inform practice and influence decision making with regard to choice of teaching techniques. In consequence, classroom decisions that teachers make are based on their perceptions of teaching and learning, of the learners and of themselves (e.g. Borg, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2001 & 2003; Head & Taylor, 1997; Toref & Warburton, 2005). In a very literal sense, beliefs filter the contextual problems and help teachers to understand contexts (Nespor, 1987). Therefore, what teachers perceive as the most important skills for their

pupils to learn influences what they choose to teach and their teaching techniques (Glean, 1984; Johnson, 1999; Williams & Burden, 2000).

The second finding related to teacher perceptions is that the teaching context can affect teachers' perceptions of themselves significantly, and the image which teachers hold of themselves affects their classroom behaviour too (Ben-Peretz et al, 2003; Johnson, 1999; Pajares, 1999). Williams and Burden (2000:97) define self-concept as "the amalgamation of all of our perceptions and conceptions about ourselves which gives rise to our sense of personal identity". They consider 'self-image', 'self-esteem' and 'self-efficacy' as aspects of 'self-concept' (with 'self-image' as views of ourselves, 'self-esteem' as feelings of value we hold for ourselves, and 'self-efficacy' as what we believe we are capable of doing). Teachers' perceptions with regard to their self-efficacy affect their instructional practices (Williams & Burden, 1998 & 2000), and are central in determining their perceived locus of control (Pajares, 1999). Locus of control is the perception of one's control over situations in life (Williams & Burden, 2000). As Williams and Burden (2000) concede, when people perceive they are responsible for their action, they are said to have an internal locus of control and they tend to be motivated to act. However, when they see that others are responsible for what they believe or what happens to them, they are said to have an external locus of control. In this case, they are not motivated to act but appear to be compliant and passive.

The third finding in the area of teachers' perceptions is the way in which perceptions can be investigated, and which underpins the methodology of this investigation. According to Gatlinton (1999) and Johnson (1999) the best way to understand teachers' perceptions is to make them reflect on their actions. Thus Johnson (1999) uses the term 'reasoning' to

refer to the articulation of beliefs through talking about actions, and concedes that the way teachers interpret their teaching is a major key to understanding teaching.

Last, there is a controversy whether training changes perceptions or not with the tendency towards stressing the finding that teacher education fails to influence teachers' perceptions. On the first side of the argument, Nespor (1987) contends that beliefs are hard to control or influence. On the other side, some researchers use terms as 'initial beliefs' (Beijaard & De Vries, 1997; Brousseau & Freeman, 1988; Von Wright, 1997) and 'evolution' of teachers' thinking (Freeman, 2002), with the implication that new beliefs can be acquired. Similarly, there are researchers who assert that training can alter beliefs which are related to pedagogy on the condition that they are consciously challenged (Korthagen & Lagerwerf, 1996; Tillema, 1997a, 1997b & 1998; Tillema & Knol, 1997; Von Wright, 1997).

Conversely, according to Pajares (1992), new information is filtered through old beliefs. Therefore, in spite of teacher education and teacher training, teacher beliefs are unlikely to change (Johnson, 1999) since old beliefs are hard to get rid of (Pajares, 1992). When teachers have conflicting old and new beliefs, only *they* can resolve these conflicts. For this, they need more evidence from the classroom (Johnson, 1999) as well as confrontation with themselves (Tillema & Knol, 1997). Eventually, such conflicting beliefs leave a mark on teachers' practices.

Even if we assume that training can affect teachers' perceptions, I think that teachers resort to old behaviours if the new behaviour is not enhanced, or if there are contextual circumstances that teachers perceive beyond their control which make them revert to old ways of teaching. In such cases, the change in perceptions is not enhanced enough to effect

change in beliefs. Enhancing new perceptions can be obtained through eliminating contextual factors that impede the application of new behaviour that matches new perceptions. Accordingly, teachers may hold certain perceptions and display classroom practices which are not in accordance with their beliefs because the culture of the school does not facilitate this change. Therefore, some researchers argue that to cause a change in beliefs, the culture of the school must change first (Fullan, 1993, 1999, 2001a, 2001b; Karavas-Doukas, 1998).

In summary, although ‘perception’ is a broad psychological concept, I tried to explain it from the perspective which suits my research. I shall be considering ‘perceptions’, which are constructions of reality, as constructs of beliefs based on the argument above. While there is a tendency in the literature to use the terms interchangeably, I will abide by the distinction explained above.

### **3.2.2 Educational Change: Definition and Synthesis of Research Findings**

To define ‘change’, we need to consider its overlapping meaning with ‘innovation’. From a linguistic point of view, according to Webster’s Dictionary (1993), ‘innovation’ is “the introduction of something new” and ‘change’ is “the action of making something different in form, quality, or state”. With reference to curriculum change literature, Markee (1997) differentiates between change and innovation but recommends using the words interchangeably due to the fact that they are overlapping concepts. She defines change as “an ongoing, almost unconscious process that involves reworking familiar elements into new relationships”; and ‘innovation’ as “a willed intervention, which results in the

development of ideas, practices, or beliefs that are fundamentally new” (Markee, 1997:47). Thus, introducing an innovation in any aspect of the curriculum brings about curriculum change. However, change has several dimensions. According to Print (1993:xvi), change is “the process of transforming phenomena into something different. It has the dimensions of rate (speed), scale (size), degree (thoroughness), continuity (profoundness) and direction”. Therefore, change comes in various degrees. That is, an innovation may be introduced but change may or may not occur.

Change may occur either naturally or deliberately (Fullan, 2001b) while innovation is a proposition for change as it imposes change (Fullan, 1999; Print, 1993). However, both terms can be used to refer to the process aspect *and* the object or strategy that is introduced. Realising this overlap in meaning, I shall use the terms interchangeably and take them both to mean the introduction of something different or new. Obviously, the view that an innovation is new, of course, depends on the perceptions of the people affected by it; as there can be a change but things may seem familiar. Understandably, an innovation loses its novelty over time. Therefore, the perception of an innovation as a change is relative due to the ambiguity caused by the overlapping meanings of both concepts.

When considering educational change in general, I see change as an ongoing process which can be taking place without the deliberate introduction of something different or new. However, when considering curriculum change, there is a deliberate attempt to introduce one or more elements of the curriculum which are different or new (Everard & Morris, 1996; Markee, 1997). Whether this innovation is perceived as new or not by those affected by change, still from the perspective of change managers, it is a change.

As seen from Markee's definition of innovation above, 'innovation' is also a term used to describe the process of change by introducing new elements. Thus whether we are referring to curricular change or curricular innovation, there is going to be some element of the curriculum which is new to the context. Hence comes Markee's definition of curricular innovation as: "a managed process of development whose principal products are teaching (and/or testing) materials, methodological skills, and pedagogical values that are perceived as new by potential adopters" (Markee, 1997:46).

There is ample research on educational change, but those that are related to successful change management are the most relevant to this study. The first finding in this area is that planning change is essential but there are unexpected impediments (Fullan, 1993, 1999; Kotter, 1996). According to Burden (1998:3), "change ... often occurs in unexpected ways in unforeseen directions such that our preconceived notions about almost anything can be confounded at a stroke". Second, the rationale for change needs to be communicated to facilitate acceptance and ensure implementation (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1998). Third, curriculum change challenges teachers' existing skills (Markee, 1997; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Therefore, introducing change does not necessarily imply that it will be implemented by those affected by it due to lack of commitment (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). To ensure commitment, involvement of teachers in the various stages of change is recommended (Becher & Maclure, 1978 & 1982). Last, contextual factors can either promote or inhibit change.

### **3.2.3 Curriculum: Definition and Synthesis of Research Findings**

Linguistically, curriculum is defined as: “the whole body of courses offered by an educational institution or one of its branches”. It is also defined as: “all planned school activities including besides course of study organized play, athletics, dramatics, clubs, and have-room program.” (Webster, 1993:557). However, if there is a controversial concept which has evoked a multitude of meanings and lead some writers to avoid defining it at all, then it is the term ‘curriculum’. In this section, I shall review the different standpoints taken in the literature when defining curriculum.

In an attempt to give a workable definition to the term ‘curriculum’, I shall refer to the list in Appendix IV-A, and show how many of the definitions are not comprehensive and how an amalgam of meanings could help draw a better picture of what is practically meant by the term. As the literature shows, the meaning of curriculum differs depending on the perspective from which it is viewed and the point of focus. For instance, teachers view ‘curriculum’ differently from educational policy makers. In the literature I reviewed, theorists define curriculum from four main perspectives (see Appendix IV-A).

Firstly, one perspective of curriculum is that of learning events which are experienced by students, as in Connelly and Clandinin (1988), Marlow and Minehira (1996), Hargreaves et al (1994), Rodgers (1994) and Reid (1975). This may include the actual life experiences of learners such as field trips, or simulated ones as in experiments and role-plays. From the perspective of the classroom, curriculum is also what students experience in situations through the interaction with materials that convey the learning objectives and teachers who

decide on the process of instruction. This view involves activities which constitute the learners' experiences.

Secondly, another view of curriculum is that of knowledge presented through experience. Thus according to Elliott's (1994) and Becher and Maclure's (1978) definitions of 'curriculum', teachers represent the world (or content) to learners through teacher-selected experiences. Curriculum as knowledge goes beyond what is prescribed or defined officially to include learning activities encountered by students, set by teachers or recommended by individual schools. While White (2001) does not state explicitly what view of curriculum he adopts, his use of the term 'curriculum experience' to talk about curriculum suggests that he adopts this view.

Thirdly, other theorists have a view of the curriculum as an intended plan or program of instruction. While Galton (1998) observes that this view of curriculum is limited to early literature, I still find it present in recent literature (e.g. Dubin & Olshtain, 2000). In my view, this standpoint is simplistic and narrow in scope as it neglects essential aspects of curriculum. Specifically, it does not take into consideration the process of actualising the plan or the actual experiences that learners encounter.

Fourthly, and from a wider perspective, curriculum is viewed as a process or a framework of processes. In this respect, the curriculum is seen as a decision-making process which includes decisions made with regard to setting goals and objectives, content areas to be taught, teaching methods, and evaluation of these processes. In this regard, according to Brown (1995), the curriculum is a *process* rather than an inflexible *product*. It can change and adapt to new conditions. Based on his definition, 'curriculum' is synonymous with

'curriculum development'. Accordingly, several phases of the process can be identified in his list of curriculum elements: (1) needs assessment, (2) goals and objectives, (3) testing, (4) materials, (5) teaching, and (6) program evaluation. A wider, yet a similar view of the curriculum is seeing curriculum as a network of interacting processes, people and objects (Richards, 2003).

While the view of curriculum as a process is more comprehensive than the previous views, there is no single definition in the literature which is inclusive of all views. For this reason, I see that it is not wrong to view the curriculum as experience, for instance, since it is one meaning among many. Also while the view of curriculum as knowledge is limited and suggests that curriculum is a product, still, the literature reports that teachers' view of curriculum is often that of teaching materials. In this case, curriculum does not leave space for teachers to focus on areas based on their observations of students' needs, which is a point to be taken into consideration (Breen, 2001 & 2002). Further, the view of curriculum as a plan involves several subjects taught in the overall curriculum. However, to talk about curriculum as a process, means to add life to an unidentified entity. Still, in each view, something is lacking as we need to consider a holistic view of the curriculum.

Therefore, my working definition in this study is a collage of the listed definitions. Curriculum, for me, is a network of interconnected, interdependent, continuing processes which result in knowledge to be experienced by learners through materials presented by teachers in the form of activities. The curriculum processes include: needs analysis, setting goals and defining objectives, preparing materials, training and supporting teachers, teaching approaches and techniques, and assessment of learning and evaluation of all the above. Curriculum also includes modification of materials according to the feedback from

evaluation. These processes are often referred to as elements of the curriculum (Brown, 1995; Print, 1993), or steps in curriculum development or syllabus design (Kerr, 1970; Richards, 2003; Dubin & Olshtain, 2000).

The literature also describes the difference between the terms ‘curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’ which are often confused. ‘Syllabus’ itself has two meanings, one as a list of content areas and one as a method of organising material. On the one hand, according to Richards (2003:2), a ‘syllabus’ is “a specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested”. Similarly, Print (1993:xxi) defines ‘syllabus’ as “a list of content areas which are to be taught and assessed. Sometimes objectives and learning activities are included. A syllabus is subsumed within a curriculum”. On the other hand, Brown (1995:5) defines syllabuses as “ways of organizing the course and materials”. As well, Breen (1987:82) also defines syllabus as:

“a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning. Such a plan, most typically, maps out that body of knowledge and those capabilities which are regarded as worthwhile outcomes from the work of teachers and learners in a particular situation for which the syllabus was designed”.

In the same vein, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) give a contrasting view of ‘curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’ whereby a ‘curriculum’ states general goals and guiding principles, and a ‘syllabus’ is seen as: “a more particularised document that addresses a specific audience of learners and teachers, a particular course of study or a particular series of textbooks” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000:185). In the context of this study, I shall take the first view of syllabus that considers it as a part of the curriculum which constitutes a list of content areas specified in a textbook to be used for assessment. To borrow Rogers’s definition, the language syllabus is “the selection and organisation of linguistic content to be taught” (Rogers, 1994:28).

For the purpose of this study, there is a need to clarify what an 'EL curriculum' is. Since 'curriculum change' and 'curriculum development' are interconnected terms, I shall also explain briefly the process of curriculum development from a foreign language perspective. Finally, I shall consider the role of EL teachers in the curriculum and in the EL curriculum development process.

### **3.2.3.1 The EL Curriculum**

The language curriculum evolved from the discipline of applied linguistics and is partially based on it (Johnson, 1994). Most theorists refer to the language curriculum as a 'programme' or 'course' (e.g. Berwick, 1994; Brindley, 1994; Brown, 1995; Burden, 1998; Dubin & Olshtain, 2000; Graves, 2003; Johnson, 1994; Rodgers, 1994). As Johnson (1994) concedes, the language curriculum has passed through three major phases. The first one has focussed on methods of language teaching. The second one included aspects like needs assessment, syllabus and materials design, and the roles allocated to teachers and learners in the classroom. The current phase, which had started in the 1980s, views the curriculum as a process of decision-making which goes in five interactive stages: (1) planning; (2) specification of goals; (3) implementation of the programme; (4) classroom implementation; and (5) evaluation. Moreover, in consideration of recent literature (e.g. Breen, 2001; Breen & Littlejohn, 2000; Graves, 2003; Holliday, 1997, Kumaravadivelu, 2003a, 2003b & 2003c) a fourth phase can be identified in which the focus is on adapting language methodology to local contexts and on activating the role of learners in language learning.

The EL curriculum is basically a decision-making process because decisions have to be made at every phase of the process which makes each phase a process by itself. Thus decisions should be made with regard to the specifying of language needs, selecting syllabus design, selecting teaching materials, the teaching approach and the nature of the teacher and learner roles.

### **3.2.3.2 The Components of the EL Curriculum Development Process**

‘Curriculum change’ and ‘curriculum development’ appear to be reciprocal and interconnected processes. From one perspective, ‘curriculum change’ is a comprehensive term as it includes development, implementation and evaluation (Ganguly, 2001). From another perspective, ‘curriculum development’ is an intentional attempt to effect curriculum change (Markee, 1997). This section gives an outline of the components of the curriculum development process from an EL perspective (see Appendix IV-B for an extensive critical account of the processes). The framework which I describe here is an amalgamation of several frameworks described in the literature (e.g Bailey, 2000; Benesch, 1996; Coombe, 2005a & 2005b; Coombe & Hubley, 2005; Cronbach, 1985; Dalton, 1988; Duke, 1995; Isaac, 1983; Romero, 1998).

Curriculum development is the systematic building up of curriculum. Whether starting up a new programme or renewing a current one, an initial, and a continuous, inquiry into the learning needs is the start of curriculum development. The results are utilised when setting the aims, goals and objectives of the curriculum (e.g. Brown, 1995; Dubin & Olshtain, 2000; Richards, 2003). Simultaneously, the specification of how the achievement of the outcomes of learning will be assessed (e.g. Brown, 1995; Graves, 2003) is considered.

These processes are followed with a decision-making process of course planning and syllabus design, which is followed by materials writing or materials selection (e.g. Print, 1993). Then comes the process of teaching which is connected with the processes of teacher training and curricular support (Richards, 2003). Finally, there is the process of evaluation which takes place at all levels of the process as each of the processes is evaluated and feedback is incorporated into the process in the form of improving aspects of the process (e.g. Graves, 2003). Thus we have assessment of the learning outcomes, and evaluation of materials and of teaching. While this framework may seem to be linear as it is listed following certain steps, it is actually cyclical in nature as the processes are interrelated and interwoven in an endless process (Breen, 2001). For a broad sketch of essential stages in the process of curriculum change see Appendix IV-B.

### **3.2.3.3 Teachers' Roles in Curriculum Development: Issues of Voice versus Power**

The centrality of the teachers' voice in the curriculum is an issue which is called for in the literature (e.g. Berstein, 1974; Elliott, 1994; Finch, 1981; Lieberman, 1997; Markee, 1997; Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1998). According to Elliott (1994), curriculum development is a process in which teachers are the central agents in the sense that they keep experimenting with their students to develop the curriculum. Similarly, Rea-Dickens and Germaine (1998) argue for the importance of involving teachers in curriculum development. They advocate that teachers are the experts on how the curriculum works in the classroom and should play a vital role as evaluators of the curriculum. The more the teachers are involved the more effective the curriculum (also Finch, 1981). Similarly, Lieberman (1997) highlights the benefits of involving teachers in administrative decisions as a means of promoting more active involvement in curriculum change.

The degree of involvement of teachers in curriculum change has changed over the years as teachers have become more actively engaged in the process (Finch, 1981). Bernstein (1974:206) explains that teachers have varying degrees of control over “the selection, organization, and pacing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship” with their students. However, Webb (2002) argues that teachers should be autonomous in deciding to make alterations to mandated curricula as well as forms of assessment. Teachers are aware of their students’ needs and therefore should exercise the power to adapt the curriculum to them (also Holly, 1973).

Teachers should be consulted starting from analysis of needs to defining goals and objectives, selecting materials and so on (Hadley, 1999). This facilitates implementation of change and eliminates resistance (Brown, 1995; Lieberman, 1997). Involving teachers also ensures that the intended curriculum is the taught curriculum (Finch, 1981). Several researchers, however, report the tendency of policy makers to impose change on teachers rather than involving them (Barrow, 1984; Gibbs et al, 1999; Hadley, 1999; Holt, 1986; Richards, 2003).

Young (1979) explains that teachers’ involvement in curriculum decision making is feasible at the school level but difficult at the district level when considering the teachers’ daily obligations. The school culture itself in relation to the wider context of educational institutions as well as the perceived lower position in the educational hierarchy compared to administrators make teachers detached from other educators. Moreover, teachers tend to be alienated from their peers within the school due to their classroom orientation. When sharing is missing, curriculum decision-making at the district level is logically ruled out.

Overall, the organisation shapes the teachers' perceptions of their professional duties (Young, 1979). Therefore, Richards (2003) raises a broader issue of whether teachers are considered professionals or simply treated as employees. This is also echoed in this quote: "the basic predicament of teachers is that they are treated as passive consumers within their own organizational structure. They are acted upon rather than acting." (House, 1974, in Young, 1979:117-118).

Barrow (1984) asserts that most plans for curriculum change are poor and tend to be authoritative taking a top-down approach. He advocates a model for dissemination of the curriculum based on teacher involvement which starts from schools moving upwards. Holt, (1986), on the other hand, asserts that teachers are not trained to think of themselves as part of the curriculum. They only need to be encouraged to get involved for them to take up their role as change agents.

Basically, EL teachers have specific roles in the EL curriculum that are dictated by the language teaching methodology adopted. Since this is a study which focusses on teachers' perceptions of curriculum *change* and their role in the curriculum *development* processes rather than in the curriculum per se, I shall not discuss it here. However, for the readers' convenience, I included this in appendix IV-C which is based on literature in this area (e.g. Breen, 2001; Chamot, 2001; Dubin & Olshtain, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 2003a).

### **3.3 STUDIES ON CURRICULUM CHANGE**

In this section, I shall present a review of selected studies that I found close to my topic of research. It is divided into three parts. There is a review of international published research

in the first part and of studies from Arabic-speaking contexts and the UAE in the second. The third part rounds up the discussion with a critical account of the methods of investigation used in the reviewed empirical works.

### **3.3.1 International Studies on Curriculum**

International published research covers a wide range of studies which are relevant to this study albeit from various perspectives of handling the topic. They are grouped here according to the themes they cover. Hence there are studies of EL teachers' perceptions of curriculum change; EL teachers' roles in curriculum development and Teachers' perceptions of curriculum change. I shall summarise each one of them and present the most important findings.

#### **3.3.1.1 EL Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Change**

McGrail (2005) explored English language arts teachers' perceptions of introducing technology in the classroom in Atlanta, USA, using a qualitative methodology. Adopting a similar approach to my study, the researcher used a collective case study in which recorded interviews, with open-ended questions, were conducted with teachers, transcribed and analysed inductively. According to McGrail's findings, the psychological effects of change were apparent in the participants' perceptions of themselves. Teachers felt unqualified and expressed their need for on-going training and support on the required skills. They were obliged to use the new technology in their instruction without having the power of choice, which highlights the issue of powerlessness during top-down curriculum change. Another major finding is that the teachers perceived that their most important responsibility was to

make the students master the curriculum material. Understanding the rationale for change, according to McGrail, facilitates adaptation as teachers seem to be cooperative when the reasons underpinning change are known to them.

Burns (1995) reveals similar findings with regard to the psychological effects of change. She emphasises the challenging nature of change in requiring teachers to replace their developed practices with ones they are not familiar with, thus affecting teacher identity. In her study, however, these challenges had been eliminated by the fact that teachers were “being given an explicit basis for course planning, teaching and assessing” (Burns, 1995:6). The findings are derived from a collaborative action research study which was carried out by 30 EL teachers in Australia. Its main focus was the change in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program. Other findings are related to teachers’ classroom concerns with regard to the content, teaching techniques and time constraints as well as their perceptions of a mismatch between their beliefs and their practice. The study implies the need for a long-term process of curriculum development which includes teachers’ participation in all processes of preparing, planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum.

A note on Burns’s methodology needs clarification here. I agree with her that action research is a valuable tool both for evaluating and developing the curriculum. However, I think that the claimed approach used for investigating the topic does not reflect actually what was done and should be referred to as ‘collaborative research’ rather than ‘collaborative *action* research’ while the curriculum change was in action. I base this inference on two grounds. First, Burns uses two different titles to refer to *teachers* on the one hand, and *participating teacher-researchers* on the other hand, suggesting that teachers

were used as research ‘participants’ who kept documented data needed for the research and suggested solutions to problems from their perspective. This is clear in her declaration that the purpose of the research was to “investigate the impact of the curriculum initiatives on teachers’ course design and classroom practices” (Burns, 1995:6). The term ‘assessing’ implies ‘discovering’ issues which support or impede classroom practice and course design rather than ‘introducing’ any form of ‘intervention’, which is the basis of action research. Thus curriculum change was already taking place and the investigation was an ‘evaluation’ of the stages of change rather than an ‘intervention’ in the change and an evaluation of that intervention. This argument will be pursued in (3.3.3).

A similar evaluative study, albeit from a different perspective, is a case study by Karavas-Doukas (1998). It investigates factors which impede the implementation of the English language secondary school curriculum innovation in Greece. One of the factors was the fact that change to the Communicative Approach had not affected the participants’ beliefs. Unlike Burns’ (1995) study, this included classroom observations which were taped and analysed with regard to teacher behaviour. For investigating the factors that affect implementation, Karavas-Doukas used a Likert-type attitude scale, a questionnaire and interviews. This was done over a three-month period on the fourth year of the implementation.

Another approach was adopted in a multi-site case study by Roelofs and Terwel (1999) in researching a similar topic. The purpose of the investigation was to evaluate the extent to which teachers in the Netherlands abided by a change in recommended EL pedagogy. The study revealed a mismatch between teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the pedagogy used. The researchers found that the new constructivist pedagogy for English was not

widely adopted since the innovation demanded major changes in teachers' roles, and certain work conditions, such as restructuring of reschedules, which were not catered for. This is similar to the findings of Karavas-Doukas (1998) that teachers did not abide by the change in teaching techniques and that they used their old ways of teaching in delivering the new activities that required communicative teaching techniques.

### **3.3.1.2 EL Teachers' Roles in Curriculum Development**

Context, voice, professional development and changing perceptions are basic issues in curriculum development according to the studies reviewed in this section (Beattie and Thiessen, 1997; Elliott et al, 1999; Gibbs, 1998; Ling, 2002; Nunan, 1988; Sharkey, 2004). The first study that reflects these findings is Sharkey (2004). It is a qualitative study that describes the process of curriculum development in Millville, USA, in which EL teachers were involved. It reports the first year of a 3-year-study in which EL teachers worked on defining and planning the curriculum project. The researcher, as a facilitator for the teachers, took the role of a participant observer. The data collection methods consisted of field notes, descriptions of meetings, transcriptions of two curriculum workshops, questionnaires and interviews.

The findings revealed that teachers' knowledge of context was helpful in the curriculum development process; as it enabled them to handle issues of defining needs and dealing with political factors which had been affecting the work of teachers. Sharkey reports the tension that teachers felt while working within the context and against it, and how the context shaped their work. She concedes that if curriculum consultants are not familiar with the context or do not acknowledge its impact on teachers' work, their contributions are

useless. The context, in her view, includes not only the classroom and the school but also political decisions and laws. Further, the participants in her study were critical of the political factors which impacted on their work in the curriculum project, which she interpreted as a sign of professional voice struggling and negotiating standpoints. The teachers in the study also critiqued the fact that they were excluded from chances of professional development which were government-funded. The findings indicate that the notion of power- that they had a say in the matter- affected the teachers' work.

The same notion with regard to teachers' voice in the curriculum is reflected in Beattie and Thiessen (1997) who found that collaborative curriculum planning and design, and engaging teachers in reflective discussions help in implementing change and improving teaching practices. Theirs had been a case study of a secondary school in Toronto, in Canada, that had been participating in government-funded innovative projects. The school was taken as a model of a secondary school which had been attempting to create a link between structural and curricular change. The researchers have documented the curriculum which was planned by three teachers and three students. The purpose of the study was to understand change as it was experienced by teachers and students during a restructuring process in which curricula were developed. The researchers conducted individual and group interviews with teachers and students. They also observed classrooms and conducted document reviews. Based on their data, they concede that the planned curriculum from the point of view of the teachers was different from that which was experienced by their students.

Similarly, Nunan (1988) reports a study of teachers as curriculum developers within the Australian Adult Migration Education. This national study was set to investigate the

transfer from a centralised curriculum to a learner-centred one. It discusses the type of problems encountered by teachers as their role changes and aims to find solutions to the problems, and identify the personnel who should be included in eliminating problems in the curriculum.

As the findings reveal, teachers identified effective teacher development as a major factor contributing to curriculum development. The study concludes with the general finding that lack of curricular support was found to be one of the obstacles in dealing with curriculum change.

Training, according to Nunan (1988) is essential during curriculum change. However, as Gibbs's (1998) research findings reveal, it has to be relevant to the context. Gibbs found a mismatch between the content of training and the actual skills needed in the classroom that lead to teachers' inability to carry out the implementation of the curriculum in the way intended. The descriptive case study that Gibbs (1998) reports investigated the development of the English Curriculum in New South Wales, Australia. While there is nothing said about how the data were collected, document reviews and reflections of the researcher being an insider might have been the basis for data collection. The change, according to Gibbs, was not planned appropriately and failed to abide by recommendations for successful curriculum change implementation which resulted in various drawbacks. For instance, teachers have been excluded from the planning stage of curriculum development.

Like the case in Gibbs's study, Elliott et al (1999) report low-level teacher participation in curriculum change that hindered implementation. The degree of involvement was related to how encouraging the atmosphere was in the schools. This empirical large-scale quantitative

study was about teacher participation in curriculum leadership in Queensland, Australia, in which they used mailed questionnaires to collect the data. Overall, the findings reflected low levels of teacher engagement in curriculum leadership as compared to administrators' involvement. The researchers also found that teachers believed that there were certain aspects of the school context which hindered their engagement in curriculum leadership. The factors were related to the availability of resources for curriculum support, networking facilities, and administrative encouragement of teachers to engage in curriculum-related initiatives. A very important finding is related to teachers' negative perceptions of themselves that the study failed to pursue, due to the limitations of the selected methodology (see 3.3.3).

The change in perceptions of teachers during curriculum change is reflected in a qualitative longitudinal study on teachers' responses to curriculum reform in Hong Kong in Ling (2002). The study was carried out over a five-year period, and included observing two teachers. Ling explains that there were four phases to the development in teachers' perceptions. The first phase was marked by the teachers' negative response to change, as they did not recognise the need for the new curriculum and they expressed fear of change. The other phases included change in management structure. As a consequence, in the second phase, the teachers perceived that they had gained experience on how to deal with the curriculum due to the supportive management and the collaborative culture within the school.

The study shows that teachers' perceptions of curriculum do change over time due to professional development. A detailed analysis of the change which occurred in perceptions of two veteran teachers is given, highlighting how they experienced change differently.

While one teacher was encouraged to experiment with the new methodology in the curriculum by reflecting on her action, another was encouraged to do the same through her involvement in committee work and administration.

### **3.3.1.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Change**

Studies in other disciplines that investigated teachers' perceptions of curriculum change also reverberate issues of power and voice, recognise the mixed reactions to change that capture the feelings of uncertainty during change, and emphasise the importance of training. To begin with, Webb (2002) contends that teacher power is based on "professional expertise, action research, and pre-service teacher education...professional organisations (which) are major sources for teacher power" (Webb, 2002:58). Webb contends that conducting teacher education at both pre-service and in-service levels empowers teachers to express their voice. He also interprets participants' adjustments of curricular and assessment directives as exercising power. The interpretive case study reported is of an elementary school in Washington, in the USA. It explored teachers' autonomy related to their instructional beliefs during curricular change. Data collection was carried out over almost three years. There were six participants in the study, five teachers and a school principal. The sample constituted various teaching levels and varied ranges of experience. Data collection methods included participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

Jacob and Frid (1997), on the other hand, report research findings on secondary school teachers' and graduate students' perceptions of curriculum change in mathematics in Australia, and the impact that curriculum change had on teaching and learning. The researchers also found that teachers had mixed reactions to change. They also report that

teachers were critical of the fact that their voice was not respected which resulted in the inability of the change in curriculum to reflect students' needs. Such findings with regard to teacher voice are also echoed in Allfrey (1990) who reports four interpretive case studies of change promoted in schools and colleges in the UK. The case studies addressed different aspects of the teachers' work: "the adaptation of an existing curriculum, the introduction of a new one, the deployment of new technologies and approaches and the incorporation into practice of the broad concept of quality of opportunity" (Allfrey, 1990:135). Her findings reveal that models of change are far more idealistic compared to the actual experience of change that teachers encounter. She highlights the hierarchical authoritative relationship which teachers perceive in their relationship with their schools, and calls for teacher involvement in curriculum planning. Methods used for collecting the data were documents that had been prepared by teachers and in-depth interviews.

### **3.3.2 Studies on Curriculum in Arab Countries and the UAE**

Unlike the direct relevance of the reviewed international studies to my investigation, studies in this section are partly relevant in terms of focus but reflective of characteristics of the local context. There are also no comprehensive local studies that took the same perspectives of the current study, neither in the Arab World nor locally, with the exception of Loughrey et al (1999), that aimed at evaluating the EL curriculum in the UAE. In this section, I review four studies from selected Arab countries: Bahrain, Oman, Egypt and Jordan. I also review studies from the UAE that have the most relevance to my study.

### **3.3.2.1 Curriculum in Arab States**

With regard to teacher training and evaluation Abbas (2005) found that a few teachers are sent for training programmes as a result of the annual appraisal (also Alwan, 2000). Likewise, the general attitude towards appraisal is unfavourable among teachers (also Al-Nayadi, 1989). This quantitative study of the system of performance appraisal of EL teachers in Bahrain aimed at investigating whether the results of the teacher appraisal system were used to determine training needs for teachers in public schools. To collect the data, the researcher used questionnaires with teachers and senior teachers and semi-structured interviews with school principals, curriculum specialists and subject advisors. The analysis was descriptive and inferential.

Similarly, findings of Harrison's (2000) in Oman resonate with local findings in the UAE with regard to teacher practices which had not been affected by change in the teaching materials (Loughrey et al, 1999). This study explored change in student attainment as a result of curriculum change. However, one of its drawbacks is that it diverts from primary data sources. For instance, while the study's purpose is to explore the development of the pupils' oral skills in all types of data, rather than seeking data from teachers or students, the researcher derived his data from supervisors, documents and videoed lessons that he had not participated in their preparation. Basically, the study does not appear to be an evaluation of the implemented curriculum, as it claims to be; rather it is an attempt to focus on one aspect of the curriculum without first describing an overall picture of the change effected.

The findings of Gahin and Myhill (2001) in Egypt also echo within the UAE context. This study on Egyptian EL teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the Communicative Approach in language teaching employed the collection of quantitative data using an attitude scale questionnaire with a priori categories, and of qualitative data using interviews. The researchers point out that more attention was paid to the development of materials rather than to the training of teachers on how to adopt them (also Ghareeb, 1996).

Likewise, Amro's (2001) findings in Jordan mirror local findings that teachers use traditional teaching techniques, teach to the test and use Arabic most of the time to ensure that students understand the content that was to be tested (Loughrey et al, 1999). The study investigated the contextual factors which influence EL teachers' choice of instructional techniques. The researcher used a questionnaire with 27 EL teachers in four secondary school teachers in Jordan.

### **3.3.2.2 Curriculum in the UAE**

To the best of my knowledge there are no studies on curriculum change in the UAE. However there is research related to single aspects of the curriculum. This section is divided into four parts according to the focus of the studies reviewed. The first part reviews two studies on curriculum evaluation and the role of teachers in curriculum change (Loughrey et al, 1999; Alwan, 2003b). The second part deals with studies that investigate teacher training (Alwan, 2000 & 2001; Azzari & Mansour, 1998; Badri, 1991; Ghareeb, 1996), and teacher evaluation (Al-Nayadi, 1989; Alwan, 2003a), as elements of the curriculum. The third part reviews studies around teaching methodology in the UAE (Alwan, 1995 & Gardner, 1995). The final part discusses a study conducted at the tertiary

level to investigate learner needs (the UAE Institute of Nursing in 2001- the Nursing Institute Study henceforth).

### **A. Curriculum Evaluation and Roles of Teachers in Curriculum Change in the UAE**

Loughrey et al (1999) conducted a collaborative large-scale evaluative study of the EL curriculum in the UAE. It was based on questionnaires and group interviews with teachers, materials reviews as well as quantitative measurement of students' achievement against a range of external criteria. In addition, a needs analysis investigation was carried out in which prospective employers were interviewed to find out the language needs for joining the various employers and higher education institutions.

The major findings in the areas related to this study are those on teachers' roles and their position in the curriculum which reveal that teachers were not involved in curriculum decisions as their views had not been incorporated into the development of the curriculum. For instance, the researchers attest that the surveyed teachers were not aware of the aims of the curriculum, and many of them were ignorant that a curriculum document existed. This indicates that the objectives of the curriculum were not communicated to teachers. Hence evidence of involving teachers in other curriculum processes other than teaching and testing is a point of controversy.

