ESP TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT STEPS AT SOME UNIVERSITIES IN HO CHI MINH CITY

Huynh Thi Hoa Sen*; Tran Van Phuoc

People's Security University; University of Foreign Languages, Hue University

Received: 11/05/2021; Revised: 10/08/2021; Accepted: 31/08/2021

Abstract: ESP curriculum development is of great significance in terms of developing a curriculum that meets the specific needs of a learner group and its steps are essential in ensuring this aim. Teachers' role in this process is vital in that not many materials are available for leaners with specific needs. The study thus aims to investigate ESP teachers' perceptions of the curriculum development steps. Seventy eight teachers at four tertiary institutions in Ho Chi Minh City were asked to give their viewpoints on the macro and micro steps to develop an ESP curriculum for non-English majors at their universities through a questionnaire and interviews. The data were then analyzed to find out the ESP teachers' perceptions of the curriculum development steps; the findings were discussed and some suggestions given to inform the ESP curriculum development process.

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

1. Introduction

In the effort to enhance the quality of English teaching in tertiary institutions, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching is considered to make English learning more relevant to the students' use of English for their future jobs, and thus arouse their interest and motivation in English learning. The development of ESP curriculum is, therefore, of great significance to the extent that it meets the specific needs of a learner group as well as enhances relevance and students' interest and motivation. Teacher involvement in this process is essential due to the modest availability of materials for learners with specific needs. The ESP teacher in this context is not only a teacher but also a collaborator, a course designer and material provider, a researcher, and an evaluator (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). The present study aims to investigate ESP teachers' perceptions of the steps in the curriculum development process. Data for the study were collected at four universities in Ho Chi Minh City to find out the answer to the question "What are the ESP teachers' perceptions of the curriculum development steps at some universities in Ho Chi Minh City?"

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. ESP curriculum development

ESP has evolved since its popularization in the 1960s, partly manisfested in its definition's evolvement. From Strevens' (1988) and Robinson's (1991) definitions of ESP, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) modified the definition of ESP as consisting of three absolute characteristics and five variable characteristics. The absolute characteristics are (a) ESP is designed to meet specific

* Email: hoasenhuynh38@gmail.com

needs of the learner; (b) ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; and (c) ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. The variable characteristics are (a) ESP may be related or designed for specific disciplines; (b) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English; (c) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could be used for learners at secondary school level; (d) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced learners; and (e) most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

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

For the present study, curriculum development is a term used to address "the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims and objectives for a program to address those needs, to determine appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods, and materials, and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes" (Richards, 2001, p.2). The process of curriculum development therefore consists of successive and interrelated steps or components. According to Nunan (1988), the key elements in the curriculum model are initial planning procedures (including data collection and learner grouping), content selection and gradation, methodology (which includes the selection of learning activities and materials), and ongoing monitoring, assessment and evaluation.

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

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

2.2. Teacher involvement in curriculum development

Teacher involvement in the curriculum development process has attracted several researchers to look for a curriculum that works more efficiently. Powell (1992) looks into the United Kingdom national context in which a regional modern languages project was conceived. The main focus of the article is the perceptions and emotions of the teachers involved, both as clients of an in-service program of professional development and as writers of language teaching materials for the 16-19 age range. The evidence gathered through open-ended questionnaire responses and diary entries reveals an interesting spectrum of feelings. It also underlines the benefits of networking and the importance of external support for writing activities. The positive outcomes in terms of curriculum developments at institutional level are listed in a brief conclusion including the inclusion of some subjects such as Spanish, or Languages for Business course, or the establishment of a modern languages center as part of the library.

While Powell (1992) explores the perceptions and emotions of the teachers involved, Eisenbach (2012) focuses more on the teachers' percetions and practice during a collabrative work on curriculum development. He investigates some reform initiatives that push for stronger curriculum mandates and greater teacher accountability. Such initiatives lead to an increase in scripted curriculums within the secondary education classroom. He poses the questions of what happens when teaching ideologies are at odds with such required curriculums and how teachers maintain a balance when personal beliefs no longer match the curricular expectations set before them. In his article, he shares the stories of three middle school teachers – the accommodator, the negotiator, and the rebel – as they work to incorporate a scripted curriculum within their language arts classrooms. In examining the curricular approaches taken by these three teachers, he urges educators to question their ethical obligations when infusing a scripted curriculum that opposes their personal teaching beliefs.

