

# **LEARNER CENTERED CURRICULUM IN THE EFL CLASSROOM IN INDONESIA**

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## **Abstract**

Learner Centered Curriculum in the teaching of English in the classroom setting needs attention from educational practitioners, especially teachers of English. This is because; good curriculum hopefully will give beneficial contribution to the quality of teaching of English in Indonesia which is assumed today very low. This paper discusses a variety of issues deal with curriculum. Those issues are identification of curriculum problem, curriculum design, characteristics of ideal curriculum, curriculum development in Indonesia, and learner centered curriculum.

*Keywords: Learner centered curriculum, EFL, Indonesia.*

## **A. Introduction**

Indonesia as one of developing countries today faces many problems in some sectors. One sector that needs change is educational system. Education is an important sector and educational system in Indonesia needs to be repaired. This is because, in 2012 as reported by Pearson Educational Firm as quoted by Abbas (2014) reveals that the Indonesian educational system is the lowest position.

As the national investment, education is capable of responding to the demands of changing the national economic, social and cultural development, and many dimensions in all development sectors. One of the changes is educational reform. Therefore, criticism of education is expected to find the good educational system, so that the drastic changes of educational sectors become important in this sector. This is because, the development in education sector can give a crucial role towards the development in all sectors, economic, social, and cultural development. One of the important factors in education sector is curriculum. Though there has been less clarity about the elements that may constitute a curriculum, attempts have been made in systematic thinking on the methodology and approaches to curriculum design. Learner-centered curriculum is one of best practices of curriculum designed to meet the educational target in Indonesia.

Learner-centered, society-centered and content, centered curricula are varying with each other as the exclusive

approaches to the curriculum design process (Jambulingan, 1993:26).

Considering the important of curriculum design in educational system in Indonesia, the government then gives serious attention to this factor, and the language practitioners design curriculum always concentrate on curriculum development and the curriculum change has been conducted for approximately ten times since 1968 in Indonesia. This reflects that the previous curriculum needs to be repaired, because it did not fit with the demands of situation.

The last curriculum in Indonesia is curriculum 2013 and this curriculum is ready to be implemented in all school levels in Indonesia. English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia becomes a mandatory subject in secondary schools up to university. This subject in its implementation needs a good curriculum design. A good curriculum design is a curriculum that enables the graduates to compete with others in getting a good job in industry or company.

## **B. Brief Look of Curriculum**

As described in introduction that curriculum development is a factor in educational system which paid some attention by Indonesian government. Therefore, this paper focuses on the studies of learner-centered curriculum in language classroom, because curriculum plans that should drive the pedagogical action are critically very important to be employed in the learning process. In other words, classroom decisions cannot be made without reference to structures operating outside of the classroom (Nunan, 1996), further he states that language curriculum development has been greatly influenced by changing views on the nature of teaching and learning. These changing views are reflected in the objectives and content of language programs, as well as activities, materials, and teacher/learner roles.

In summary, as stated by Nunan (1996) that we can say that curriculum development represents a delicate juggling act involving the incorporation of information about the learner, about the language, and about the learning process. Language content questions include what we are teaching, why we are teaching it, and when we are teaching it. Learning process questions, which are methodological in character, include how we are arranging the learning environment. Among other things, when we focus on the learner, we must ask how well the learner has done and how well the curriculum has done in serving the needs of the learner.

Furthermore, we can relate these key questions to each other in terms of the central curriculum elements of syllabus design, which has to do with the selection, sequencing and grading of content; methodology, which is concerned with task selection and sequencing; and assessment and evaluation, which are concerned with determining how well students have done, as well as evaluating how well the instructional process has met curricular goals. These relationships are set out schematically in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Key curriculum questions, procedures, and areas**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Procedures</i>	<i>Areas</i>
Content What? Why? When?	Selecting Justifying Grading	Syllabus design
Processes How? When?	Enacting Sequencing	Methodology
Outcomes How well? How effective?	Assessing Evaluating	Assessment Evaluation

Nunan and Lamb (1996: 21)

### **1. Problem Identification of Curriculum**

To improve and develop education quality, the government and educational institutions have done any activities and change. One of important changes is curriculum development, in order it can be relevant, efficient and effective in appropriate with the national development demand.

