



Evaluation of Teachers' involvement in English curriculum design and development in the Saudi Public School

Ashwag A. Al-kasi

Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabi

Author: Ashwag A. Al-kasi

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Abstract

Involving English teachers in designing and developing curriculum leads to producing effective curriculum, therefore, efficient learning process of English. This exploratory study evaluated the English teachers' involvement in designing curriculum in Saudi public schools. Also, it investigates how English teachers' absence of the process of curriculum design impacts them and their learners. Then the study suggests the collaborative curriculum design method as an alternative. The sample consists of seven teachers and two supervisors. The data were collected and analyzed through qualitative research methods. The findings show that English teachers' participation is restricted to evaluating the curriculum after implementing it. This narrow role limits the creativity and productivity of English teachers and their students.

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Faculty of Languages and Translation

English Department

**Evaluation of Teachers' involvement in English curriculum design and development in
the Saudi Public Schools.**

By

Ashwag A. Al-kasi

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Involving English teachers in designing and developing curriculum leads to producing effective curriculum, therefore, efficient learning process of English. This exploratory study evaluated the English teachers' involvement in designing curriculum in Saudi public schools. Also, it investigates how English teachers' absence of the process of curriculum design impacts them and their learners. Then the study suggests the collaborative curriculum design method as an alternative. The sample consists of seven teachers and two supervisors. The data were collected and analyzed through qualitative research methods. The findings show that English teachers' participation is restricted to evaluating the curriculum after implementing it. This narrow role limits the creativity and productivity of English teachers and their students.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Curriculum development and design is a crucial activity that motivates teachers to increase their awareness of different linguistic and pedagogical aspects. Unfortunately, from my own experience, as an English teacher for almost five years, Saudi English teachers are deprived of the opportunity to be involved in the process of designing a curriculum.

Curricula is essential to the ability of the learning process to succeed in meeting its objectives. A curriculum refers to an overall plan for a course that contains learning objectives, content, teaching methods, the means of assessments, and an evaluation of the whole plan or program (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Thus, designing a curriculum is “largely a how-to-do activity” (Macalister & Nation, 2010, p. xv). Curriculum design is a process that requires making essential decisions about who will participate in the process of curriculum decision-making and how it is going to progress (Adentwi, 2005, as cited in Abudu & Mensah, 2016). It is needed teachers regularly join a learning process and actively be productive in curriculum design to add to their professional development (Voogt et al., 2016).

1.2 Collaborative Curriculum Design Model

Recently, the use by teachers of a collaborative curriculum design method (CCDM) is increasingly being approved as a pedagogical practice since the traditional way of teaching and implementing the curriculum—where teachers are passive—is inadequate. Besides designing the curriculum, teachers should be involved not only as implementers but also as designers. This involvement has been shown to enhance both their teaching proficiency and curriculum implementation (Voogt et al., 2016). Collaborative design requires effective interactions with teachers, experts, designers, and facilitators to design, develop, or adopt a new curriculum (Voogt et al., 2015). In collaborative design, teachers work in groups to form new content or adjust existing curricular content that responds to their objectives and environment (Voogt et al., 2015). Such groups are usually known as teachers’ communities

(Pareja Roblin et al., 2014), professional communities, or teacher design teams (Voogt et al., 2016).

1.3 Problem Statement

Teachers' involvement in curriculum-based innovations is critical, especially in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The Ministry of Education, in Saudi Arabia, dominates the curriculum design process and issues sets of structured textbooks for each course, then provides them to public schools (Alghamdi, 2019). The English language curriculum comprises three series (for all stages), and it has been developed by three different publishing companies: the Macmillan Series, the McGraw–Hill Series, and the MM Publication Series; each series has three curricula (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, 2019). Currently, the McGraw Hill series has been chosen as a standard curriculum across the country (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia 2020). Despite the importance of English teachers' involvement in curriculum design (Albedaiwi, 2014), the English curricula are approved and produced by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) with no evident involvement of English teachers.