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

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

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

In their qualitative study, Lam et al. (2013) examined eleven Singapore teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning as related to their experiences implementing integrated curriculum. Interviews revealed that the teachers' conceptions of integration spanned the spectrum of ideas found in relevant literature. Further, although participants saw benefits to integration, including greater engagement of learners, they also spoke of significant obstacles to its implementation, such as teachers' own perceived lack of subject knowledge and a misalignment with the assessment system. The findings, while echoing previous studies conducted in various countries, highlight implementation difficulties in settings where high stake examinations and disciplinary-based curriculum prevail.

The previous studies explore the teachers' perceptions and practice of many aspects related to curriculum development and implementation. The teachers' perceptions of each step in the curriculum process, however, have not been addressed, especially in the context of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The development of ESP curriculum, in addition, has certain characteristics that are different from general English curriculum or those of other subjects. In the present study, therefore, the aspect of ESP curriculum development procedures will be explored in terms of the ESP teachers' perceptions of these steps in the curriculum development process.

3. Methods

The main aim of the present study is to investigate ESP teachers' perceptions of developing curriculum for non-English majors at some universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The research question is "What are ESP teachers' perceptions of developing curriculum for non-English majors at some universities in Ho Chi Minh City?" With the aim of investigating the

perceptions of ESP teachers in developing curriculum and for the nature of the research question, a descriptive research design is employed.

Participants

Participants of this study are ESP teachers from four universities in Ho Chi Minh City. All these universities have departments of English, either as a faculty that has their own English-majored students or as a department that teaches the English subject to non-English majors and they have their own long-established Department of English with a large number of permanent full-time faculty teaching English.

Seventy-eight ESP teachers from the four universities accpted to take part in the procedure of providing data for this study, including twenty-four teachers from University One, nineteen from University Two, eight from University Three, and twenty-seven from University Four. Table 1 displays that there are twenty-eight male teachers and fifty female teachers whose age ranges from below 25 years old with one teacher, from 25 to 30 with four teachers, from 31 to 35 with eighteen teachers, from 36 to 40 with seventeen teachers, from 41 to 50 with thirty-one teachers, and over 50 with seven teachers. Table 1 also displays that among the seventy-eight teachers, six of them are bachelor degree holders, fifty-four hold the degrees of Masters of Arts, five are doctoral students, twelve already have doctoral degree, and one is entitled Associate Professor.

As for years of ESP teaching experience, ten of the teachers have taught ESP for one to three years, sixteen of them for four to seven years, nineteen for eight to twelve years, and thirty-three for over twelve years. One fact emerged from the investigation is that not all the ESP teachers are EFL teachers. In University Four, among the twenty-seven teachers that were accessed for the study, only seven of them are EFL teachers, and twenty of them are specialist teachers who teach the core content subjects of the students' specialties. The reason is that in this university, the teaching of ESP was discussed and concluded to be more suitable to be taught by specialist teachers than by EFL teachers. ESP teaching, therefore, was in charge by the specialist departments in the university such as departments of Economics or Electricity, and some EFL teachers are still invited to teach ESP for these specialist departments due to the lack of ESP teachers.

Table 1. Participants' ethnographic information

Universities		**University One**	**University Two**	**University Three**	**University Four**	**Total**
Age	Below 25	1	0	0	0	1
	From 25 to 30	1	3	0	0	4
	From 31 to 35	2	9	0	7	18
	From 36 to 40	4	3	2	8	17
	From 41 to 50	14	2	5	10	31
	Over 50	2	2	1	2	7
Gender	Male	6	4	3	15	28
	Female	18	15	5	12	50
Qualifications	Bachelor	2	3	0	1	6
	Master	19	13	7	15	54
	Doctoral student	0	2	1	2	5
	Doctor	3	1	0	8	12
	Professor/ Associate Professor	0	0	0	1	1

Years of ESP teaching	1-3 years	3	1	0	6	10
	4-7 years	2	7	1	6	16
	8-12 years	3	5	2	9	19
	Over 12 years	16	6	5	6	33
Teachers' specialty	EFL teachers	24	19	8	7	58
	Specialist teachers	0	0	0	20	20
Total number of teachers		24	19	8	27	78

Among the seventy-eight teachers participating in the data collection procedure of the study and responded to the questionnaire, twenty-four teachers agreed to take part in the interview. However, due to their working agenda, twenty teachers did participate in the interview.