The change of curriculum has been conducted for approximately ten times since 1968, this reflects that the previous curriculum needs to be repaired, because it did not fit with the demand of situation. Therefore, curriculum planners are required to evolve a sound theory which not only states problems but also explain concepts which must be used to assess the relevance of curriculum to educational demands (Jambulingan, 1983:26). Further he says that curriculum development involves many kinds of decisions. Decisions require to be made about the general and the more specific instructional objectives which the schools are required to

pursue. Decisions on major subject areas of the curriculum are to be made, as well the specific content to be covered under each. Types of learning experiences to be implemented, evaluation of student's learning and the effectiveness of the curriculum in attaining the desired objectives are the other factors on which decisions are to be made.

All these decisions are to be made competently on a recognized and valid basis and with some degree of consistency, based on a well defined curriculum theory; but recent writers on curriculum making often point out that confusion is the main characteristic of curriculum theory. There are conflicts regarding nature and grouping of individuals, nature of learning, goals of culture, and the role of the individual in that culture. Also there is the difficulty of piece meal approaches to curriculum planning with additions and revisions in certain areas without considering the entire pattern. With all these problems and difficulties it can be claimed that the logic of content, pupils interests, social needs and utility are the basic concepts of curriculum theory to select and organize curriculum and its contents.

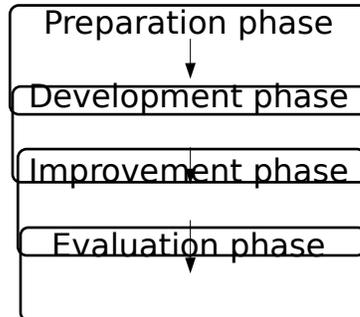
## **2. Curriculum Design**

What is curriculum design? Curriculum design is an aspect of the education profession which focuses on developing curricula for students (WiseGEEK). Curriculum design is not an easy job. It needs hard work. This is because, curriculum design is a scientific process based on decisions on valid criteria. The criteria are derived from society, their culture, learner process and analysis of the nature of the knowledge. The technique of arranging in order the decision in respect of: 1) needs, 2) objectives, 3) content and sequences, 4) learning experience and sequence, and 5) evaluation procedure, they can be termed as curriculum design elements (Jambulingan, 1993). Jambulingan therefore reveals that these elements can be grouped into four stages which is called *curriculum model*. They are the preparation, development, improvement and evaluation phases.

*Preparation phase* consists of analyze needs, ideals and culture, select knowledge areas, classify educational aims, behavior school and course objectives. *Development phase* which consists outline content, sequence topics, selecting methods and media, preparing lesson plans, preparing evaluation materials and tryout. *Improvement phase* consists of examining feed back, comparing performance with objective, comparing objectives with employability, revising curriculum and tryout. *Evaluation phase* consists of objectives and evidence pertaining to them, factor affecting learning, teaching-

learning operations, and teaching methods as set out of their relationships as revealed in chart 1. (Jambuligan, 1993:27)