Teaching English is a meticulous undertaking that requires a high level of proficiency that is informed by appropriate preparation and specific values. The contributions of teachers, learners, curriculum designers, and policymakers are required if this is to be successful. A lack of involvement by teachers in curriculum design and development is a severe constraint that impacts this process, specifically by negatively influencing the quality of pedagogical outcomes and the effectiveness of the curriculum and its ability to meet the desired goals.

1.3The Purpose of the Study

The current research explored the extent to which Saudi English teachers are involved in the design and development of English curricula in Saudi public schools. It discusses the negative effects, on teachers and students, related to the absence of participation by teachers in curriculum design. The Collaborative Curriculum Design Model is recommended as an alternative to the current strategies being used to resolve this issue and to enrich the

proficiency of teachers.

1.4The Study Questions

The research questions for the current study were as follows:

- (1) To what extent are Saudi public-school teachers involved in the EFL curriculum design process?
- (2) What are the effects, on learners and teachers, of ignoring teachers' opinions and perspectives with respect to English curriculum design and development?
- (3) In what way would the participation of teachers in improving curriculum design (using a collaborative curriculum design method) enhance their teaching careers?

2 Literature Review

2.1 English Teachers' Involvement in English Foreign Language Curriculum Design and Development

All policymaker, facilitators, specialists, and teachers should be involved in the curriculum so that it can be optimally effective, especially those with direct involvement in the learning process. Thus, the role of English teachers in the curriculum design process is crucial (Alsubaie, 2016). In their book, *Language Curriculum Design*, Macalister and Nation (2010) acknowledge that "Teachers themselves are very good sources of needs analysis information because they typically know their learners well, have seen them perform various tasks, and have seen the results of those tasks. Teachers' intuitions can be reliable, valid and practical" (Macalister & Nation, 2010. p. 199). Similarly, it has been confirmed that the value of teacher input in curriculum design results in a successful curriculum, greater awareness of students' requirements, enhanced ability, and increased knowledge sharing during the design process (Abudu & Mensahthe, 2016).

However, in some contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, teachers' opinions are ignored in the process of curriculum design. In one study by Gherzouli (2019), he aimed at problematizing the top-down educational system of Algeria that forces teachers to implement a new curriculum without involving them in the process of curriculum change or policy-make. The researcher recommended for a curriculum reform to be effective; teachers, facilitators, and stakeholders should collaborate in the decision-making process. The findings showed that many reasons challenged the involvement by teachers in curriculum reforms like centralized government, power system, and domination (Gherzouli, 2019).

In the Saudi context, discussing the role of Saudi English teachers in designing the EFL curriculum is complicated. In Saudi, the English curricula have been updated regularly over the years, yet the process has not been sufficiently rapid to involve English teachers in the curriculum design (Albedaiwi, 2014) owing to a highly governed system in which all curricula are approved and produced by the Ministry of Education (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014).

It has been proposed that a curriculum can only be efficiently delivered if teachers are an essential element of the design process (Gherzouli, 2019), yet teachers remain marginalized in the curriculum design process owing to the top–down Ministry of Education policy in Saudi Arabia (Alnefaie, 2016). In another study, the limited involvement of teachers in curriculum development was attributed to monopolization of the creation and design of EFL curricula by the Tatweer project (Albedaiwi, 2014). In 2007, King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz initiated the Tatweer project with the primary purpose of modifying education. The Tatweer program was intended to enhance the effectiveness of education by transforming policies, processes, and functions within institutions with a core purpose to shift from a massively centralized governance system to a more decentralized one (Alyami & Floyd, 2019). Furthermore, Alghamdi (2019) confirms that the Saudi Ministry of Education reforms the curriculum in collaboration with international experts. The logistics of this collaboration remain unclear for teachers and learners. The mystery of how the Saudi Ministry of Education designs and develops the English curriculum, with whom, and whether Saudi English teachers are involved suggests that this issue requires further research.