Data collection and analysis

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

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

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

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

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Teachers' general perceptions of developing ESP curriculum

To investigate the teachers' general perceptions of developing the ESP curriculum, question 7A in the questionnaire asked for their opinion about the importance of each step in the ESP curriculum development process. In addition, questions 7B and 7C also looked into the teachers' general perceptions of the implementation level by the university or the faculty and of their own involvement level in the process.

Data from question 7A shows that the teachers generally have high perceptions of all the seven steps in the ESP curriculum development process with all the mean from 4.28 or higher (Table 2). Specifically, they perceived that the most important step in this process is specifying the course goals or objectives with the highest mean of 4.68. Other steps that the teachers have high perceptions of are selecting or compiling coursebook or teaching materials with the mean of 4.50; selecting and sequencing the contents with the mean of 4.49; analyzing ESP needs with the mean of 4.47; and determining teaching and learning methodology with the mean of 4.44. Last but not least, the two steps the teachers perceived as a little less important are determining methods and contents of assessment with the mean of 4.35 and evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools with the mean of 4.28. This data from the questionnaire is aligned with the interview data when all of the teachers interviewed agreed that these seven steps were of high importance in ESP curriculum development.

Table 2. Teachers' general perceptions of the ESP curriculum development steps

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q7A.b.Specifying the course goals/ objectives	78	3	5	4.68	.497
Q7A.d.Selecting/ Compiling coursebooks/ teaching materials	78	3	5	4.50	.552
Q7A.c.Selecting and sequencing the contents	78	3	5	4.49	.528
Q7A.a.Analyzing ESP needs	78	2	5	4.47	.659
Q7A.e.Determining teaching and learning methodology	78	2	5	4.44	.594
Q7A.f.Determining methods and contents of assessment	78	3	5	4.35	.661
Q7A.g.Evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels/ tools	78	2	5	4.28	.662
Valid N (listwise)	78				

In contrast to the teachers' perceptions of the steps in ESP curriculum development for its own sake, their perceptions of how their university or school deploys this process diverge from different steps. With the assigned values of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 as totally not conducted, at low level, at average level, quite well, and very well respectively, the highest mean which is 3.42 is ascribed to determining teaching and learning methodology. This mean describes the teachers' perceptions that the step of determining teaching and learning methodology is not implemented really well but at the average level or a little higher than the average level. Other steps that are perceived by the teachers as at the average level or a little higher are determining methods and contents of

assessment with the mean of 3.27; selecting and sequencing the contents with the mean of 3.18; and selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials with the mean of 3.14.

The three remaining steps are perceived by the teachers as below the average level or they are even not explicitly conducted. As displayed in Table 3, specifying the course goals or objectives has a mean of 2.86, evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools 2.00, and analyzing ESP needs 1.85. This data is aligned with the interview data that analyzing ESP needs was not conducted comprehensively. The step of specifying the course goals or objectives, therefore, was not based on an informed foundation of ESP needs analysis. Similarly, the step of evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools was also perceived as at low level when the interviewees admitted that there had not been standardized criteria for implementation. These steps in practice will be presented in more detail in section two of this chapter.

Table 3. Teachers' general perceptions of the university/faculty's implementation level of the ESP curriculum development steps

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q7B.e.Determining teaching and learning methodology	78	2	5	3.42	.814
Q7B.f.Determining methods and contents of assessment	78	1	5	3.27	.878
Q7B.c.Selecting and sequencing the contents	78	1	5	3.18	.864
Q7B.d.Selecting/ Compiling coursebooks/ teaching materials	78	1	5	3.14	.922
Q7B.b.Specifying the course goals/ objectives	78	1	4	2.86	.734
Q7B.g.Evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels/ tools	78	1	4	2.00	.773
Q7B.a.Analyzing ESP needs	78	1	4	1.85	.757
Valid N (listwise)	78				

Similar to the teachers' perceptions of how their university or school deploy the ESP curriculum development process, their perceptions of their own involvement level in this process also diverge from different steps. With the assigned values of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 as totally not involved, at low level, at average level, quite well, and very well respectively, the highest mean which is 3.31 is ascribed to determining teaching and learning methodology (Table 4). This figure shows that the teachers perceive they generally participate most in the step of determining teaching and learning methodology although this involvement is just a little higher than the average level. The situation is similar for the steps of determining methods and contents of assessment with the mean of 3.08 and selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials with the mean of 3.01.