A study in which I piloted the topic of this dissertation revealed findings on teachers' roles in the curriculum. In Alwan (2003b) I investigated teachers' roles in the management of change when introducing innovations. The case study adopted an emergent research design, and part of it was on teachers' roles in curriculum change. It included repeated interviews

with a school principal on which an open-ended questionnaire to teachers was constructed. The findings can be summarised in that participant teachers' roles in the curriculum was found to be limited to teaching, and there was no follow-up or evaluation of curriculum from the managing authorities. Another important finding was the affective aspect of introducing innovations that change managers needed to consider. Change affected the participant teachers' morale to a far extent raising issues of restricted teacher voice. Teachers had not taken initiative due to preserving one's dignity as a teacher, as participants in the focus group interview concurred.

## **B. Teacher Training and Teacher Evaluation in the UAE**

In this section, I shall provide a synopsis of studies on two aspects of the curriculum which are teacher training and evaluation. The number of studies reviewed here indicates that the issues of teacher training and teacher evaluation have received extensive evaluation in the country. To begin with, in Alwan (2000 & 2001) I investigated the effectiveness of in-service training and general perceptions among educationists regarding the introduction of self-directed teacher development activities to EL teachers. The findings reveal that teacher training in the UAE is ineffective and unsystematic.

Likewise, Ghareeb (1996) found that evaluation of training was lacking and was illuminative in identifying teachers' training needs. The study investigated inservice provision in the UAE in an attempt to find out attitudes of teachers and trainers towards in-service teacher training of EL teachers. The same drawbacks in teacher training were echoed in a quantitative study by Azzari and Mansour (1998) which investigated

educational supervision in the UAE and was based on a case study of Sharjah Educational Zone.

In a quantitative study, Al-Nayadi (1989) reports findings on the perceptions of administrators and teachers concerning one aspect of the curriculum which has to do with the teacher evaluation system. The researcher used a questionnaire to survey a random sample of 60 administrators and 400 teachers from all educational zones in the UAE. A major finding is that the teacher evaluation system in the UAE had generated suspicion and mistrust in schools, and that the process used in evaluating teachers did not accurately measure the competence of the teacher. Another similar qualitative study was conducted by Badri (1991) who investigated EL secondary teachers' perceptions of supervisory practices in the UAE with regard to their contribution to professional growth. The sample included all 300 EL teachers in 60 selected schools in all educational zones, of which 175 teachers responded. The most significant findings that resulted from this study contradict the findings of Al-Nayadi's as most teachers held positive perceptions regarding the effect of supervision on improving instructional effectiveness.

A meaningful indicator that teacher evaluation continues to be a point of controversy in the UAE is that several attempts have been made to improve the practice. While there is a study of relevance to this topic (reported in Alwan 2004b & 2005), it is partially irrelevant to this study in terms of its orientation. Therefore, I shall only report the findings which are of relevance to this study in Chapter 5.

### **C. EL Teaching Methods in the UAE**

The local literature reveals that teachers have also been subjects of research from a different perspective: teaching techniques. In Alwan (1995) I investigated the teaching techniques used by EL teachers in several schools including both genders. While my position as an administrator, who was responsible for performance evaluation, might have affected the findings, the findings connote otherwise since participants were not reserved about their actual practice due to anonymity. The majority of the teachers admitted that they did not use basic communicative techniques, which was the methodology adopted by the EL curriculum at the time.

The same finding is asserted by Gardner (1995) whose study is a descriptive case study of the teaching force in the UAE, which used, beside interviews, official documents as well as press releases and commentaries in daily papers. While the use of daily papers as data sources reduces the credibility of his study, I agree with him that the press can be considered the major official outlet for documents or announcements of policies in the UAE, in a culture where published research is relatively scarce (Shaw et al, 1995). The study revealed that the UAE depends mainly on teachers from other Arab countries who are inclined towards using traditional ways of teaching and that provision of training is limited.

### **D. Studies on Learner Needs in the UAE**

Another stream taken by the local literature is the investigation of student needs. At the public education level, the study of Loughrey et al (1999), which was reviewed earlier, included evaluation of learner needs (see 3.3.2.2 - A). In addition, a project was carried out

to define the EL curriculum objectives in which teachers and supervisors were required to consider a priori list of objectives based on the findings of Loughrey et al (Development of the English Language Curriculum, 2000). The study had not been documented and the mentioned details here on the method used are based on my personal knowledge as I participated in this study (see 1.1.1). The findings of both studies confirm the findings of the Nursing Institute Study (2001) which was conducted at the tertiary level. In this study, the researchers used six questionnaires, discussion groups and analysed samples of students' work as methods of data collection. Different questionnaires were given to EL teachers, nursing tutors, students, doctors, head nurses and practising nurses who had been on the programme. Clearly, the findings of this study indicate that speaking was the greatest weakness among learners. The researchers attributed this partly to lack of practice in public school, since traditional methods were used by public school teachers to teach English. There were also notable weaknesses in the use of the language as students reported making a lot of mistakes in English since the majority of the students considered themselves weak at using English for communication. Other areas of weakness include spelling and incorrect use of vocabulary.

#### **E. Teachers' Work Conditions in the UAE**

Altraifi (1999) investigated teachers' perceptions of their work conditions. She found that teachers use their own funds to spend on curriculum requirements of supplementing the teaching materials. She also found that the school libraries lacked useful resources and were under-equipped. Further, she refers to the intensity of the curriculum materials that were in mismatch with the time allotted to teaching. A point of weakness in the study is the quantitative approach that the researcher took to investigate the psychological construct of

teachers' perceptions, and that she used questionnaires with a priori list of perceptions which led to restricting the respondents' choice. This leads to the issue discussed in the proceeding section which is the choice of methodology for investigating teacher perceptions and curriculum change.

### **3.3.3 Reflections on the Methods Used for Researching Teachers' Perceptions and Curriculum Change**

It is essential, when researching curriculum change, or teacher perceptions, to ensure that the research methodology adopted is suitable for the purpose of the study as wrong choices contribute to insufficient understanding of the phenomenon and undependable inferences (Maxwell, 1996; Mykut & Morehouse, 2001). With reference to the methodologies adopted in the above studies, I would like to point out that I have avoided certain pitfalls. First, some studies above seem to have unsuccessful choice of methodology or data collection instruments. Second, some researchers have adopted techniques which are incompatible with their philosophical standpoints. And third, some studies advocate sound methodology but I will explain why they do not fit the current purpose of my study.

In the first place, as theorists assert, the investigation of teachers' perceptions, or curriculum change, requires a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one (e.g. Gatbonton, 1999; Golombek, 1994 & 1988; Hedgcock, 2002; Janesick, 1994; Johnson, 1999). Some of the researchers above were successful in selecting the methodology which is most appropriate for their research (e.g. Alwan, 2003b; Allfrey, 1990; Beattie & Thiessen, 1997; Burns, 1995; Gibbs, 1998; Ling, 2002; McGrail, 2005; Webb, 2002).

Conversely, some researchers took a quantitative orientation in researching these topics (e.g. Al-Nayadi, 1989; Altrifi, 1999; Badri, 1991; Elliott et al, 1999; Gahin & Myhill, 2001). From another point of view, in some studies, the quantitative methodology might have benefited from a qualitative element in data collection and analysis (as in Jacob & Frid, 1997; Karavas-Doukas, 1998; Nunan, 1988; Roelofs & Terwel, 1999) such as Al-Nayadi (1989) and Badri (1991). Both researchers used a priori statements expressing potential teacher attitudes in their questionnaire. The limitation of such an approach is that the respondents might have had other perceptions that the data collection instruments failed to capture. Similarly, Elliott et al (1999) reached findings that their methodology failed to pursue later on, as their sole dependence on questionnaires prevented this.

Another issue is the perspective of the researcher's role in the research as an insider or an outsider, and his or her informants' relationship to the population of the study. Insider-research achieves more transparency in data collection and reaches better inferences (e.g. Maxwell, 1996; Radnor, 2002). This criterion appears to be a limitation in some studies (e.g. Azzari & Mansour, 1998; Harrison, 2000 and probably Nunan, 1988). As for Nunan (1988), while the researchers have successfully employed multiple methods for data collection, the description of the methodology does not show what part the researchers played: outsiders or insiders. Further, the period of actual involvement in the research plays a vital part in promoting the trustworthiness of the research. For instance, Webb (2002) conducted only twelve interviews over three years which implies limited involvement with the research participants. In addition, nothing was said about validating the findings through member-checking, which also requires involvement with the participants, or other means of validation as is the tradition in qualitative research. Since researching teacher perceptions requires direct involvement with teachers rather than asking outsiders about

teachers, only teachers should be consulted, contrary to what some researchers attempted to do. This limitation can be found in Harrison (2000) and Nunan (1988) who used indirect data sources, such as administrators, supervisors and non-teacher-generated documents, to collect information about teachers.

Another drawback in the methodology in some of the studies above is that some researchers spoke with authority and generalised from qualitative case studies (e.g. Gardner, 1995; Ling, 2002), or insufficient qualitative observation (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1998; Sharkey, 2004), which is not accepted in the qualitative research tradition. For instance, Ling (2002) recommends that teachers experience different school cultures to improve their performance. This generalisation was based on the finding that one of her participants achieved professional development as a result of taking an administrative post in a different school. A similar drawback is that some researchers generalised from unreliable quantitative data due to sampling errors which refute the claims of representativeness required for generalisation (e.g. Amro, 2001; Abbas, 2005; Al-Nayadi, 1989; Alwan, 1995, 2000 & 2001; Azzari & Mansour, 1998; Badri, 1991; Elliott et al, 1999; Ghareeb, 1996; Loughrey et al, 1999).

Second, some researchers stated a certain conceptual framework but diverted from it. For instance Jacob and Frid (1997) analysed data quantitatively in their supposedly interpretive research. Similarly, Gahin and Myhill (2001) claimed that they adopted an interpretive-constructivist conceptual framework but included quantitative analysis of data. In both cases, the approaches are not in accordance with the constructivist ontology (see 3.1).

Finally, Burns (1995) commends collaborative action research for curriculum development and curriculum change evaluation for its role in making the developed curriculum responsive to classroom needs. Although there is a misrepresentation of her work since it is a collaborative research rather than a collaborative *action* research, still, I agree with her assumptions about action research. She considers action research “a powerful means of understanding the nature of curriculum change as well as supporting its implementation” (Burns, 1995:15). In addition, she recommends it for curriculum evaluation. However, while action research stems from a social constructivist epistemology, I think it is suitable for *developing* and *evaluating* the curriculum. I have not considered action research in this study as its epistemological springboards are not in accordance with mine (see 3.1). When researching teachers’ perceptions, action research is not an option since it implies intervention (see also 4.2).

The present chapter has provided explanations of the basic concepts of this study. The next chapter details the methodology adopted, revisits its philosophical underpinnings and explains how data were collected and analysed. The description of an audit trail is also supported by providing evidence on how the study should be considered trustworthy.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is a detailed description of the research methodology adopted. It explains the research design that was selected in consideration of the research questions and the sample. Then it proceeds to give a detailed report of the methods of data collection and data analysis. In an attempt to provide clear details, I shall be citing evidence of trustworthiness of this study. I shall also talk about the ethical considerations that I observed when carrying out this inquiry as well as the limitations of the study.

#### **4.1 Research Design**

Research questions that address curriculum and innovation are suited to qualitative inquiry (Janesick, 1994). Therefore, a suitable approach to investigate teachers' perceptions of curriculum change, according to the literature, is an explorative one (e.g. Gattbonton, 1999; Golombek, 1994; Hedgcock, 2002; Johnson, 1999). Looking back at the research questions, one can see clearly that the issues to be investigated require the selected approach (see 1.3).

I planned to use an emergent research design to be able to reach an understanding of teachers' perceptions of curriculum change by collecting sufficient data about the situation under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An emergent research design is one which enables researchers to adjust their research plans in accordance with their learning as their studies unfold (Robson, 2002; Schwandt, 2001). At the beginning, I had in mind individual interviews as a sole data source. I believe that interviews provide an outlet for teachers to reflect on their action -or in many cases lack of action in the case of earlier curriculum change that has often gone unnoticed by them. Reflection on action is the best way to understand teachers' perceptions (Gatbonton, 1999; Golombek, 1998; Hedgcock, 2002; Johnson, 1999). Later on, as the study unfolded, I included informal member-checking throughout the investigation and formal member-checking as part of the design. In addition, I reviewed my research questions as the tradition of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As Holliday (2001:8) asserts, "the rigour in qualitative research is in the principled development of strategy to suit the scenario being studied".

As I carried out data collection and analysis of data simultaneously, I was able to make decisions with regard to the design of the study. Simultaneous data collection and analysis is recommended in this type of research (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Holliday, 2001; Maxwell, 1996; Silverman, 2001). Inductive data analysis revealed themes that had to be pursued further. Accordingly, throughout the inquiry, I had to revise the research questions and conduct additional interviews when the participants focussed on issues raised in the analysis or those which were closely related to the topic of the study that I had not thought of before.

## **4.2 Theoretical Rationale for Choice of Current Research Method**

The choice of methodology is guided by the philosophical stance of the researcher (Crotty, 1998; Shulman, 1988). As argued earlier, interpretive researchers see knowledge as personal, and therefore encourage the involvement of the researcher with the research participants to capture the uniqueness of the context without attempting to change it (see 2.1). I opted for interpretive research as it suits my purpose for learning about curriculum change in the UAE more than any other method.

Burns (1999:13) advocates using collaborative action research for curriculum development. She declares that: “Collaborative action research processes strengthen the opportunities for the results of research on practice to be fed back into educational systems in a more substantial and critical way”. At the first stage of the action research cycle, however, “the researcher treats the context as it occurs naturalistically and no attempt is made to control the variables operating in the context as these may be the very sources of unexpected or unforeseen interpretations” (Burns, 1999:22). Burns emphasises the importance of collecting ‘rich’ data and providing ‘thick’ descriptions, as in interpretive research.

Therefore, in the case of my research, from Burn’s (1999) perspective, I am working on the first phase of an action research project. While I do not intend to intervene at this stage, paradoxically, I may carry out another phase of research later in which intervention is expected to improve the contextual problematic factors related to curriculum change. As research, which is a form of developing human knowledge, is a cycle, intervention in future phases of the research process is not ruled out. Meanwhile, this interpretive research is expected to bring up issues which can be pursued further later whereby intervention is

possible. That is, research at a later stage of the cycle may require a different approach according to the purpose of the inquiry. At this point, however, my aim is to generate ideas and discover issues of importance in curriculum change in the UAE.

### **4.3 The Sample**

The research population of this study encompassed EL teachers in the UAE public secondary schools in the ten educational zones. On the other hand, the sample included female secondary school teachers of English in one educational zone who had previously taught the previous secondary school curriculum and who had been teaching the new one during the year when the data were collected. I aimed to focus on a case of one educational zone using multiple sites to be able to capture any differences that could enhance the description.

I selected the sample on two grounds, purposiveness and accessibility. Purposive sampling refers to deliberate selection of individuals for participation in a study (Silverman, 2001) to achieve variability in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and to the selection of cases on the basis of access (Burton, 1996). In the context studied, it was easy for me, as a female researcher, to access girls' schools and work with female teachers without restrictions. Unfortunately, it was not viable for me to access boys' schools, as I could not work with male teachers for contextual reservations. As Shaw (1994) contends, methodologies should be sensitive to culture. Therefore, it is acceptable to modify them to fit into the culture where the study takes place. In addition, the selected female schools had an advantage for me as I did not need time to establish rapport with the participants or the schools which already existed due to my previous involvement with the sample in all three sites selected.

In the past nine years, I had a previous experience with the selected schools, as I had supervised these teachers several times till two years before the study was conducted.

Sixteen out of eighteen teachers who fitted into the specified sample characteristics participated in the study. Two teachers (from two different schools) expressed their willingness to participate but due uncontrolled circumstances, they were not available for interviews. One teacher was hospitalised for the whole period of the study as she had a life threatening illness and had undergone a major operation; and the other one had to leave the school after giving her lesson to attend to an elderly parent throughout most of the initial period of data collection.

The consent of the teachers to participate was an implied consent as they did not sign an informed consent form. According to Berg (2001), the informant's permission to record an interview is an implied consent to participate in a study. This is also helpful in maintaining anonymity and therefore confidentiality of data sources.

The participants in this study had varying years of experience in teaching within the UAE and in their own countries. They come from 5 different nationalities: Egypt (n=5), Jordan (n=4), Palestine (n=3), 2 Syria (n=2), Tunisia (n=1) and the UAE (n=1). They had a varying range of years of teaching experience in the UAE, from 8 to 22 years. They had all taught the former curriculum; and at the time when this study was carried out, they had taught the new one at least for a few months. When quoting the participants, I shall be using pseudonyms like (T1), (T2), ...etc to refer to them.

#### **4.4 Gaining Access**

I went through the formalities of seeking consent for participation from the school principals directly rather than from higher authorities (see Appendix V). In my case, it was not necessary to go to the research department in the MoE to ask for permission to do the research as I was not using questionnaires. Only researchers using surveys in public schools need to obtain permission for public investigations (Alwan, 2000), otherwise, it was left for the discretion of individual schools.

Taking into consideration the purposes of the study stated earlier in Chapter 1, I consider myself a participant researcher from two standpoints: a materials' writer and a regional supervisor. During the course of the study, these two parts were advantageous too in terms of the participants' willingness to talk. I understood the limitations of the supervisors' job with respect to authority and its effect on research informants (see limitations below); but also it had its advantages as supervisors in the UAE function as a channel for conveying the teacher's opinions to the EL Curriculum Department (Ghareeb, 1996; Badri, 1991). A participant researcher has the advantage of being involved with the research participants and developing trust, which makes them cooperate with the researcher rather than conceal or fake information.

Initially, I had concerns that the teachers might feel obliged to participate because they were ex-colleagues, or may say what they thought I wanted them to say in the interviews, being a former supervisor and a co-author of two of the textbooks. To address these concerns, I conducted initial staff meetings to explain what the research was about (see Appendix VI) and to encourage them to speak for themselves. In piloting the interview

schedule, I was relieved as the teachers talked freely without reservations. I was not on the job during the time of the investigation and was able to exercise ‘technical detachment’ (Holliday, 2001:178), a strategy that enabled me to observe ‘reflexively’ from a close distance. In writing this report of how I conducted the study, I managed to employ what Holliday (2001:179) calls ‘cautious detachment’. I had the stance of a stranger who saw the familiar as strange (Holliday, 2001).

#### **4.5 Data Collection**

As Burton (1996) explains, methods of data collection in social sciences are governed by the selected sample and characteristics of the research participants. Similarly, Shaw (1994) contends that methods are *culture bound*. Additionally, as Shulman (1988) asserts, they are underpinned by the researcher’s commitments. As I argued earlier (see 3.1), intensive ‘involvement’ with the research participants when researching teacher perceptions is a decisive issue for the effectiveness of the interpretive inquiry since the researcher seeks to understand teachers from their own perspectives (Golombek, 1994; Johnson, 1999). In consideration of my prior work experience with the teachers, and the acceptable length of time that the data collection took (about six months), I see that I meet this criterion.

Overall, data collection in interpretive research is collected in its natural setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Holliday, 2001). Several theorists consider the interpretive researcher as the data collecting instrument, since the researcher’s personality and his or her interaction with the research participants shape the description of reality (e.g. Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Olesen, 1994; Shaw, 1994). To me, the researcher is the catalyst or the filter through which the findings are processed.

Qualitative researchers have to tolerate ambiguity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) and be willing to accept the demands that this type of research requires. For example, there is no limit to the amount of data to be collected since it is left to the discretion of the researcher who decides to stop collecting data when reaching a point of saturation (Radnor, 2002). According to Maykut and Morehouse (2001:62): “to fully understand the phenomenon of interest, ideally, we continue...to gather information until we reach the saturation point, when newly collected data is redundant with previously collected data”.

#### **4.5.1 Document Reviews**

To collect the data related to curriculum, it was inevitable to review curriculum documents and other curriculum related materials. The documents reviewed for this study were primary sources. These included the old and new curriculum documents; the circulars to schools and other curriculum related records (see Appendices I & III). Although I was familiar with the teaching materials, I studied them analytically to be able to handle any discussion with the participants (see Appendix II). The purpose of reviewing curriculum documents was to understand aspects of the context in depth. In a sense, however, I considered this as part of the literature review rather than a means to triangulate the data (see 4.8.3). When doing so, I have been observing Lincoln and Guba’s (1985:239) view in referring to these as non-human instruments and rejecting their use in grounded theory. Such documents are not grounded themselves, as they do not “reflect the constructions of the respondents, but only the instrument maker”.

As for triangulation, some theorists consider triangulation a violation of the constructivist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994- see argument in 4.8.3) I am with the interpretive researchers who appreciate the rich descriptions obtained through variety of sources which contribute to trustworthy conclusions and inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Nonetheless, with regard to using multiple data sources around teachers' perceptions, I was interested only in sources which were produced by the participants as those only might be informative about their perceptions. Yet despite reviewing curriculum materials that the research participants had produced, I cannot claim that they contributed much to the findings. For triangulation, I depended heavily on member-validation (see 4.8.3).

#### **4.5.2 Interviews**

I used interviews as the major data collection technique for carrying out the investigation. According to Radnor (1994:13), the interview "is an active encounter in which someone seeking information is supplied with it by another". It is a suitable data collection tool for understanding perceptions, as explained earlier (see 4.1). Interviews are least demanding on participants and teachers are normally willing to speak more than put their thoughts in writing (Best & Khan, 1989). They are effective in gaining acceptance to participate, obtaining co-operation of respondents (Burton, 1996), and encouraging people to disclose confidential information (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Basically, I used repeated face-to face *semi-structured interviews* and *member-checking group interviews*. The sample size was manageable, and the nature of the research questions informed my interviewing (see Interview Schedule in Appendix VII). Brown and Dowling (1998) concede that semi-structured interviews are better than structured ones

when the primary purpose of the investigation is to describe the phenomenon from the perspectives of the interviewees. This form of interview combines structured components but at the same time makes room for probing and free interaction (Brown & Dowling, 1998) as well as more relevant issues to be developed (Holliday, 2001).

As a quality control procedure, I designed the interview questions in a way that addresses the research questions (Anfrara et al, 2002). The interview schedule contained open-ended questions to encourage the informants to talk about the topic freely without restrictions or concern for the interviewer's interests (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) and to obtain deeper responses (Best & Khan, 1989).

In semi-structured interviews the researcher determines the questions to be asked and elaborates on responses (Robson, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I prepared the interview schedule to use as a guide but the sequence of the questions depended on the development of the informant's responses. I began the interview with a topic of general interest and avoided leading questions which implied specific answers. Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 32) emphasise assuring the research participants that there is no right answer to the interview questions and that "they cannot be wrong", as I did.

It is noteworthy to mention that the interviews in this inquiry were conducted in English as both I, the interviewer, and the participants are fluent in English. It is an acceptable tradition in the context of the UAE to find EL teachers conversing in English. Rossman and Rallis (2003) affirm that it is ideal to conduct interviews in the language which is considered most comfortable for both parties.

I conducted the first set of interviews in December, 2003 and the other in March, 2004. A qualitative analysis of data from the first round of interviews informed the questions of the second round. Within the first round of interviews some questions were designed to check for responses to other questions. The questions sought the interviewees' perceptions of curriculum change and were informed by the research questions as well as the initial literature review. To achieve spontaneity, I did not stick to the same order of questions but adapted the order according to the responses of each interviewee. The second round of data collection was guided by the initial analysis of the data which I collected in the first round as well as by the fact that I wanted to clarify or pursue further issues based on responses of individual informants. All sets of interviews went well as the interviewees indicated interest in the study and enthusiasm about voicing their views even if this was merely for research purposes. To verify the data during interviews, I paraphrased the respondent's talk as a means to seek more information. Ruane (2005) refers to this technique as verbal mirroring and commends it as a way to convey that the interviewer is actively listening. Further, at the end of the interview, I asked if the interviewee wanted to add anything for which I had not asked a question or whether she had more points to add to any of the earlier questions. Most of them thought that the questions were comprehensive and some of them stressed previous points.

I recorded all the interviews after seeking the informant's permission before each interview. Recording interviews is recommended as depending on note-taking is distracting, and relying on memory may affect the credibility of the study (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Although Taylor and Bogdan (1984) warn that the use of the tape recorder may affect what people say, they also acknowledge that the participants are aware that what they will say will be used to inform the research and that taping the interview might not be as

threatening. In addition, recording interviews is essential if the researcher wants to focus not only on 'what' the interviewees say but also on 'how' they say it (Brown & Dowling, 1998). Recording interviews has helped me maintain the flow of the conversation, remain alert and know when to probe in responses (Bell, 1995; Burton, 1996). I was able to capture the exact words of the participants and thus preserve the meaning in the words that the interviewees used (Oppenheim, 1996). Recorded interviews also have the advantage of being examined by other people too (see Appendix VIII: Sample Transcripts of Interviews).

There are key issues in interviewing. Interviewers need to establish rapport and develop interviewing skills (Best & Khan, 1989). It goes without saying that interviewing was part of my job as a supervisor. As a researcher, I had also conducted several studies based on interviews (e.g. Alwan, 2000, 2001, 2002 & 2003; Loughrey et al, 1999). I am also aware of the drawbacks of bias in interviews and tried to eliminate it. Biased interviews result when the interviewer has a priori expectations of what the respondents would say. In my case, the interview schedule guided the interviews but since I used open-ended questions, participants were free to explore other issues related to the topic under discussion.

#### **4.6 Procedures**

I piloted the interview schedule with a colleague first then with two of the research informants. Piloting made me refine the interview questions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), eliminate redundancy, and omit factual questions which could be answered by some participants without repeating them with others (such as the question on who prepared exams).

I went to each school once a week. On every visit, I was greeted warmly by whoever was in the staffroom. While I was waiting for the teacher to be interviewed according to a prior appointment, I would normally sit in the staffroom having informal conversations with the teachers while they were checking their planning, marking their students' written work or resting in between lessons. I was rarely left alone as teachers would initiate general discussions which I was invited to join in; at that point, I also took advantage to pursue more data.

At the time of the scheduled interview, I made sure that the teacher interviewed had sufficient time to rest after class before accompanying her to a different room to conduct the interview in privacy. After completion of each interview, I escorted the teachers and took notes to record whatever data were relevant to the research topic that emerged in the conversation on the way. Ruane (2005) refers to this type of data collection as an informal interview. Besides establishing rapport, this technique is a valuable tool for follow-up of the research topic from the participant's perspective.

After the interview, I would escort the teacher back to the staffroom only to be received warmly by others who had been busy teaching for the morning. During recess, there was much chatting and the teachers made me feel one of them. I was touched by their expressions of welcome, and their hospitality in keeping me entertained was truly outstanding. Sometimes I left directly after the interview when I saw that my presence was distracting them and I felt guilty about it.

I continued to interview the teachers on the basis of initial analysis and went back to interview the participants on further issues based on initial analysis and to validate their

previous responses, as I explained earlier. The subsequent interviews were shorter. When I reached the point of saturation (see 4.5), I conducted group interviews as a formal member checking procedure in each school. Hence, I had observed the variety of timings recommended for data collection. To quote Woods (1999:3): “research methods have to be sensitive to the perspectives of all participants, and must sample across place and over time as perspectives may vary accordingly”.

#### **4.7 Data Analysis**

Interpretive research has a heuristic nature. The researcher adopts an inductive approach in analysing the data which are recorded without prior knowledge or conception of the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, interpretive research is hypothesis generating through the discovery and description of patterns (Seliger & Shohamy, 1990). Interpretive researchers begin by understanding each individual’s interpretation of the world around him or her. Therefore, theory is said to be emergent, as it emerges from data taken from a particular situation (Cohen & Manion, 1995). Theory in qualitative research is developed directly from the data (Strauss, 1987). The conclusions reached are not seen as established knowledge; rather, they are regarded as possible hypotheses for further research (Seliger & Shohamy, 1990).

The common adage that describes theory in interpretive research is: “theory is neither explanation nor prediction...it is interpretation” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:19). Hence generating hypotheses is a major characteristic of qualitative research. Consequently, I used some techniques from the grounded theory approach by presenting the findings in categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Holliday, 2001; Stake,

1995). Grounded theory is a form of qualitative analysis in which the researcher makes *constant comparisons*, *codes* similar data and *develops theory* out of the data (Strauss, 1987; Merriam, 1998). Devised by Glaser and Strauss (in Merriam, 1998), this method requires researchers to begin with a particular incident in the data and compare it with another instance in the same data. These constant comparisons lead to categories which later on lead to formulation of theories (Merriam, 1998).

As I mentioned earlier, I began to analyse the data while collecting them. I agree with theorists who contend that simultaneous data collection and analysis is advantageous in gaining more depth as the researcher is able to pursue issues raised by the data early in the research (Radnor, 2002; Holliday, 2001). However, as Maxwell (1996) reports, some theorists contend that this may make the researcher biased when collecting more data. But I was aware of this drawback and worked to eliminate its effect. While transcribing the interviews directly on the word-processor, which proved to be an excellent way to become immersed in the data, I kept notes of the recurring themes. I used these as headings for sections in a document on the computer that I used as a draft for analysis. I cut and pasted each part of the interview that fitted into each initial category based on the research questions and categories based on recurrent themes. Some parts indicated more than one meaning, so I pasted copies in places where they fitted. I did this every time I transcribed an interview.

Initially, the resulting themes were affected by the research questions at this point. This had been the preliminary data analysis that I kept aside for two weeks while working on the literature review during the end of semester exam. The rationale behind this was to let the data 'incubate' for a period of time (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I also went to see the

participants during the exams to maintain involvement all the way and verify their opinions about the exam that they singled out as a major drawback in the curriculum. After that, I refined the categories and established new ones when I went to consider the data for a second phase of the analysis. A week later, during the mid-year holiday, I read whole transcripts of individual interviews and worked out extra themes and noted down further questions to be used in the second round of data collection. After obtaining the second set of data, during February, 2004, I divided them into the established categories. I also worked out sub-categories. Throughout the analysis process, I used to go back to the schools for member-checking (see 4.8.1). During the second half of April, 2004, I worked out a summary of the findings and interpretations that I used as a basis for the final member-checking. I had given a copy to each participant beforehand to reduce the demands on the teachers' time during the working hours. In summary, I 'lived' with the data throughout the period of the research (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

#### **4.8 Authenticity Criteria: Provisions for Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a set of quality criteria for judging interpretive research, which is also known as 'authenticity criteria' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989 & 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2001). The decisive measurement of the trustworthiness in qualitative research is "whether we believe the findings strongly enough to act on them" (Maykut & Morehouse (2001:147). The procedures taken in qualitative research establish trustworthiness of the research (Johnson & Saville-Troike, 1992). Nonetheless, establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research cannot be proven but can only be strived for (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this regard, qualitative research theorists advise researchers to explain what precautions they have taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings of their studies (Linclon &

Guba, 1985). In this account, I shall give an overview of three trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability and dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### **4.8.1 Credibility**

To establish credibility, the researcher strives to make the constructed realities in the interpretation of the data match the constructed realities of the research participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is achieved when the researcher provides information on the methods used for collecting the data and justifies them (Robson, 2002). I took into consideration the establishment of the criterion of ‘credibility’ from the start. First, as a researcher, I think I fit into the requirement of *prolonged involvement* that theorists recommend to ascertain credibility (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). I selected the research setting from the wide context which I have been working in. My previous work experience within the context (about nine years) and with the research participants (from three to nine years with each one of them) helped me establish the rapport necessary to gain access as well as build the trust which is necessary for uncovering the participants’ constructions of reality. Although the period for conducting the research was about six months (December 2003 to May 2004), with varying degrees of involvement from one day each week in every school to partial involvement during April (the time when I prepared a summary of my interpretations to give to the participants), I still feel confident that I have taken precautions to establish credibility from the point of view of involvement. As Robson (2002) asserts, involvement over a period of few weeks or months is usually accepted.

Second, I also took steps to establish credibility through another procedure recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which is *peer debriefing*. Although one debriefing session is not as effective as many, it has contributed to enhancing self-reflection. My colleagues, who have been doctoral students too, were supportive and critical at the very beginning when I informed them of the plan of the research and the initial findings that the pilot interviews revealed in December, 2003, the first month of the fieldwork. The questions raised during the session defined biases at an early stage of the inquiry, and contributed to exploring certain aspects in the inquiry which I had not considered at the beginning (e.g. the issue of authority in curriculum change) and to improving the quality of my interpretations of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Third, and last, theorists also recommend *member-checks* as part of the quest for establishing credibility (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Holliday, 2001). Member-checking is the process of seeking feedback on data analysis from the research participants depending on early analysis. This technique helps to find out whether the realities constructed by the researcher reflect the realities perceived by the research participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), and guards against researcher bias (Robson, 2002). Accordingly, I tested the interpretations and refined the categories with the participants throughout the period of the inquiry. To verify the data, I provided each informant with her interview transcript and they all confirmed that the record of the interview was accurate (Punch, 1998). I checked the analysis with each of them in subsequent visits to the schools when I talked to individual participants about my initial categories and interpretations. I tested my interpretations with the research informants throughout the course of the study as this is an approved informal procedure (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In addition, I had a formal member check with each group in the three schools in the end as a round off. Both informal and formal member-

checks proved useful in confirming the data and collecting additional evidence to clarify certain points. Thus the study is credible to the research participants.

#### **4.8.2 Transferability**

Transferability is a consideration that the conclusions reached in a study can be transferable to other similar contexts or settings (Punch, 1998). As Schwandt (2001:258) concedes, transferability deals with:

“(T)he issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer. It concern(s) the inquirer’s responsibility for providing readers with sufficient information on the case studied such that readers (can) establish the degree of similarity between the case studied and the case to which findings might be transferred”.

The rationale behind not considering generalisations is that interpretive researchers study multiple realities and focus on the uniqueness of the context. However, transferability of hypotheses generated may be claimed by providing sufficient detailed accounts of the context investigated (Davis, 1992).

To check for transferability, there are three aspects of the research which need to be focussed upon: (1) theoretical sampling; (2) thick descriptions of context and (3) the degree of abstraction of the concepts in the data analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Punch, 1998). In my view, the findings based on the setting under study may be reflected elsewhere in the context of the UAE based on the diversity of characteristics that the sample represents, the detailed description of the context, and the level of abstraction in the data analysis.

### 4.8.3 Dependability

The criterion of dependability in qualitative research denotes that the data are stable and that any changes can be tracked by the public by providing a clear account of changes in research design (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Schwandt (2001:258) defines dependability as “the process of the enquiry and the inquirer’s responsibility for ensuring that the process of the inquiry was logical, traceable, and documented”. In this study, I used an emergent research design and explained any decisions made during the course of the study. In addition, I also considered triangulation, through member validation and diversity of research settings, as a means towards achieving dependability.

Triangulation is also known as ‘parallel mixed analysis’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998:128). However, I depended on member-checking as a main validating procedure to enhance the trustworthiness of the investigation more than on triangulating the data sources to include non-human informants (see 4.5.1). In addition, I believe that by selecting three schools I have achieved triangulation in terms of the diversity of settings studied (Denzin, in Maxwell, 1996).

It is worth noting that Guba and Lincoln (1989:162) show how triangulation has a positivist implication but still accept it as a way of doing research. They explain that when qualitative elements are mixed with traditional positivist methods to illuminate the data, the inquirer does not “move away from the basic belief system of positivism” but capitalises on “the putative synergistic effects of multimethods”. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998:91): “Many qualitative theorists and researchers do not triangulate because they do not believe that there is a single reality that can be triangulated”. Similarly, Denzin and

Lincoln (1994:482) declare that: “there can be no single, or articulated truth”. Nonetheless, as I argued earlier, there is virtue in variety (see 4.5.1). Triangulation improves “the quality of inferences” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998:169) and contributes to trustworthy conclusions.