On the other hand, the Saudi Curriculum Agency claims to support the involvement of teachers in EFL curricula design; it posted a comment on its official Twitter account as follows: “The teacher has a vital role in preparing the curriculum, as he is the closest to the students and knows how appropriate the materials and the content are to their abilities” (Curriculum Agency, 2017). Another tweet stated that, “The teacher observes the students’ interaction with the curriculum and makes sure that it suits all students with different preferences and abilities” (Curriculum Agency, 2017). It has been claimed that any evaluation of English materials should be the responsibility of teachers only (Binobaid, 2016). Likewise, Al-Seghayer (2005), in a historical overview of the FFL curriculum in Saudi Arabia, indicated that the development of or improvements to the English curriculum in the 1990s was carried out based on reports, the feedback of teachers and supervisors, and the cooperation of language researchers. Since then, the situation has not changed; Fatima Al-

Sukhari, Head of the English Language Department at the Department of Educational Supervision in Taif, declared that the EFL curriculum could only be adjusted based on feedback obtained through the submission of periodic reports and questionnaires to teachers, supervisors, and parents (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, 2019). Hence English teachers are hardly involved in the curriculum design at inception and are only asked to evaluate it after the curriculum has already been implemented. Some teachers consider their ability to provide feedback to be acceptable, while others feel marginalized and unappreciated.

2.2 The Effect of the Limited Involvement of Saudi English Teachers in Curriculum Development on Teachers and Learners

Teachers play a critical role in the learning process. They represent a third of the components necessary to the educational process: teacher, curriculum, student (Binobaid, 2016). In the Saudi context, it has been demonstrated that, in general, educators accept their role as receptive observers who must apply what they are told or as curriculum implementers, whether as university professors or public-school teachers, owing to the nature of the centralized educational system (Mullick, 2013). Saudi English teachers in the qualitative study performed by Alnefaie (2016) expressed their frustration at limitations that hindered their creativity since they desired meaningful engagement in the curriculum design process.

Language teachers have views about the curricula they use, and students likewise have ideas. These views are critical in designing language curriculum since they are the people most directly involved to the curriculum (Macalister & Nation, 2010) implementation. As mentioned by Albedaiwi (2014) failing to involve teachers in the EFL curriculum design negatively impacts teachers, in terms of their professional progress and teaching practices, and learners, in terms of curriculum development that does not match their needs. In a study that evaluated the reasons for the low achievement by EFL Saudi learners, Alrabai (2016) suggested that the English curriculum should be adjusted and informed by teachers' input and designed according to students' interests, requirements, aims, skills, and real-life contexts. It is counterproductive to ask learners to learn content that they do not think is relevant to their

environment and interests or content that discourages and demotivates them (Dörnyei, 2001 as cited in Alrabai, 2016). That means the involvement of English teachers with adequate expertise when addressing learners' needs, interests, and differences is a prerequisite to designing the EFL curricula.

The study by Mullik (2013) traced the influences of marginalization in the university context; he observed that English teachers experienced intensely negative emotions in relation to the hierarchical organizational structure of learning systems in Saudi educational institutions. Albedaiwi (2014) argued that the method of teaching English in Saudi Arabia is managed by controlling teachers' participation, establishing boundaries regarding the applied approach and the skills needed. That narrows the range of creativity when preparing learning activities for students, especially since such constraints prevent teachers from being able to adequately consider their students' needs or having the capacity to promote strategies that meet their requirements (Albedaiwi, 2014). Enforce preprepared plans upon English teachers influence their efficiency in a destructive way.

2.3 Gaps in the Literature

Generally, there is a shortage of resources in Saudi Arabia regarding the ability to address the involvement of EFL teachers in curriculum design. Most local studies consider teachers' voices to evaluate an existing curriculum or textbook (Alnefaie, 2016) rather than to explore the contribution of Saudi English teachers in curriculum design. Moreover, hardly any research has suggested the use of a collaborative curriculum design tool as a practical solution in this regard. Thus, the current study sought to address this gap and explore the extent to which Saudi English teachers contribute to EFL curricula design and development in Saudi public schools and evaluate their knowledge of such processes by identifying causes and the effects and offering a solution. It is hoped that the findings of the current study will constitute a starting point for further studies, with the definitive goal of effecting critical changes to curriculum design practices and educational policy in Saudi Arabia. Ultimately,

this would enhance the field of language curriculum design, both locally and universally.