Table 4. Teachers' general perceptions of their participation in the ESP curriculum development steps

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q7C.e.Determining teaching and learning methodology	78	1	5	3.31	.997
Q7C.f.Determining methods and contents of assessment	78	1	5	3.08	1.148
Q7C.d.Selecting/ Compiling coursebooks/ teaching materials	78	1	5	3.01	1.190
Q7C.c.Selecting and sequencing the contents	78	1	5	2.97	1.128
Q7C.b.Specifying the course goals/ objectives	78	1	5	2.81	1.058
Q7C.g.Evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels/ tools	78	1	5	2.24	1.034
Q7C.a.Analyzing ESP needs	78	1	4	2.22	1.002
Valid N (listwise)	78				

Table 4 also reveals that the teachers' general involvement level into the ESP curriculum development is below the average or at low level regarding certain steps. In particular, the teachers participate in the step of selecting and sequencing the contents at the level which is a little lower than the average (m = 2.97) or specifying the course goals or objectives with the mean of 2.81. The teachers' general involvement level into the ESP curriculum development, however, is at very low level regarding the steps of evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools whose mean is 2.24 or analyzing ESP needs with the mean of 2.22.

The interview data also supports the questionnaire findings. The teachers interviewed generally said that they did not participate in an ESP curriculum evaluation process with clear criteria for evaluation except for some kinds of questionnaire to ask the learners about the teachers, the teaching process and the curriculum as well. Most of the teachers interviewed also stated that they were not involved in a formal and systematic needs analysis before developing the ESP curriculum, which was often implemented by the dean or the assigned team leader. The step of specifying the course goals or objectives, therefore, was not the process they were involved much in either. This data can also be triangulated by the standard deviation displayed in Table 4, which ranges from .997 to 1.190.

4.2. Teachers' perceptions of the steps in developing ESP curriculum

The previous section has described the teachers' general perceptions of the seven steps in ESP curriculum development. This section will be devoted to present the findings on the teachers' perceptions of each of these steps in the ESP curriculum development process, that is, Step One: Analyzing ESP needs, Step Two: Specifying the course goals or objectives, Step Three: Selecting and sequencing the contents, Step Four: Determining teaching and learning methodology, Step Five: Selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials, Step Six: Determining methods and contents of assessment, and Step Seven: Evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools.

4.2.1. Teachers' perceptions of Step One: Analyzing ESP needs

To investigate the teachers' perceptions of the first step in ESP curriculum development, that is, ESP needs analysis, they were asked about the importance of the instruments for ESP needs investigation. The findings demonstrate that the teachers generally perceived that the instruments asked are important. Accordingly, they perceived questionnaires as important with the mean of 4.08, seminars with the mean of 4.01, observations with the mean of 3.97, interviews with the mean of 3.96, exam or test results with the mean of 3.86, and finally, existing documents and materials with the mean of 3.79.

With the ranges from 2 to 5 for questionnaires, seminars, observations, and interviews, and from 1 to 5 for exam or test results and existing documents and materials, the questionnaire data shows that some teachers do not perceive these instruments as important for ESP needs investigation. The interview data also reveals that some of the teachers did not even think of these instruments in their ESP teaching because they did not participate in the needs investigation or analysis.

Regarding the contents in ESP needs analysis, the teachers perceived all the aspects asked in question 9A as important or very important. They perceived the item 9A.a in question 9A, situations of using English at the students' future workplace, as very important with the highest mean of 4.60 and in fact the most important aspect of all. Other aspects of the contents in ESP needs analysis are perceived as important by the teachers as well. They are situations of difficulty in using English at the students' future workplace with the mean of 4.44, students' current ability of English with the mean of 4.33, frequency of different channels of communication in English at the students' future workplace with the mean of 4.26, organizational and environmental conditions for good teaching and learning with the mean of 4.19, frequency of linguistic elements 4.17, recommendations to difficult aspects in using English with the mean of 4.12, students' preferences on different teaching and learning activities with the mean of 4.06, and finally, frequency of common errors with the mean of 3.87. These figures demonstrate that the teachers' perceptions are high or even very high regarding the specified contents of ESP needs analysis in question 9A.