As noted earlier, to Lincoln and Guba (1985), only documents which are prepared by participants are grounded in the data and contribute to grounded theory. Maxwell (1996) also concedes that there is also danger in selecting methods which have the same self-report bias such as interviews, questionnaires and documents. I had this in mind and did not widen the scope of the study to include questionnaires. Rather, I depended heavily on member-checking in the research design. I think that teachers are the only human informants who can better express their perceptions. Including other human informants would have defeated the aim of the study. However, as I explained above, I used documents as data sources to explain the background and answer the research questions that are of factual nature. In summary, member-checking and variety of settings were the only form of triangulation used that were found to suite the purpose of the study and fit into its conceptual framework. Thus, in my view, I have striven to maintain a dependable inquiry.

#### **4.9 Ethical Considerations**

In the light of the established codes of ethics, the researcher has responsibilities to the research informants. Qualitative researchers believe that there is no such a thing as bias-free or value-free inquiry (Janesick, 1994). Therefore, it is extremely important to observe ethical standards in research that involves human participants in schools (Nunan, 1997). Overall, data collection is governed by the code of conduct that the consequence of

participating in a study does not harm the respondents in any way (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Oppenheim, 1996). In this research I have taken the following steps to safeguard the research participants:

- A. The researcher should communicate the aims of the research to those participating in the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Radnor, 2002). Observing this code of ethics, I conducted an initial meeting for the purpose of explaining what the research was about (see Appendix VI). I also explained the purpose of the research briefly before each interview.
  
- B. In doing research, the right of the respondents to refuse participation should be respected (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Maxwell, 1996; Punch, 1998; Silverman, 2001). I explained to the participants that their participation was valuable but depended on their agreement to participate willingly. I had contacted the participants directly and not through the school principals for fear that they might be coerced to participate. As Ruane (2005) concedes, the principle of informed consent is violated if any hint of coercion exists. Basically, all the teachers who participated in the research did so voluntarily and they knew that they could avoid answering some questions if they wanted (Burton, 1996; Ruane, 2005) or that they could withdraw at any point without offering any explanation (Frankael & Wallen, 2000) (see Appendix VI; see also 4.3 above for teachers who were not included).
  
- C. In an attempt to minimise place threats, I conducted the interviews privately with each teacher in a convenient vacant room in each of the schools: in a multi-purpose room in one school, the meetings room in another and the English Club in the third.

As Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) assert, some places of data collection may influence the responses, and are seen as a 'location threat'. Therefore, I avoided using the staffroom when other teachers were present. Such a setting is also viewed as unpleasant (Oppenheim, 1996) and threatening to confidentiality (Berg, 2001; Brown & Dowling, 1998).

D. Recording interviews without taking permission of the participants is unethical (Maykut & Morehouse, 2001). Therefore, I sought permission to tape interviews from each participant. I also stopped it according to their wishes when they reached issues that they considered confidential. I only resumed the recording when the topic was over. This preserved their right to decide that some of the data were not to be used if they asked for this (Frankael & Wallen, 2000).

E. Interviews that are rushed or that are conducted when the interviewer is tired may affect the outcome of the study and this is known as 'instrument decay' (Frankael & Wallen, 2000). I conducted the interviews on different dates, at a time convenient to each participant (see 4.5.2 & 4.6).

F. The identities of the participants were protected so that they would not be identifiable (Burton, 1996; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Punch, 1998). In my initial meeting with the teachers in each school, I promised to keep the participants' names and the school names confidential. I also explained that I would not disclose any part of the raw data or findings to a third party including supervisors and principals. To respect this confidentiality, I avoided any citation that would disclose the sites in the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Ruane, 2005; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). While

the zone, my work place, and the schools may be identifiable as there are only three secondary schools for girls in this zone, I did not divide the participants in groups according to their schools so as to disguise their identities. In the interest of preserving anonymity, the interviews are annexed in random order and I used pseudonyms with quotations from interviews.

#### **4.10 Limitations of the Study**

Best and Khan (1989:37) explain that “limitations are those conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations”. It is essential to avoid or eliminate sources of error throughout the research process. The current study had the following limitations that I made my best to eliminate their effects and I hereby acknowledge them:

- A. My previous work as a supervisor of the participant teachers might have had an effect on the responses. Although I recognise this factor, its tacit effect on the responses could not be identified or eliminated.
  
- B. The fact that I have co-authored two sets of materials for the secondary stage might have affected the teachers’ views in some ways. Although the teachers have criticised those two levels that I have co-authored (for Grades 10 and 11) as well, the potential effect of this factor on the teacher’s responses could not be overlooked. Had this been an evaluative study of the textbooks, this would have been a negative factor affecting the conclusions of the study.

- C. The research was conducted with female teachers, male teachers' views could be different from the ones the study has revealed about teachers' perceptions of curriculum change and their roles in the curriculum, and could have enriched the data. Nonetheless, the reasons for not including male teachers were inherently cultural.
- D. The research was conducted in one educational district. Its findings may not conform to perceptions of teachers in other districts. However, transferability of findings to similar settings or contexts is not totally ruled out as a result of this limitation (see 4.8.2).
- E. The period of data collection began towards the end of the first semester. Teacher perceptions might have been affected by the tension known to occur around final examinations. A history threat may be considered applicable here too as there could have been unforeseen influences on the participants' perceptions during the period of the study. However, on-going member-checking might have eliminated this factor. Purposely, I conducted follow-up interviews with the participants individually, at a time in February that was considered stable. I also obtained their opinion on the analysis of the data throughout the course of study. I asked them extra questions that needed to be clarified depending on the on-going analysis and requested clarification on other points at times that were the least stressful at the beginning and throughout the second semester. The group interviews have helped also in checking my inferences and enhancing the trustworthiness of the data in this regard.

F. The scope of the study was limited to interviewing as a data collection instrument besides document reviews. The use of questionnaires might have provided breadth and could have served to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. However, the focus on perceptions as constructs of beliefs or constructions of reality (see 3.2.1) cannot take the form of a pre-established set of beliefs as would be required in a questionnaire. Also, from my own experience, teachers tend to fill in questionnaires cooperatively. Furthermore, the use of questionnaires does not fit into the framework of the study but should, nonetheless, be recognised as a limitation in terms of breadth.

In the Chapter 5, I shall present the findings of this study supported by actual quotes from interview transcripts. In addition, I shall back up the findings with research findings from the literature.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is a presentation and discussion of the findings derived from the data backed up with quotes from interviews and findings in the literature. It is divided into three sections according to the major research questions. Within each section, I provide answers to the research questions as well as categories that emerged from them.

#### **5.1. TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE**

This section attempts to answer the first major research question: How do English language teachers in public secondary schools in the UAE perceive curriculum change? As I explain below, overall, participants considered the 'books' to be the curriculum and 'curriculum change' as having a new set of materials to teach. There are, of course, a few teachers who expanded their views of curriculum to include other aspects. Still, when referring to the curriculum, they used the word 'book'.

### 5.1.1 “Curriculum is the books”

In answer of the research question (1.a): What do EL teachers understand by ‘curriculum’ in the UAE context? Analysis of the data revealed that most of the participants had a view of the curriculum as solely the materials. Others included extra-curricular activities in their definition of curriculum and a few gave a wider definition that included evaluation; while one participant mentioned human elements like students and teachers. Consider, for instance, the remark: “Curriculum is the books; it is the content that we teach” (T11). This perception of curriculum also centres on the teaching materials regardless of their source: “The curriculum includes the whole set of books, the book, the workbook, tapes...possibly magazines, newspapers,...things that can be brought into the classroom in order to make the students take the language from different sources” (T13).

Still other participants had been aware that the curriculum is a wider concept but their views of it revolved around the materials to be taught. As one teacher explained: “Curriculum should cover textbooks, activities to be done in class; extra-curricular activities... Things that I do inside the classroom and things students should do. It is not just the textbook” (T2). A similar view was conveyed by another teacher, who mentioned that: “Curriculum means teachers, students, books, cassettes, media, teaching aids” (T1). Nonetheless, although these teachers gave a wider definition of curriculum, their use of the term in response to the questions mirrored the meaning of the term ‘curriculum’ among all the participants in the study. A similar view has been found in the local literature. For instance, Loughrey et al’s (1999) findings echo the same perception of curriculum: “[I]t appears that in the view of those working in the system the curriculum is in practice the course books. Most teachers and many supervisors are not familiar with any other

curriculum or syllabus besides the books they use in their teaching” (Loughrey et al, 1999:26). Loughrey et al go even to the extent of stating that although there is an official curriculum document, there is no English language curriculum in public schools in the UAE. While this is an extreme view which is not supported by the data in the mentioned study, it is reflective of the narrow view of the curriculum in the UAE as the materials only.

In an attempt to explore the rationale behind this perception, I would like to refer to Apple (1997:346) who maintains that: “the fact that the textbook became the major organizing element of the curriculum...was the complicated result of ...the politics of ... bureaucratization in the schools and the teachers’ responses to it”. In other words, the hierarchical structures of educational institutions lead to this narrow perspective of the ‘book’ as the ‘curriculum’. The textbook is the product which reaches teachers or those who are at the lower end of the hierarchy.

This perception of curriculum as the teaching materials has a domino effect on the other aspects of the curriculum. Some elements of the curriculum, like teaching, learning and testing seemed to be affected by this perspective. There is no doubt, for instance, that this perception of the curriculum as a ‘product’ rather than a ‘process’ has implications for the way the participant teachers dealt with the materials. This perception also denotes stability whereby the textbooks are to be taught, as they are, regardless of the students’ needs. The finding that the textbooks are not usually modified (see 5.2.1.2) serves to promote this perception of an inflexible curriculum. As the findings reveal, all the participants reported difficulties in adapting the materials to the students’ needs (see 5.1.2.6). Moreover, examinations also centre on the content of the books.

### **5.1.2 Curriculum Change: A change of books**

This section answers the research question (1.b): What do EL teachers understand by ‘curriculum change’ in the UAE context? As I shall argue, the findings reflect the general perception of the curriculum as solely the materials taught. Hence a change of textbooks was seen as a change of curriculum. The same theme encompasses different categories related to teachers’ perceptions of curriculum change which I shall be discussing too within this section.

#### **5.1.2.1 “When we say curriculum change, the books are changed”**

As a result of the perception of the books as the curriculum, all the participants gave one meaning for curriculum change, which was having a change in the books they teach. They asserted that when the MoE changes curricula in public schools in the UAE, the overall concept is that the books are changed. The following statement supports this case: “Here, when we say curriculum change, the books are changed” (T7). This same view was held by all the participants in the study. However, two of the participants mentioned that change should not be limited to ‘books’ but should include teaching approaches and tests.

When I asked them how far they considered the change in the curriculum to be a real change compared to the former curriculum, some participants saw that the ‘books’ had improved but some recognised this as a ‘partial’ improvement. When asked what aspects of the curriculum made it new, participants explained that only the ‘books’ were new. They explained that the test had not changed. As some teachers asserted: “Just the books, nothing else is new” (T13), and “We can say that just the books have been changed and nothing

else. The tests, of course, have not been changed” (T16). However, a few participants reported a slight modification in one type of questions in the exam specifications. Take for instance the response: “The part of the test that has changed is how to make questions” (T7). Conversely, another participant remarked: “Exams are still the same, what changed with the textbook is the marking scheme whereas we expected that they would change the way they examine students” (T2). Similarly, another declared: “Even the exams have not changed. Still, they are based on memorisation of the book” (T1). In summary, the nature of the exam remained the same save for a change in one of the instructions in the exam specifications. Why some teachers had conflicting views in considering this a change or not may be due to the fact that the nature of the exam remained the same as in the former curriculum in spite of the slight change in rubric used (see section 5.1.2.5).

Since curriculum development is an aspect of curriculum change, I pursued the topic to see how teachers perceived curriculum development. With reference to the interview transcripts, the research participants fell into three categories with regard to their understanding of curriculum development, two of them had been underpinned by the perception of the ‘book’ as the curriculum. The first view was held by two of the participants who defined curriculum development as teachers trying to make the given curriculum better in terms of teaching the material in innovative ways. The second group saw curriculum development as improving the materials by constant modifications based on feedback from teachers. This group talked about what should be done and not what was happening in reality. The third perspective was taken by one participant who understood curriculum development as following steps starting from surveying needs to setting objectives, preparing and piloting materials, to teaching, testing, and modifying materials. However, this participant admitted that that was what happened in an ideal world, which

was not the case in the UAE. What is evident is that their responses were justified by the realisation that what came out of the curriculum development process were mainly new textbooks.

Similar contradictory views were held regarding the aspects that changed in the curriculum in accordance with the teaching techniques, the teaching materials, the adaptability of materials to students' needs, and testing, as mentioned above.

#### **5.1.2.2 Stability in teaching techniques: A point of controversy**

Although most participants asserted that only the 'books' had changed, they gave contradictory responses with regard to whether the teaching techniques had changed or not. Some of them had not recognised any change in this aspect of the curriculum at all, while others had. Meanwhile, some teachers who recognised the change in teaching techniques attributed it to individual preferences, personal efforts or personal initiatives and did not consider it as part of the overall change in the curriculum. For example, (T6) affirmed: "Even the teaching techniques, you can say that they remained the same except for teachers to use new ways on their own". Further, a few participants attributed the change in techniques to change in the type of tasks in the textbooks. This view was shared by (T3), who asserted: "The techniques are different because of the different tasks in the workbook".

In consequence, another finding indicates that despite the change in textbooks, some participants had not changed their teaching techniques. Although several participants ascribed the change in teaching techniques to the change of tasks in the teaching materials, they still resorted to traditional ways of teaching. This did not prevail in every lesson. On

the contrary, they tried to be creative in teaching the materials. However, it was common to use more traditional techniques during times of pressure, like the time when the first round of data were collected for this study, as schools were approaching the final exam for the first semester. All the participants pointed out time as the main constraint which forced them to resort to traditional teaching methods. As one teacher pointed out:

“Yes, they [teaching techniques] have changed as a result of changing the types of tasks in the book...The tasks require a lot of group work... But I think it is not appropriate because of the time required for this task because if we do them in the way they should be done, this will have an effect on the other material. We will run short of time if we do them the way they have to be done” (T13).

In this vein, some participants explained that there had been change in teaching techniques that were not part of the current change in curriculum but a result of the change in the resources available and their personal initiatives; others credited the change in teaching techniques to personal efforts. Consider, for example, this view:

“The books are completely different and they require different work. With the old curriculum, we didn’t have the present technology of computers. My lessons are now different from those five years ago; I am not teaching in the same way...Yes, my teaching techniques have been changed completely. Before, I used to depend on drawings, gestures and realia. That was what we had then as I didn’t have a computer at home” (T10).

Likewise, another participant attributed the change in teaching techniques to personal efforts rather than considering it part of the change in curriculum. This can be understood from her remark: “We are developing our teaching techniques depending on the seminars we attend. So, we have been renewing our teaching techniques for the previous books, this is something we do for our own development...it has nothing to do with the books” (T2).

While it is not directly stated in the materials, the curriculum adopts a task-based approach. According to the findings above, there are three points to consider. First, all the teachers did

not see the change in teaching techniques as part of the imposed change in the materials. They perceived it as an inevitable development as a result of their self-directed endeavours in professional development, and their willingness to use up-to-date technological teaching aids in teaching that required change in teaching techniques all the way. Second, some participants rationalised why they resorted to old techniques despite the fact that they believed in task-based learning. They had given various reasons to justify their actions. And third, although several participants explained that they welcomed change and liked it, their actual teaching techniques remained unchanged. This paradox between perceptions and actions is also echoed in forthcoming findings (see 5.1.2.6 & 5.1.3).

In response to the interview question: What is the overall approach in the curriculum?, all the participants explained that the teaching material was organised around themes. Some of them approved of the organisation of the textbooks but others found faults in it. All of them, however, refuted any aspect of gradation in the materials. Further, some teachers saw no clear approach adopted in teaching the materials and explained that the curriculum did not state what good ways of teaching were. Nonetheless, all the participants recognised that the tasks required student-centred techniques, as explained earlier. Paradoxically, some participants did not recognise that there were suggested teaching techniques in the teachers' book, while others, who asserted that there were suggested teaching techniques, had some critical comments about the recommended ways of teaching.

Furthermore, some teachers expressed their belief that they could not judge whether what they were doing was good teaching or not. As (T4) criticised: "We do not know what is right and what is wrong...We teach the material in the way we think suitable". Based on my view of the teaching materials, I think that the teachers' perceptions in this respect are

justified. The teaching materials did not seem to have a distinct identity with regard to teaching methodology. They seemed to be composed of scattered unrelated units where language gradation was not considered.

In a similar vein, Loughrey et al (1999) contend that teachers in the UAE are working in isolation and are not able to form a clear perception of a coherent curriculum. This is not exclusive to the UAE as, according to Fullan and Pumfret (in Barrow, 1984), it is common to find some teachers who cannot identify the features of the curriculum they are dealing with. This explains why aspects of weak teaching might still prevail in the UAE public schools (Loughrey et al, 1999). On the other hand, Hacker and Rowe (1998) argue that it is not essential that curriculum developers recommend teaching strategies since materials convey implications of the recommended teaching strategy. Although this reflects the case at hand, in my opinion, I would argue otherwise. Having a clear statement of the teaching methodology ensures that the ‘experienced curriculum’ is in accordance with the ‘planned curriculum’. This should also clear any misconceptions associated with perceived stability of any element of the curriculum during curriculum change (the argument is pursued in 5.1.2.6).

### **5.1.2.3 The Teacher’s Book: A neglected innovation**

I was surprised to find that some of the teachers of the second secondary book (Grade 11) not only did not own a teachers’ book but also did not know that the new curriculum had a detailed teacher’s book. Whilst some participants said that they had no idea that it was available, others explained that they preferred to teach in their own ways. Surprisingly, only one teacher reported a change in having a detailed teacher’s book as in the former curriculum this was not the case. She said: “There is also a teacher’s book in this course, in

the past we had a general teaching guide which we did not refer to. The teacher's book gives brief suggestions of how to deal with each lesson" (T2). Within the course of the interviews, however, I found that not all the teachers who owned a teacher's book read the recommended teaching procedures in it. They also differed in how they viewed the teacher's book in terms of how often they used the suggestions. However, they agreed that most of the recommended procedures were monotonous and inadequate. As (T8) stated: "I usually follow the procedures that I feel useful and skip the procedures that I do not find convincing". Those who did not use the teacher's book asserted that it was not helpful: "You don't know what is the mind of the writer...you don't get the idea. Sometimes it gives you broad guidelines that do not help... there is no creativity" (T7).

Consequently, the majority of the teachers admitted that they neither read the suggestions in the teachers' book nor used them. Surprisingly, some of them did not own one at all. In my opinion, the reason why teachers had not been encouraged to follow the suggestions is underpinned by the issue of routine. Teachers had not have a detailed teacher's guide in the past and they continued to work in the same way based on the premise adopted formerly that teachers have a wide range of expertise and should not be restricted with a teaching manual (1994 Curriculum Document). Evidently, all the teachers continued to do what they used to do before the change in curriculum regardless of the presence of a teacher's book.

#### **5.1.2.4 Adaptability of Teaching Materials: "We have to teach every point"**

As the findings revealed, all the teachers needed to supplement the textbooks in areas where linguistic items required recycling, as the materials were lacking in this aspect. Further, some units of the materials needed to be taught in several lessons which

necessitated the presence of teacher-prepared worksheets that bound the content together and made it coherent. In this respect, the participants had different perceptions with regard to the adaptability of the new teaching materials in terms of modifying the current content and preparing materials of their own to cater for students' needs.

As the interview responses revealed, participants had contradictory perceptions of the new teaching materials. Some found them flexible but others commented on the rigidity caused by the content-bound exam format which forced them to teach the content in ways that were compatible with the exam. Participants also had different perceptions with regard to the rationale behind adaptation. While some said that the materials needed to be adapted to meet the needs of the students, some teachers suspected these intentions. They believed that the teachers' initiatives were mainly to show off in their teaching portfolios which were used as tools in the teacher evaluation scheme. On the other hand, all the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the inflexibility of the materials in most cases.

In the first place, the dominant role of the 'book' as the centre point of the curriculum manifests itself in the finding that teachers perceived the available material as having the priority over anything they wished to add. This is clear in this declaration:

"It limits me. It limits my freedom. I cannot change the content. I cannot just give another lesson from my own because I do not like it. I can't. But in other areas, like structures, I can really add, extend things when this is for [the students'] benefit. But for the topics, the lessons themselves, I can't do this" (T8)

Comments like 'limiting' and 'restricted' were repeatedly used by some participants to describe the 'books' as the major component of the teaching materials. However, they gave various reasons to rationalise the need for adaptation. On the one hand, the procedures suggested in the textbook were monotonous and repetitive, so they needed a sense of

change; and on the other hand, some lessons seemed above the students' levels and they needed to be simplified. As one participant explained: "There are lessons that are really hard to present as they are complicated and full of new words" (T10). Another rationale for adaptation was the perceived monotony of the lessons. For instance, one participant was satisfied with the fact that there was a variety in the topics discussed in the book, as the themes on which the language content was based were varied. However, she expressed discontent with the repetitiveness of the book by saying: "There is a variety in the topics and we do not need to prepare extra material in that respect...But still ... every lesson has the same procedures in it. The tasks are repeated" (T16). In addition, some participants pointed out that there was a need to prepare extra materials to meet students' needs. Another rationale behind the need for adaptation is the feeling of satisfaction that some of them gained when adapting the materials. (T13)'s remark that she was happy with supplementing the textbooks as it made her "feel creative", for instance, implies that she derived a sense of joy when she exercised her creativity by manipulating the teaching materials to make them suit her students' needs.

Teachers commented also on the type of adaptations they did which included preparing worksheets with some lessons and changing the sequence of lessons. They all agreed, however, that although they supplemented the 'book', teaching what was in the 'book' was on the top of their agenda. This is clear in the remark: "I can change the way I teach the lessons, their sequence but I cannot change the texts... Unfortunately, we cannot change what is in the book" (T7). This shared perception of the teaching materials as limited was repeatedly highlighted in the interviews. Participants cited several reasons why they felt that the materials were limiting. One of the reasons is the final exams as they would be based on the contents of the books (see 5.1.2.5). Another reason is the amount of content as

the books are satiated, as they pointed out earlier. Further, the tendency of the students to be exam-oriented is also limiting. As a teacher emphasised: “We cannot replace or cancel any part because the tests are based on the book. We have to teach every point, everything, every single word” (T1).

This finding is in accordance with Tantawi’s (1995) observation of the intensity of the curriculum in the UAE. I think that teachers are justified in their view with regard to the restrictions that made teaching *all* the material inevitable. Although some parts were repetitious, as they all asserted, they could not overlook anything in the light of the word-for-word book-bound nature of the final exam (see 5.1.2.5, and Appendix III).

Jacob and Frid (1997) use the argument that during curriculum change the teachers are concerned about the negative effect of prescribed assessment methods. According to Al-Sadan (2000), assessment systems in the Arab Gulf States underpin aspects of the curriculum such as educational aims, teaching methods and emphasise the importance of covering the teaching materials on which assessment is based. Al-Sadan makes the observation that the main focus in this case is on the number of students who pass the exams. In justification of the above emphasis on coverage, Hacker and Rowe (1998) concur that it is typical for a mandatory curriculum to create a need to cover more curriculum content. In case of public schools in the UAE, not only the textbooks are prescribed but also the exam is content-based. This encourages memorisation and defies any claims for linguistic aims in the curriculum.

#### **5.1.2.5 “Testing is the same old traditional way”**

As explained earlier, assessment in the curriculum had not changed. All the participants emphasised that the tests remained the same as before and did not change in the format with the change in textbooks. According to them, there is a strong relationship between the content in the teaching materials and the basis of the final exam.

Exams, as participants explained, are content-based and are prepared by individual teachers assigned by supervisors. These should be administered to all schools within the same educational zone for Grades 10 and 11, and to all schools state wide for Grade 12. Final exams are external ones and are prepared by selected teachers who deal with the same level. Although this finding is not a result of curriculum change, it is a continuing result of stability in assessment, which was not considered in the curriculum change agenda which had been implemented. Many participants recognised this stability in several elements of the curriculum in spite of the current change in teaching materials that signified the major aspect of change in the curriculum.

Therefore, I pursued the topic further to find out how they perceived the effect of stability of the testing regime. Commenting on the relationship between what was taught as opposed to what was tested, (T4) remarked: “These are closely related. This was also the same case with the previous book”. In consequence, all the participants admitted that they focussed on what might appear in the exam paper. However, they claimed that they did not do this out of choice. They regretted that instead of focussing on language proficiency and linguistic skills, they were teaching to the test, as (T15) confessed: “Actually, we are teaching them for the exam rather than to be able to use the language”. However, some participants tried

also to focus on the language despite the time pressure. The second effect of this close relationship between the exam and the text was the constant pursuit for coverage, which was of course at the expense of mastery. The third result of this close relationship is that it limited adaptation of the materials to the students' needs. Although all the teachers supplemented the books with worksheets, they perceived that they did not have the choice to supplement the books in the way that satisfied them. Fourth, as a consequence also, some teachers were left worried to speculate about the nature of the exam in the cases where they perceived the books as lacking in essential structural points. Fifth, there were even problems as a result of this when correcting exam papers since students were expected to produce the same content in the 'books', as (T6) asserted: "When we correct the exam papers we need to check the answers against the book". The final effect of the close relationship between the materials and the exam that continued with the new curriculum is that the students had become exam-oriented too, as the participants admitted. So they were seen by a teacher as "just interested in collecting marks...not interested in developing their language [and] keep asking whether what they learn is coming on the exam or not" (T11). Therefore they "ask for models to memorise", and become "scared" (T7) if their teachers do not cover parts of the book.

According to the participants, the consequences of the close relationship between the test and the materials were harmful when considering mastery of the language. As (T9) affirmed: "I do not think that this is sensible, because we are just looking for the main goal which is just passing the exam, not mastering the language"; and with her agreed (T2) who explained the situation: "We are testing memorisation. For instance, we do not test free writing because in the exam composition should be related and within what is covered in the book. We do not test comprehension because comprehension should be related". In this

case, participants suggested several remedies to combat the dilemma. For instance, one teacher suggested that teachers should be provided with the recommended language objectives to enable them to select their own materials to eliminate memorisation. Another suggestion given was to make the composition topics not based on topics covered in the textbooks.

While it is stated in older literature (e.g. Mann, 1983) that the exam should follow the curriculum and not determine it, it seems that, in the UAE, things are still done in the old way. According to all the participants, the exam is a central determining factor in the curriculum which affects what is to be taught. This perception resulted in that all the teachers made it a main concern to prepare their students for the exam. Coombe and Hubley (2005) discuss the same negative washback effect of testing on teaching and learning whereby both teachers and learners focus on what would appear in the test. According to Coombe (2005b), this washback effect can only be avoided when involving teachers in designing test specifications. She concedes that involving teachers in this endeavour is expected to control the negative effect of exams on teaching, and lead to developing assessment in the curriculum. It is obvious that all the teachers had been following the same mediation strategy in the former curriculum. Had they been consulted when developing the new curriculum, their dissatisfaction with this problem would have been the core for changing the exam specifications. This issue of unheard teacher voice will be revisited in later findings (see 5.2.2.3 , 5.2.2.4 & 5.2.2.5).

#### **5.1.2.6 Teachers' Strategies to Cope with Curriculum Change**

As the analysis of interviews revealed, the participants faced various difficulties with the current change. To cope with these obstacles, they explained that they managed to solve the problems following certain strategies they found helpful. In the course of the interviews, they explained their mediation or 'survival' strategies in their attempts to cope with the main stressful issues in this change: The content and the demands of the final exams. There are various strategies that teachers adopted in order to cope with the stressful amount of content and the demands of the exam. There are also other strategies developed to combat the students' weaknesses and the perceived common learning style of being spoon-fed. Survival strategies were clearly stated by teachers of Grade 12, specifically, as they were facing the change for the first time.

As participants admitted, they faced the huge amount of content and limited time by speeding up lessons and skipping activities which were not expected in the exam, such as speaking and listening. They also translated the reading texts, and adopted more frontal or teacher-controlled teaching techniques. Some of them gave models of written paragraphs, prepared intensive worksheets that covered more content and joined classes together, borrowing classes from teachers of other subjects who had completed the syllabus by the end of the first semester.

The teachers had their own ways of overcoming limitations related to the unannounced approach in the new curriculum. For instance, some of them used interpretation into Arabic,

others used a teacher-oriented approach. One participant described this situation with the recently introduced materials for Grade 12:

“We started using student-centred learning but as the course proceeded, we faced many problems. There are too many tasks to be carried out, so many activities to be done... Now, because of lack of time, I teach using translation. I know it is useless, it is forbidden but I have no choice. I was forced to use a method I am not convinced with” (T2).

Participants, however, expressed their frustration with aspects of the ‘book’ which were in conflict with the recommended teaching procedures. Despite the task-based approach hinted at in the teacher's book, the teachers explained that the amount of content and the weaknesses of the students restricted them from giving the tasks in the way they should, in a student-centred way of teaching.

A crucial finding at this point was the way they got through the mentioned difficulties within the context of an exam-driven curriculum in that they resorted to ways to cover the materials and at the same time help their students get better scores in exams. As participants remarked: “The speaking in fact can be well utilized for grading the students” (T8); “I give them a model as an example right away to stick it in their books [and] I skip many skills.... it is a translation lesson” (T5), and “I .. skip the activities that may not appear in the exam” (T2). Radnor et al (1995) assert that teachers may resort to strategies to help students score well on tests. However, Gatbonton (1999) construes the use of translation as a need to develop rapport with the students. Research on code-switching in multi-lingual classrooms shows that it is used as a facilitative strategy (Martin-Jones, 2000). Teachers resort to code-switching not only to signal transitions but also to get their points across as well as to incorporate learner preferences. This also tends to occur in teacher-dominated classrooms. Studies show that teachers tend to accept the learner’s use of the first language

to encourage contribution (Martin-Jones, 2000). According to the literature on teacher thinking, teachers' perceptions dictate how they teach as it influences teaching behaviour (e.g. Freeman, 2002; Graves, 2003; Pajares, 1992; Williams & Burden, 2000). Participants' perceptions revealed that they saw their students' language proficiency as low and hence they resorted to translating the content to them and providing them with models to memorise. By following these strategies, they also managed to combat the perceived lengthy materials and the limitations of time allotted for coverage. Commenting on the role of contextual factors in forming teachers' perceptions, Beijaard and De Vries (1997) contend that the perceptions which teachers form about their students are based on dissatisfactions during classroom situations. They also assert that when teachers do not like innovations, they tend to attribute the underpinnings of their behaviour to external factors.

This finding supports previous research findings that traditional teacher-dominated, transmission styles of teaching like lecturing, doing pattern drills and translation are still common in the UAE (e.g. Al Nuaimin, 1991; Balfakih, 2003; Shaw et al, 1995). Dreyfus and Mazouz (1989) found that reasons that teachers give to explain why they did not use certain ways of teaching are pupil-related ones which may be imagined or actual. In general, teachers claim that the needs and abilities of learners dictate the use of certain techniques. Shaw et al (1995) also criticise the dominant style of teaching in the UAE which is based on transmission and teacher's control of the learning situation. However, they attribute this style of teaching to ineffective teacher training rather than to contextual factors (also Amro, 2001).

The teachers' remarks, with regard to resorting to their old techniques, raise the issue of the 'planned curriculum' as opposed to the 'experienced curriculum'. To quote Breen and

Littlejohn (2000:9) “the teacher’s interpretations of a syllabus and reasons for classroom decisions are usually covert...the compromised syllabus is essentially the teachers’ creation”. Dreyfus and Mazouz (1989) argue that the gap between the planned curriculum and the enacted one is mainly due to perceived feasibility from the part of the teacher. Furthermore, several researchers found that change in classroom behaviours does not meet the expectations of curriculum developers and is sometimes opposite to what they expect (e.g. Gahin & Myhill, 2001; Karavas-Doukas, 1998; Newman, 1998). Dreyfus and Mazouz (1989) emphasise that while the role of the teachers is to convey the planned curriculum in the form of classroom activities, it is impossible to impose certain techniques on them, which leads to the inevitable result that makes the experienced curriculum different from the planned one.

Researchers assert that teachers’ methods remain the same in spite of curriculum change since change is normally directed towards the practice without an attempt to challenge the teachers’ beliefs or change contextual factors which affect teacher practice (Collinson & Cook, 2000; Cooper & McIntyre, 1994; Galton & Isaac, 1983). Similarly, Borg (1998b & 1999), attributes the use of traditional techniques in teaching to the influence of teachers’ beliefs on their instructional decisions. Paradoxes between beliefs and practice on the other hand are cited in Campbell et al (2001). These researchers found that there is a paradox between teachers’ perceptions and their choice of teaching techniques. Karavas-Doukas (1998) declares that it is a rare occurrence to find curriculum innovations implemented as anticipated. As his findings indicate, teachers usually claim that they changed their practices according to the requirements of the curriculum but their practices show that they continue to work in the way they are familiar with, as in the following quote: “[T]eachers’ attitudes have been identified as context-specific, influenced by the values and philosophy

of the educational system of which the teacher is part ... and by the attitudes and norms held by others in the teachers' working context" (Karavas-Doukas, 1998:31). From Hayes's (2000) point of view, the success of change implementation depends on the type of change required of behaviour that teachers need to trade off. Likewise, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) explain that teachers choose their behaviour when they are aware of the need for improvement depending on their own observations of the learning outcomes and on training. While there is no doubt that teachers' beliefs influence their classroom decisions, I think that contextual factors have to be taken in mind when considering change in teaching methods. For instance, Freeman (2002) argues that context is a foremost issue in teacher education. Therefore, teacher educators must appreciate the complexities which face teachers in their classroom and in the context in which they work. According to Sharkey (2004:296) contextualisation "is a form of teacher praxis; it is an articulation of the theory-practice dynamics". By acknowledging these contextual factors, we can understand the reasons for the paradox between the teachers' articulated perceptions and their mismatching classroom behaviour reported in this study.

### **5.1.3 Affective Issues in Curriculum Change**

This section answers the research question (1.c): How do EL teachers feel about 'curriculum change' in the UAE context? Teachers' feelings towards curriculum change discussed were a recurrent theme in the data. Findings in this section are not only taken from teachers' responses to direct interview questions but also from their responses to other questions around curriculum change. The overall interpretation of data revealed that participants perceived change from various perspectives. Therefore, they expressed a

paradox in their feelings towards change depending on the stance from which they considered curriculum change. I will be arguing here that participants developed mixed feelings during curriculum change. I will also be explicating how the teachers' feelings evolved with the passing of time as familiarity with the new curriculum was enhanced.

### **5.1.3.1 Mixed Feelings**

As the data revealed, some teachers had contradictory feelings as a result of change in the curriculum. In addition, they seemed to express hard feelings that came as a result of reflecting on their role in the process of curriculum development. In the first place, some teachers expressed *indifference* to change or stability; others said they experienced *fear* while some participants were *contented*. Consider for instance these two quotes: “My feelings are neutral. I am not much excited seeing the change” (T3) and “Sometimes, I feel frightened,... But I accept it anyway” (T11). There are also individual cases which show ‘contradictory’ feelings towards change. For instance, three participants teaching Grade 12 had conflicting feelings towards change. While they claimed that they welcomed change, they had not started teaching levels where they had the new curriculum in previous years. Rather, they kept observing their colleagues’ experiences with change for two years and waited till it reached Grade 12, till there was no choice but to face change. This shows that some teachers were contented within the comfort zone of familiarity. Take this teacher, for instance, who claimed that she welcomed change and notice her expressed contradictory behaviour:

“I haven’t taught book 10 or 11. I was so lucky not to experience the two other books. It gave me lots of time to see my colleagues ... going through the experience... I could say that I was lucky or may be unlucky. I should have taught the three books one after the

other. I think if I had taught the first two books, I might have felt more comfortable with the third one...It would have been better if I had gradually followed the books” (T13).