3Methodology

The present research applied an exploratory methodological approach to evaluating Saudi English teachers' involvement in curriculum design and development in Saudi public schools. Qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze the data. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews as this approach is widely used in qualitative research (DonYei, 2007). The interviews were conducted and recorded online using Zoom owing to Coronavirus 2019 social distancing regulations.

3.1Participants

The study targeted female English teachers in public schools in the southern region of Saudi Arabia. As education in Saudi Arabia is gender-segregated, it was not possible to obtain the opinions of male teachers in public schools. The participants, seven English female teachers and two English female supervisors from various administrative offices and public schools in the southern region of Saudi Arabia, were selected using snowball sampling. Four years of experience teaching different grades at public schools was an inclusion criterion to ensure adequate experience and familiarization with the involvement of teachers in curriculum design and development in Saudi Arabia.

The characteristics of the participants (assigned pseudonyms) are detailed in Table 1.

Pseudonyms were used throughout the research to guarantee the confidentiality of the study subjects.

Table 1

The Characteristics of the Participants in the Study (who work in different schools at the southern region of Saudi Arabia)

Name	Teacher (T) or Supervisor (S)	Years of Experience	Qualification	Current Grade Taught
Maram	T	20	BA	Secondary & intermediate school
Asma	T	5	MA	Elementary school

Rawan	T	16	BA	Elementary school
Ebtehal	T	5	MA	Elementary & intermediate school
Eiman	T	8	BA	Secondary, elementary & intermediate
Sara	T	16	BA	Elementary school
Fatin	T	18	BA	Secondary & intermediate school
Ftoon	S	26 (6 as a teacher, 20 as supervisor)	BA	
Bassma	S	23 (21 as a teacher, 2 as supervisor)	BA	

3.2 Procedures

The data for the study were collected through one interview with each teacher, conducted via online interviewing (Zoom). The interviews, which comprised 15 items (questions and sub-questions), were recorded, transcribed, and translated from Arabic into English. The participants were given an option as to which language to use to best facilitate the expression of their thoughts. Accordingly, the questions were prepared in Arabic and English.

Informed written consent was obtained through a consent form sent via WhatsApp® messaging. Although the nine participants were amenable to discussing their perspectives and sharing their experiences, their heavy workload, as a result of teaching classes online, made it difficult for them to participate in further interviews. Nonetheless, they were consulted via WhatsApp® messaging to determine if the interpretations were correct and to ask for further explanations if needed.

3.3 Analysis

The interviews lasted about 40–50 minutes and were recorded and transcribed. The data were analyzed using Microsoft® Word® comments. The data analysis was conducted using several

steps. The first step was to read the written transcripts several times to obtain a general idea about the participants' views and opinions. The second step was to draw up a list of subtitles that had emerged while reading. Thereafter, subtitles were assigned to relevant quotes using the comments feature in Microsoft® Word®; if needed, the quotes were translated into English. As to ensure the validity of the data, the translations were checked by a translator - with an MA degree- who is fluent in Arabic and English. She approved the translation with minor alterations that did not affect the meaning.

4Results

This section addresses the research questions regarding English teachers' role in the learning process in general and in the design and development of the English curricula, in particular (Research question 1). Next, it discusses, from the perspective of the participants, how the absence of participation by teachers in the creation of English materials impacts teachers and learners (Research question 2). Finally, it considers the reactions of participants to the suggestion that the use of a collaborative curriculum design method might be a viable alternative to current approaches used to English curricula design in the context of Saudi public schools (Research question 3). Several themes emerged during the data analysis, and they are explored in this section.

4.1Teachers' Perceptions about their Role in the English Learning Process

The participants agreed on the importance of the role played by English teachers in the learning process. For example, the majority, including one of the supervisors, Ftoon, described the role of English teachers as “the core of the educational process” and “the tool in implementing the curriculum.” The participants reported that teaching EFL, especially in the southern region where there is not adequate opportunity to practice English other than in the classroom, meant that English teachers were the only viable source of information and afforded a key opportunity for communication in English. One of the teachers, Fatin, agreed with this: “Since we are in a society that does not speak English as an official language, I feel that it is our responsibility as English teachers to use every minute in the classroom to practice the language with students. So, English teachers act as a link between the reality in which the students live and what they learn.” Asma showed that teachers have an important emotional connection with their students. Asma stated: “I should leave the chair of teacher and be just one of their friends. Sometimes we chat with each other ... play ... dance. The teachers of any language, especially foreign language, should be fun.” It is Asma's belief that this approach constitutes “the vision of the new generation of teachers.” It is Asma's belief that this approach constitutes “the vision of the new generation of teachers.”