Question 10A in the questionnaire investigates the teachers' perceptions of the stake-holders that need to be surveyed in ESP needs investigation. The data displays that the teachers perceived the specified stake-holders as important survey subjects in this process. Accordingly, they perceived alumni or staff working in this area as important survey subjects with the highest mean of 4.37, ESP teachers with the mean of 4.36, students with the mean of 4.33, managers, employers or professionals with the mean of 4.29, and specialist teachers with the mean of 4.15. These figures are also supported by the interview data which shows that similar to other aspects of ESP needs investigation and analysis, the teachers' perceptions are also high concerning the specified stake-holders to be surveyed.

4.2.2. Teachers' perceptions of Step Two: Specifying the course goals or objectives

Regarding the second step, specifying the course goals or objectives, question 11A asked for the teachers' viewpoints on the bases when specifying the course goals or objectives. The questionnaire data display that the teachers have very clear perceptions on these bases. They

perceived that the most important base for the goals or objectives specification is situation needs with the highest mean of 4.62, whose value is very important. Other bases are also perceived as important by the teachers with high means. Specifically/ Particularly, they perceived learners' needs as important with the mean of 4.44, experience in ESP teaching of the curriculum developers with the mean of 4.41, students' entrance and outcome standard levels that are specified in the curriculum framework with the mean of 4.32, language needs with the mean of 4.14, learning needs with the mean of 4.12, and Vietnam's 6-level foreign language proficiency framework with the mean of 3.94.

The interview data is also aligned with the questionnaire data regarding the teachers' perceptions of the bases in the course goals or objectives specification process. They stated that in specifying the course goals or objectives, it was very important to base on the ESP needs that had been analyzed, especially the situation needs or target needs in actual working conditions together with the learning needs to facilitate learning. Only then are the goals and objectives specified informedly and meaningfully for the whole ESP curriculum development process.

4.2.3. Teachers' perceptions of Step Three: Selecting and sequencing the contents

Question 12A asked for the teachers' opinion on what type of syllabus framework as the most important, that is, how to select and sequence the contents for the ESP curriculum development. They were asked to number the items from the most important to the least important with number 1 designated to the most important and number 8 the least. The questionnaire data illustrate the teachers' perceptions that the most important type of ESP syllabus framework is the topical or content-based syllabus with the mean of 1.83. Other types of syllabus framework are also perceived by the teachers as important, that is, situational syllabus with the mean of 3.28, skills syllabus with the mean of 3.38, and task-based syllabus with the mean of 3.51. The remaining syllabuses are considered less important or even unimportant at all. They are functional syllabus with the mean of 4.29, lexical syllabus with the mean of 5.03, text-based syllabus with the mean of 6.12, and no syllabus type indicated is considered unimportant at all with the mean of 7.81.

4.2.4. Teachers' perceptions of Step Four: Determining teaching and learning methodology

To investigate the teachers' perceptions of the step of determining teaching and learning methodology, question 13A asked for the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the elements, activities or mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of the ESP curriculum and question 14A explored for the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the activities that support the ESP curriculum implementation. The findings of question 13A shows that the teachers' perceptions are high concerning the elements, activities or mechanisms that ensure the effectiveness of the ESP curriculum. Accordingly, they perceived as important the aspect of establishing mechanisms for students to get feedback on teaching and learning process through many channels with the highest mean of 4.19, establishing mechanisms to support students in learning and self-study with the mean of 4.18, organizing orientation sessions and seminars to better raise students' awareness of the course goals or objectives and the methods of teaching, learning, and self-study with the mean of 4.09, organizing the investigations with questionnaires and other tools to find out students'

needs on motivation, learning styles, teaching and learning activities, etc. with the mean of 4.03, and developing different learning options for better and weaker students with the mean of 3.99.

As regards their viewpoints or opinions on the activities that support the ESP curriculum implementation, the teachers discerned as important the aspect of compiling test banks and evaluation profiles with the highest mean of 4.51, training teachers in ESP teaching with the mean of 4.44, compiling a system of reference materials for teaching with the mean of 4.42, organizing orientation sessions and discussions with teachers before, during and after the ESP course with the mean of 4.27, training teachers in the specialist subjects with the mean of 4.22, developing a set of tools to manage students' self-study, eg. tests of self-study, marking schemes, etc. with the mean of 4.17, and developing survey tools for students and teachers with the mean of 4.13.