Specifically, participants took a positive stance when they considered that change in curricula was justified by the fact that the old curriculum was in schools for ten years without any considerable modifications. As one teacher remarked: “There are factors that make us accept change especially if there are faults in the old curriculum” (T11). In addition, they also welcomed curriculum change when they viewed it as learning opportunities for themselves. According to the same teacher: “Curriculum change is a big experience, it requires effort from the teacher ... when you teach, you learn” (T11). This finding supports Ganguly’s (2001) assertion that the teacher is more of a co-learner during curriculum change than a facilitator.

Some participants saw change in curricula as challenge and displayed positive feelings towards it from this perspective. Consider this statement: “change... is challenging. Having to deal with a new curriculum means that you do not repeat yourself.” (T9). Likewise, some participants saw the change in the curriculum as the end to the repetitive teaching habits: “Change ... means breaking the routine of the old curriculum”, as (T7) admitted.

On the other hand, some participants had incongruous thoughts. While they accepted the current change, they saw future change as a threat in terms of effort. Thus they considered further change ‘a big burden’ and ‘tiring’. Several participants declared that the mere rumour that the curriculum might change again affected their current contribution to the new curriculum, as they anticipated it would later be a ‘dead curriculum’. As data revealed, change implied effort and required leaving the comfort zone established with familiarity

over time. For instance, two of the participants, (T8) and (T1), admitted that they enjoyed the familiarity of teaching a textbook for two consecutive years and said that they planned to teach the same level in the following year. As (T1) remarked:

“I don’t know whether I want to teach another new book next year. May be I won’t...I know this book very well now that it is the second year for me to teach it. I do not need any preparation at home. I can give the lesson without looking at the pages of the book”.

These paradoxical feelings during change are also reported in Lieberman (1997), who found that teachers experience excitement with one aspect of change but also they are disturbed by other aspects of the same change.

Another important finding is that teachers tend to have low self-concept (see 3.2.1), and appear to be powerless when considering their role in the process of curriculum development. They project an image of themselves as being “at the bottom of the pyramid” (T1), “out of the circle” (T1), “obedient slave[s]” (T6 & T7), “prisoners of the exam” (T5), and teachers of the “Holy Book” (T4 & T9). A discussion of these metaphors is drawn when considering teachers’ roles in developing the curriculum (see 5.2.2.3).

Obviously, the fact that teachers were not included in curriculum development affected their morale negatively. So, some participants had low self-concept, they felt they were alienated and unappreciated as in: “I am being faced with so many frustrations...We are not free to do things the way we would like them to be done” (T2). Their motivation to contribute to the curriculum waned because of feelings of learned-helplessness and external locus of control. They saw that their previous contributions to the former curriculum in terms of feedback were not answered. Therefore, they assumed that if they took the initiative in expressing their views, they would be rejected: “From my previous experience,

I do not think that my views will be taken into consideration seriously” (T9). Teachers appeared to have external locus of control as they saw that they did not have a hand in the way they were performing their role: “It is out of our hands” (T9), and “There is a hierarchy. Everybody is controlling the ones below” (T7). Teachers seemed to devalue their role in the curriculum in saying: “I am just the teacher...teachers should do whatever they are asked to do... Teachers are victims” (T1). Dissatisfaction was also voiced: “I am not happy about my role because I am the obedient slave. I have to do what I am told to do; I have to do what I am required to do” (T6). There is also a sense of despair and pessimism as suggested in the declaration: “I don’t think I will play any role in future change...May be just a passive part...Because we are asked to do things and we do them in the way we are asked to” (T9).

Al-Araj (1999) found that teachers in the UAE exhibited psychological problems, including feelings of job insecurity. According to Shatat (1995), until recently, teachers have enjoyed a high status in the Arab societies. The teacher’s dignity has been declining and this has resulted in undermining the teachers’ self-concept. White (2001) reports that self-perceptions of teachers are affected by the criticism of the media. Consequently, they tend to hold low images of themselves as a result of the undermined status. Feelings of uncertainty, frustration, anxiety, as well as having internal conflicts are common discomforts associated with change (Fullan, 1993 & 1999). As Fullan (1999:28) declares: “the change process is so nerve-wracking”. This is true with regard to the feelings that are associated with change since they are inevitable. Conversely, feelings associated with teachers’ perceptions with regard to their contribution to the curriculum are not unavoidable. These, in my view, could be improved with better teacher involvement in the process.

### **5.1.3.2 Tacit Resistance to Change**

Teachers' responses to interview questions related to various issues revealed their feelings towards curriculum change which suggest tacit resistance towards it. This tacit resistance was embodied in their expressed dissatisfaction with all aspects of the new curriculum without exception. In general, participants focussed on drawbacks in the materials and talked extensively about other aspects with scrutiny. In addition, they resorted to traditional techniques despite the suggested change. Although they had a teacher's book, for instance, they did not consult it. Further, teachers claimed that they did not know what good teaching was according to the curriculum. In general, they were mostly critical of every aspect of the current change.

As I see it, participants' responses conveyed tacit resistance to change, in that they focussed on finding faults with the materials more than on the positive aspects. In an earlier finding (see 5.1.2.3) participants criticised the teacher's book to justify why they resorted to their old techniques although some of them had not looked at the teaching suggestions at all. This notion of tacit resistance is also recurrent in the data. For instance, the fact that they undervalued the improvement in the content of the books also implies resistance to change.

### **5.1.3.3 Teacher Change Cycle: From Excitement to Frustration to Confidence**

A recurring theme in the data is how the feelings of the participants evolved with time. In this respect, I identified three main phases in the evolution of the teachers' feelings that reflected change of perceptions in their receptivity to change.

Overall, the feelings towards curriculum change were varied. However, initial feelings were those of *happiness* and *enjoyment* as the participants welcomed change. But they progressed in dealing with the course materials, the feelings changed. As (T2) remarked: “When I first got the book, I was very thrilled... to teach the first few lessons.... As the course proceeded, I discovered that there is too much to be done in a short time. I cannot cope”. While the initial feelings were positive, the demands of the change in the curriculum created feelings of *discontent*, *loss*, *uncertainty* and *frustration*. The second period was characterised by work pressures and errors in teaching plans that created tension in having to meet the requirements to cover the syllabus before the end of semester exam. Consider, for instance the following quote in which the tone of uncertainty is revealed: “Sometimes texts and questions do not match...There are so many incomplete ones. You as a teacher have to look, search and give the students feedback. Students are also lost. Search for what, what is the definite thing that we should search for I do not know” (T2). The participants, who had experienced change in the past two years, reported that their feelings became increasingly positive when they started teaching the ‘book’ for the second time. They were more able to manage their time to cover the syllabus, prepare more supplementary materials or simply cope with the difficulties by following certain survival strategies.

Ling (2002) also reports similar research findings regarding transformations in teacher feelings during curriculum change. In her study, teachers’ feelings changed from *frustration* during the first phase of curriculum change to *confidence* when finding themselves articulate in adaptation. Similarly, Marlow and Minehira (1996) discuss this emotional development of teachers during curriculum change. They identify four stages which teachers go through during curriculum change. In the first stage, teachers develop

awareness of the change in curriculum. Secondly, their comfort level rises as they participate in staff development activities or begin to collaborate with colleagues. Thirdly, they develop an acceptance of the required change and attempt to modify their practice. At this point, they are in a position to modify aspects of the curriculum. Finally, in stage four, there is full acceptance as familiarity with the curriculum increases.

Similar findings, albeit concerned with change in assessment in the curriculum are reported by Burns (1995). She concedes that curriculum change challenges familiar practices but with the passing of time that brings familiarity, initial concerns are normally dissolved. In my opinion, the familiarity which came with experience as the time passed was the factor that helped in reshaping the teachers' perceptions of the change and contributed to improving the teachers' feelings. This could be what happened to the teachers in the study as their initial perceptions of change in curriculum evolved over time and this change in perception was reflected in their feelings.

## **5.2 TEACHERS' ROLES IN CURRICULUM CHANGE**

This section answers the second major research question: How do EL teachers perceive their role in the process of curriculum change? As I explain below, overall, participants did not perceive themselves as having any significant role in the curriculum development processes. The argument in this section revolves around the issue of power and suppressed teacher voice. Involvement of teachers in curriculum development is argued for too.

### **5.2.1 Teachers' Roles in Developing the Curriculum**

To answer the research question, How do EL teachers perceive their role in developing the curriculum?, analysis of the data revealed that all the participants perceived that they had not played any role in the process of curriculum development. Rather, they perceived their role as mainly to deliver the materials. Curriculum plans, as participants asserted, were not disclosed to the public, to the extent that the teachers normally left for their annual holiday without knowing whether there would be a new set of 'books' for the following year or whether the old 'books' would stay in use. In response to the interview question on what teachers knew about the new curriculum plans, some participants explained that the plans of the MoE were usually unannounced. A teacher reported this by saying: "They say that all these books will be cancelled and they will use a new series. I do not know when this will happen, God only knows" (T2). Other participants speculated about some rumours that the books would change the following year, proving that they were ignorant of the plans. As (T11) remarked: "Every year we hear rumours. For this year, they say that next year there will be a general change in the curriculum". In sum, this finding indicates that teachers were not informed of any curricular plans and that change is mostly mandated. In the following sections, there is more evidence that teachers are alienated as I will be considering needs analysis and curriculum evaluation to see what roles teachers play in them.

#### **5.2.1.1 Needs analysis: "I wasn't part of it."**

Needs analysis is an essential component of curriculum development (see Appendix IV-C). Materials writers have to be familiar with the needs of the learners they are preparing the materials for, as well as the teachers who are to deal with them (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000).

To understand the teachers' roles in curriculum change, I asked the participants specific questions related to their roles in the process of curriculum development.

In response to the interview question: “What sort of needs analysis was carried out before preparing the current materials?”, respondents explained that they had *never* been asked about the needs of the students. As (T4) remarked: “I haven’t heard about such a thing. I do not think they make any needs analysis”. Moreover, participants expressed their concerns with regard to the way needs had been specified in the curriculum, as this was completely unknown to them. Some of them speculated that curriculum experts might have depended theoretically on their experience and made up a list of curriculum objectives that they assumed matched the students’ needs. Other participants assumed that teachers elsewhere had been consulted but that none of them had been involved. As (T8) asserted: “May be they consulted the opinion of some teachers, I don’t know but I wasn’t part of it”. Obviously, the general view was that if anyone had been consulted then it was not them, ‘the teachers’. As (T2) declared: “Maybe they asked supervisors because they are our channel. When we complain about the books, we normally complain to supervisors.” (see also 5.2.1.2 below).

As a review of the materials revealed (see Appendix I) the general goals for every level are listed in the introduction of the teacher's book. Nonetheless, some teachers saw that the realisation of the goals of the curriculum in the teaching materials did not seem to be clear.

This excerpt summarises the situation:

“When we teach, we don’t see really what they aim at. We don’t know whether they want the students to master English to communicate, or to pass an exam or to know the structures well or to know the functions. We don’t know what they really expect from us to do with that material. We really feel confused. What I mean is that the goals don’t seem to be that clear” (T13).

Another comment: “Well, certainly they do not seem to be based on real needs” (T3), represents a common concern among teachers. Overall, participants agreed that the needs addressed in the curriculum did not represent actual needs of the students. Some of them had identified a gap in the teaching materials. According to (T16): “there is... a big gap between Grade 10 and Grade 9... I do not know how they identify the needs for every level”. To sum up, participants explained that the goals of the curriculum were not clear and that needs analysis was not carried out; not only because they were not involved, but also because the goals did not answer current students’ needs. Brown (1995) explains that this can be the case in certain circumstances; as despite systematic needs analysis, theoretical estimation of needs is inevitable. Richards (2003:53) concedes that foreign language teaching in many countries “is based on what curriculum planners consider best for students to study at school”. Thus curricula are based on perceived needs and potential needs which may be unrecognised.

In my view, the UAE is a young country and the attempt to adopt a perceived view of needs is not a crime. A more systematic investigation of students’ needs, however, might ensure more satisfactory learning outputs. On the other hand, the curriculum should be interactive to accommodate the changing language needs of learners (Brown, 1995). While estimation of needs is not wrong at the beginning, it should not continue to be the rule in which things are done. Teachers, and students, have to be consulted continuously and their feedback should inform the statement of objectives according to the expressed needs.

While the general goals are stated in the 1994 Curriculum Document, this document is not available to the public including teachers. Participants explained that they had never seen

the curriculum document and even did not know what a curriculum document was. Responses like: “The curriculum document? I don’t have any idea about it” (T7), and “I can’t remember seeing or hearing about anything as such” (T16), were common among the participants. Some of them were even sarcastic about my question. Consider, for instance (T2)’s response: “What’s that?... [laughing] another question, please!...Who am I to see it?”. Only (T1), who had a previous work experience at the Curricula Development Centre, reported having seen it but admitted that it had not been used as a basis for preparing the new textbooks by saying: “I doubt whether it has been the basis for any of the books in the new curriculum” (T1).

Davies (1993) discusses the importance of the curriculum document for teachers but admits that it is uncommon for them to report that they have seen the curriculum document or its guidelines. In the case of the 1994 Curriculum Document, the document has not been formally published. It is true that the general goals for each level are listed in the teacher's book of that level; still a comprehensive document would be helpful for teachers. Since schools in the UAE are divided into levels, the fact that teachers do not know what is taught in the lower educational levels makes their job in understanding the students’ needs somewhat difficult. The remark: “Who am I to see it?” (T1) conveys a recurrent issue in the findings that has to do with powerlessness versus authority that seems to be the basis for most issues related to teachers’ perceptions of curriculum change.

#### **5.2.1.2 Curriculum Evaluation: “If nobody listens, why should we speak?”**

In response to interview questions related to materials evaluation, all the participants in the three schools declared that they had not been asked to voice their opinions on the new

materials since their introduction in the past two years, and the same thing applied for the current year. According to participants, they “have never seen any of the curriculum people...Nobody has ever come to ask ...about the curriculum” (T12) and “there is no type of evaluation” (T9).

The participant who had worked at the Curricula Development Centre confirmed the other participants’ observation of lack of materials evaluation for the new curriculum: “As for the books in the secondary stage, nothing is done about them” (T1). In the former curriculum, however, teachers cited a few incidents where they received feedback forms, as (T3) remarked: “Not with this book. In the past, they used to send us questionnaires that we had to fill in. This was all what they did”. In addition, one participant cited her participation in the former curriculum evaluation project (see 3.3.2.2 a), whereby she was a member of the group of teachers interviewed. Other than this, all participants agreed that no attempts have been made to evaluate the new English Language curriculum in the secondary stage. Nonetheless, participants recalled no real modifications in the textbooks other than correcting misprints.

Overall, participants agreed that the only channel for conveying feedback to the Curricula Development Centre was through supervisors. As (T13) remarked: “Whenever we meet with our supervisors, we draw their attention to the things which we really suffer from”. It was surprising for me to realise that even supervisors had not formally collected feedback from teachers, since according to (T10): “You are the first one to ask us about our opinions”. Nonetheless, one participant stated that supervisors might not be the right people to talk to. As (T13) realised: “We expressed ourselves but maybe not directly to the people who are in charge”. To clarify this point, I asked them to explain the type of feedback they

had given to their supervisors. It appeared that most feedback was “Just oral feedback” (T13), and that they “normally write the comments when (they) are asked to” (T10) only. Consequently, to check for the utilisation of teachers’ feedback in improving the materials in the past, I asked the participants to talk about the degree of response to written feedback, in consideration to the forms supplied to them, on the previous curriculum. They replied with: “the same book without modifications...Even the printing mistakes stay as they are for several years till they are changed” (T1). The case, as participants conceded, was not different in the new curriculum either. With regard to on-going modifications, it was clear from the interview responses that this point was an apparent defect in the curriculum, as materials were not normally modified save for printing errors.

Seeing that the Curricula Development Centre has not taken any measures for curriculum evaluation of the new textbooks, as participants reported, I asked them to explain the reasons for not taking initiative in sending feedback since there had been a general discontent with the current ‘books’. They explained that they had not taken the initiative because they feared rejection, and they thought that their opinions would be undervalued. Consider, for instance (T3)’s argument: “Will they be interested?... If they don’t ask me for my opinion it means that they are not interested in it”. Other participants also thought that their feedback was not sought because their opinions were not respected; therefore they had not taken the initiative to convey their evaluation of the books. Several declarations sum up the overall perceptions of those participants, such as: “They don’t care for what teachers say” (T1); “They look at the teacher as someone who is not important” (T4); “It seems that they do not respect the opinions of teachers” (T3) and “I do not feel that they really appreciate our views” (T9). In addition, participants lacked initiative because they feared rejection. As (T8) complained: “Someone must ask me to give my opinion otherwise, who

would care for it?” Also they believed that their efforts would be futile, as (T16) declared “Giving feedback takes time and effort. If nobody wants to listen, why should we speak?” In addition, teachers did not claim their place in the curriculum by participating in the evaluation process because they sought to maintain their self-respect, as (T4) remarked: “We have to wait for them to ask us. If we tell them our opinion without being asked to say it, they will say it is not our business. They must have the initiative, not us”.

Curriculum theorists agree that periodic evaluation of the components of the curriculum assists in monitoring the curriculum to overcome any gaps and carry out the necessary corrections. (e.g. Beattie & Thiessen, 1997; Brown, 1995; Cronbach, 1985; Ganguly 2001; Popkewitz, 2000; Richards, 2003; Sheldon, 1988; Tribble, 2000). Notwithstanding this, according to local research findings which back up this finding, Shaw et al (1995) also assert that empirical evaluation of curriculum is lacking in the UAE. This finding also confirms Ghareeb’s (1996) finding that evaluation in the UAE is not systematic, and depends on impressionistic remarks, and that where evaluation forms are used, these are merely routines. This also confirms my previous research findings (Alwan, 2003b) that follow-up is lacking in the curriculum, and communication channels for passing feedback had not been established in public schools. Similar to the case under investigation, where incidents of feedback questionnaires were cited, teachers singled out printing errors as the only modifications in the materials.

### **5.2.2 Teachers’ Roles in Implementing the Curriculum**

In answer to the research question: How do EL teachers perceive their role in implementing the new curriculum? Analysis of the data revealed that teachers perceived their role to be

restricted to teaching the materials. They disputed whether their role has changed as a result of curriculum change or not. They also explained that they had no authority in curriculum change. On the contrary, they admitted that they would like to claim a more active role in the curriculum if only they were involved.

#### **5.2.2.1 “I am just the teacher”**

Several recurrent remarks from the participants as well as direct responses to the interview questions revealed the finding that the teachers felt that their only role was to teach what they were given. This highlighted their perception that they were passive receptors of change rather than active participants in the process. Remarks like: “I am just the teacher” (T14, T15 & T5); “A teacher only” (T6); “just... a classroom teacher” (T3); “my role is just teaching” (T15), and “It is definitely teaching the book” (T13) are indicative of the teachers’ perceptions of themselves as performing a limited role in curriculum development. Some teachers indicated that they were satisfied with this role: “I am satisfied with what I am doing... I like teaching” (T10), and “We as teachers play an important role in teaching the materials” (T12). On the other hand, several participants were not satisfied with this role and some felt that they had been excluded from the process of curriculum change. The following excerpt is an example of this: “I am only teaching the book. However, I should be playing a more active role. Currently, I don’t feel I am part of the process. I just have to teach, follow the required procedures” (T11).

More often than not teachers are viewed as technicians who should follow the prescribed curricula that are usually dependent on tests. The same circumstances apply to the UAE context, as explained earlier, since the whole curriculum is seen as materials that are to be

taught to meet the requirements of the final exam. According to Young (1979), teachers prefer to carry out their instructional role more than participate in any other aspect of the educational processes. But I do not think that they would refuse participation in other processes when they realise that their contribution would benefit their students too. As Marlow and Minehira (1996) entertain, the perspective which teachers hold of the curriculum is a 'micro perspective'. They assert that teachers perceive the curriculum from the perspective of what they do for learners in the classroom.

As the findings indicate, participants had different perceptions concerning whether their role has changed with the change in the curriculum. From one perspective, some participants saw that their role in the new curriculum had changed. In the past, as they explained, they used to deliver the materials in the same way they were presented in the textbooks. In the current curriculum, however, they modify the materials according to students' needs by preparing worksheets or bringing in their own teaching aids. As they remarked: "My role has changed" (T12); "The books are completely different and they require different work" (T10), and "I think that there is a change... There is more challenge in the new book" (T16). From another perspective, analysis of data strongly suggests that some participants view their role in the curriculum as stable despite the change. The following excerpt supports this finding: "It is the same, nothing has changed. I am a teacher, nothing has changed. Can you change me, give me materials that will. I am doing the same tasks; I am preparing exams, marking them, teaching students, doing exercises and giving homework. What has changed? Nothing" (T10).

This view was underpinned by their perception that they considered themselves just teachers of the materials. The remark: "As a teacher, as someone who is teaching the book,

I am the same” (T10), explains why they perceived their role as stable despite the differences in contributions to the materials.

Although some teachers reported other roles associated with the role of teaching the materials, the roles did not appear to be new as a result of curriculum change. For instance, as they came into close contact with their students, teachers felt that their job included other aspects such as following-up students’ results. As teachers, their role encompassed a broad spectrum of tasks such as those found in this excerpt:

“As a teacher, I do everything. I am a prompter, I explain the materials, I prepare my own aids. I prepare my OHTs, CDs with PowerPoint presentations. I do everything the curriculum needs. I play the role of an examiner. I have to prepare my own exams, according to the rubrics specified. I am a facilitator, trainer, coach, everything. I have to do everything in class...And outside the classroom...I am responsible for a class. I have to collect all the grades...for all subjects. I have to revise them and prepare report-cards. I have also to supervise outside activities in the school. I participate for celebrations on special occasions. I have a duty once a month to watch the girls at the end of the school day” (T6).

The above roles, however, were not the result of change. They contain the same tasks that were required of teachers in the former curriculum. This explains why some teachers viewed their role in the curriculum as stable. Blake et al (1996) also report their findings that teachers manage to balance various roles inside the school but these roles are interconnected with their instructional role. In my view, when we consider the teachers’ role from this perspective, it does not seem to change with curriculum change. Al-Sadan (2000) also found that the role of the teachers in the curriculum in Saudi Arabia is to teach the prescribed materials without being involved in curriculum development. He concurs that this is a sign of weakness in the curriculum and calls for active participation of teachers in the process of curriculum development which according to them leads to better pupil performance.

According to Elliott et al (1999) teachers are more active in teaching and testing roles than in any other part of the curriculum. However, Brown (1995) argues that most roles that teachers carry out are self-imposed ones. A crucial finding here is that all but one respondent seemed to underestimate their roles. This indicates that many teachers had low self-concept (see 5.1.3.1).

Roelofs and Terwel (1999) report research findings that teachers' roles change during curriculum change due to the change in demands. Conversely, Karavas-Doukas (1998) reports that teachers view stability in their role in spite of curriculum change. Similarly, in the current study, the role of teachers had not changed with the change in curriculum. Seeing it from the broad perspective of the process of curriculum development, the role of the teachers remained as the end receptors of the product.

### **5.2.2.3 Teachers' Perceptions of their Roles in Curriculum Development: Implications of Teacher Metaphors**

When considering their role in the curriculum, all the teachers in this study felt isolated, neglected and undervalued. As a result, this affected their self-concept (see section 5.1.3). Realising that their major contribution to curriculum development was limited to teaching the materials, which they considered a peripheral role, they undervalued their role in the process. Consequently, the metaphors that they used to describe their role in the curriculum echoed the above issues.

Bowers (1992:31) defines metaphors as: “shared perceptions, captured in language through allegory and illusion, simile and cliché”. As Inbar (in Ben-Peretz et al, 2003:279) concedes, “metaphors rest on the mental process of selection and emphasis”, meaning that teachers’ metaphors are expressions of teachers’ perceptions that teachers unconsciously emphasise. Whether these images are truly representative of other teachers’ views in the context of the study rather than personal ones needs to be investigated. However, the literature on teacher metaphors emphasises the proposition that metaphors that teachers use reflect their perceptions (e.g. Reagan & Osborn, 2002; Sugrue, 1997; Von Wright, 1997).

In one statement, a teacher projected her perception of her place in relation to her role in curriculum development that came as part of the current change in curriculum. By saying: “Where do I see myself? Out of the circle! Where am I?...If it were a pyramid, I am in the very very far bottom”, (T2) conveyed her feelings of powerlessness, inferiority and isolation. In essence, the metaphor is reflective of four aspects of the teacher’s perception of her place in curriculum change: control, hierarchy, exclusion and low self-concept. As shall be seen later, teachers reason that they have no significant role to play in curriculum development other than teaching the prescribed materials (see 5.2.2.1).

Another metaphor about the teacher’s role is that of a teacher of the ‘Holy Book’, which was cited by two participants. Consider these excerpts from interviews: “Well, I think we should not deal with the book as the ‘Holy Book’ that cannot be changed” (T9); and “We just teach the ‘Holy Book’” (T4). The concept of the ‘Holy Book’ in the Muslim culture refers to the ‘Quran’. To use the label to refer to a school textbook, even mockingly, is reflective of the view that the ‘book’ is the centre point of the curriculum and that the teachers’ role is to deliver the content of the book and not to change anything in it.

Another metaphor that raises the issue of powerlessness and inferiority is that of two teachers describing their roles in the process of curriculum development as that of the obedient slaves as in the following excerpts: “For now, I am the obedient slave... an obedient slave who does what his master instructs him to do” (T7); and “I am an obedient slave. I have to do what I am told to do; I have to do what I am required to do” (T6). This metaphor connotes inferiority and low self-concept as well as the passivity of the teachers’ position as mere receptors of change.

Further, there is a striking metaphor of a participant seeing teachers as prisoners of the exam in the following excerpt: “And also we are prisoners of the exam format. How can we change the topic for the composition? Suppose it appears on the exam. We are prisoners, we cannot change anything” (T5). This metaphor too brings up the issue of powerlessness when considering the teachers’ roles in curriculum change and is expressive of teachers’ feelings of helplessness.

Finally, the metaphor of the curriculum developers sitting in an ivory tower, which was given by one of the participants depicts the perception that teachers constantly emphasised throughout the interviews, that they were alienated: “Those who are responsible for curriculum, they are in their ivory tower away, far away from the field” (T2). In my view, involving teachers in curriculum processes may help overcome this problem of inferiority and powerlessness, and improve their contribution. This argument is also pursued in the proceeding section.

#### **5.2.2.4 Authority in Curriculum Change**

Deducing that the participants had an external sense of agency, that they perceived that their contribution to curriculum was controlled by forces outside themselves (Williams & Burden, 2000), I pursued the topic further and asked them in the subsequent interviews whose authority they thought curriculum change was. Several participants had no idea who had the authority but they all agreed that they did not have it. Some of them thought that the authority lay within the hands of their superiors: curriculum developers in the MoE, the senior supervisor and their supervisors. Apparently, there should be a close relationship between curriculum developers and teachers and the communication gap between the two parties needs to be bridged (Brown, 1995; Jackson, 1980).

Participants, who held a view of the supervisors as having authority in curriculum change, explained how they used them as their prime channel for conveying curriculum feedback. In reality, however, the status of the supervisors is not better than teachers in this regard (Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996). According to the participant who had a previous work experience at the Curricula Development Centre: “The Minister himself should issue the decree to change. Even the members of the Curriculum Centre couldn’t modify a book without a ministerial decree. At least this is what they told me when I was there” (T1). Why teachers considered supervisors as having the authority can be explained by the hierarchical perception of the authoritative role of the supervisor. In summary, teachers thought highly of their supervisors. There are various reasons for this; the major one is that they are responsible for teacher appraisal. This might also be the reason why they did not complain when they received no training from their supervisors. However, there is a need to

investigate the teachers' perceptions of their supervisors as mediators in the process of curriculum development.

Al-Sadan (2000) asserts that curriculum development in most Arab countries is centralised with no flexibility for teachers to participate in the various processes of curriculum development. Overall, researchers are against centralisation of curriculum decision-making (e.g. Fullan, 1993 & 1999; Golby, 1985; Harris, 2001; Spikes, 1992). According to Spikes (1992), imposed curriculum change is a reality in many countries all over the world too. Harris (2001) warns that this has negative consequences on teachers since they tend to be blamed when the outcomes of change do not meet expectations of curriculum planners. Along the same line of the argument, Head and Taylor (1997:121) contend that "teachers sometimes find themselves responsible for the outcome of a situation, but without the power to influence it".

To sum up, when considering the authority for curriculum change, teachers perceived their supervisors as authoritative figures. Their responses in the interviews implied that they did not think of themselves as having any form of authority. This signifies the issue of powerlessness during top-down curriculum change. This is similar to Hadley's (1999) and Barrow's (1984) findings that teachers are normally placed at the bottom level of the hierarchy in curriculum change. Gibbs et al (1999) recognise that teachers are aware of this hierarchy. I see that teachers in this study had been aware of this hierarchy too but appeared to be powerless and frustrated. They had been aware of the hierarchy in decision-making which places them at the bottom of the scale. Harris (2001) explains that mandated change implies bureaucracy and hierarchical ranks, and contends that teachers lose control over what to be taught when they have mandated curriculum. White (2001) reports that teachers

are aware that they have a 'low professional status'; they feel that they are not respected and believe that their views are not appreciated. This status causes "low morale amongst the teaching profession" (White, 2001:85). Apple (1997) recommends a power shift so that the power goes to teachers. He concedes that those involved are not the reason for this hierarchy. The hierarchy, as he concedes, is simply the result of the system of bureaucratisation and the teachers' reaction to the system which leads to this hierarchy. In consequence, Webb (2002) and Holt (1986) recommend that teacher education should show teachers that they have rightful power that they should exercise in the process of curriculum change. Similarly, Radnor et al (1995) call for empowering teachers to claim their voice at least by rejecting that which they think is not right. Waters and Vilches (2001) posit that ownership is an essential element in accepting change. Therefore, teachers' participation in curriculum development enforces ownership and facilitates acceptance in the form of implementation. In the same vein, Allfrey (1990) recommends that teachers contribute to curriculum planning from the beginning. White (2001) contends that teachers have a moral right to be consulted in curriculum matters and Alexander et al (1997) propose that involving teachers in the curriculum development leads to professional renewal.

While teachers in the UAE do not tend to exercise power even in areas where they are highly dissatisfied (Alwan, 2003a & b), several studies (e.g. Osborn et al, 1997; Radnor et al, 1995) report that teachers rebel against innovations in aspects of the curriculum when they are unable to "accommodate the expected practice into their beliefs and the values they held about pedagogical practice and the nature of the knowledge that should constitute the English curriculum" (Radnor et al, 1995:335). Radnor et al (1995) encourage teachers to feel empowered to claim their voice in educational matters that they perceive in need of change. They posit that teachers themselves need to claim their power and the government

should listen to professionals in matters of educational concern. Similarly, Ganguly (2001) recommends a change of policy in Arab Gulf States to involve teachers in the process of curriculum change.

On the other hand, the contextual factors have to be considered in examining this perception. The work context does not allow for teachers' voices to effect change in any way (also Suliman, 2000). While the majority of the teachers are expatriates who conceive of themselves as temporary employees– and it is may be understandable why they do not claim their voice– the national Emirati teachers do not seek to claim their voice either. It is obvious that the hierarchical perception dominates in this context.

#### **5.2.2.5 Teachers' Voice in Curriculum Change: Retrospective and prospective**

The findings indicate absence of coordination between curriculum experts and classroom teachers. Due to their past experiences in this matter, participants had low expectations of involvement in future curriculum projects as they perceived that they had been alienated. In response to the question: "In case there were any plans, to what extent do you think you will have a role in them?" they were sceptical and ruled out any future involvement. Understandably, some teachers were sarcastic about their current role in the curriculum development process as mere teachers of the textbooks (see 5.2.2.1). An important finding at this point is that the participants construed the fact that they were not asked for feedback as distrust in them. As one participant remarked: "May be they do not trust teachers" (T16).

Not all the participants were dissatisfied with this hierarchical status in terms of decision-making in curriculum development. However, some participants were aware that they should take action with regard to participation in other curriculum processes. As one teacher remarked, “To be honest, we should work harder. We have to talk to the people who are in charge” (T3). Several participants expressed awareness that they should have a voice in the matter. In response to the question: “Who should have the authority to ask for change?” they responded with: “The teachers are the only people who deal with the curriculum and they know about its problems and the students’ needs. Teachers always look for the better, so they should be entitled to ask for change in the curriculum” (T6); and “The teachers should have the power to call for change. The people in the Ministry should listen to them. Teachers deal with the books in the classroom. They know the students, they cover the books, they know the problems that these books have inside the classroom” (T15). Although they viewed teaching as their main role, many participants have voiced their wishes to be involved in various curriculum processes. The above excerpts from interviews show that teachers are critically aware of what their roles should be.

The reason why the curriculum experts had not contacted teachers remains a mystery. However, according to the participant who had a previous work experience at the Curricula Development Centre, the curriculum experts are busy with their workloads since they are not only responsible for developing the public schools curriculum but also they are in charge of investigating commercial teaching materials used by hundreds of private schools throughout the country.

Although Rassekh (2001) refers to UAE report on a regional conference on curriculum change which claims that the MoE values the role of teachers in improving the education

process, no proofs have been provided to support these claims. On the other hand, the local literature calls for giving better roles for teachers in the UAE who project their demands of getting involved actively in decision-making processes (Altraifi, 1999). Being mere transmitters of the content of the books should not be the role that the teachers are in charge of. Teachers can participate in other curriculum processes. While currently they find very limited freedom in adopting the materials, they should neither be restricted by the current intensive content nor the time demands. In addition, they should be involved in other curriculum development processes as well. For instance, they should be surveyed continuously to check the suitability of the current aims of the curriculum to students' needs and adjust the textbooks accordingly. Further, if piloting materials is not feasible, the manuscripts can be checked by panels of teachers to check their suitability. I would argue that the effectiveness of the teaching material does not become clear till its implementation. Therefore, further feedback should be collected and amendments to the materials have to be carried out regularly.

One aspect that is helpful in facilitating acceptance of change is to make the local community aware of any anticipated change plans (Fullan, 2001 a & b; Barrow, 1984). This explains why teachers in this context had their problems in accepting the change easily since they had not been aware of upcoming change. As Burns (1995) contends the voice of people concerned with curriculum change should have the high priority. She argues that teachers' views should be explored and they should be assisted to cope with any problems which arise during implementation. Brown (1995) also argues for the importance of involving teachers in materials selection to win their acceptance in spite of its faults: "If all teachers are involved in the decisions about which materials to select...they will probably

be much more willing to use the chosen material, even if they did not fully agree that the selected materials were the best of all possibilities” (Brown, 1995:162-163). A similar view is given by Collins and Waugh (1998) who posit that the higher the level of participation in the change process the more receptive the teachers are. However, I do not agree with this view in involving teachers as a means to gain their silence for administrative gains. Involving teachers emerges from my conviction that their views and feedback on the curriculum are based on solid grounds of experience. Barrow (1984) concedes that involving teachers in curriculum development should be based on the fact that they are change agents and are qualified to do so rather than to buy their silence. Harris (2001) condemns some curriculum authorities which tend to create a façade of representative teacher participation, while in reality participation is minimal. She explains that marginalisation of teachers in the process of curriculum change leads to low morale as well as feelings of dissatisfaction.