**Chart 1. Curriculum Model**

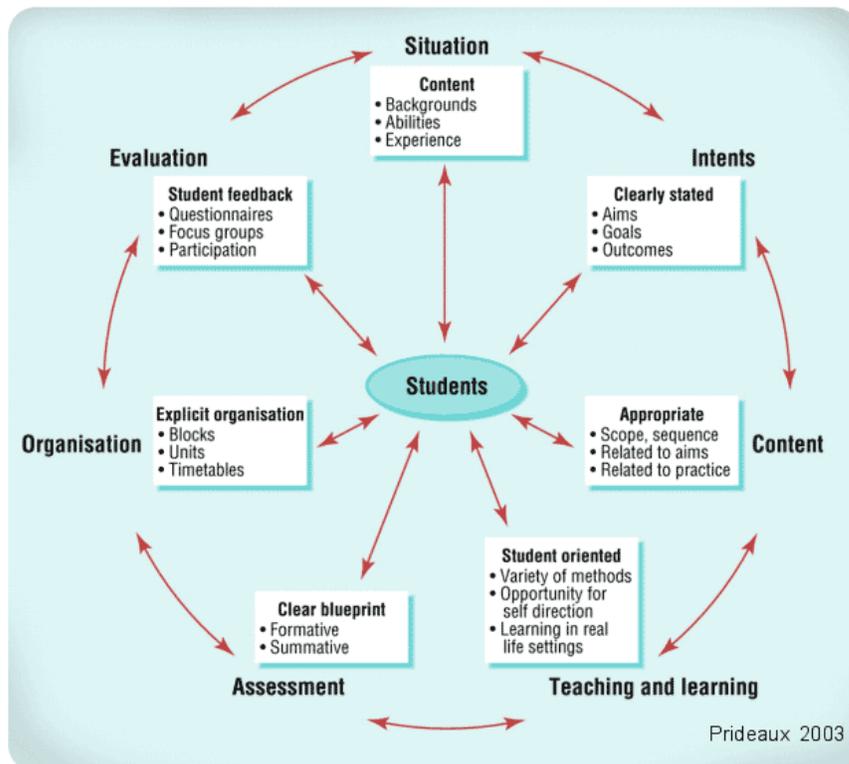


### **3. The Characteristics of the Ideal Curriculum**

Shortly speaking, that the ideal curriculum can support educational system to conduct its function in the social system frame of a country. Curriculum must be relevant, effective and efficient. Relevant with given material towards society and individual demand. Effective, because it should be maximized the learning-teaching process and efficient measured by financial and time use (Bistok, 1983: 81). This is therefore can give opportunities for facilitating access to language learning in the classroom setting and educational environment for individual or social group.

Therefore, students' perspective to curriculum consists of some elements as proposed by Prideaux (2003). The elements and influences include appropriate scope and sequence of content; student focused teaching and learning; formative and summative assessment; explicit organization; student evaluation and feedback; the background, ability and experience of the student relative to the situation at hand; and finally, the intention of the curriculum as stated by aims, goals and outcomes. Those detail elements can be seen in chart 2. ([http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/curriculum\\_assessment/curriculum\\_design](http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/curriculum_assessment/curriculum_design)).

**Chart 2. Students' Perspective to Curriculum**



In relation to English language learning, curriculum which relevant is curriculum that can give beneficial contribution to language function either individual or society. Based on this approach, we can formulate the language function as follows:

- a. Instrumental function  
This function must be developed continuously from elementary school to tertiary level. In universities, the language function as instrument must be developed, because it can support any other disciplines.
- b. Integrative function  
Integrative function of language can be used either as a medium of communication in social group or as a medium for ethnic relationships, intercultural communication, etc. In the curriculum, this function must be paid more attention, especially for people who basically learn a language.
- c. Cultural function  
The cultural function developed from primary school to tertiary level.
- d. Reasoning function  
This function can be used to understand concept, this function must be developed in language learning, so that language can be used as a tool for reasoning.

#### **4. Curriculum Development in Indonesia**

Having identified the methodology and approaches to the curriculum development, let us review some of the special measures and programs envisaged in Indonesian towards the curriculum at primary, secondary, and higher educational levels (Jambuligam, 1993) as follows.

- a) Primary education. In Indonesia, apart from physical education, as a part of the program of studies, curriculum revisions through pilot projects are being envisaged.
- b) Secondary education. In Indonesia, at secondary level, there are the junior and senior level schools. There are also the general and vocational streams of study at this level. Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Bahasa Indonesia, Social Sciences, English and vocational skills are provided at the junior secondary schools. At the senior secondary vocational schools commerce, home economics, basic engineering subjects of study are provided. The technical schools are provided with skill training facilities at centralized workshops.
- c) Higher education. In many countries like Indonesia, the program in higher education envisages the expansion of facilities for rural and backward areas. Qualitative improvement through improved facilities, curriculum and examination reforms and improved teaching methods are also attempted.