4.2.5. Teachers' perceptions of Step Five: Selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials

As regards the fifth step, selecting or compiling coursebooks or teaching materials, question 15A examined the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on selecting or compiling the coursebooks and teaching materials in ESP curriculum development and question 16A asked for the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the bases in selecting or compiling the coursebooks and materials in the ESP curriculum development process.

In respect of the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on selecting or compiling the coursebooks and teaching materials in ESP curriculum development, the questionnaire data displays that the teachers discerned coursebooks or students' books as very important with the highest mean of 4.60. A number of teaching and learning materials that were perceived as important were teacher's books with the mean of 4.29, workbooks with the mean of 4.26, books or materials on the specialty with the mean of 4.26, CDs, DVDs or software with the mean of 4.05, books or materials on vocabulary with the mean of 4.01, books or materials on reading skills with the mean of 3.90, books or materials on speaking skills with the mean of 3.83, books or materials on writing skills with the mean of 3.79, and books or materials on listening with the mean of 3.78. Besides, two types of materials that were considered as of average importance were books or materials on pronunciation with the mean of 3.49 and books or materials on grammar with the mean of 3.37.

As for their viewpoints or opinions on the bases in selecting or compiling the coursebooks and materials in the process of ESP curriculum development, the teachers perceived the aspects specified in question 16A as important or very important. In specific, they perceived as very important the aspect of the curriculum goals or objectives with the mean of 4.69, the content that has been determined with the mean of 4.58, and the ESP needs that have been analyzed with the mean of 4.55. Other aspects were discerned as important, that is, teacher experience with the mean of 4.44, the methods of testing and assessment developed with the mean of 4.36, the viewpoints on language teaching and learning with the mean of 4.33, the time allotted with the mean of 4.22, the unit structure determined with the mean of 4.13, and the viewpoints on language with the mean of 3.99.

4.2.6. Teachers' perceptions of Step Six: Determining methods and contents of assessment

To survey the teachers' perceptions of the sixth step in ESP curriculum development, determining methods and contents of assessment, question 17A examined the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the specification of assessment methods and contents in ESP curriculum development and question 18A looked into the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the bases or principles to determine the requirements for testing and evaluations in the ESP curriculum development process.

Regarding the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the specification of assessment methods and contents in ESP curriculum development, the findings to question 17A demonstrated that the teachers perceived the final achievement test and proficiency test at the end of the course as the most important of all with the means of 4.59 and 4.51 respectively. They also perceived as important the progress test after each lesson or group of lessons with the mean of 4.29, the mid-term achievement test with the mean of 4.26, proficiency test at the beginning of the course with the mean of 4.04, placement test with the mean of 4.01, and tests for students' self-assessment with the mean of 3.91.

As for their viewpoints or opinions on the bases or principles to determine the requirements for testing and evaluations in the ESP curriculum development process, the teachers perceived the aspects listed in question 18A as important or very important. Accordingly, the most important aspect was able to measure the learning outcomes compared with the goals and specified learning outcomes with the highest mean of 4.62. Two other aspects were compatible with the contents and learning methods and able to provide information that helps adjust the next teaching and learning process with the means of 4.53 and 4.50 respectively. Besides, the teachers discerned as important the aspect of able to be developed into exam question banks with the mean of 4.33 and has a good washback effect on the next teaching and learning process with the mean of 4.28.

4.2.7. Teachers' perceptions of Step Seven: Evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools

To examine the teachers' perceptions of the seventh step, evaluating the performed curriculum through different channels or tools, question 19A asked for the teachers' viewpoints or opinions on the contents to be evaluated in curriculum development. The questionnaire data illustrates that the teachers perceived the specified evaluation contents as important or very important. Particularly, they discerned as very important the development of the curriculum contents with the highest mean of 4.77, teaching materials with the mean of 4.69, students' progress with the mean of 4.56, the development of the curriculum with the mean of 4.50, and the training and development of the teaching staff with the mean of 4.50. Furthermore, they considered as important the aspect of students' motivation (4.49), teachers' teaching process (4.44), facilities and learning environment (4.21), and decision making (4.01).