### **5.3 TRAINING AND SUPPORT DURING CURRICULUM CHANGE**

This section attempts to answer the third major research question: How do EL teachers perceive their training in implementing the new curriculum? As I mention below, overall, the participants expressed their dissatisfaction due to the lack of training. They declared that the current training provision was lacking in terms of orienting them with the new teaching materials and other aspects of the new curriculum. Absence of on-going support was also found to be another problem. While there is shortage in what they are provided with, teachers continue to work to the best of their abilities depending on their own funds due to the deficiencies in curriculum resources and their own initiatives in terms of

professional development. The issue why teachers had not complained about this inefficiency in the provision of training and curricular support is discussed in this section.

### **5.3.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Support: "I call it lack of support"**

In answer of the question: How do EL teachers perceive support during curriculum change? Analysis of the data revealed that all the participants complained that there was no practical support in the curriculum. However, they continued to do their work diligently depending on their own funds.

The literature considers curricular support as an essential aspect of curriculum change. (e.g. Ganguly, 2001; Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001; Markee, 1997; Marlow & Minehira, 1996; Seller, 2001; Short et al 1994; Smith 1990 & 1991). However, the findings of this study indicate that curricular support was lacking. In general, participants agreed that curricular and administrative support with regard to the curriculum was inefficient: financially, technically and pedagogically.

With regard to lack of finances and the teachers' initiative in self-funding for the curriculum requirements, I found the case to be the same in the three schools. This meant they could not adapt the materials unless they depended on their own resources. They complained that the basic resources were missing and that they compensated for this by paying from their own pockets. As one participant remarked, "There are no facilities. In this school, you have to pay for the copies that you make. We do it on our own expenses outside the school" (T9). Where there are available resources, teachers had to pay for the service, as appears in the remarks: "We pay them to have our worksheets and exams

copied” (T4) and “In the school... we pay for photocopying” (T1). So, technically, photocopying was not available unless in some cases for exams where teachers had to type them at home since no computers were available for their use. An exception in one of the schools is the availability of a computer with data show equipment that had recently been purchased using funds raised by the school for this purpose. On the other hand, in another school, there was a computer room used as a resource centre but teachers were not allowed into it for fear of causing technical faults, and teachers in this school depended on preparing their materials at home.

Lack of resources in UAE schools has been admitted by the Curricula Development Centre in its report to a regional conference. Such constraints include: “The inadequate availability of instructional resources (textbooks, teachers’ guides, maps, wall charts, audio-visual materials, computer based materials) is considered as the main bottleneck” (Rassekh & Thomas, 2001:89). In gross contrast to this confession, the report mentions some sixty-nine existing language laboratories in UAE schools. While there has been one in one of the schools in this study, which has been there since the 1970s, the equipment was found to be faulty, and the laboratory had been not in use for years.

As for school libraries, participants agreed that they were under-resourced, thus also confirming Altraifi’s (1999) findings about the status of teachers in the UAE. According to her:

“[I]n addition to fulfilling their statutory requirements, teachers are expected by administrators to prepare teaching materials to help and support (their) lessons...The ministry of education does not provide specific funds for materials such as posters, illustrations, models....for which individual schools must take responsibility...This has led to their wide spread of provision by teachers using their own money” (Altraifi, 1999:106).

As to why teachers resorted to this can be understood through participants' perceptions that their performance would be weak without supplementing the materials. As teachers remarked, "If I don't have the facilities I need how can I be effective?" (T1) and "How do they expect us to do our job well if the basics are missing?" (T9). This is also in accordance with Altraif's findings that teachers perceived the lack of teaching aids as a sign of weak teacher performance. She recommends proper funds given to schools to alleviate the teachers' efforts in trying to maintain a good standard of performance.

Similar conditions have also been reported in other Arab countries. For instance, Gahin and Myhill (2001) found that in Egypt, the government schools lacked resources and that teachers had to seek them outside the schools which they perceived was expensive for them. Blake et al (1996) also report their findings of little concrete support for the teachers in their study.

Waters and Vilches (2001) recommend monitoring and supporting teachers during innovations so that they are given 'trouble-shooting' help. With regard to this type of support, the participants admitted that it was lacking. Teachers had nobody else to depend on when problems occur in the curriculum except supervisors who were neither available nor qualified to deal with curricular issues as they lacked the knowledge of the curriculum (Ghareeb, 1996). Thus pedagogical support was also limited to the supervisor's availability, and teachers had to depend on themselves to solve their problems. Overall, participants voiced their dissatisfaction with regard to the quality of support they were having. They

asserted that in saying: “Support? It is not really support” (T13); “I call it lack of support” (T9) and “It’s very weak” (T10).

Holt (1986) criticises the limited role of the curriculum advisors or inspectors. He explains that they are detached from the field and if they do visit schools then there are time restrictions to what they are able to offer. They have a conflicting role of providing assistance in curriculum matters as well as evaluation. The same applies to the context of the U.A.E. (Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996; Suliman, 2000).

Richards (2003) discusses the parallel relationship between quality teaching and support. Similarly, Graves (2003) advises that in order to ensure implementation, things which teachers identify as restrictions that cannot be changed need to be recognised; such as absence of resources and student motivation. However, she and Elliott (1994) observe that lack of resources may seem a constraint to some teachers but it may encourage other teachers to be creative in utilising the available ones. Likewise, Richards (2003) concedes that deficiencies in the materials or the resources are not an issue if we have good teachers. As for the teachers in this study, participants did their best to make up for the lack of support. They had become creative in dealing with ‘the book’ in their own ways in terms of teaching aids and devising tasks. Furthermore, it is clear from the interviews that the absence of curricular support made room for more cooperation among teachers. They mentioned this by saying: “We shared ideas with teachers.... We exchanged teaching aids such as worksheets. Even we exchanged PowerPoint lessons” (T16); and “In fact, I cooperate with my colleagues here....We cooperate with teachers in other schools” (T8). Ghareeb (1996) also reports teachers networking together to make up for inadequate

support; and Wright (1981) stresses support in curriculum through cooperation among peers.

By commending teachers' initiatives, I am not saying that I approve of the current status of curricular support. On the contrary, I would argue that teachers' initiatives in compensating for lack of support may not imply only dedication to their profession as it can also be construed in other ways. First, I would like to discuss why teachers had not complained to the MoE given the many drawbacks in support and training. As for the participants, their responses conveyed 'learned-helplessness' and the moral issue of preserving dignity. As one participant remarked, "This is lack of support. But we cannot complain...There is no use in complaining, nobody would listen. They would think that we do not want to work. We prefer to be silent" (T1). According to them, any complaint may be construed as inefficiency on the part of the teachers. This is the same reason expressed in a similar case in Allfrey (1990).

As the local literature reveals (e.g. Altraifi, 1999; Hokal & Shaw, 1999) curriculum resources have always been underprovided in UAE schools. On the other hand, evaluation of teachers included the use of teaching aids as one of the criterion for effectiveness. According to Richards (2003), to achieve quality in teaching it is necessary to generate work environments which support teachers, and teachers should not be left to worry about lack of resources. When teachers do other chores than teaching then this is at the cost of their instructional duties (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2003). I agree with this view point and add that in cases where schools are under-funded, the act of teachers' paying for expenses of teaching should not be taken for granted and made to pass unrecognised. While charity is a valued act in the Muslim society and some teachers may volunteer to 'donate' to the

schools in concern for the welfare of their students, I do not think that all teachers are driven by this noble cause although others may be. As I argued earlier, the absence of certain teaching materials is considered a deficiency in the teachers' performance (also Altraifi, 1999). Within the current teacher evaluation system, the motives which drive teachers may be the sustenance of their own welfare to secure renewal of their contracts. Supervisors may be impressed by this humanitarian act, as who would undervalue someone who cares enough to put professional needs over personal ones? Such acts, I think, should be discouraged as they may interfere with the validity of the appraisal report. The only way to discourage it would be to ensure that schools are well-funded. In cases where there is shortage in funds, the evaluation of teachers should not include the use of teaching materials save for those which are available to teachers. The question why teachers do not complain may also be linked to the same issue of job security. To make my point clear, I would like to refer to the fact that supervisors are in charge of teacher appraisal and teachers may not complain about training since supervisors are responsible for it (Ghareeb, 1996). Therefore, complaints may threaten job security. On the other hand, since there are no communication channels established with schools, (Alwan, 2003b), teachers' feedback about any issue could not be revealed without consulting supervisors, which is again a threat to job security.

### **5.3.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Training**

To answer the research question: How do EL teachers perceive their training during curriculum change? I prompted the participants to relate to this aspect in the curriculum and how they felt about it. In response to the interview question on what training had been received for teaching the materials, many participants responded with remarks that asserted

that they had not received any form of training. For example, they said: “There are no training courses” (T13) and “We didn’t have any training” (T2). There was an exception in two schools where teachers of Grade 10 had had a seminar to orient them with the new curriculum materials. This is clear in this assertion: “My colleagues had training for the first secondary on its first year, but there was nothing for the second secondary last year and for the third secondary this year” (T14).

Another participant explained that even if there was any training for Grade 10, teachers who taught ‘the book’ for the first time in the subsequent years, received no training at all: “Usually there is no training except on the first year in which the book is introduced. Anyway, even in the previous year [Grade 11] there was no training on the book. Even this year for the third secondary, they didn’t have any training” (T7). At the level of the MoE, the participant who had had previous work experience at the Curricula Development Centre explained that curriculum leaders adopted cascade training. She said: “Central training was carried out for supervisors but not for teachers. Supervisors are expected to carry out a training course for the teachers in the zone” (T1). One participant explained that this lack of training for two years had been a specific problem in the zone and that ‘some’ teachers in other zones had orientation meetings for materials of grade 11 and 12. As one participant explained: “In some zones they had meetings, at least they gave them an idea about it... We need guidance ... to show us how to deal with the materials” (T5).

Obviously, the findings indicate lack of training and this is not something to be considered as merely a passing remark when talking about curriculum change. The literature considers effective change synonymous with systematic teacher education (Fullan, 1993; Karavas-Doukas 1998). Thus teacher training has a reciprocal effect on curriculum development as

each contributes to the other (Nunan, 1988). Unfortunately, several studies found that training in the UAE is occasional and lacks efficiency (Al-Araj, 1999; Al Mansouri, 2001; Al-Nayadi, 1989; Alraway, 1988; Alwan 2000 & 2001; Ghareeb, 1996). This may have lead Shaw et al (1995) to attribute the traditional methods in teaching to the ineffective training that teachers get. Hence they declare that the system is greatly in need of quality teacher training programmes. Ghareeb (1996) also found that teachers wanted more practical training. The courses which are provided do not fulfil the real needs of the teachers. In addition, she found that evaluation of training was lacking. Altraifi (1999) recommends holding practical training for teachers which involves actual practice on how to teach the materials at hand rather than theoretical training, as is the case in the UAE where training is offered.

The above findings will be discussed here from two perspectives. First, I shall deal with them from the psychological effect of lack of training. Second, I shall discuss cascade training and its negative effect during curricular change. In the first place, when I asked the participants how they felt about the fact that they were not trained, they explained that it was 'frustrating' for them to begin the new year with the 'surprise' that the curriculum has been changed without giving them the materials in advance to review, and that they were required to teach them from the first day of school; the same thing happened throughout the three years of change. As one participant remarked, "We feel surprised with the materials just as the students. Imagine starting with the students in the same condition that everything is new to you, it is very difficult. It leads to depression. It affects the readiness for the school year" (T14). According to McGrail (2005), lack of training during curriculum change causes teachers to feel less qualified, which is what is implied in this remark.

Some participants said they were indifferent to training, some of them were confident that their experiences were assets to them, while others were critical of the fact that exams remained the same and declared that there was no need for training. Remarks like: “Teachers complain, [but] they can cope anyway. They are experienced” (T1); and “I can manage. I have experience. There is no problem” (T15) suggest that teachers with more experience may be able to cope without training. Jacob and Frid (1997:10) found that during the absence of training the more experienced the participants the better they were able to cope “as they felt competent to use their own initiative to make any adjustments they felt would be advantageous for their students”. I am not suggesting that training be dismissed but I am trying to highlight some of the reasons why the curriculum has survived in spite of lack of training. It could be because the teachers, being at secondary school level, have had enough experience to enable them to cope during difficulties.

Conversely, the majority of the teachers in this study regretted that they had not been trained. As the review of the teaching materials revealed, the new curriculum, although eclectic in nature, required a task-based approach which teachers had not been familiar with and had not been formally trained on how to carry out. McGrail (2005) and Dreyfus and Mazouz (1989) posit that when teachers call for training, they seem to express a need that should be met. Similarly, I think that teachers are calling for training because they had sensed the difficulty in sustaining the new practice. In my view, they might not have resorted to traditional teaching techniques if they had been trained on the new method, and of course if the intensity of materials and the nature of exams were reconsidered.

As I concluded earlier, change had several psychological effects on the teachers. With the absence of training, there was a sense of loss as expressed by the metaphor of a participant describing herself without training during curriculum change. According to her, she saw herself: “Like a leaf in the wind...I am left to drift with the current of the wind. I am left without guidance to know where I am going” (T3). This loss is expressed also directly by other teachers by saying: “I am lost. I need someone to tell me what to do with the materials” (T5). Another point is the perceived external sense of agency when teachers saw themselves controlled by others: “I feel bad, really. I blame them because they are guilty for this mess that we have now” (T8). In conclusion, curriculum change without training had negative effects on teachers’ perceptions of themselves as qualified professionals. Gahin and Myhill (2001) observe that normally more attention is paid to the development of materials than to training of teachers on how to deal with them. Jacob and Frid (1997) explain that curriculum change, whether affecting teaching materials or teaching methods create a need among the majority of teachers for assistance. They consider continuing professional development as a factor which contributes to effective change. Training installs feelings of confidence among teachers that they are carrying their job in a highly professional way.

The MoE adopts cascade training as the findings revealed in this study (also Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996). Al-Nayadi (1989:5) sums up the situation in the UAE which still reflects the status quo: "standards of teacher training are absurdly and disgracefully low". This is in accordance with Hayes’s (2000) findings. Hayes defines cascade training as: “A strategy often adopted for introducing major innovations into educational systems in the ‘cascade’ model, in which training is conducted at several levels by trainers drawn from the level above” (Hayes, 2000:137). He found that this strategy is a regular practice in ministries of

education all over the world. However, studies show that the training that reaches the teachers is far less than expected, while curricular change depends for its success on actual practices in the classroom. He observes that although this strategy is cost-effective, it causes “dilution of the training” (Hayes, 2000:138) since the farther down the level, the less that reaches teachers who are normally down the cascade. He also explains that the faults lie in the implementation of the cascade and recommends that experiential and reflective modes of training be used to maintain the success of the cascade training.

Participants had no training with two sets of materials (Grades 11 and 12) in all three schools and with Grade 10 also in one of the schools. Bearing in mind that cascade training is carried out with every new set of materials, I think that supervisors have neglected this part of their job for reasons that cannot be identified in the current study. The main reason in my opinion, however, is lack of follow-up from the MoE. This, as well as potential logistic problems such as funding and finding a training venue and suitable time within the working hours (Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996), might have caused some supervisors to overlook their duties in implementing the training. Richards (2003:105) recommends “on-going feedback on the trainers’ performance through workshops and visits” to ensure that training is carried out, and that trainers use appropriate training modes. As Suliman (2000) observes, the MoE in the UAE claims that there is on-going training for all teachers and supervisors but the reality is that training is a rare occurrence (also Alwan, 2000; Ghareeb, 1996). This finding, however, is not exclusive to the context of the UAE, as other writers reported a similar problem elsewhere in the world (e.g. Gahin & Myhill, 2001; Hedgcock, 2002).

### **5.3.3. Self–development Activities**

In this section, I report findings related to the research question: What forms of professional development do teachers engage in in relation to curriculum change? The findings indicate that this aspect is positive, unlike the other aspects discussed throughout the chapter. As a matter of fact, I think that the deficiencies in training and curricular support, as well as the obstacles encountered by teachers in the new curriculum lead them to be more active in seeking professional development than the local research before the time of change revealed (Alwan, 2000).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) argue that successful implementation of innovation lies in teacher development. Professional development includes training but it also includes self-directed learning. It is evident in the interview responses that the absence of training had ignited the awareness of the need for self–development and teachers, as a result, attended conferences and training activities organised by higher educational institutions and TESOL Arabia – an international organisation for teachers of English to speakers of other languages which is based in the UAE. In addition, some teachers carried out peer-observation and staff-presentations.

An overall positive effect of self–development activities was the main finding here. Remarks like: “It motivates me too. It makes me feel that I am doing something worthwhile” (T9); “It changes the way I teach. I also use varied teaching aids as a result” (T16) and “If you develop yourself, you can embrace all students” (T7), highlight the positive outcome of self-directed teacher development. Another instance is the benefit that teachers gained from attending conferences in that they had practically improved their

performance. As a participant admitted: “I apply everything I read about or I attend... this helps in improving the quality of learning that my students have” (T6). Equally, some teachers also commended staff presentations for their contribution to the curriculum: “I gain so much. Staff presentations are useful in terms of learning about new aspects of teaching and new teaching techniques. It also affects students’ motivation” (T11). Similarly, some teachers felt themselves resourceful as a result of searching the internet. Marlow and Minehira (1996) also report that confidence increases with development. To quote Rowe and Sykes (1989:129) who report similar findings: “there were strong, positive effects of professional development on teachers’ professional self perceptions, and particularly those concerned with indicators of energy, enthusiasm, and satisfaction”. According to Thomas (2003), these teacher initiatives in seeking development are a sign of professionalism. Nunan (1988) posits that effective teacher development is a major factor in contributing to curriculum development. Similarly, Elliott (1994) argues for the importance of the teachers’ roles in curriculum development provided that they become researchers of their practice. While researching practice is an effective development tool, I found that it is not a familiar practise in the context of the study (also Alwan, 2000). It is worth mentioning that none of the teachers cited research as a means of self-development; a finding that calls for further investigations.

It is worth mentioning too that most of the self-development activities mentioned above were related to the curriculum. For instance, peer-observation was mainly related to how teachers delivered the teaching materials, and staff presentations dealt with how to be innovative when delivering the curriculum as well as other educational issues. Most of the participants reported that when going to conferences, they opted for sessions that demonstrated teaching techniques.

This chapter has presented the findings of the study and discussed them in the light of the literature reviewed. In Chapter 6, I shall summarise them, explain their implications and suggest areas for further research.

## CHAPTER VI

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

Given the limitations of the study identified earlier (see 4.10) the findings of this investigation are exclusive to the sample studied. However, when considering the procedures taken to ensure trustworthiness, external transferability to similar settings at least within the context of the UAE is not ruled out. The reader, who is familiar with the context of the UAE, is more likely to recognise the transferability of the findings to other homologous local institutions than someone who is not. In this Chapter, I shall summarise the findings, point out their implications in the local context, and suggest topics for future research within the same issues of concern.

#### 6.1 Phases of Change

Analysis of the teachers' responses indicates that during change, some teachers passed through three affective stages from *excitement* through *frustration* to *confidence*. During the first phase, the initial feelings that they had at the time when curriculum change was first introduced were positive, and they were generally satisfied with their work. This indicated that they had high self-concept and felt motivated. During the second phase, the demands of

the change in the curriculum created feelings of discontent, loss and frustration. In the third phase, the teachers' feelings became more positive; they were confident and more able to manage their time to cover the syllabus, prepare more supplementary materials or simply cope with the difficulties by following certain strategies. While teaching the materials in subsequent years, teachers became more comfortable and regained their high self-concept with regard to trusting their repertoire of knowledge gained through experience (see 5.1.3.3).

The implication of this finding is that change managers need to take affective issues into consideration when planning for curriculum change. While teacher involvement in change processes helps in relieving the stressful effects of change, hard feelings during change are inevitable (Fullan, 1993, 1999; 2001a & 2001b). Training and support should be of great help in reducing the stressful effects of change during implementation. As teachers achieve a level of comfort, encouraging them to network with others and seek professional development may help enhance their confidence (Marlow & Minehira, 1996).

The hypothesis raised by this finding is that a teacher responds to change at its various stages differently and passes through the change cycle which marks out the change in feelings that reflect changes in perceptions. Further investigations are recommended to verify this proposition. The inquiry needs to consider teachers' perceptions from a longitudinal perspective. As a means of data collection, teacher journals would be more revealing in terms of daily reactions to daily conflicts encountered during curriculum change, although they would be new to this context.

## **6.2 Affective Issues during Curriculum Change**

Teachers in this study had conflicting feelings towards curriculum change. On one hand, they had positive attitudes, and on the other hand, they displayed, albeit unconsciously, resistance to it and feared future change. In some respects, they took a positive stance towards change for various reasons. First, they felt that change was justified as the previous materials had been in circulation for a decade without significant modifications to meet the changing needs of the students. Second, they believed that change provided them with learning opportunities as they needed to broaden their knowledge by searching for extra information when the topics dealt with in the materials required that. Third, some of them perceived change as a challenge and enjoyed the process of finding their ways through times of hardship. Last, they also perceived curriculum change as a break in the routine in their ways of teaching. As a result, they commended change from these perspectives. Nonetheless, they also held an antagonistic stance against change. From one perspective, their responses carried tacit resistance to change, and from another, they expressed fear of future change. They actually rejected any change in the near future, as their responses in the interviews showed.

In the investigated case, curriculum change had various affective results on the research participants. They had an external sense of agency, learned-helplessness and low self-concept. They acted against their beliefs and appeared to hold tacit resistance to change.

The implications of this finding are similar to the one mentioned in the preceding section. Involving teachers in curriculum development should improve their morale. Modifying the materials and updating their content according to teachers' feedback is the first and

foremost issue called for in this study. This should combat any practical problems during implantation and contribute to improving teachers' feelings. In addition, it should improve acceptance based on the realisation that the curriculum is a living enduring entity through modification rather than a dead, rigid thing through stability that is insensitive to drawbacks. Another implication here is a need for a change in the nature of the exam from a content-based one to one which focusses on linguistic items and skills. This may help eliminate various problems including psychological ones and help reinforce the value of language mastery over coverage of the materials.

Further research is recommended that takes the form of action research aiming at investigating how teacher involvement in curriculum development affects their receptivity of curriculum change. Another investigation could focus specifically on the development of the English exam paper to be more valid in measuring students' language proficiency than it currently is.

### **6.3 Teachers' Roles in Curriculum Change**

As the findings indicate, teachers perceived that they had just one role to carry out in the process of curriculum change, which is teaching the materials. Perceiving this role as marginal, they appeared to undervalue it and some seemed to be sarcastic about it. They felt that they were excluded from the process of curriculum change and not part of it. If there was any part at all, then it was teaching; which they felt was low on the authoritative hierarchy. They perceived themselves as executors of the higher commands.

The implication of this finding is that the MoE should highlight the value of the teachers' role in the curriculum by involving them in other aspects of curriculum development. Involvement, as I see it, would connote the sharing of power with the teachers. It does not only reflect positive aspects on teachers' perceptions with all their contributions to improving self-concept, it also reflects positively on the curriculum. There is no doubt that the teachers can contribute in updating the data on students' needs and offering suggestions on how materials can be improved. This should make curriculum development an interactive process. It should also make the experienced curriculum reflective of the planned one by bridging the gap between the two. This result should also improve students' achievement to meet the planned objectives in the curriculum. Topics of research in this area may cover any of the hypotheses stated here.

#### **6.4 Teachers' Perceptions of the Process of Curriculum Change**

Participants in this study voiced their perceptions, which were mostly negative, of how the various elements of the process of curriculum change were carried out. Several areas call for further investigations. First, in the area of curriculum goals, the materials need to be examined to find out whether this was an actual problem or that it was just an unjustified perception. Second, in the area of students' achievement, more studies need to be carried out to investigate the factors behind the weaknesses and ways to remedy them. Third, further investigations about the effect of coverage over mastery need to be carried out as well. Fourth, further research is recommended to validate the teachers' claims about their students as well as to find out whether it was the exam which really affected the teachers' practices or other factors within the context. Fifth, further investigations need to be done to

find out if a change in testing regime would improve the teachers' approach to the materials and their teaching techniques. Sixth, further research is recommended to investigate the reasons for not carrying out continuous curriculum evaluation, and the factors which prevent the modification of teaching materials. Finally, the reasons for lack of the provision of training during curriculum change need to be investigated.

Overall, the implications of the findings centre on involving teachers as agents in the process of curriculum change, and actually carrying out the missing processes such as continuous evaluation of the teaching materials and the students' needs. In addition, communication channels need to be established with transparency in dealing with feedback from teachers, as to why the data were taken into consideration or not. Teacher training should be made more active through follow-up of those in charge of it.

### **6.5 Teachers' Metaphors as Expressions of Perceptions**

A finding which calls for further investigation relates to the metaphors that the teachers used (see 5.2.2.3). On the one hand, there is a need to explore whether the metaphors used in this study were evocative expressions of perceptions (e.g. Reagan & Osborn, 2002; Sugrue, 1997; Von Wright, 1997) or mere figures of speech. There is a need to verify whether these metaphors reflect what teachers think or are just clichés in the context. On the other hand, there is a need to inspect whether these metaphors have any implications in the context, and whether they are perceived as such by other teachers in the same setting. For instance, the metaphor of the 'obedient slave' may have political implications of lack of exercising teachers' rights in their job as they perceive themselves as controlled beings who carry out orders thoughtlessly. Nonetheless, more research should be done in this area too.

Further, the implications of the negative connotations of such expressions have to do with improving the status of teachers by giving them voice in the curriculum, as argued earlier.

## **6.6 Contributions of the Study**

Considering that the study is the first of its type in its comprehensive focus on the secondary school EL curriculum in the UAE and on policies taken for changing curricula and roles of teachers in these processes from the teachers' perspective, the study has contributed in various areas of knowledge. It has explored the issues and portrayed a picture of the status quo. From my perspective the findings are transferable, and they may be so from the perspective of many educationists who are familiar with the context. Therefore, I shall now identify areas of further research, in addition to the ones explained in this chapter. These can be recapitulated as follows:

- 1- Participants in this study have identified areas of weaknesses in the secondary EL curriculum. Further investigation is needed in this area to validate them. These can be summarised as follows:
  - a) There is a need to revise the goals of the EL curriculum to make them compatible with actual student needs. The MoE should seek feedback from teachers in this regard.
  - b) There is a need to revise the materials in accordance with emerging student needs and eliminate redundant content. Teachers should have a major role to play in this. They should be provided with effective communicative channels which ensure their voice reaches the right people.

- c) The amount of content should be suitable for the time allotted for learning. Teaching materials need to be piloted before introducing them nationally. Further, based on changing student needs, teachers need to be consulted with regard to the amount of content. More attention is to be paid to the quality of content rather than quantity.
- d) Materials should not be binding and supervisors should give teachers a free hand in the curriculum. Teachers should have the authority to manipulate the content in ways which meet students' needs but do not violate curriculum goals. This should relieve the teachers feelings of being restricted by the materials.
- e) The current student assessment system should be revised. Teachers should report the aspects of the assessment system which hinder their work and their views should be respected. If the exam becomes independent of the content of the teaching materials, teachers' work pressure with regard to time constraints will be reduced, and many of the factors that force teachers to resort to traditional ways of teaching will be eliminated.
- f) Evaluation should be integrated as part of the curriculum. The Curriculum Development Centre should have a more active role in researching the effectiveness of the curriculum by consulting teachers. It is expected that the teachers' feelings of low-self concept will be overcome when they realise that they are playing a better role in the curriculum.
- g) Materials should undergo modifications on a regular basis based on feedback from teachers. The actual implementation of the teachers' recommendations will also improve their self-concept with regard their role in the curriculum.

- h) Teacher training should be made more systematic. The MoE should follow up the training of teachers to ensure that they get the background information needed for dealing with the curriculum materials as well as assessment of students based on the goals of the curriculum. Basically, training teachers on dealing with the new curriculum should be implemented more efficiently. Rather than having it a one-shot activity, training should be held regularly and continuously. In cases where training is offered only on the first year when new materials are introduced, some teachers could be invited to carry out training in the subsequent years for their colleagues who have missed it. This should encourage peer mentoring and make teachers aware of the importance of support from within the school or educational district.
- i) Curricular support should be considered. The Curriculum Development Centre should have a more active role in curricular support. Representatives from the Centre should carry out field visits to observe the curriculum implementation in schools in addition to feedback gathered by supervisors. Further, schools should receive sufficient funds to cater for the requirements of the curriculum.
- j) Regular needs analysis should be integrated as part of the curriculum. The Curriculum Development Centre should follow up on this aspect of the curriculum by consulting teachers on the various aspects of the curriculum. Since it would be hard for the Curriculum Development Centre to follow up individual curricular requirements, networking among schools, at least within each educational district, need to be encouraged. School representatives need to report teachers' feedback to representatives from the

Curriculum Development Centre, or supervisors, who need to be more active in forwarding the feedback to the Curriculum Development Centre. When teachers are involved in this process, they are expected to feel agents of change rather than executors of commands. This should improve their self-concept too.

2- The study has generated hypotheses about areas of weaknesses in the current change attempts in general. They are:

- a) Teachers' voice in the various aspects of the curriculum should be honoured. Teachers in this study expressed hard feelings with regard to their role in curriculum development. Much of the hardships can be eliminated by involving teachers in curriculum development. The curriculum development processes which have been identified as missing by teachers need to be made explicit for them. Teachers need to be empowered to feel that they are important agents of change. This cannot be achieved without actual curriculum development tasks allotted to schools.
- b) More transparency is needed where top-down curriculum change is inevitable. Teachers should be informed of any future plans. This can be feasible if regular updates are posted on the MoE's website. Rather than following rumours which hinder the teachers' work, they need to be clear about what is ahead of them. More active communication channels need to be established as well.
- c) Evaluation of change should reach all the aspects of the curriculum on an on-going basis. Curriculum evaluation needs to be continuous and its result

utilised in modifying the various aspects of the curriculum. The results of the evaluation have to result in actual modifications of the materials or any other element of the curriculum which proves to be causing difficulties such as testing, for instance. Change should not only take the form of new materials but other aspects of the curriculum should be changed too.

- 3- The study has raised critical issues of importance for the management of change. They reverberate how imposed change through contextual hierarchy has an impact on impeding actual implementation of the curriculum in ways which make the enacted and experienced curriculum different from that which is initially planned. Such issues like powerlessness, control and lack of teacher involvement need to be observed and explored in depth.

The study has also contributed to my enlightenment in the issue of curriculum development. I see the above findings as lessons for me in my upcoming career. Personally, I believe it is dangerous to be ignorant of these lessons and even tragic to know them and not do anything about them.

The purpose of this study was to understand teachers' perceptions of language curriculum change. Although the sample in this study provided many insights into understanding teachers' perceptions of curriculum change, it also posed several practical limitations. Therefore, in spite of the fact that I have outlined defective aspects of the process of curriculum change and teachers' roles in it, additional research is needed to investigate the process from the perspective of other stakeholders as well as the effect of these factors on students' achievement and teachers' performance.

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix I:       A. The Goals of the EL Curriculum in the UAE  
                      B. Excerpts from the 1994 Curriculum Document
- Appendix II:       A Description of the Materials Taught in the Secondary Stage: English  
                      for the Emirates 10, 11 and 12
- Appendix III:      English Test Paper Specifications in the Secondary Stage
- Appendix IV:      A. What is curriculum?  
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- Appendix V:        Letter of Invitation to Participate (School principals)
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- Appendix VII:     Interview Schedule
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## Appendix I – A

### The Goals of the EL Curriculum in the UAE

According to the 1994 Curriculum Document, the goals of teaching English are as follows:

1. *to foster the spiritual and intellectual development of the individual in accordance with the teachings of Islam, Arab tradition and the general aims of education in the UAE;*
2. *to promote the economic, social and technological development of the UAE;*
3. *to contribute to the growth of understanding and co-operation between the UAE and other nations;*
4. *to give pupils the valuable educational experience of learning another language, and to develop the discipline that this requires;*
5. *to qualify school leavers for higher studies through the medium of English;*
6. *to qualify school leavers to take up employment that requires the use of English;*
7. *to introduce pupils to other cultures and to the wider world;*
8. *to enable pupils to acquire a basic communicative competence in English in all the four language skills;*
9. *to develop in pupils a critical awareness of the ethical dimension of language use;*
10. *to encourage pupils to acquire the self-study skills, including critical thinking and other mental skills, applicable to learning languages and learning through languages”. (Curriculum Document, 1994:7-8)*

The 1994 Curriculum Document also lists the objectives for teaching English in the secondary stage, which are listed below according to the four language skills:

#### *“ A. LISTENING*

- *understand English spoken at a normal pace by a variety of native-speakers;*
- *understand a wide range of recorded texts (talks, dialogues, phone calls, etc.)*
- *recognize accent variety of English from around the world;*
- *decipher the gist of an incomplete oral message;*
- *extract specific and detailed information from a spoken communication;*
- *listen to news bulletins on radio or television;*
- *listen to a lecture;*
- *listen to and respect others’ viewpoints.*

### *B. SPEAKING*

- *speak with confidence on a wide range of topics, including unfamiliar topics;*
- *initiate and take part in a conversation with native-speakers;*
- *take part in a role-play;*
- *understand an incomplete dialogue by requesting the necessary missing information;*
- *express a wide range of emotions;*
- *argue a logical case.*

### *C. READING*

- *read a variety of text types, including narratives, descriptions, arguments, explanations, etc;*
- *grasp the gist of texts which include unfamiliar language;*
- *extract specific information from a variety of texts;*
- *use reference books (including dictionaries) and libraries;*
- *distinguish between fact and fiction, between emotion and reason;*
- *appreciate the value and joy of reading;*
- *read poetry and other literature;*
- *read silently at a reasonable level of speed and understanding;*
- *identify key sentences and main ideas;*
- *read at least 3 supplementary readers each year at an appropriate level.*

### *D. WRITING*

- *write texts of paragraph lengths on a variety of topics;*
- *write a lengthy report with correct spelling and punctuation;*
- *improve their written work by writing and correcting several drafts;*
- *write one-page formal and informal letters and other business communications;*
- *write short essays which show a development of ideas and the presentation of an argument;*
- *take notes and reconstruct them as text;*
- *make summaries;*
- *appreciate the value of the writing skill, especially for educational progress.”*  
(Curriculum Document, 1994:19-21)

## Appendix I - B

### Excerpts from the Curriculum Document (1994)

**Excerpt 1:** (Introduction and General Principles, page 2)

This document is concerned with the English language in the general school curriculum in both basic and secondary education. For the purposes of planning the syllabus, these two stages have been further broken down into four levels of three years each, as follows:

1. Primary 1-3 (pupils usually aged 6 - 8)
2. Primary 4-6 (9 - 11)
3. Preparatory (12 - 14)
4. Secondary (15 - 17)

**Excerpt 2:** (Introduction and General Principles, page 5)

...

4. The new course will feature a balance between the communicative approach and the explicit teaching of basic grammar and vocabulary. It is possible to find a harmony between the various approaches. Similarly, it will incorporate a balance of all four language skills;
5. One of the most effective means of ensuring successful implementation of new curricula is to integrate effective staff development programmes with any curricula change. The course must take into account the nature of the teachers who will be using it, and its introduction will coincide with the implementation of a full teacher training programme;
6. The development of materials will go hand-in-hand with the systematic collection of feedback from the field to ensure that this course is truly appropriate to the needs of the UAE;

...