#### **C. Learner-Centered Curriculum**

The concept of learner-centeredness has been invoked with increasing frequency in recent years (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). In relation to this, they therefore argued that learner-centered classrooms are those in which learners are actively involved in their own learning process. In an ideal learning-centered context, not only will decisions about what to learn and how to learn be made with reference to the learners, but the learners themselves will be involved in the decision-making process (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). They therefore reveal that each element in the curriculum process will involve the learner, as table 2 shows below.

**Table 2. Learner roles in a learner-centered curriculum**

<i>Curriculum stage</i>	<i>Role of learner</i>
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Planning want to learn  An  facilitates this	Learners are consulted on what they  and how they want to go about learning.  extensive process of needs analysis  process. Learners are involved in setting, monitoring, and modifying the goals and objectives of the programs being designated from them.
Implementation	Learner's language skills develop through the learner actively using and reflecting on the language inside and outside the classroom. They are also involved in modifying and creating their own learning tasks and language data.
Assessment and progress. Evaluation	Learners monitor and assess their own  They are also actively involved in the evaluation and modification of teaching and learning during the course and after it has been completed.

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Nunan and Lamb (1996)

The philosophy of learner-centeredness has strong links with experiential learning, humanistic pedagogy and task-based language teaching (Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

Table 2, which sets out the role of the learner in relation to curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation, represents the ideal. As teachers and course designers, we have been in relatively few situations in which learners from an early stage in the learning process have been able to make critically informed decisions about what to learn and how to learn. In our experience, learners need to be systematically taught the skills needed to implement a learner-centered approach to pedagogy. In other words, language programs should have twin goals: language content goals and learning process goals. Such a program, we would characterize as being "learning centered." By systematically educating learners about what it means to be a learner, learners reach a point where they are able to make informed decisions about what they want to learn and how they

want to learn. It is at this point that a truly learner-centered curriculum can be implemented (Nunan, 1996).

Nunan (1996) argued that learner centeredness is not an all-or-nothing process. Rather it is a continuum from relatively less to relatively more learner-centered. Further, Nunan in Nunan (1996) had captured this continuum in table 3 and 4, which show that learner-centeredness can be implemented at a number of different levels. The tables also illustrate some of the practical steps that can be taken in implementing a learner-oriented approach to instruction.

**Table 3. Learner-centeredness in the experiential content domain**

<i>Level</i>	<i>learner action</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
1 pedagogical	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the goals and content of the course.
2 selecting their range of	Involvement	Learners are involved in own goals and objectives from a alternatives on offer.
3 modifying and the	Intervention	Learners are involved in adapting the goals and content of learning program.
4 and	Creation	Learners create their own goals objectives.
5 classroom and make classroom classroom.	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the links between the content of the and the world beyond the

Table 4. Learner-centeredness in the learning process domain

<i>Level</i>	<i>Learner action</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
1	Awareness	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical

		tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies
2	Involvement	Learners make choices among a
3	Intervention	range of options. Learners modify/adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners become teachers and researchers.

Table 4 illustrates how the continuum can apply to the learning process domain. Once again, we see that learner-centeredness is not an all-or-nothing process, but can be implemented in a series of gradual steps (Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

#### **D. Concluding Remarks**

This paper imposes the following conclusions:

1. The characteristics of ideal curriculum that can support educational system should be effective, relevant and efficient, because this can give opportunities for facilitating access to the classroom and education environment either for individual or social group.
2. The curriculum design elements are needs, objectives, content and sequences, learning experiences and sequence and evaluation procedure. These elements can be grouped into four stages which is called curriculum mode. They are the preparation phase, development phase, improvement phase and evaluation phase.
3. Language functions are: instrumental function, integrative function, cultural function and reasoning function.
4. Curriculum stages are: planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation.

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