5. Conclusion

This study has explored the ESP teachers' perceptions of the curriculum development steps at four universities in Ho Chi Minh City. The findings of the study reveal that when the issue of ESP curriculum development steps was placed explicitly, the ESP teachers perceived them as

important or very important to carry out the steps in a logically ordered and reflective way. They perceived that all the seven steps are essential and indispensable, including analyzing ESP needs, specifying course goals or objectives, selecting and sequencing content, determining teaching methodology, selecting or compiling coursebooks and materials, determining testing and assessment contents and methods, and evaluating the ESP curriculum to inform each step as well as the whole procedures of ESP curriculum development. Especially, the ESP teachers were aware that many of the controversial and problematic issues concerning ESP teaching at their universities resulted from the fact that the first step of ESP needs analysis had not been carried out scientifically and comprehensively. They perceived that the four aspects of ESP needs analysis had not been approached systematically, including target situation analysis, present situation analysis, learning situation analysis, and means analysis (Robinson, 1991; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), which led to problematic issues in later steps of the ESP curriculum development process, especially the steps of specifying course goals or objectives, selecting and sequencing content, determining teaching methodology, and evaluating ESP curriculum.

As ESP curriculum development is a cyclical process (Brown, 1995; Nations & Macalister, 2010), the universities or faculties could re-evaluate the effectiveness of the current ESP curriculum as to what extent it meets the ESP needs including situation needs, learning needs and learners' needs with reference to the ESP teachers' opinions. The innovative work could start with conducting a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the four aspects of ESP needs. The specification of ESP course goals or objectives should be closely conformed to the ESP needs that have been analyzed as well as other principles of specifying goals or objectives. The ESP needs that have been analyzed and the course goals or objectives that have been specified should then be the bases for conducting or adjusting the following steps in the curriculum innovation, including selecting and sequencing the contents, determining the teaching and learning methodology, selecting or compiling coursebooks and teaching materials, determining the contents and methods of assessment, and evaluating the performed curriculum. As the ESP teacher is not only a teacher but also a collaborator, a course designer, a material provider, a researcher, and an evaluator (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), every step of the curriculum development process should be conducted with their involvement to better ensure curriculum effectiveness.

References

Banegas, D.L. (2011). Teachers as 'reform-doers': developing a participatory curriculum to teach English as a foreign language. *Educational Action Research*, *19*(4), 417-432.

Banegas, D.L. (2014). Initial English language teacher education: Processes and tensions towards a unifying curriculum in an Argentinian province. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *13*(1), 224-237.

Brown, J.D. (1995). *The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development*. New York: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Clarke, D., & Hollingsworth, H. (2002). Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *18*, 947-967.

Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M.J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eisenbach, B.B. (2012). Teacher belief and practice in a scripted curriculum. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 85(4), 153-156.

Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centred approach*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lam, C.C., et al. (2013). Curriculum integration in Singapore: Teachers' perspectives and practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *31*, 23-34.

Nation, I.S.P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design.* New York & London: Routledge.

Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Powell, R.C. (1992). More than just a hobby: Language teachers' perceptions of involvement in a curriculum development project. *System*, 20(4), 493-505.

Richards, J. (2001). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, P. (1991). *ESP today: A practitioner's guide*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Strevens, P. (1988). The learner and teacher of ESP. In D. Chamberlain & R. Baumgardner (Eds.), *ESP in the Classroom: Practice and Evaluation* (pp. 39-44). Oxford: Modern English Publications in association with the British Council.

Voogt, J., et al. (2011). Teacher learning in collaborative curriculum design. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*, 1235-1244.

White, R.V. (1988). *The ELT Curriculum: Design, Innovation and Management*. Oxford: Blackwell.

NHẬN THỨC CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH CHUYÊN NGÀNH VỀ CÁC BƯỚC XÂY DỰNG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH TẠI MỘT SỐ TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

Tóm tắt: Xây dựng chương trình Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành đóng vai trò vô cùng quan trọng trong đáp ứng nhu cầu học tập của một nhóm người học cụ thể. Vai trò của giáo viên trong xây dựng chương trình Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành rất quan trọng vì thường ít có tài liệu phù hợp nhất với một nhóm người học với nhu cầu cụ thể. Vì vậy bài viết này nhằm tìm hiểu nhận thức của giáo viên về các bước xây dựng chương trình Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ 78 giáo viên Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành từ bốn trường đại học tại Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh qua công cụ bảng hỏi và phỏng vấn. Dữ liệu sau đó được phân tích và thảo luận nhằm hiểu rõ nhận thức của giáo viên về các bước xây dựng chương trình Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành.

Từ khoá: Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành, xây dựng chương trình, giáo viên Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành, nhận thức