**Excerpt 3:** (Recommendations from the Needs Analysis, pages 89-91)

An Assessment of the English Language Needs of the UAE: a survey and analytical study  
Ministry of Education, December, 1992

In the light of the above study and of the UAE Development Plan and the requirements of the University of the UAE (including new ESP courses starting in 1992/93), it is recommended that the content of the teaching materials will meet the following needs:

1. the theoretical and applied needs of higher education and professional life;
2. the need of the students to cope with international changes in technology and electronics;
3. provide learners with a sound understanding of scientific and literary biographies in the local, Arab, Islamic and international spheres;
4. indicate the role of science fiction in arousing thinking and releasing creativity;
5. stretch the role of language descriptive writing and reading;
6. enable learners to transfer their knowledge from one field to another;
7. provide the basis for a cohesive integration of subjects in the secondary stage.

**Recommendations for the New English Course**

1. The course will promote the positive attitude of learners towards learning English. To help them achieve mastery, the course will be longer and include more language, structures and teaching techniques.
2. It is very important to show the functions of language in a graded way, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The course will include lively, meaningful and natural use of language, and simple self-instructional techniques.
3. The course will adopt advanced techniques and technologies in teaching and evaluation.
4. Training programmes will be designed in the light of the actual difficulties encountered by teachers and learners, and suitable solutions suggested.

5. The course will take into account the English language requirements of UAE society:

- a) reinforcing the relationship between the use of the English language and local values. The contents will take this into account in the areas of the learner, local society, international society, Islamic and Arabic heritage, health, science and technologies;
- b) defining the language targets precisely so that learners can achieve a mastery that will enable them to use the language as a tool of study;
- c) specifying the language that will be used to prepare learners for higher studies and for the labour market;
- d) adapting teaching strategies and evaluation in line with the general aim of promoting the standard of English language learning;
- e) developing the professionalism of teachers with a training approach which allows for a variety of training methods.

## **Appendix II**

### **A Description of the Materials Taught in the Secondary Stage:**

#### **English for the Emirates 10, 11 and 12**

##### **1. Materials for Grade 10**

###### **A. The Pupil's Book**

The Pupil's Book for Grade 10 contains eight units; four to be covered in each semester. Each unit focusses on one theme, which is not repeated again, and consists of five lessons. Each lesson has five steps. The steps vary in length and have corresponding activities in the Workbook. Some of them may be covered in a part of a lesson while others may require more time to deal with. The first step is a reading text which may take the form of a short narrative, a letter, a review, a dialogue or a story. At the end of each unit, there is a word list of the vocabulary items selected from the lessons which are subject for testing. The book has coloured illustrations and consists of 108 pages.

###### **B. The Workbook**

Workbook 10 falls in 105 pages. It is divided into 8 units that correspond to lessons in the Pupil's Book. The numbers of the activities are not consistent in each unit; they range from four to 11. The types of activities are listed below:

a. Comprehension

- Answering wh-, yes-no and multiple-choice questions
- Responding to true-false statements
- Filling in missing information in a given table or a report
- Summarising information
- Solving a crossword puzzle
- Finding reference words

b. Grammar

- Making questions
- Rewriting sentences without changing the meaning
- Changing sentences into the negative
- Completing dialogues with missing questions
- Completing statements
- Correcting verbs between brackets
- Joining sentences
- Reordering words to form sentences

c. Functions

- Reading lists of expressions
- Writing suitable expressions for given situations
- Classifying expressions related to given functions

d. Vocabulary

- Filling in spaces with words from the list
- Using words in sentences
- Finding synonyms using a dictionary
- Finding antonyms
- Searching for words to match given meanings
- Looking up meanings of words in a dictionary

e. Writing

- Writing a paragraph on a given topic
- Completing forms and dialogues
- Writing words using given affixes
- Retelling a give story from a different point of view
- Writing a letter/ a postcard

f. Pronunciation

- Identifying homonyms

g. Project work

- Finding information about a given topic

### **C. The Teacher's Book**

Teacher's Book 10 contains brief notes on how to teach each lesson as a whole. The introduction lists the general objectives of the course in the secondary stage and gives a brief description of the materials. Different aspects are adopted in different units which indicates that they were produced by different writers. Some lessons contain answers to the questions in the workbook. There is a comprehensive list of the words that are prescribed for the exam arranged in alphabetical order.

### **2. Materials for Grade 11**

#### **A. The Pupil's Book**

The Pupil's Book for Grade 11 contains six units; three to be covered in each semester. Each unit focusses on one theme, which is not repeated again, and each Unit consists of five lessons. The number of steps varies from one lesson to another. The steps vary in length and have some corresponding activities in the Workbook, as in Book 10. Similarly, some steps may be covered as a part of a lesson while others may require more time to deal with. The first step is a reading text that has a pre-reading activity that precedes it. The text may take the form of a short narrative, a letter, a review, a dialogue or a story, as in Book 10. In every unit, there is a pronunciation activity and a speaking activity. These activities are new features in the course starting from this book and continuing in Book 12. There is a word list in the Pupil's Book 11 at the end each unit. At the beginning of the book, there is a list of phonetic symbols and a table of contents. These, as well as an appendix of irregular

verbs, are new features in the course. The book has coloured illustrations and falls in 128 pages.

## **B. The Workbook**

Workbook 11 falls in 170 pages. It is divided into 6 units that correspond to lessons in the Pupil's Book. There are five activities consistent in each unit which are known as practices. There are detailed grammatical rules in every lesson; five in every unit. The types of activities are listed below:

### **a. Vocabulary**

- Filling in spaces with words from the list/ multiple choice
- Using words in sentences
- Searching for words to match given meanings
- Looking up meanings of words in a dictionary
- Matching words and meanings
- Searching for words in a crosswords puzzle
- Guessing meanings from the context

### **b. Structure**

- Completing statements
- Changing words into nouns
- Completing a table
- Transformation
- Correcting verbs in given sentences / paragraphs
- Word search for given parts of speech
- Multiple choice questions

### **c. Functions**

- Reading lists of expressions
- Writing suitable expressions for given situations
- Matching expressions and responses
- Completing a dialogue with missing parts
- Matching statements to pictures

### **d. Focus on: (this section provides different focus points in every unit)**

- Punctuation marks
- Spelling rules
- Abbreviations
- Gender words

Articles  
Analysing a paragraph into its constituent parts  
Connectives

e. Writing

Critical thinking activities: e.g. writing a plan, solving problems,  
Writing a paragraph on a given topic  
Completing forms and dialogues  
Writing a letter/ a diary  
Writing a story  
Designing posters  
Retelling a give story from a different point of view  
Completing a diagram  
Writing a headline for a given news story

**C. The Teacher's Book**

Teacher's Book 11 also contains brief notes on how to teach each lesson as a whole. The introduction is shorter but it gives a brief description of the materials and has a contents chart which is the same as that in the Pupil's Book. Each lesson in the Workbook begins with the general aims of the unit, and specific objectives listing the structures and functions to be taught in that unit. Some lessons contain answers to the questions in the workbook. Similar aspects are adopted in different units, unlike Workbook 10. The wordlist here is replaced by a list of irregular verbs similar to the one in the Workbook.

**3. Materials for Grade 12**

**A. The Pupil's Book**

The Pupil's Book 12 for Grade 12 contains six units, three to be covered in each semester. Like the other books, each unit focusses on one theme, which is not repeated again.

However, more topics are covered as the theme of the unit seems to be more general. Unlike the previous books, each Unit in Book 12 consists of fifteen lessons. The number of steps varies from one lesson to another and there is more than one reading text in each lesson in some cases. The steps vary in length and have some corresponding activities in the Workbook, as in Books 10 and 11. Similarly also, some steps may be covered as a part of a lesson while others may require more time to deal with. The first step is a reading text that has a pre-reading activity that precedes it and comprehension questions following it. The text may take the form of a short narrative, a letter, a review, a dialogue or a story, as in the other books with the addition of a box containing words and their meanings. There are other new features with regard to the type of texts in this book. There are tables, diagrams, grammatical or functional notes, pictures, activities with spaces provided. In every unit, there is a pronunciation activity and a speaking activity longer than those in Book 11. A new feature that is exclusive to this book is the revision section, which contains functions with lists of expressions and grammatical notes. There is also a summary of what is covered in the whole unit, and a picture-dictionary. There is a table of contents but there is no contents chart as in Book 11. Like the previous books, the book has coloured illustrations but it is longer as it has 227 pages.

## **B. The Workbook**

Workbook 12 consists of 181 pages. It is divided into 6 units of 15 lessons, each of which corresponds to a lesson in the Pupil's Book. The number of activities is not consistent in each unit. The types of activities are listed below:

a. Vocabulary

- Writing definitions for given words or for highlighted words in sentences
- Filling in spaces with words from the list
- Using words in sentences
- Searching for words to match given meanings or opposites
- Matching words and meanings

b. Structure

- Correcting statements with grammatical errors
- Reading to identify specific structures
- Rearranging jumbled statement
- Making up statements from a given grid
- Completing statements
- Transformation
- Retelling a story using a different tense
- Filling in sentences with correct forms of given verbs
- Identifying parts of speech
- Correcting verbs in given sentences / paragraphs
- Word search for given parts of speech

c. Comprehension

- Answering a true-false exercise
- Writing answers to comprehension questions
- Completing tables using information from the textbook
- Completing word maps

d. Functions

- Making up short conversations
- Writing a get-well card including advice
- Writing sentences using given expressions

e. Writing

- Sentences as ideas for a given topic
- Answers to questions to be used as notes for writing a paragraph
- Writing a paragraph on a given topic
- Explaining given terms in short paragraphs
- Organising ideas for an essay
- Completing forms, letters and one-sided dialogues
- Writing letters
- Writing a story
- Punctuation marks

f. Other activities

- Punctuation marks
- Reference skills: arranging words alphabetically
- Abbreviations

### **C. The Teacher's Book**

Like the previous teachers' books 10 and 11, Teacher's Book 12 also contains brief notes on how to teach each lesson as a whole. In addition, it has a section that contains answers for the workbook exercises and another one for the listening activities. The introduction contained in this version is different and comprehensive as it supplies the underlying principles of the course. It also contains a scope and sequence chart. The general recommended teaching procedures are brief. Teachers are mostly given the freedom to choose their own teaching techniques. The book has 135 pages.

## **Appendix III**

### **English Test Paper Specifications in the Secondary Stage**

The type of questions in the English examination paper as follows:

#### **PAPER ONE**

Reading Comprehension (1): The student answers comprehension questions on one of two passages taken from the prescribed book. Types of questions include:

- True/false statements
- WH-Questions

Reading Comprehension (2): The students answer questions on an unseen reading comprehension passage. Types of questions include:

- Finding synonyms
- Pronoun reference
- WH-questions

Letter Writing: Students write a letter similar to the models given in the prescribed materials.

#### **PAPER TWO**

Functional Writing: A choice between two tasks both are taken from the prescribed books.

Paragraph Writing: A choice between two topics ( a general information one and a story), both are covered by the taught materials.

Structures:

- A. 10 multiple-choice questions based on structural areas covered in the prescribed books.
- B. Correcting structural errors in 5 sentences.
- C. Forming questions from given sentences.

Functions:

Students write responses to given situations using the language functions covered in the prescribed materials.

## **Appendix IV-A**

### **What is Curriculum?**

#### **(A) Curriculum as Experience**

- “curriculum is something experienced in situations”, in classroom where there is “a dynamic interaction among persons, things, and processes...not any of the three in isolation... all of these parts are in interaction.” and where experiences are interconnected” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988: 6-9).
- “curriculum (is) not only ...a collection of subjects, but ...the entire set of experiences the students have in the school” (Marlow & Minehira ,1996:6).
- “the school’s curriculum...can be interpreted as the totality of the experience of pupils as they learn and develop, as a product of school, home and life in the community” (Hargreaves et al, 1994:85).
- “curriculum is all those activities in which children engage under the auspices of the school” (Rodgers, 1994:26).
- “a set of activities involving teachers, learners and materials, and that these activities are provided through permanent institutions” (Reid,1975:247).

#### **(B) Curriculum as both Experience and Knowledge**

- “(representation) of knowledge for the purpose of teaching. ...(It is what) the languages teachers employ to talk about things and events in the world and ...(it) impl(ies)...a point of view about the use of the mind in relation to these things and events... . The curriculum, as the language of education, not only refers to things in the world, its content, but also marks the stance the teacher is to adopt towards the use of the child’s mind in relation to them” (Elliott, 1994:49).
- “A curriculum is the offering of socially valued knowledge, skills and attitudes made available to students through a variety of arrangements during the time they are at school,

college or university...the school curriculum embraces many organized forms of learning beyond those prescribed...(it includes) extra-curricular activities...Some of the school's activities are common to all; but for the most part the curriculum consists of combinations of essential and optional programmes and activities, some chosen by the pupil for himself, others chosen for him by the school." (Becher and Maclure, 1978: 12-13)

### **(C) Curriculum as a Plan**

- “the broadest contexts in which planning for language instruction takes place, either on the national level or for a community's schools” (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000:3).
- “A curriculum contains a broad description of general goals by indicating an overall educational-cultural philosophy which applies across subjects together with a theoretical orientation to language and language learning with respect to the subject matter at hand. A curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well” (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000: 34-35)
- “A document of an official nature, published by a leading or central educational authority in order to serve as a framework or a set of guidelines for the teaching of a subject area...in a broad and varied context” (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000:185).

### **(D) Plan and Process**

- “Curriculum: All the planned learning opportunities offered by the organisation to learners and the experiences learners encounter when the curriculum is implemented” (Print, 1993:xvii).
- “a process of assisting learning informed by a background of knowledge and experience” (van Lier, 1997:3)
- “the philosophy, purposes, design, and implementation of a whole program” (Graves, 2003:3).
- “Curriculum...involves a number of separate elements: needs assessment, goals and objectives, testing, materials, teaching, and program evaluation” (Brown, 1995:ix).

- “Curriculum ...include(s) all the relevant decision making processes of all the participants...The products of these decision making processes..(are) policy documents, syllabuses, teacher- training programmes, teaching materials and resources, and teaching and learning acts” (Johnson, 1994:1).
- “...includes the establishment of goals for the entire educational program, the selection of subjects through which the goals can be achieved, and the identification of intended learning outcomes and, possibly, content that comprise the unique contribution of each subject. It also encompasses dissemination of the curriculum, planning for implementation of the curriculum, and evaluation of both the curriculum itself and the processes that produced it.” Young, (1979:115).
- “curriculum ...covers all the learning which is planned and guided by the school. It should comprise several interrelated components-precise statements of objectives for each area, the knowledge and learning experiences most likely to achieve the objectives, and the means of deciding the degree to which the objectives are being achieved (‘evaluation’)” Kerr, (1970:57)
- “a network of interacting systems involving teachers, learners, materials, schools, administrators, and curriculum planners...choices at one level affect other elements in the system. Thus a choice of a particular curriculum philosophy or ideology implies a particular model of teaching.” Richards (2003:215).

## **Appendix IV-B**

### **The components of the EL Curriculum Development Process:**

#### **A Critical Account**

Curriculum development is a framework of processes that should be seen as spiral procedure rather than a linear one (Holliday, 1997). Its processes have been explained extensively in the literature (e.g. Bailey, 2000; Brindley, 1994; Brown, 1995; Dalton, 1988; Dubin & Olshtain, 2000; Graves, 2003; Isaac, 1983; Kerr, 1970; Print, 1993; Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1998 Richards, 2003 Rodgers, 1994 White, 1985). However, this account is a synthesis of the frameworks described by the mentioned theorists.

#### **1. Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis or needs assessment, as it is also referred to, includes gathering information about what the students already know and what they still need to learn (Brown, 1995) and learning about contextual constraints (Holliday, 1997). It also includes exploring the context in which the EL programme is planned to be introduced (Holliday, 1997). Needs analysis is conducted before, during, or after a language programme (Richards, 2003). A thorough examination of the learning needs within the context is a basic requirement of curriculum development (Print, 1993; Richards, 2003). People involved in the needs analysis are not only the needs analysts but also the target group. This includes students, as well as the audience for the needs analysis such as teachers and supervisors, and any group of people who have useful information about the target group (Brown, 1995; Richards,

2003). There are needs expressed by learners and needs perceived by teachers. The most common instruments used for data collection may be questionnaires, interviews or students' performance assessments (Brown, 1995). In addition, Holliday (1997:195) asserts that: "the whole range of activities in English language education, from syllabus design to project management, needs to be led by a deeper understanding of the social forces acting on the classroom, which a culture-sensitive approach hopes to provide". He refers to the process as 'ethnographic means analysis' (Holliday, 1997:206) to which he recommends ethnographic action research as a framework for curriculum development. As well, Benesch (1996) calls for a critical approach to needs analysis to guide curriculum development.

The process of needs analysis is only an attempt to understand the context in which language is taught. This understanding is coloured by the perceptions of the people who carry out the analysis (Brown, 1995). The results of the needs analysis are important since understanding the weaknesses and strengths of the existing curriculum can result in producing an improved one (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000). However, the process of needs analysis has been criticised as its results tend to be impressionistic regardless of the approach taken in conducting the investigation (Benesch, 1996). According to Richards (2003), needs are subjective interpretations rather than objective facts. Further, a needs analysis does not automatically imply that the curriculum will change (Richards, 2003).

According to Brown (1995), language needs analysis is a situation that is unlike needs analysis for other disciplines. It involves discourse analysis as well as text analysis. The pattern of language that is used in the society should be sought for (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000). If the teachers of the language are non-native speakers, Dubin and Olshtain (2000) recommend evaluating their knowledge and ability to use the language. Needs analysis

serves many purposes. It identifies the skills that the learners need to communicate in the foreign language. It also identifies areas of potential weakness with some learners to address them in the course, and points out the gaps between students' current abilities and the target ones (Richards ,2003). In this regard, I agree with Brindley (1994) who considers needs analysis as an aspect of formative evaluation, and Richards (2003) who views needs analysis as a continuous process. Both writers propose that learners' needs should be investigated continuously throughout the life of the language curriculum. From this standpoint, teachers have a dual role. From one perspective, they are required to explore the needs of the learners and meet them accordingly. From another perspective, the changing needs of learners should be communicated to curriculum developers when there is a central body in the institution responsible for this.

## **2. Curriculum Intents: Defining Aims, Goals and Objectives**

Gathering information about the students' current proficiency and difficulties they have with the language helps in shaping learning objectives (Brindley, 1989). Therefore, needs analysis yields data that are to be analysed and employed in generating the goals of the curriculum (Brown, 1995; Dubin & Olshtain, 2000); As Brown (1995:75) concedes:

“the process of converting perceptions of students into goals and objectives provides the basic units that can in turn be used to define and organize all teaching activities into a cogent curriculum ...objectives provide the building blocks from which curriculum can be created, molded, and revised”.

The intents of the curriculum are normally stated in a curriculum document. Aims, goals and objectives take a hierarchical form according to their degree of specificity (Brown,1995; Print, 1993) whereby educational aims reflect societal expectations; goals address general concerns and objectives are specific outcomes of courses outlined in a

syllabus. Goals guide materials development and objectives serve as a guide for teachers and learners (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000). The objectives are linked to its goals and affect the language content and the outcomes (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000). These outcomes should not be binding (Elliott, 1994). Apparently, the goals of the curriculum should display continuous sensitivity to student needs.

Theoretically speaking, teachers should participate in setting curriculum intents. While this might be feasible in individual institutions, it is rather difficult to achieve in state schools whereby the curriculum is developed centrally. However, still teachers should have their input through continuous revisions of goals. This implies that they should have access to the curriculum document.

On the other hand, there are specific objectives at the daily level. While teachers have some autonomy in the adaptation of the objectives to include others that are based on daily interactions with learners, still a tension occurs between these objectives. To quote Graves (2003):

“the time it takes to master skills or knowledge or to develop awareness may not correspond to the time allotted in a syllabus. This tension can create dilemmas for teachers who must cover and test the materials in the syllabus yet wish to ensure that students have mastered the material prior to moving on. The tension can also put teachers at odds with their students or the institution if the teacher believes that success is achieved through demonstrated mastery but the students expect coverage to *mean* mastery”.

Elliott (1994) criticises the situation in which curricula are driven by objectives. He posits that their tenets are contradictory to the modern principles of discovery learning. Objectives therefore should be illuminative rather than binding allowing more teacher input into them on the basis of students’ needs. It goes without saying that objectives should be revised

regularly, especially by the end of the course to check for their reflection of real learning needs.

### **3. Course Planning or Syllabus Design**

For Breen (1987:82) a syllabus is “a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching”. By definition, “syllabus design is...the process by which linguistic content-vocabulary, grammar, notions, functions- is selected and organised” (Rodgers, 1994:28). The decision of which syllabus to follow may be decided a priori by curriculum developers or it may emerge as the curriculum development process proceeds.

Dubin and Olshtain (2000) cite five formats for organising the syllabus: Linear, modular, cyclical, matrix and story-line formats. First, in the linear format, grammar is sequenced and graded, and units have to be taught in the order of their presentation to preserve gradation. Second, the modular format is suitable for language content that is thematic or situational. Third, in the cyclical format, teachers and learners are reintroduced repeatedly to the same topic with an increasing complexity. Fourth, the matrix format contains a grid of topics and content in random order and is more suitable for situational content. Last, the story-line format, which takes a narrative form, can be used in combination with the other formats.

While there is no model curriculum that adheres to these designs, there is a tendency in recent practices to have a negotiated syllabus between teachers and learners. Initially, language objectives can be negotiated with learners and modifications or manipulation of the structure of the teaching material may be carried out as the course progresses (Graves,

2003). It is doubtful however that this can be feasible to teachers who have inflexible or prescribed materials. However, while the teachers' role in the negotiated syllabus is that of active involvement, their role in implementing other forms of syllabus may seem passive. Yet feedback on the practicality of the design cannot be decided without consulting teachers.

#### **4. Curriculum Content: Preparation or Selection of Instructional Material**

Materials serve as a resource for teachers and learners in terms of classroom activities. These include books, lesson plans, audiovisual aids and the like (Brown, 1995). They are the basis for language input and practice in the classroom (Richards, 2003). They also help guide new teachers and serve as a reference for language-related items such as grammar and vocabulary. While some teachers depend exclusively on published materials, others may supplement them with teacher-made materials that meet students' needs (Richards, 2003). A key issue in materials selection or preparation is that materials should be well organised, easy to use and lend themselves to adaptation (Brown, 1995).

Brown (1995) gives an overview of ways of organising materials. Firstly, a structural syllabus focusses on sequencing and grading grammatical forms. Secondly, a situational syllabus focusses on organising content on the basis of common situations. Thirdly, a topical syllabus organises the material around themes that are perceived to be of importance. Fourthly, a functional syllabus is organised around general notions or concepts. Fifthly, a skills-based syllabus organises content around academic skills. Lastly, a task-based syllabus organises the materials around tasks that are essential for language performance. While most published materials claim one aspect or the other, there are

mostly mixed-syllabuses in which writers mix a syllabus with one or more types of syllabuses (Brown, 1995).

Dubin and Olshtain (2000) offer guidelines for writers to consider when preparing materials among which are: providing a focus and adequate preparation for learners before asking them to produce anything. In addition, motivational factors have to be considered. Further, the manner in which a curriculum proposal is presented in the form of materials is a core issue in curriculum development (Barrow, 1984). Essentially, the textbook is the main determinant of the validity of the curriculum among teachers and learners (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000). To maintain this validity, materials need to be reviewed continuously as a means of monitoring their effectiveness. Brown (1995) argues that the materials should be reviewed annually.

While some institutions credit the choice of materials to teachers, more often than not teachers are given a prescribed set of materials to use. Usually, the choice of materials is guided by several factors of which to what extent they meet the objectives of the curriculum and the needs of the students are two major determinants (Graves, 2003). Overall, piloting materials is an issue of great importance too.

## **5. Training and Support: Providing for Effective Teaching**

Bailey (2000) observes that curriculum development and teacher development are interconnected issues. Having a new curriculum implies that new approaches need to be adopted which calls for retraining of teachers. Without exception, teachers should receive sufficient orientation of the materials as initial training, which should be given before

teachers begin using the course books, affects their perceptions of the course (Brown, 1995). Furthermore, there should be on-going curricular support for teachers especially during curriculum change. However, teachers should not expect to receive ready solutions and they have to take an inquiry stance towards the curriculum (Dalton, 1988).

Curriculum development should be a cooperative process. It is of importance that teachers should not be left without training or support as this would affect their main task of teaching. It is true that deficiencies in the materials or the resources are not an issue if we have good teachers (Kerr, 1970; Richards, 2003) but to achieve quality in teaching it is necessary to generate work environments that support teachers (Richards, 2003).

## **6. Evaluation**

Evaluation is a process that should accompany each of the above curriculum development processes. It is also an integral part of the curriculum itself. Evaluation focusses on the objectives of the curriculum and to what extent they have been achieved (White, 1985) in an attempt to improve it (Cronbach, 1985). Evaluation of the curriculum includes evaluating learning, teaching and the materials in use. Curriculum evaluation is conducted for three purposes: (1) formative, as part of the curriculum; (2) illuminative, to develop an understanding, and (3) summative, to make decisions about the effectiveness of the curriculum (Richards, 2003). Therefore, it is important to have continuous evaluation as part of the curriculum by integrating evaluation into curriculum development (Brown, 1995; Print, 1993; Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1998). Evaluation is illuminative in nature, can be utilised in shaping policy and contributes to curricular decision-making.

One of the forms of evaluation in the curriculum is the measurement of students' performance. Gathering data on students' performance takes the form of tests which are normally prepared by teachers (Print, 1993; Brown, 1995; Elliott, 1994; Romero, 1998). Test design is guided by principles of "validity, reliability, practicality, washback, transparency, security and usefulness" (Coombe & Hubley, 2005:3). Test specifications are normally developed to provide a blueprint that guides the teachers in designing tests (Coombe, 2005). While testing is one of the apparent processes in which the teachers' role is clear, Brown (1995) advises curriculum developers to be involved in testing in as much as teachers are.

Evaluation of the curriculum also involves the evaluation of teaching. The basic assumption behind teacher evaluation is the attempt to improve education (Duke, 1995), as the quality of the curriculum depends on the quality of teaching (Cronbach, 1985). Outcomes indicate that teacher evaluation helps to recognise training needs and improves teaching (Richards, 2003).

Evaluation of the materials is also part of curriculum development. There is no such thing as a perfect set of materials. To maintain the effectiveness of the material, it has to undergo regular evaluation to match the change in students' needs. Criteria for textbook evaluation include stability, flexibility, adaptability, theoretical orientation and the teaching approach (Richards, 2003). There are issues to be considered in curriculum evaluation. These include evaluation from insiders and outsiders alike to promote precision. Qualitative as well as quantitative measurements should be considered when conducting the evaluation. Evaluation should be accompanied by on-going improvement based on the findings (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2003). It goes without saying that teachers should play a major

role in evaluating the curriculum materials and the extent to which they meet the curriculum goals and objectives. Such insights cannot be obtained without consulting those who are directly involved in dealing with students.

The more the curriculum is viewed as a process the better it lends itself to revision and modifications to cater for the specific needs of the students that are unstable. The view that the curriculum is a finished product makes it difficult to change. The materials are best to be viewed as unfinished. This makes on-going development of the curriculum possible. The materials can be checked for their compatibility with the needs, goals, tests and any other component of the curriculum (Brown, 1995).

## **Appendix IV-C**

### **Teachers' Roles in the EL Curriculum: A historical overview**

Since this study investigates perceptions of teachers with regard to curriculum change, the teacher's role in implementing the curriculum and possible contributions to curriculum development had been discussed in the thesis. However, the role of teachers inside the classroom is a pivotal issue that readers consider understanding. This account includes a brief overview of how the teachers' roles in the classroom have changed with the change in foreign language teaching methodology. In addition, the role of learners in the modern teaching methodology will be considered.

The teacher's role in the classroom has changed to parallel the changes that occurred in methodology (Dubin & Olshtain, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). For instance, in Grammar-Translation, the teacher's role was to explain the content. In the Audiolingual Approach, the teachers' roles changed radically into being models for their learners in drilling content. In the Communicative Approach the teacher took the role of the director as he or she worked on facilitating the students' parts in playing their roles in their own learning. In this approach, the teacher was a resource person who supplemented the prescribed materials with ones that matched students' needs within the given curriculum.

The eclectic method preceded the communicative approach. In this method, it was agreed that teachers should utilise the most successful techniques from all the known methods. The

decision of which method suited the language purpose was based on areas of strengths that each method was successful at.

Currently, language teaching methodology continues to receive criticism for its insensitivity to context. Kumaravadivelu (2003:32-33) refers to this as the post-method era that marks the “search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method”. This is also known as the Post Communicative Language Teaching movement. It calls for using methodology that is appropriate to the culture (Holliday, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 2003a). The approach that Holliday recommends is that language teachers should research the context ethnographically to arrive at the most appropriate method for the context. In this view, teachers are more autonomous in selecting their teaching methods based on their repertoire of experience as learners.

Viewed from a different perspective, roles of teachers fall into three aspects: technicians, reflective practitioners and transformative intellectuals (Kumaravadivelu; 2003). As technicians, teachers are conduits of knowledge who derive their knowledge from empirical research of experts and their own proficiency. Their main goal is to maximise content knowledge through activities that are prescribed by experts. As reflective practitioners, however, teachers are facilitators who obtain knowledge from guided action research in addition to their own personal knowledge and professional knowledge. Their goal is to maximise the students’ learning potential by devising problem solving activities.

As transformative intellectuals, teachers are considered change agents. They derive their knowledge from self-exploratory research besides their personal knowledge. According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), the role of the teachers as a reflective practitioner encompasses the

role of the teacher as a technician, and the role of the teacher as a transformative intellectual is holistic and encompasses aspects of all. Thus the three roles can be seen as hierarchical.

In a process syllabus design, the teacher mediates between the learning needs of the students and the requirements of the syllabus (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). The syllabus that reaches the students is filtered through the teacher based on his or her prior experience with the students. For instance, Smith (2000) explains her approach to teaching in a process syllabus, which is grounded on learners' views. She explains that even objectives need to be changed to match the students' needs. Breen and Littlejohn (2000) concede that negotiating the curriculum with learners is more feasible when it is not prescribed by a higher authority as prescribed curricula constrain teachers' and learners' freedom of choice.

Obviously, the above roles are limited to the classroom, whereas teachers are considered agents of change (Fullan, 1993, 1999, 2001a, 2001b). They should be involved in the various curriculum development processes.

The roles of learners have also changed within these approaches. In the Grammar-Translation Approach, the learners carried out reading, writing, translating and memorisation of texts. In the Audiolingual Approach, the learners carried out mechanical repetitions and guided practice. In the Communicative Approach, the learners were encouraged to participate in pair and group activities. The current philosophy is that learners should have an active role in their learning (Breen, 2001). According to Chamot (2001), while language learning strategies have been proved to be decisive in successful

language learning, there is a possibility to develop them to make them more effective. This, according to her depends on the teacher's expertise and intervention skill.

## Appendix V

### Letter of Invitation to Participate (School Principals)

(see translation below)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

اليوم:

التاريخ: نوفمبر 2003

الأستاذة الفاضلة مديرة مدرسة/..... الثانوية

تحية طيبة و بعد،

أشكر لكم تعاونكم معي طوال فترة عملي معكم كموجهة لمادة اللغة الإنجليزية في الأعوام السابقة. و كما تعلمون فإنني في الوقت الحالي أقوم بالتحضير للحصول على درجة الدكتوراة في التربية من جامعة اكستر بالمملكة المتحدة. و ستكون الأطروحة حول انطباع معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية عن عملية التغيير في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. و لعلمي بكفاءة الطاقم التعليمي لديكم أتطلع إلى مشاركة معلمات اللغة الانجليزية بمدركتكم في البحث الميداني.

و لذا أرجو السماح لي بإجراء مقابلات مع معلمات اللغة الانجليزية اللائي لديهن خبرة في تدريس مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية القديم و المنهاج الجديد. مع العلم بأنني سأكون متواجدة في المدرسة في أيام معينة من كل أسبوع؛ وذلك خلال العام الدراسي الحالي (2003-2004) من شهرديسمبر 2003 إلى نهاية شهر يونيو 2004 ، بما لا يتسبب في عرقلة أي من أنشطة المدرسة.

و ستكون خطة البحث كالتالي: في البداية سوف أقوم بعقد اجتماع للمعلمات لعرض الهدف من وراء البحث و خطة البحث وستكون المشاركة اختيارية. و ستتم إجراء المقابلات مع المعلمات الراغبات بالمشاركة وذلك في أوقات لا تتعارض مع التزاماتهن التدريسية. ثم سأقوم بعقد اجتماعات مع المعلمات لاحقا حسب ما يتطلبه البحث و تحليل البيانات و بما لا يتعارض مع التزاماتهن المدرسية كذلك.

مع العلم بأنني سأحرص على أن تظل أسماء جميع من يشارك في هذا البحث سرية بما في ذلك اسم المدرسة.

أشكركم على تعاونكم معي و أتمنى لكم دوام التوفيق.

و تفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام و التقدير،،،،

أختك/ فاطمة علوان

(موجهة اللغة الإنجليزية سابقا و الطالبة بجامعة اكستر بالمملكة المتحدة حاليا)

#### Translation:

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Date: November, 2003

Dear (principal's name),

Thank you for your wonderful cooperation with me throughout my career as a supervisor of EL teachers your school. I am currently working on my doctoral studies at the University of Exeter in the UK. The topic of my dissertation centres around issues relates to teachers' perceptions of curriculum change. As I have a prior knowledge of the high level of professionalism that the EL teachers in your school have, I would like to seek their participation in my study.

I am writing to seek your kind permission to grant me access to your school to be able to collect data for my study. I plan to visit the school once a week for the period from December 2003 to June 2004. The research plan will be as follows. I need to have an initial meeting with the staff of English to explain the purpose of the study, encourage them to participate, and clarify how I intend to collect the data. Participation will be voluntary and interviews will be conducted at times that are convenient for each participant. In the end, I plan to conduct a group interview to check the data with them. I will ensure that my presence does not disturb the work in the school in any way.

The names of participating schools and teachers will not be disclosed when reporting the study.

Looking forward to your consent to grant me the permission to interview the teachers. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Fatma Alwan

Ex-supervisor of English  
Doctoral Candidate, University of Exeter, UK.

## **Appendix VI**

## **Address of Invitation to Participate (EL Teachers)**

*November, 2004*

*Dear Colleagues,*

*Thank you for your cooperation in accepting my invitation to this meeting. I am currently studying at the University of Exeter in the UK. My doctoral thesis is EFL teachers' perceptions of curriculum change in the UAE.*

*As you know, the previous curriculum materials that have been in use for more than a decade in the secondary schools were changed in the past few years including this year. In this process of change, there are things that satisfy you and there are things that do not meet your expectations.*

*According to my experience with you throughout the past years, I feel that you have valuable views that you wish to express. I have selected your school as part of my study because I believe that you are interested in making your voice reach the people concerned. After getting the doctoral degree, I intend to join the Curriculum Development Centre in the Ministry of Education. The results of this research study will be illuminative for me to be able to put into practice what teachers look forward to.*

*I am gathering you today to see who would like to participate in this study. The research design requires that participants be interviewed as many times as needed to elicit their views on the topic of curriculum change. Participation in the research is optional and the number of teachers participating is not an issue if some of you do not wish to be included. So, you have the right not to participate without providing reasons. However, your contribution is extremely valuable for this research as you may have important information that would enrich the findings of the study. All the data will be confidential as no one will have access to them except me. You will also get the chance to review what you say in the interview that may be recorded if you agree to. In the end, you will get a summary of the findings and my interpretations, which you may confirm or reject if you wish as well.*

*I look forward to your agreement to participate. If, however, at any time you wish to withdraw from the study, you have the right to without apologising as I understand that you are busy professionals and participating in this type of research is a great commitment. I am grateful in advance that you will give me your valuable time and input.*

*Kind regards  
Fatma Alwan  
(University of Exeter)*

## **Appendix VII-A**

## Interview Schedule (First Round)

1. Can you talk about your work experience?
2. Can you tell me what in your opinion a curriculum is?
3. Can you tell me what curriculum development involves?
4. Can you explain what is meant by 'curriculum change'?
5. What exactly changes when we say 'curriculum change'?
6. What aspects of the curriculum makes it new? (Textbooks? Tests? Teaching techniques?)
7. Can you tell me about the current changes in the curriculum?
8. In what aspects of the curriculum has change occurred? To what extent do you consider this as change?
9. Do the current developments meet expectations from the field (teachers, students and administrators)? How?
10. How do you feel about curriculum change?
11. How do you feel about having to deal with a new curriculum?
12. Do you think you are playing (or have played) a role in the process of curriculum change?
13. Can you talk to me about the recent changes in the curriculum?
14. Do you think that the curriculum has improved? In what ways?
15. What are the current curricular developmental plans? What is your role in them?
16. Where do you see yourself in the process of curriculum change?
17. What sort of needs analysis was carried out? How do you think the needs were specified?)
18. How do you identify the needs of your students?
19. In your opinion, what are the most pressing problems for your students as language learners?
20. To what extent are they met in the current curriculum?
21. What is the basis on which tests are written?
22. Who produces them?
23. What is the relationship between what you teach and what you test?

24. Can you talk about the overall approach in the current curriculum? (What are the characteristics of this approach?)
25. What materials are available for use by teachers?
26. How are teachers expected to deal with the material? (Teach from a textbook/select own materials/ adapt these materials/ create their own?)
27. According to the new curriculum, in your opinion, what would be regarded as good teaching?
28. To what extent do the curriculum materials limit/ enhance your (the teacher's) freedom in the classroom?
29. What is your role as a teacher in the classroom with regard to the curriculum? (What is your current contribution to the curriculum?)
30. What else would you like to do in addition to your current roles? (What stops you from doing this in the meantime?)
31. From your experience, what are the mechanisms within the curriculum for gathering information? (about needs/ materials/techniques)
32. Can you tell me in what ways are these mechanisms used to improve the elements of the curriculum on a constant basis?
33. Can you now describe your role in the curriculum? (How is it different from your role in the former curriculum?)
34. How do you see yourself functioning in this role? (periodically/ on a daily basis)
35. How do you feel about this role?
36. To what extent are you satisfied with this role?
37. To what extent do you think that you as a teacher are playing the role you should be playing in the curriculum?
38. What else would you like to contribute to in the of curriculum development?
39. Can you explain what is done from the part of the curriculum department to get feedback from teachers? (With regard to: learner needs, language testing, materials development, evaluation)
40. How do you convey your opinion to the curriculum department?
41. What aspects of the new curriculum reflect response or non-response to feedback from you/ the field?
42. What curriculum-related recommendations do you wish to convey to the curriculum department?

43. How do you plan to make them known to the curriculum department?
44. How were you prepared to deal with the new curriculum?
45. How do you feel about this training? (Suitability? Meets expectations?)
46. Can you explain to me the support, facilities and resources that are available for you for adaptation of the curriculum?
47. What else do you recommend? ( with regard to support, facilities and resources)
48. Can you talk about the support you receive to facilitate your classroom teaching? (administrative/ curricular)
49. What do you think of this type of support?
50. What else do you recommend?
51. Can you talk about your personal development attempts to complement training?
52. How effective do you see them in supporting your classroom teaching or your role in the new curriculum?
53. Would you like to talk about other aspects related to curriculum change that we had not discussed in this interview?

N.B. The above Interview questions are listed according to the order of the research questions that they serve.

## **Appendix VII-A**

## **Interview Schedule (Second Round)**

1. Can you explain to me who has the authority to change the curriculum or to call for curriculum change?
2. Who do you think should have the authority to call for change?
3. Can you tell me on what basis the curriculum should be changed?
4. To what extent has the new curriculum taken care of the Emirati learner's characteristics, such as school and classroom behaviour?
5. To what extent has the new curriculum taken care of the Emirati learner's learning styles?
6. To what extent has the new curriculum utilised the wider learning culture in the UAE in the form of extra curricular activities/ supplementary material?
7. In your opinion, will the curriculum be acceptable if the exam is changed?
8. To what extent will things improve with the current curriculum if exams become language based?
9. Can you describe your feelings when you teach the book for the first time and when you teach it again?
10. With regard to adapting the material: how do you know that what you are doing is effective?
11. In your opinion, what is the benchmark for checking the effectiveness of what you do/ the way you teach?

N.B. Not all interviewees were asked all the questions in the second interview as some of them have mentioned the relevant data in their first interview.

## **Appendix VIII**

## Sample Transcripts of Interviews

### Interviewee (T-2)

Interviewer: Can you talk about your work experience?

Interviewee: I have ten years of experience in the UAE, nine of them as a secondary school teacher. I have taught third secondary for seven years.

Interviewer: To be clear about the concept of curriculum, can you tell me what in your opinion a curriculum is?

Interviewee: Curriculum should cover text-books, activities to be done in class, extra-curricular activities should be included. Things that I do inside the classroom and things students should do. It is not just the textbook.

Interviewer: Can you explain what is meant by 'curriculum change'?

Interviewee: Here, what changed for us is just the book.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me what curriculum development involves?

Interviewee: It involves not only textbooks but other aspects such as teaching techniques and tests.

Interviewer: So, when we say that the curriculum has changed, what changed exactly?

Interviewee: What changed in the book is the material but my responsibilities are still the same. What should I do is still the same, exams are still the same, what changed with the textbook is the marking scheme whereas we expected that they would change the way they examine students, how we teach students. We still have to depend on testing reading, testing listening as for the skills, nothing changed. They have changed the material only but everything else is still the same.

Interviewer: How about teaching techniques?

Interviewee: We are developing our teaching techniques depending on the seminars we attend. So, we have been renewing our teaching techniques for the previous books, this is something we do for our own development. It is for self-development, it has nothing to do with the books.

Interviewer: What exactly are the current changes in the book?

Interviewee: They increased the length of lessons. They have also taken out the listening texts from the book but that is only for the third secondary. They did not put the listening texts in the Pupil's Book, this is the only change. A lot of activities are in the new book. The new book has so many activities. They are student-centred. There is also a teacher's book in this course, in the past we had a general teaching guide that we did not refer to. The teacher's book gives brief suggestions of how to deal with each lesson.

Interviewer: If you consider these aspects that changed in the curriculum, do you see these as change?

Interviewee: Actually, it is showing off. Because these are people who think they are superior to teachers. The people who made the book for the third secondary, I mean. They think they are superior to us, so they are showing off. The language taught is not classic English, it is mostly slang. There are points we used to teach our students as such and now they have change. For example, the functions, expressions that we have always taught as 'advice' are now given as 'suggestions' and 'obligation'. May be this is used in the native language, but in our classical English that we were taught and that we have been teaching for years, these things were not used. Some sentences appear as slang English. As if somebody is sitting at a café talking to his friend. That is not English to be taught. If you go back to some lessons, you will find that the paragraphs in them are slang English.

Interviewer: So can you recognise areas in which the curriculum has improved?

Interviewee: The texts are very interesting. They give the students information. They make students think. It develops their thinking. It teaches students how to think. In the old textbook we didn't have this skill. Still, it is dry, it is not essential or communicative English. You cannot feel that it is a textbook for teaching English as a language. It is an Arabic book for the Arabs, It is not authentic, you feel that it is fake, it is not authentic.

Interviewer: After several years of waiting for things to change, do you think that these changes meet the expectations of the teachers?

Interviewee: In some aspects, yes. These activities that are stuffed in the book are similar to what we used to supplement the old books with. If we are given more time, pupils would enjoy them, but this is not the case. There are so many lessons, too many activities to be done in class. Our students are not used to working on their own. Now they need to do self-help work. Our students are used to being taught every new word in the classroom, and they expect all the activities to be carried out in class, they are not used to home assignments, especially large ones. In the previous textbooks, they were none, and the students depended mainly on teachers. If I deal with them, they will do them, if I ask them to do them as home assignment, nothing will be done. Now, with these too many activities, some activities need to be done at home but students refuse to do them. They think that the teacher is a poor manager of time and she could not cover the syllabus. For instance, there are more than two pages of texts in each lesson in the Pupil's Book and a minimum of three pages in the workbook. This makes a minimum of five pages. How can I cover all of this in one period or two or even three?

Interviewer: So, are you saying that it partially meets the teachers' expectations but does not meet the expectations of the students?

Interviewee: Not all changes are necessarily for the better. Yes, they have made changes, they minimised our efforts as teachers as we used to prepare worksheets for more practice. But, the point that they have given so many exercises covering one point and few grammar practices is a problem. Why? Especially for the third secondary, I am teaching my students the first and second conditional from the start. The students say that they have learned them in first and second secondary. On the other hand, there

are areas of grammar that they have not tackled, why don't they teach them this. Compared to the previous books, we are working a lot as well but to study and supplement the material. They minimised our efforts with regard to preparing worksheets as they have given us enough activities. Things we used to type and spend a lot of time preparing them. Still they maximised our efforts in search for information. There are questions that you cannot find answers in the text for. Sometimes texts and questions do not match. From where should I get the answers? I have this text with comprehension, what I check is what is based on the students' own information and not what is in the text. There are so many incomplete ones. You as a teacher have to look, search and give the students feedback. Students are also lost. Search for what? What is the definite thing that we should search for? I do not know. The book is based on providing us with a theme, an open one and we are expected to search for information. Questions are very big, and the text itself, it is very weak. Why, because the content looks like it is based on 'cut-and-paste' sources.

Interviewer: How do you feel about curriculum change, then?

Interviewee: Frankly speaking, when I first got the book, I was very thrilled. Why? Because after seven years of having to teach the same old material. I was very happy. To teach the first few lessons, I was happy with surfing the internet in search of more information about the topics tackled. As the course proceeded, I discovered that there is too much to be done in a short time. I cannot cope, so what I want to ask is, those who made this book, did they have a calendar in front of them? Did they count the lesson with the days off? Did they count days on which students are absent if they fall between two holidays? Did they count the days taken for the school extra curricular activities when lessons are lost? One day they are out on a trip, another day they have an open day, then again there is another activity in which students have to participate in competitions. We miss too many lessons. Did they put in their plan that days will be cut off and there will be some occasions, why so many lessons and activities without any arrangement. And why is this redundancy? I spend fifteen lessons talking about one topic. It is too much, I do not why? They haven't taken into consideration the circumstances in which students work.

Interviewer: Based on your experience, to what extent do you think that you as a teacher are playing the role you should be playing in the curriculum?

Interviewee: Do you mean teachers? We never did! How?

Interviewer: Do you feel you are part of it?

Interviewee: No, of course not. They change and they give and we take. Our role is to receive. We are passive receptors. We just receive orders and high commands. Even we cannot cancel. The reason for this is that it is a new book. May be I decide to cancel some parts and they appear on exams. Whose responsibility is it? Who would take the responsibility? And when we asked them to do something about it. Some teachers say that we can skip what we think is unnecessary. Others say that we do not know what is important for the exam, so they say we cannot skip anything. So, do we have any role? We just teach. We are passive receptors.

Interviewer: What are the current curricular developmental plans? What is your role in them?

Interviewee: They say that all these books will be cancelled and they will use a new series. I do not know when this will happen, God only knows.

Interviewer: What is your role in this?

Interviewee: In future change? You are asking the same question and I told you: we are not involved. Those who are responsible for curriculum, they are in their ivory tower away, far away from the field. They do not know what we need. Even there is no contact between the curriculum centre and the schools. They are staying far faraway. I do not know why. Is it because they are superior or because nobody invited them to see how things are going in schools. Sorry to say, they do not know how it works. For curriculum development, ask those who are in the field. Ask those who daily confront problems. Ask those who daily see students, deal with students and who daily deal with their fantastic books. Why do you choose for me what to teach? If I want your help, you are a helper, why do you impose things? These textbooks, who is concerned with them, you or me? Ask me and my students first.

Interviewer: So is you consider the process of curriculum change, where do you see yourself in the process?

Interviewee: Where do I see myself? Out of the circle! Where am I? Consider me and my students. If it were a pyramid, I am in the very very far bottom. The orders were to make a new book and we came back from our summer vacation and found the new book. Even if we were in the country, we wouldn't be invited to say our opinions on the rough copy. The book was made, distributed. The process is distribute, teach, examine, end of story.

Interviewer: Normally, the process of curriculum change begins with needs analysis. What sort of needs analyses were carried out for this kind of change?

Interviewee: Nothing! I told you, up till February of last year we had been asking if there would be a new book for our students who were taught book 10 and eleven and whether they would use the old book or not. When we heard from our colleagues that their old books changed into a different format in terms of long lists of vocabulary, and long texts, we asked them for the plans. Up till February until the answer came. Nobody had clear information, we have been complaining about the old book. As for the new one, nobody consulted us, nobody asked us if we wanted change what change we would like. No body offered comparing the old book with those new ones for years one and two of the secondary change in order to improve on them for the third secondary. May be there was needs analysis somewhere else but not in our zone. For us we didn't have any, nobody asked us for our opinions of what students need or how to improve on the previous books. I do not know the basis on which the needs were specified. May be they took the views of supervisors. I have no idea. May be they consulted other people in the field, may be higher ones. May be they asked supervisors because they are our channel. When we complain about the books, we normally complain to supervisors. So may be this was the link.

Interviewer: Now that the books have changes, how do you identify the needs of your students?

Interviewee: My students were very happy at the start then they complained that they had to talk about the same theme. They were interested at first but not later on.

Interviewer: And how do you know that they need some help in certain areas?

Interviewee: Well, when they show that they are not interested, they start to count how many pages we still have to deal with before we finish the unit. And you hear the sigh of relief when finally we reach the end of the unit. They are happy to deal with the new unit that follows but still it is the same old story again.

Interviewer: So, this is concerning their psychological or emotional need that has to do with maintaining interest or motivation. What about their language needs?

Interviewee: The language? They ask me: do we still have to talk about this subject only? For language functions they are more concerned about testing. They are more concerned about what will be in the exam. They are not practicing the language for practicing the language, they are just using the language to pass the exam.

Interviewer: Can you clarify this point please?

Interviewee: I check how they perform on the exam and try to help them in areas that they are weak at. I know what they know and try to find a solution. There are points in the book that I wish I could omit. There are points that I feel they need more practice on. There are some very nice exercises for instance using “I wish”, and I wish I had the time and they had the time too to practice it more than just in a few sentences that come in the same format and using the same approach. And they have to use the same expression without any real practice of the structure. There is a difference between real English and realistic English. So, they are not developing their communicative skill.

Interviewer: With regard to the needs that your students have, to what extent are they met in the current curriculum?

Interviewee: There are areas that are very important that are not tackled. And there are areas that are repeatedly tackled that are not needed. Why should I teach the past simple in unit one, unit two and unit three? What about the other tenses and structures? I have taught just a few rules this year. Now they have introduced similes, something that we teach second language students but not those who learn English as a foreign language. Another story is the vocabulary, some items are at a beginner’s level and some are very complicated and are not widely used. They learn “weather, rain..” what is this is it after eleven years of learning English.

Interviewer: How do you adapt the material to the needs of your students?

Interviewee: I cannot consider any vocabulary item as passive ones as they may appear in the exam, I mean those in the vocabulary box. I need to teach the students that the words have other meanings as well.

Interviewer: So, how do you relate what you teach to what you test?

Interviewee: As for me, I teach something and when I test I follow the rule. I test them word for word. When I teach them I teach them the words in context. The exam is a general one. As for the daily ones, I prepare them on my own or share with the other teacher using the same book. As teachers we teach students to use the vocabulary and not simply memorise it for the exam. This is a way of adapting the text to students needs. As for other parts in the exam, they are very closely related to the content of the book.

Interviewer: As for materials development, can you talk about the overall approach in the current curriculum? What are the characteristics of this approach?

Interviewee: I would say it's an eclectic approach. We started using student-centred learning but as the course proceeded, we faced many problems. There are too many tasks to be carried out, so many activities to be done. For some students, the material is not motivating. They liked some topics but with other topics, they get bored. They keep asking why the same topic is used in the whole unit in fifteen lessons. The content follows a thematic approach that does not take into consideration the students' interests. There are minute and specific details that students do not need. What is more is that some lessons, like filling in forms use the same form that was given in a previous book. Those who put this book, didn't they go back to the other books? I have a lesson with four different forms. Why again? If I ask the students to do them at home they fear that it would appear in the exam as functional writing and ask to do it in class. They are afraid to do things at home because they are afraid that it would appear in the exam. The problem is that what we test is greatly related to what we test. They do not accept home assignments; they are not used to doing things on their own at home. I do not blame them because in our exam, what I teach is what I test. Students are mainly concerned about exams.

Now, because of lack of time, I teach using translation. I know it is useless, it is forbidden but I have no choice. The last three lessons I used this method. But I consider it a failure. How do people use it? How was it a method before? Because when I started teaching, the students could not follow. I was forced to follow this method to cover the content to make up for the days on which students were absent. Translation is not working with me, it is not teaching it is not English at all. I am so sorry to say it is against the rule to speak Arabic in the classroom; it is against the rule to use audio-lingual for a long time. I found my students lost. With this book, there should be lots of frontal teaching to be able to cover the content. I was forced to use a method I am not convinced with.

Interviewer: How are teachers expected to deal with the material? According to the new curriculum, in your opinion, what would be regarded as good teaching?

Interviewee: In the Teachers' Book, which is supposed to guide, they do not guide you to anything. They leave you at a loss. Things that you really need and leave you frustrated, you can't find an answer for them in the Teacher's Book. And things that are trivial, such as multiple choice items, they provide answers. So they give answers to some exercises- not all the exercises are answered. Only some are answered. For those you really need, you can't find the answer to. It is left blank. In addition, the guiding steps for teaching are nothing helpful. You can find instructions such as "teach as in the previous lesson" then you go back to the previous lesson, and it refers you to another lesson and there is nothing helpful. They wrote the book, they made the cake, they know the ingredients, and you know how and when to mix and when to add. Why didn't they give us workshops, seminars, or come to school- not all schools, let's say make general meetings to tell us how to teach what in which way. We are teachers but they are the creators of the book and they know every piece in it.

Interviewer: This leads us to talk about how you were prepared to deal with the new curriculum.

Interviewee: Nothing, Nothing! We just came to school from our vacation two days before the students started school. The workbooks were available but the Pupil's Books were not. Ten days later we received the book. We didn't have any training. May be they think that because we have enough experience that we did not need the training. A

whole book, for one year, you are responsible to do it yourself. You are responsible for ninety students. Whether you do it right, you do it wrong, whether you were lucky to have good students or not. Whether you could manage or not. Start it. You skip it and it is in the exam and you are in problem.

Interviewer: It seems to me you are not happy with this situation.

Interviewee: Of course, we had a problem with the supervisor and he was replaced. When this supervisor came it was too late for training.

Interviewer: What about support on the job? Can you explain to me the support, facilities and resources that are available for you for adaptation of the curriculum?

Interviewee: Yes if I go to ask the supervisor then he will be helpful. He helped me with testing as I do not know what will be in the exam. I did not know what was considered functional writing and what was not. He does not have time to visit the school more often. He helped in getting us the cassettes. We need help because it is our first time to teach the material.

Interviewer: What about support from the school with regard to resources?

Interviewee: Are you dreaming? Are you dreaming? Nothing from this school. We stayed one whole month without air-conditioners in some classroom in summer, and you are talking about resources! I used to take students to an air-conditioned auditorium that was dark without lights.

Interviewer: So, what support would you like to have?

Interviewee: There should be an internet service where I can show my students what I want. There are film that I found in some sites and I would like my students to watch them. I have them on a CD anyway, so we do not have a place with the proper technology to show them to my students. It is hard to book the computer lab because the computer teachers have classes too. I would like to have facilities. In a dream school, in the Utopia, I need my own room with all the resources, a satellite T.V. and a computer. I have taped videos but do not know where to show them.

Interviewer: Now, to what extent do the curriculum materials limit or enhance your freedom in the classroom?

Interviewee: The materials sometimes enhance my freedom and at other times limit me. It depends on the text. However, I am not free to change anything. I can teach one lesson before the other but I am not allowed to skip anything. I do change the way things are taught but I do not know if that is right. The problem in this is that I am teaching a general stage where students will have general examinations. I am limited by this fact, I am limited by the general exam. I may decide to skip the final lesson where students are asked to write summaries of the previous lessons not because they know how to do them but because if you turn the page, you will find summaries provided for them. But I do not skip anything, I want my students to learn how to write regardless of the fact that they have a ready model with them. It depends on the teacher, and what is right or wrong differs from one person to the other. What you see wrong, I may see right. Other teachers say it is completely fine to skip this part of the unit where models are offered. Who defines what is right and what is wrong? The curriculum

writers should decide, should make it clear to us. Anyway, I am perfectly sure that if we discuss the book with them, they will strongly defend their work.

Interviewer: Now that we are clear about with your role. What is your role in the classroom?

Interviewee: Because I feel I have developed myself as a teacher, I see that I tend to minimise my role inside the classroom. There are many activities that require the students to work on their own. There are things that they like to do but feel that they are a waste of time considering the amount of material in the syllabus that must be covered as anything may appear in the exam. The activities in the book are too many but time is too short. I see myself talking a lot. There are things that you need to induct at times. They ask me to finish the lessons and skip the activities that may not appear in the exam... In some sense, I feel that I am a social reformer as some of the activities are related to their life. For instance, there was one activity about keeping a spending journal. Based on what the students have written, I was able to advise them on how to be sensible in spending their income. It highlighted some errors that needed to be focussed upon and I was able to do this. I am also a guide when it comes to helping them to search for information on the internet, for instance. And I am a consultant when they need academic help even in matters related to health. Because if you have a unit that talks about lifestyle, the students keep asking for advice on what to do in certain situations. It is the thematic nature of the book that tends to create this role for me as a teacher. I tend to raise the awareness of the students in matters related to their lives. Add to that correction that I have to do daily for ninety students of at least three pages each. If I teach one task it means that I have to check that they have done it correctly in their workbooks.

Interviewer: So, you do play various roles. What other roles would you like to play?

Interviewee: I dreamt that some of the lessons can be taught by some of my bright students on their own.

Interviewer: And what stops you from doing this?

Interviewee: Information, too much information to be given, too many skills to be tackled. The skills are integrated and there are so many activities that should be carried out in one class. How could any of them do it? And add to that that I was not trained to teach in this book, so how can the students do it?

Interviewer: What else would you like to do in terms of curriculum?

Interviewee: In the first stage, I want to be consulted as a teacher. I want to have a say in what to teach my students. I want them to ask me if the materials are suitable for the students or not, if it meets their interests or not. If they talk to the students even they will know that many topics are not interesting to deal with, and even if they were interesting, it is hard to keep the students interested in fifteen lessons talking about the same topic everyday. In the first stage, teachers and students should be consulted regarding the themes in the book... the curriculum people are sitting in their ivory tower up there.

Interviewer: And how do they get feedback about the material from teachers?

Interviewee: I don't know. May be the supervisors are the link. When we have problems we consult the supervisor. May be the supervisors are the link... The supervisor asked us if we found something wrong in the book just to write it down. They are concerned about printing errors only. Even in the old books, they only corrected mistakes to be fair.

Any other changes suggested were not done. I don't know if our feedback reaches them or not on the way up. There is something wrong with the communication with them. The channels may lead to nowhere. I do not want to be unfair about this.

Interviewer: Is your role now the same as with the old curriculum or do you see a difference in it now?

Interviewee: It is the same, nothing has changed. I am a teacher, nothing has changed. Can you change me? Give me materials that will. I am doing the same tasks, I am preparing exams, marking them, teaching students, doing exercises and giving homework. What changed? Nothing.

Interviewer: How do you feel about this role?

Interviewee: I am running away. This is the last year I am teaching. For me, that is enough. I am not saying enough teaching because I hate teaching, I am being faced with so many frustrations...We are not free to do things the way we would like them to be done. Whatever you do, you are not appreciated. They blame everything on teachers. They say there are weak students because teachers are not working. This may be because the book is not interesting or the way the test the students is not suitable any more. We are testing memorisation. For instance, we do not test free writing because in the exam composition should be related and within what is covered in the book. We do not test comprehension because comprehension should be related. Students can predict what will appear in the daily exams...the roles I am currently playing are not what I want to do. I want to teach my students to enjoy learning. I would prefer to design my own material even if the topic is specified for me. Let them provide us with the objectives and we will prepare our materials. I can design my work. Teachers working in the UAE are very well qualified to do this as they undergo examinations in the selection process. We can design our own material. If they think that we cannot design material let them train us to do it. Why should curriculum design be central? If we have major goals to achieve now, then I do not think they will be achieved with the current books.

Interviewer: I cannot get this. Aren't the goals stated in the teacher's book?

Interviewee: The goals are there but the trick is to carry them out. Let them make the equations healthy. Do not make it on the basis that I teach only. I feel that I am being rushed to cover the material without achieving the goals. How can we cover this huge content other than by speeding up lessons? I pity my students. Those who stated the objectives should have considered the timing as well... I wonder why they do not ask for our opinion about the curriculum.

Interviewer: And why do you wait for them to ask? Why don't you have the initiative?

Interviewee: Initiative? What will I say? Nothing will be done. Who are we fooling? Suppose I phoned them and told them about my opinion. My opinion is that their curriculum cannot be carried out even if I were a witch.

Interviewer: So you mean that the problem of content is the main issue, is that what you mean?

Interviewee: In the previous books, that were shorter we had a problem with content.

Interviewer: So, you cannot recognise that there has been a response to your previous complaints about curricula.

Interviewee: May be next year. Now let's face it, nothing can be done now.

Interviewer: If I were to convey your remarks to the curriculum centre, what would you like me to say?

Interviewee: Regarding the same book? Regarding the things to be done in the future? Well, at least cut off two units and from each unit take out at least five lessons.

Interviewer: So, you want them to reduce the amount of material to be covered.

Interviewee: That is number one. Second, put some active English. And third, revise the vocabulary, especially comparing them to the previous books. Revise the English, because there are too many mistakes. This book has been mostly written by native speakers. There are mistakes in the language that need to be reconsidered. Anyway, we Arabs are so precise. May be it is natural and that the language has changed, I do not know. In addition, give us as many seminars as possible. We will cost you nothing. We are ready in our zone as we have free time for training on one of the weekdays as we teach till eleven o'clock. We have several venues. Why not they make seminars during working time? Definitely, there must be people in the curriculum centre who can market the book, do the training, collect feedback and so on. There might be points in the book that I do not know. May be they can show me how to deal with them.

Interviewer: And how are you planning to convey your opinion to the curriculum centre?

Interviewee: I have a list of negative points listed by one of the teachers in another school. I called so many teachers to ask for their opinion and that is how I got the paper.

Interviewer: Now let's talk again about professional development. What are your personal development attempts to complement training?

Interviewee: I attend conferences and workshops arranged by TESOL Arabia. I also give staff presentations, present at some conferences in addition to reading in the area of foreign language teaching.

Interviewer: How effective do you see these personal development activities in supporting your classroom teaching or your role in the new curriculum?

Interviewee: They have developed my awareness of what I need to improve in my performance. I have changed my teaching techniques. I tend to use more student-centred activities whenever possible. I stopped spoon-feeding them. This is because of seminars and workshops. I have searched for the best ways of teaching listening, and now I adopt a method that I find helpful with my students.

Interviewer: Have you realised the effect of this on your students' learning or motivation for example?

Interviewee: Yes, of course, their motivation is enhanced. Even for myself, it is extremely motivating to try new teaching techniques in class because it is a change. I feel also

that my students are happy when they carry out new activities that they are not used to doing before.

Interviewer: Are there other aspects in the curriculum that you would like to talk about and we have not covered?

Interviewee: No, but what I want to emphasise is that the UAE with all its resources should test the curriculum before introducing it to schools. They spend too much, let the resources be spent in schools. A new textbook requires piloting the material, training teachers and evaluating the product. How can a course book be prepared in four months? If they want to develop the curriculum, they have to do what is required of them. If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing it right.

Interviewer: Thank you for participating in this research.

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Interviewer: What do you know about the curriculum document?

Interviewee: What's that?

Interviewer: A document that states the objectives of the curriculum.

Interviewee: (laughing) another question, please!

Interviewer: This means you haven't seen it.

Interviewee: Who am I to see it? I told you I am out of it.

Interviewer: Who do you think has the authority to call for curriculum change?

Interviewee: No idea! Really, I don't know.

Interviewer: And who do you think should have the authority to ask for change in curricula?

Interviewee: We teachers should have the right to ask for change.

Interviewer: On what basis should change be called for?

Interviewee: Depending on the students' needs. Another issue that makes change necessary is when there are too many problems with the curriculum and the results of the students show deterioration in standards.

Interviewer: I agree with you. With regard to the current curriculum, you talked earlier about the weaknesses of the students. Has the new curriculum taken into consideration the weaknesses of the students?

Interviewee: No, there is no evidence of this in the books. Consider for instance the length of texts. Texts are too long, there are too many new vocabulary items that are not required for the exam but they are necessary for understanding the texts. The words are so essential to understanding that without them, the students wouldn't get the meaning. The students find it hard to follow up. This is ridiculous. I try to avoid translation and make the students guess the words from examples that I give, as the context does not

show the meanings most of the time. It is higher than their level. Do you know that one lesson takes four pages of the book and five pages of the workbook? We have to rush to cover it. Yes, the book is full of pupil-centred activities but it's too long. It teaches them critical thinking but still, the exam is based on memorisation.

Interviewer: In your opinion, will the curriculum be acceptable if the exam is changed?

Interviewee: That will be reasonable. Consider reading comprehension for instance. Comprehension implies that students read and comprehend. What is the point when I give a reading comprehension text in the exam that is related to something the students already know? What's the comprehension in it?

Interviewer: To what extent will things improve with the current curriculum if exams become language based?

Interviewee: To some extent, we will not be obliged to cover the entire book. But still, it needs modifications; it needs to be reduced to fit the given time.

### **Interviewee: (T-6)**

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your work experience?

Interviewee: I have more than 15 years of Experience. I worked in a private school in the UAE for two years before joining the Ministry 1991. I worked in Umm Al Qaiwain for 5 years. Then I transferred to this zone and have been working in the secondary stage for 9 years. I have experience in both preparatory and secondary stages, the old curriculum and the new one.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what in your view a curriculum is?

Interviewee: It's the syllabus. It is something designed. What I like my students to know to be able to communicate in English. It is what is in the books and what helps us convey the message.

Interviewer: And can you explain what is meant by 'curriculum change'?

Interviewee: It means changing the course materials that we teach. When something changes, it means, of course that it becomes better. Here, this doesn't seem to be true.

Interviewer: What changes when a curriculum changes?

Interviewee: Here the methods of teaching didn't change. According to our life, I think everything changes. As teachers, we pursue change and development. But according to the ministry, they only design the book, but they didn't tell us how to teach it. So, they have changed only the curriculum, the material itself, the book.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what curriculum development involves?

Interviewee: This includes improving the current textbooks. Of course, we should ask teachers who are working in the area or the field because they know which is good for students, what makes students communicate better. So, teachers should be asked before. Of course, we should change the material in a useful way that enables the students to communicate in English. But what happens in reality is that the books remain without improvement and when they are changed, they are changed without consulting teachers.

Interviewer: What aspects of the curriculum make it new?

Interviewee: I am currently teaching the first and the second secondary, book 10 and book 11. When you teach every year one new book it is a big burden.

Interviewer: So, how do you feel that you have two books to teach?

Interviewee: I enjoy my time when I prepare a new lesson. I find up-to-date information in this book. But if I teach a new book every year, I feel it is tiring. When you take a new book, you prepare everything. You do not prepare only the lesson but also the aids that you are going to use. The aids themselves take a long time to prepare. PowerPoint, drawings, pictures, OHTs and the lesson plans. It takes a long time and effort from the teacher. It will be tiring if you move every year to a new syllabus.

Interviewer: According to the new curriculum, what would be regarded as good teaching?

Interviewee: The textbook doesn't give us any way of teaching. It depends on the teacher and his or her own way of teaching. Of course, the teacher should develop new ways every time. We cannot teach in the same way every day. Teachers should develop themselves and look for up-to-date methods.

Interviewer: And how do you develop yourself?

Interviewee: Of course, I attend conferences, meetings, workshops, I am a member in TESOL Arabia. I subscribe to the FORUM magazine. I am a regular conference delegate. I also use the internet to look for new ways of teaching.

Interviewer: How effective do you see your personal development attempts in supporting your classroom teaching or your role in the new curriculum?

Interviewee: I apply everything I read about or I attend. What's the benefit if I don't? Of course, if there is a workshop on improving my teaching, I do apply what I learn. If there are ways of motivating students, I also use them. When I find new ways of teaching stories or dialogues, I apply them in my class. I find varieties of ways of teaching. Of course, this helps in improving the quality of learning that my students have.

Interviewer: And we say that the curriculum has changed and you said that it meant that the material has changed. Has anything else changed?

Interviewee: Only the materials. The way of examining the students, for example, remained the same. So, it does not differ. We were teaching the old curriculum and now we are teaching the new one but we are still examining them in the same way as in the old curriculum. There was no change at all. Even the teaching techniques, you can say that they remained the same except for teachers to use new ways on their own.

Interviewer: In general, how do you feel about curriculum change?

Interviewee: I find the books better than before. The change became better. Book 10 for example, which is for the first secondary is better than the old book for the same class. But the way the information are displayed in the book should be more enjoyable. All the books, even book 11, which is better than book 10..but all the lessons go in a routine way: listen, read and answer all the time. There is no variety in the way of displaying information. This is number one. There should be the skill of making dialogues. There should be exercises which urge them to speak more than they do now. I think also the marking scheme should not have 50 for oral and 50 for written. 50 on oral is too much in evaluation it should be less, say 30, for example, like in the preparatory stage. Of course, we should have oral exams too. Sometimes you find there are girls who are good at speaking and they are bad in writing. And, bearing in mind we are teaching a language, we should measure other ways of communicating than writing, I mean other skills too. Not only writing information that they have studied by heart. We find ourselves teaching for exams, not for communication. So, we train students to answer the questions that may appear in the exam. We have a huge syllabus. The teacher's job from the beginning of the year is to finish this syllabus. There are too many lessons, too many words, too many structures. So, the teacher has to teach all of this. If you want your students to be good at English, to communicate well, we this shouldn't be the case. We often read in newspapers that students in government schools are not as good as students in private schools when communicating in English. This is because of the curriculum itself. It doesn't give us time to teach students how to speak, or how to communicate to each other. Because you are teaching, even in the new curriculum, you find that the lesson comes in three pages in the pupils' book and even more in the workbook. Although the new curriculum is better than the last one. Why do we have to teach too many words in one line, for instance? In one line, there were 6 new words in one of the lessons.

Interviewer: To what extent do you consider the current change in the curriculum as real change?

Interviewee: I am not saying that changes in the books are not real changes. But you can find a similarity in topics between the two curricula. The same topics are repeated but using different texts. The same units had the same names before: agriculture, jobs and careers, .. you can find these in the old curriculum every year. Every year, they have been examined on how to apply for a job. Also in the new curriculum, you see the same letter, the same unit, the same topics. May be different texts but the same topics. Another fact is that we cannot find connection between units. Each unit is not related to the unit before. All units should have a link among them. They should be connected together with one binding theme. Here we have 6 units, each one is totally separate from the other one.

Interviewer: When we want to change curricula, there should be defined steps.

Interviewee: Of course.

Interviewer: To what extent are you playing the role you should be playing in curriculum change?

Interviewee: Of course, they did not follow any definite steps when they changed the previous curriculum. They gave it to us and we have to teach it. They didn't ask any teacher about...I do not know if they asked other teachers in other schools. I don't know, but

nobody asked us about the syllabus. Nobody asked us about the curriculum and what we want.

Interviewer: Where do you see yourself in the process of curriculum change?

Interviewee: I am only a teacher. I am teaching what they give me.

Interviewer: So, where do you see yourself in the process of curriculum change?

Interviewee: A teacher only. I am going to do what I am required to do. My job here in the process of curriculum change is teaching. I am only a teacher. I am a doer. I am going to do what I am required to. What I have to do: teaching. Teaching what is with me, like someone who is hungry and he has a sandwich. He has to eat only this sandwich, he has no variety, he has no choice. When we have attended the last conference with TESOL Arabia (CTELT 2003) all the lectures were on how to prepare your own exam as a teacher, how to correct your own exam as a teacher using the internet and the computer. What can we do? What benefit we can get if we are not free to apply what we learned? We have to produce the exams following specifications given by the ministry.

Interviewer: Are you saying you don't have any hand in...

Interviewee: I don't have any hand in designing the exam. I have to write questions according to the rubrics that we have. They designed it for us and I have to teach that they have prepared for us.

Interviewer: So your role is minimised to teaching, is that what you mean?

Interviewee: Yes. I am just a teacher.

Interviewer: What is your role as a teacher of the curriculum?

Interviewee: Of course, as a teacher, I do everything. I am a prompter, I explain the materials, I prepare my own aids. I prepare my OHTs, CDs with PowerPoint presentations. I do everything the curriculum needs. I play the role of an examiner. I have to prepare my own exams, according to the rubrics specified. I am a facilitator, trainer, coach, everything. I have to do everything in class.

Interviewer: So, you have a big role to play in the classroom..

Interviewee: And outside the classroom.

Interviewer: What else do you do outside the classroom?

Interviewee: I am responsible for a class. I have to collect all the grades-books from all the teachers of this class for all subjects. I have to revise them and prepare report-cards. I have also to supervise outside activities in the school. I participate for celebrations on special occasions. I have a duty once a month to watch the girls at the end of the school day. I wait till they are all gone by buses or driven by their parents. Teaching has become a very hard job. As a teacher, you have to seek development beside the daily work. My time for school is not from 7 AM to 2 PM for school, it has to continue at home. I have to complete my work at home. All my time is for teaching.

Interviewer: I agree with you on this. But how do you feel about this role?

Interviewee: Of course, I want to be only a guide to my students. I want the Ministry of Education to help us, to prepare us some workshops or seminars that help us. If you are teaching a new syllabus, they should prepare training for teachers on this new syllabus. Instead of running outside and paying our own money on training and development, we need training. If they want to improve the students, they have also to help in developing the teachers.

Interviewer: What sort of training did you get for first and second secondary?

Interviewee: I didn't get anything. They didn't prepare any training for us. They have just given out the material without preparing a training course. I told you we have to look, to search for training courses anywhere. Last year we attended the training courses that were designed for new teachers in Zayed University, because we are seeking to learn anything. This refreshes our experience. Why not they prepare training courses.

Interviewer: What support do you get for adaptation of the curriculum then?

Interviewee: There isn't any support. I told you that I have to look for everything. There are no teaching aids even. Even the teacher's book is not of help to us. It doesn't give any help to the teachers. You have to find the most suitable way for teaching by yourself, so that you can motivate the students to work with you. All the lessons are presented in the same routine in the book. The students get bored if we do the same that is required in the book. Even the listening, not all the lessons should be made for listening. In book 12, it is better, they have different listening passages. I think it is better than the one we are teaching. The listening texts are short and are not included in the textbook. Not all the texts are listening, what's the benefit they get from this?

Interviewer: How are you expected to deal with the materials available?

Interviewee: Of course, sometimes I modify a task. For instance, in book 10, there is a lesson about the internet in lesson 2 and in unit three there is a lesson about the internet, so I have to modify and give this lesson after giving unit 3. There are two parts of one story in different units, I teach them in one week. By the way, although the book is into its third year, the picture has an additional family member not in the story.

Interviewer: Have you sent your remark to the curriculum centre?

Interviewee: I didn't teach it on its first year. Our colleagues must have given them their feedback. Anyway, you can find long texts, a lot of words. If you are teaching a story, is it logical to have too many new words in it? In the first secondary, there are four units in each term. This is too much. There are too many structures: passive voice, reported speech, making questions, reporting statements, conditional 'if' , connective,...everything. You can find all structures in the first unit. Instead of teaching them real language for communication, you have to teach them structures. Even the functions should be taught in context and they are not. In each lesson, you can find two new functions. Sometimes you can find two or three functions. So there is a long list of functions.

Interviewer: You mean there is too much to cover and you can't cancel anything.

Interviewee: Book 11 is fine because it has three units. We finished it without any stress or tension. But in book 10 there are 4 units and we must finish them on time before the exam. So, it takes a long time.

Interviewer: I understand this is your second year of teaching Book 11.

Interviewee: No, this is the first year to teach book11 and the second year to teach book 10. Last year, book 10 was new for me. This year book 11 is new for me.

Interviewer: And have you sent any recommendations to the curriculum centre?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Aren't they asking for feedback every year?

Interviewee: No, the first year only.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what is the overall approach in the book?

Interviewee: It is not mainly organised according to coherent and linked themes. You can find no connection between the units. The units should be connected. They should depend on one theme that links all the units. Even when we consider structures or functions. You cannot find any gradual progression.

Interviewer: To what extent do the curriculum materials limit or enhance your freedom in the classroom?

Interviewee: Of course, it limits me. I have to finish. I have the amount of material. The content is too huge so I have to finish them. I am required to finish the syllabus because the students are going to be examined in this material. So, I have to finish the syllabus, this is number one. But I have to train them for the exam.

Interviewer: And what is the relationship between what you teach and what you test?

Interviewee: Of course, I teach for exams. Really, I teach for exams because the students have to learn all the information by heart. When I explain a new structure or I give them a new rule, they have to learn it by heart. When I give them new functions, they have to learn them by heart. When they have a new topic, they should be trained to write by themselves. I train them on how to write by themselves. But still there are students who are weak who do not know how to write. They try to learn by heart the composition paragraph that we have done.

Interviewer: Do you give extra materials that are not meant for the exam?

Interviewee: There is no time to give them something else. I have to give them something which is related to the exam. If I finish the syllabus at the end of the term it will be something that I dream of.

Interviewer: What else would you like to do in addition to this?

Interviewee: I would like to give something else. I would like to train them to read newspapers in English, read magazines and works of literature. I want them to learn language for communication. If we want to do this we have to finish the syllabus before. If you

finish the syllabus, you can't find time to do extra work and if you decide to do this for warming up, you will find that you don't have time to complete your syllabus. You know that we sometimes take extra classes to finish the syllabus. We don't depend on the six classes that we have every week. Sometimes we come on hour earlier to school to give extra classes before the school day begins. Sometimes we come on Thursday (the weekend) to give extra lessons. In the meantime, we stay two hours more after the school day ends just to give extra classes to finish the syllabus. The main problem is that the syllabus is stuffed. We have to finish it. We have no time to teach the students how to teach the language. We cannot cancel anything as it might appear in the exam.

Interviewer: Are there any mechanisms for collecting feedback about the curriculum?

Interviewee: Nobody contacts us; we know just the names on the book cover.

Interviewer: Is your role in the new curriculum the same or different from your role in the old curriculum?

Interviewee: The same of course, it didn't change.

Interviewer: And how do you see yourself functioning in this role?

Interviewee: I am not happy about my role because I am the instructed slave. I have to do what I am told to do; I have to do what I am required to do. I don't find a way to do what would benefit my students, like reading literature.

Interviewer: So, you're saying that you are not satisfied with it.

Interviewee: Of course I am not.

Interviewer: What recommendations do you have in this regard?

Interviewee: Of course teachers should be asked before changing the curriculum...what they need, we should give a curriculum that helps in teaching the foreign language in a better way. It should contain less material, less new vocabulary. We should give them something to learn from literature, poems, novels. This way it helps improve their language and their critical ability. We should have dialogues and students should prepare their own dialogue. This helps the students to communicate in real life situations.

Interviewer: What are the current curricular development plans?

Interviewee: I have heard that they are going to bring a new curriculum. Of course we are astonished because this is a new curriculum. This curriculum took a long time of us to prepare them and the aids for them. This took a lot of time from us. You cannot teach without aids. English is normally difficult for students to understand. They find it difficult. So, you need something to make it easier. So it took a long time and too much effort to prepare the needed aids for the new books. Now, how do they give us a new book this year and they change it on the following year?

Interviewer: But you said you were not happy with the new curriculum.

Interviewee: Yes, I am not very happy with it but it is tiring to see books change very quickly... I think they will bring a ready-made set of books from Britain. It will be better because this is their language.

Interviewer: And what will your role be in the curricular developmental plans?

Interviewee: If I played any role before, I would play a role in the coming one, but I haven't played any role. I do not expect they will change the way they work.

Interviewer: Do you think teachers are playing the role they should be playing in curriculum change?

Interviewee: No, teachers are not given a chance to participate in any change. They are only teaching what is in their hands.

Interviewer: And what recommendations do you have in this regard?

Interviewee: If I am asked to contribute to the curriculum, I want to give my opinions with regard to the needs of the children. I want also to prepare materials for my students according to their needs. Only teachers know what their students are in need of. I want to be given new materials which are suitable for the students. I want to be consulted to check that the materials are suitable before they reach the students. I also want to give feedback on the books and see that the books are modified accordingly.

Interviewer: Is there any way for you to contact the curriculum centre concerning your feedback?

Interviewee: Of course they should contact us. We don't know who they are. We do not know the way to reach them. Do you think that if I get their phone number and ask them to take into consideration what to change they will respond? They will say who is this teacher? Who is this intruder?

Interviewer: So, what curriculum-related recommendations do you have?

Interviewee: Of course, teachers should be asked before they write the books. But if they are going to bring a ready-made syllabus, we are not going to have a hand in it. But if they are going to prepare the books locally, they should ask teachers their experiences. What is suitable for the girls, what makes them better.

Interviewer: You mean the needs of the students.

Interviewee: Yes, they should also prepare some aids which help us like video tapes, CDs, posters, cards and so on. There should be aids. Teachers should not be left to prepare the teaching aid. We should be given everything that facilitates classroom teaching.

Interviewer: You said before there was no needs analysis to find out the needs of the learners.

Interviewee: There should be materials prepared for the excellent students. Also there should be materials for weak students. The teacher has to do these things.

Interviewer: What are the most pressing problems for your students as language learners?

Interviewee: They are weak at communication. They cannot prepare their own questions; they cannot make up a dialogue.

Interviewer: To what extent are these needs met in the curriculum?

Interviewee: No. There are also structures. Even functions, they are a good way of communication but the way of testing functions is very bad. This makes them study all expressions by heart. When we correct the exam papers we need to check the answers against the book...Even if we consider writing, the writing task does not help them a lot. The vocabulary comes in very long lists of new words. They have to learn them by heart. Students find that it is difficult for them to study English. When I ask them to explain why they are weak they say that they cannot understand English. They also say that they do not like English. They find it difficult to study English, so they are not going to study because it is difficult for them to read English on their own. Of course, this weakness has been accumulated.

Interviewer: To what extent does the curriculum attempt to remedy this weakness?

Interviewee: It doesn't. The weakness is still there. The curriculum doesn't help.

Interviewer: You see that there are needs that your students have that are not answered in the books. On what basis were the needs specified then?

Interviewee: I don't know on what basis they are preparing the books. I don't know how they define the goals even. Some stories are translated from Arabic to English. I am with giving Arabic stories but the way they are given. There is for example a very long story with a lot of new words. You think that the events are not connected too. I am with giving such stories but in a very simple way.

Interviewer: What support, facilities and resources are available for you for adaptation of the curriculum?

Interviewee: Photocopying is available for exams but we have to type them for ourselves. We don't have internet here and the library is not very helpful as a resource.

Interviewer: What do you think of this type of support?

Interviewee: They are trying their best. The school provides us with a room for the English club. We have a data show. This device enables us to use PowerPoint lessons. But the library needs more books that help the students. But the students have no time to go to the library to look for information. I think that most students have internet at home but they don't have time to find information on the internet because they have to study, study and study to finish their subjects. All the other subjects are stuffed too. Students don't have time to read for enjoyment. They have no time to read for improving their level. They have no time to practice their hobbies too.

Interviewer: What else do you recommend with regard to resources?

Interviewee: They have to reduce the amount of content first, the number of units, vocabulary and structures.

Interviewer: What else do you recommend as support to your teaching?

Interviewee: As we can find in some schools in another zone, we want special well-equipped classes for each of the teachers of English. I would like ready-made teaching aids.

Even for photocopying, sometimes you find the machine out of order. We spend on photocopying outside the school. Even the basic equipment is not available for us, like the tape recorder. We have to buy our own recorders. I know that the school is not supported well by the ministry. They cannot afford to supply the needs for all the subjects. Take for example the computer in the English club, it is old. Sometimes you prepare a wonderful lesson on PowerPoint at home but you cannot use it at school as it is not compatible with the old version at school. It does not display our work it is only Windows 95. We have to buy a new computer. How? There is no budget for the school. The school bought a data show for the staff. We need a lot of things to help us do our job. We need a class, with everything the teacher needs.

Interviewer: Thank you for participating in this research, would you like to talk about other aspects related to curriculum change that we had not discussed in this interview?

Interviewee: No, I think we have discussed everything important.

.....

Interviewer: Can you explain to me who has the authority to change the curriculum or to call for curriculum change?

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: Who do you think should have the authority to call for change?

Interviewee: The teachers are the only people who deal with the curriculum and they know about its problems and the students' needs. Teachers always look for the better, so they should be entitled to ask for change in the curriculum.

Interviewer: What idea do you have about the curriculum document?

Interviewee: I don't know. I have seen only the textbooks.

Interviewer: To what extent has the curriculum taken into consideration the characteristics of the learners that you mentioned previously?

Interviewee: We can find only lessons. We cannot find anything that satisfies the learners. For example, the students are not motivated to learn. As I said before, our goal is to cover the syllabus. We do our best to make the lessons look interesting. We cannot do anything else to motivate the students like bringing our own material. Still, the problem is that it is stuffed. It doesn't give us way to give extra material that interest the students and meet their needs. We are limited by the exam too.

Interviewer: Suppose they changed the format of the exam into a language-based one, to what extent will the current curriculum be acceptable?

Interviewee: I think this will not be enough. The curriculum itself should improve. Tests that evaluate language proficiency are welcome but still the books do not satisfy the students' needs. It doesn't qualify the students to sit for such an exam.

Interviewer: You have taught one of the books twice. Can you talk about the experience when you first teach the book and when you teach it a second time?

Interviewee: Of course, in the second year, you will try to add more. If you prepare some aids, you can use them, it will not be tiring like when you teach it for the first year. In the first year, you begin from zero. You don't have any teaching aids, so you have to prepare every thing by yourself. So when you teach the book for the first year. You find it tiring because you need to prepare aids, worksheets...everything. When you teach it for the second year, you have already your own aids and you can add more things.

**Interviewee: (T-10)**

Interviewer: Can you tell me about your work experience?

Interviewee: I have been teaching in the UAE for twelve years in secondary schools. I have changed schools in which I teach. Change in life is very important. Change means difference.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what in your opinion a curriculum is?

Interviewee: Curriculum is the ideas, topics and lessons you teach in a school. The material we teach to the students.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what curriculum development involves?

Interviewee: Curriculum development is improving the books. It is not necessary to teach so many items of new vocabulary. It is necessary to discuss nice ideas. When developing the curriculum, they should pay attention to students' interests. What they like. Go to schools and ask them what they like. If they like something, they will learn it. I have a criticism on book 10. The first two days they felt it was too boring. We tried to teach it in a very interesting way but they didn't like it. The way teachers present the curriculum should be done in a model way.

Interviewer: We say that the curriculum has changed, so what do we mean by curriculum change?

Interviewee: The curriculum changes giving us more interesting topics in the books. The topics are really more interesting, not like the old one. You can feel the new developments in the country through this curriculum. There are topics like internet, GM food, ..the topics are varied and interesting at the same time, not boring.

Interviewer: This means you approve of the topics discussed in the book.

Interviewee: Yes, the topics are fine but not the way they are presented. The amount of vocabulary, no. The amount of functions, no. It is very hard to teach them. The texts are too long, the vocabulary lists are too long.

Interviewer: Was this the same in the old curriculum?

Interviewee: Concerning the old curriculum, the topics were not interesting at all. Some topics were useless. There are certain lessons that I did not like throughout the eight years I taught the books. But now the topics are very very interesting but the way of presenting them, I do not feel that I am teaching a language. I am just giving them information: study, write, do...they don't have time to practise.

Interviewer: Was this the same in the old curriculum?

Interviewee: Yes, the same for structures for the first and the second secondary, I didn't teach the third secondary. For the first secondary, in the old book, there was no time for students to practise the language they are learning. And as I told you the topics were very traditional and not interesting and so on. Now, they are more interesting and more attractive, but there is no time at all to cover them well. For example, there are 23 new vocabulary items, for one lesson. That is in the new curriculum, Ok, the lesson is very interesting, but how can I teach 23 new words in it? Really, I couldn't cover it in a proper way. I found difficulty in presenting the lesson. How many words can an ordinary child learn in one lesson? Let's say 4, 5, 6, 7? 23? I wanted to divide the lesson but I had no time. Another instance is a letter, which I have given in an interesting way but try to read the letter yourself. Many teachers complained about it.

Interviewer: Did you teach this book last year?

Interviewee: No, this is the first year I teach it. As for the first secondary, I have been teaching it for three years.

Interviewer: So you are teaching two books for this year. Can you describe your feelings when you teach a book for the first time and when you teach it again?

Interviewee: It is not the same feeling. This time I feel lost, there is too much to cover. Anyway, the 1<sup>st</sup> secondary is a different case, I have taught it for three times but I have the same problem every time. I feel it is very difficult to present the many words in every lesson. The second secondary is more interesting. The book is less by two units and this makes it easy to finish within the given time. Yes, the curriculum is new to me but it gives me less trouble, I don't know may be this is because I am teaching the scientific section. One class is an exception, but till now I feel lost in the first secondary. I feel that I can't cover all the lessons in a proper way, in a way that the students will get the benefit, I mean. Of course not all all the areas I mean but most of the time. On the other hand, I can now manage the time. As usual, the first year, I don't do lots of extra activities. The first year is for teaching the curriculum but my creativity appears in the second year. In the third, I am also more active. But I expect to be bored in the fourth year that I need to change what I am teaching.

Interviewer: In general, how do you feel about curriculum change?

Interviewee: We need it really. Even I am talking about the difficulties in the first secondary but I enjoyed it. Imagine what it feels to be teaching the same book for ten years to two or three classes each year. The old curriculum has been the same in schools for more than ten years. The topics were traditional whereas interests of students have changed over time.

Interviewer: What aspects of the curriculum make it new?

Interviewee: Actually it is just the textbook.

Interviewer: What about the teaching techniques?

Interviewee: The teaching techniques changed a little bit because of the nature of the tasks in the book but you can say they are actually the same.

Interviewer: In what way is the new curriculum different from the old one?

Interviewee: Just with regard to the topics, the topics are now more interesting. But if you consider the new books, for the first semester, our students have 22 kinds of functions. This is too much for the students. Why do we do this to our students? We don't hate them actually to make them suffer.

Interviewer: Isn't it a kind of revision?

Interviewee: No, we can't say revision. In addition, we cannot focus on the negative aspects of the curriculum alone, even our students have many problems actually. They are irresponsible; they cannot remember what they learned in the previous year. They keep saying last year our teacher didn't do so and so even if you yourself were their teacher the year before. But 22 types of functions or expressions are too much for our students. And most of these functions are new.

Interviewer: Do the current developments meet the expectations from the field?

Interviewee: No. As I told you, I was happy with the change of topics and lessons but with the needs of our students in mind, the change doesn't give them anything. And I didn't feel a difference between students who learned English from first primary and those who learned it from four primary in the old curriculum. Where is the problem here? May be there is a little change that cannot be mentioned...the curriculum should meet the expectation of teachers and students but now it doesn't. I prefer a little amount in each lesson to give the chance to my students to read, to answer, to role play and do many activities better than giving them a hundred vocabulary items in a few lessons. I think the benefit will be better if the content is less.

Interviewer: Do you think you are playing or have played a role in the process of curriculum change?

Interviewee: I remember once we had a visiting committee from the ministry, that was may be 5 years ago when I was in a different school. They asked us about the curriculum and I told them that there was a clear gap between one book and another. The gap between the first and the second secondary in the old curriculum was very big. The first secondary book was more difficult. And I told them about the lessons which were useless and I showed them examples. So, we gave our ideas about the books. We were not satisfied. And we told them why.

Interviewer: Was this a regular mechanism in the ministry to evaluate the curriculum through visits to schools?

Interviewee: No, it wasn't a regular mechanism, it was done only once...but we normally write the comments when we are asked to.

Interviewer: Following that evaluation, have you seen any improvement in the old books during the subsequent years?

Interviewee: No, there was no change of any sort but may be they were thinking. They were thinking of changing and may be our ideas convinced them.

Interviewer: But has anyone come to your school to ask you about the new books?

Interviewee: No, you are the first person to ask us about the books.

Interviewer: If we consider the process of curriculum change, where is your part in it?

Interviewee: As a teacher I would love to be considered the leader in curriculum change. But currently...I prepare extra materials and ask my students to do the same too. I encourage them to search on the internet to learn more about the topics they are studying. They have a special notebook that they divide into different sections to include the different aspects of the language. And this is what we miss in the new curriculum, why don't we divide the work. If you ask students to study structures, they do not understand what structures include. Why don't they divide the book for them into different sections? In one lesson, they have structures, vocabulary, functions... they don't know what to do. I mean, let us divide the book into sections. And grammar, I learned English in this way in Syria. Grammar was at the end of the book. In this way, you know what grammar is but you are giving the lesson, giving the new vocabulary. In the workbook, you have grammar, after this you have functions, you explain them and the students are confused.

Interviewer: I didn't get what you mean, do you mean that you don't like the book to be organised around themes and that you prefer a structural or a functional approach?

Interviewee: That is what I mean. I want the book to be divided into sections. Students are dying to buy extra commercial pamphlets that have such divisions. They have the same information in the book arranged in order.

Interviewer: Was this the same problem in the old curriculum?

Interviewee: Yes, it was the same. Sometimes you had one exercise with five rules of grammar. Our students will never learn grammar in this way. Grammar needs to be explained for them. For one rule of grammar, I need sometimes two lessons to explain it for them and make them practise it. We cannot say this is revision, they don't remember anything. Unfortunately, they don't remember anything. This is a problem, also we don't want to make a generalisation but there are just a few bright students who can remember.

Interviewer: And what do you think is the cause of this problem that they forget easily what they learn?

Interviewee: They neglect their school work, that is why they forget what they learn. They don't study. If they study the lessons on the same day just for a short time, they will remember what they learn. But the situation here is that they shut the book after the lesson and that's all. How will they remember the next day even? And with this amount of new vocabulary? If they don't revise their lessons daily, how will they learn?

Interviewer: So, the students have certain needs. Was there any needs analysis carried out before preparing the new curriculum?

Interviewee: No, nothing.

Interviewer: How do you identify the needs of your students?

Interviewee: Actually there are many ways for learning about students' needs. I discover them through daily participation, in their exams. Sometimes I ask them directly to say what specific areas they need help in. They have many problems, social problems...I love

my students; I maintain a friendly relationship with them. I am not only their teacher, I also advise them on other aspects of their lives. I try all the time to lead them to the right way.

Interviewer: And do you think the book meets your students' needs?

Interviewee: Not at all. They are burdened even with the amount of vocabulary they should learn.

Interviewer: What are the current curricular developmental plans?

Interviewee: I heard a rumour that I don't like. If the books will change then it will be OK, I heard that they will change it with a readymade curriculum. This affected our way of preparing the lessons. If I know that the books will not change, I will prepare more resources and teaching aids to use with the current books. But I stopped, why should I work on a dead curriculum? It doesn't mean I didn't do anything at all but I have now a plan, if there is a fixed curriculum, I will try to do certain things for the books. I may distribute the work to other schools too. The way I am preparing each lesson is unique. I try to prepare each lesson in a creative way with the necessary worksheets and transparencies. But since they are saying the books will change, why should I work on a dead curriculum? Especially that I am teaching two books. So, I work on preparing resources but to a limited extent. The new curriculum makes my imagination soar. I like the topics.

Interviewer: In the process of curriculum change, what is your role in the development plans?

Interviewee: I just teach what they give me to teach but try my best to present them in the best possible way. I don't think that the lessons will be more difficult to present than the current ones.

Interviewer: So, there was no kind of needs analysis when the books were prepared. On what basis were the needs specified then?

Interviewee: I don't know. I have no idea actually but as I told you I find it dense. It is full as if students are a sack to fill. I feel the students are like this. There are lessons that are really hard to present as they are complicated and full of new words.

Interviewer: In your opinion, what are the most pressing problems for your students as language learners?

Interviewee: They are de-motivated, they forget very quickly too. In addition, our students are divided into two sections there are UAE nationals and there are expatriates. When we consider locals, we don't find that they have interest in learning. There are a few exceptions but nationals are not like expatriates and I find this a burden. Some mothers are not educated, I find this a problem. I am a teacher. I myself find difficulty following up my children, so how can an uneducated mother follow up her children?

Interviewer: And the language problems?

Interviewee: The language problems? Pronunciation, listening is very bad. They are not clear at all. And even the students hate them. Sometimes I force them to listen, but most of the time I give them the lessons as reading comprehension...they are also weak in structures and forget them easily.

Interviewer: To what extent are these needs met in the curriculum?

Interviewee: No, they aren't. For example, there are too many structures that do not allow for practise as the material is too big. Also, there are recorded texts but they are not clear. Also if you consider the noise from air-conditioners, listening is not suitable in classes.

Interviewer: And how are teachers expected to deal with the materials available to them?

Interviewee: We teach what is in the books but sometimes we need to supply additional things whether worksheets or ideas and of course, the teaching aids need to be prepared by the teacher. We are not restricted to what is in the books.

Interviewer: According to the new curriculum, what is regarded as good teaching?

Interviewee: I think teachers teach in their own way and only observers can tell if what they are doing is good or not. There are procedures in the teacher's book but I don't follow them. I tried it in the first secondary and I saw it didn't fit into my way of teaching. I have a certain way in presenting my lessons. I couldn't follow the suggestions in the book. May be this is something wrong with me, even I cannot take a worksheet prepared by a colleague and use it for my students in class. I have a way of presenting my ideas that I cannot use the ideas of other teachers and this is the same with the teacher's book. We are working hard. We try to search for more information to be able to teach what is in the books. Take the lesson on GM food for instance; I searched too many sites on the internet to be able to teach the lesson. We are not restricted to what is in the books.

Interviewer: To what extent do the curriculum materials limit or enhance your freedom in the classroom?

Interviewee: They sometimes restrict me. This is because of content and the length of the syllabus. You can say it is shortage of time.

Interviewer: Now, let's consider your role in the curriculum inside the classroom. What is your role in the classroom?

Interviewee: I teach the books. I prepare worksheets to adapt the material.

Interviewer: What else would you like to do in addition to your current role?

Interviewee: I try to research, read a lot. This helps me in the classroom, it reflects on my performance. This year I bought a book about bridging the gap between teacher and learner. I haven't read it yet. I will read it, if I find it interesting, I will try to summarise it in a research paper. If not I am thinking of another topic which is learning from learners.

Interviewer: Other than preparing a research for your own personal development, what else would you like to do in addition to your role in the curriculum itself?

Interviewee: I think because I am teaching two curricula, I don't have time to think now. But I hope I can prepare more supplementary material and I will do this only if I hear that the books will not change.

Interviewer: So are you saying that what stops you is the rumour that the books will change?

Interviewee: Yes, what's the use of working hard on something that you will use only once? I will prepare more resources for the current books when I hear that they will not be changed. This rumour that the books will be changed soon has a bad effect on us.

Interviewer: And you said there is no way for you to contact the curriculum centre to give them your comments.

Interviewee: There is no way to contact the curriculum centre. You are the first one to ask us about our opinions.

Interviewer: Has the first secondary book been modified in any way?

Interviewee: I have been teaching this book for three years, nothing has been changed. Still we have long lists of unnecessary vocabulary. However, the way I present it is different every year. But as for the book itself, nothing has changed. They haven't changed anything except the printing mistakes this year. The problems are still the same; they haven't done anything about them.

Interviewer: Compared to the old curriculum, how do you see your role now compared to your role in the old curriculum?

Interviewee: The books are completely different and they require different work. With the old curriculum, we didn't have the present technology of computers. My lessons are now different from those five years ago, I am not teaching in the same way.

Interviewer: So do you mean that your teaching techniques have changed?

Interviewee: Yes, my teaching techniques have been changed completely. Before, I used to depend on drawings, gestures and realia. That was what we had then as I didn't have a computer at home.

Interviewer: In addition to your role as a teacher in both curricula, you told me that you used to give feedback about the books but now you don't. Can you tell me why you are not giving feedback?

Interviewee: Nobody has asked me for my opinion. Do you think that one voice will be heard? We need them to go into schools and ask teachers for their opinions. I do not think that I have the courage to go and talk to them unless they contact schools.

Interviewer: As you said, your role in curriculum change is related to teaching. What else would you like to do?

Interviewee: I am satisfied with what I am doing. I like teaching and I like my students. I like teaching English.

Interviewer: So to summarise, in the process of curriculum change, you like your role as a teacher and you think you are playing the role you wish to play.

Interviewee: That's right. I like teaching, I am thinking all the time of developing my way of teaching. That is what I am interested in.

Interviewer: And what curriculum-related recommendations do you wish to convey to the curriculum centre?

Interviewee: I hope they will cut down the material. Let them take out some of the functions in the second secondary and the grammar in the first secondary. Also the number of vocabulary items need to be reduced. Let them arrange the material too. This is more helpful when studying for the exam.

Interviewer: With regard to exams, what is the relationship between what you teach and what you test?

Interviewee: They are closely related. And this is a problem for us because we need to cover all the material for the exam, and the material must be shorter than it is now. Less material is better than what we have now.

Interviewer: And can you tell me about how you were prepared to teach this book?

Interviewee: I began preparing for book 11 in the summer holiday.

Interviewer: What about the training you received?

Interviewee: Training? What training? Nothing.

Interviewer: What about for the first secondary.

Interviewee: We had a meeting for a couple of hours. It was very helpful as we were asked to share samples of planned lessons throughout the year.

Interviewer: What else do you recommend?

Interviewee: It is better if training courses are continuous.

Interviewer: Currently, what support, facilities and resources are available for you for adaptation of the curriculum?

Interviewee: The supervisor is the only person we discuss problems with. We also as a staff share our views together. I invited my colleagues and the supervisor to visit my class while I was giving a troublesome lesson to get their opinion on it. They liked my way in presenting the lesson. But this lesson came after four days of thinking after which I became really tired as the lesson was really higher than the level of the students. I got my ideas by inspiration and I stayed late at night preparing my teaching aids.

Interviewer: Why didn't you check the suggestions in the teacher's book?

Interviewee: I don't have it. For the second secondary, I haven't received a teacher's book. I don't need it. Most of the time I prepare worksheets then when I look at the workbook I find that they have the same tasks. I know that the teacher's book may be helpful but we don't have time to read it. We don't find it interesting. It is better to spend the time thinking about the way you want to present the lesson than ..I don't like abstract things.

Interviewer: Don't you think that the teacher's book presents another point of view as if you are discussing the lesson with a colleague?

Interviewee: No, I think it is better to discuss the lesson directly with the staff. They are very helpful and cooperative.

Interviewer: So you consider the teacher's book only marginal and you haven't got a copy because of this, is that what you mean?

Interviewee: Yes, I didn't ask for the second secondary teacher's book but I have the one for the first secondary and I don't use it. I never use it. I remember last year I looked at it once or twice and I didn't follow the suggestions.

Interviewer: What else do you recommend as a means of support?

Interviewee: I wish we could have direct contact with the curriculum centre....I have a point that I want to talk about.

Interviewer: Yes, go on please.

Interviewee: What is the point in teaching pronunciation to secondary school students? I feel shy in front of my students. Shall I teach this in the secondary stage and leave them for eleven years to pronounce things wrongly? I think such activities should be given in the fourth primary. It's a shame. It is a waste of time. The students don't need it at this stage.

Interviewer: That is a logical point of view. Well, back to the support you receive. What support do you receive to facilitate your classroom teaching?

Interviewee: From the school? We can't say we have any kind of facilities here. We have a resource room where there are computers and the internet but we are not allowed to give lessons there, we are not allowed to use it unless when writing a research. They are afraid that the devices will be spoiled. As for photocopying, we need to pay for this facility as we need to bring our own paper.

Interviewer: What do you think of this type of support?

Interviewee: It's very weak. Even teachers are buying their own overhead projectors.

Interviewer: What else do you recommend?

Interviewee: We need an English club. We need a projector and a data show. We need a language lab. And of course we need basic facilities like typing and photocopying.

Interviewer: What are your personal development attempts to compensate for training?

Interviewee: I search the internet. I attend any workshop or conference available whether it is for English or related to teaching techniques for other subjects.

Interviewer: How effective do you see these attempts in supporting your classroom teaching or your role in the new curriculum?

Interviewee: This has a positive effect of course. First of all, they enrich my knowledge. I also learn new ways of teaching. They are very useful, they are positive.

Interviewer: Thank you for your valuable contribution to my research. Would you like to talk about other aspects related to curriculum change that we had not discussed in this interview?

Interviewee: I think we have discussed everything important.

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Interviewer: Can you explain to me who has the authority to change the curriculum or to call for curriculum change?

Interviewee: I think supervisors. May be the senior supervisor...According to the reports he has throughout the year.

Interviewer: Who do you think should have the authority to call for change?

Interviewee: We teachers should have the power to request change. We are in the practical situation, we should.

Interviewer: And can you tell me on what basis the curriculum should be changed?

Interviewee: On the results of the students. The reactions of the students. Do they like it or not? Actually, I like the curriculum of the second secondary too much. Book 11 is very interesting. It is also shorter compared to books 10 and 12. Book 10 also starts with a difficult unit. I don't like it.

Interviewer: In your opinion, will the curriculum be acceptable if the exam is changed?

Interviewee: I think things will improve.

Interviewer: To what extent will things improve with the current curriculum if exams become language based?

Interviewee: Do you mean if it is from outside the book?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: It is a fine idea but it will not work with our students. It is a very good idea but it will not work with our students. The majority of the students have weaknesses. The current exam makes them possible to pass. A language based test will reveal their weaknesses.

Interviewer: But will this make the curriculum acceptable?

Interviewee: No, still it needs modifications.

Interviewer: Has the curriculum taken into consideration the characteristics of learners in the UAE, such as weaknesses and lack of motivation that you mentioned previously?

Interviewee: They are spoon-fed, demotivated and weak. I don't think that there is any sign in the curriculum that it was written with these characteristics in mind. The second secondary has nice and interesting topics but the first secondary doesn't.

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