4.2 Teachers' Involvement in the Design and Development of the English Curriculum

Despite consensus regarding the importance of the role played by English teachers in Saudi public schools, the views of the teachers regarding the involvement of English teachers in the design and development of the EFL curriculum varied. Four participants (Group1) perceived their current role merely to be implementation of the curriculum and not involvement in its design and development; however, they were eager to participate more. Three teachers (Group2) had no clear idea regarding the extent to which English teachers were involved in curriculum development, claiming that it was likely that only teachers with exceptional skills and more than ten years of experience would be consulted. The last two participants (Group3) stated that English teachers were effectively involved in curriculum development claiming that the changes are made according to their feedback.

Group1 participants were involved in an exercise to evaluate the English curricula, either by participating in professional meetings or voluntarily providing feedback. They had certificates to prove their attendance. However, their input was ignored and neglected. Maram, Rawan, and Fatin attended similar meetings in Abha, under the auspices of Ministry of Education. They reported that English teachers, supervisors, and the head of the English department in the region, gathered to assess the current curricula. This event has been taking place every three years since the start of the Tatweer project. Maram explained her involvement: "We were asked to evaluate the curriculum, the errors, and whatever we want to suggest. Frankly, there was a chance to ask for teachers' opinions, but unfortunately, there were no significant changes. For example, we submitted a request that there are errors in the curriculum, or we need specific lessons ... We need extra classes ... But the response was very slow, very slow." Sara also voluntarily provided feedback; however, she did not receive a response nor notice any notable changes afterwards.

Group2 participants were uncertain as to who was involved in the EFL curriculum design and how it was executed; Asma admitted, "Unfortunately, I don't know who designs our textbooks; I guess it is companies or international companies, especially [the designers

of] Smart Class and Get Ready; I think they are international companies.” Ebtehal similarly expressed her uncertainty in this regard as follows: “For myself, I have not got the opportunity to participate ... but maybe if you ask someone, supervisors or somebody who hold such positions ... I am sure they are involved.”

Group3 participants represented the supervisors’ perspectives on this issue. Ftoon explained, “Since we began using foreign series, we asked teachers, at the end of each semester, to give us a detailed report on the negatives and positives of the course, in terms of the book, such as printing images, content, goals, skills that stimulate them, their age-appropriateness, their backgrounds ... and traditions ... So, the teacher was actually submitting a full report to us at the end of each term.” Bassma had participated in workshops and meetings to evaluate the English curricula both as a teacher and a supervisor. In response to what her understanding was of the role of teachers, she replied with the following: “They have a very big role. The Ministry of Education every year asks teachers to evaluate and to analyze and to criticize the curriculum and send [their responses] back to the ministry. *But*, unfortunately, only few numbers of teachers who can do such surveys or such analysis. And you know how much this process is important in developing the process of learning in general.” She provided an example as follows: “You know there were three series of English curricula: Full Blast, Traveller, and the McGraw Hill series. After the analysis of teachers, it is more than six years ... Finally, the government or the Ministry of Education has chosen ... McGraw Hill. *This is after what!!* After a long analysis and criticism made by *whom?* By teachers themselves.” However, Ftoon attributed the reason for the change to the procedures needed to switch to distance learning: “The English curricula are the only materials that are not standardized in the whole Kingdom because [the] series [are] submitted by different companies. Each company signed for a region ... When the Coronavirus (pandemic) started, ... the Ministry of Education began preparing the studio to broadcast the Ain Channel ... the difference was only in the English curricula, so they had to cover the series from all regions,

and it was a challenging mission... This year, when distance learning continued, they chose the McGraw Hill series as a standard curriculum in the whole Kingdom.”

4.3 Reasons for Not Involving English Teachers in the Curriculum Design

The reasons provided for why English teachers are not adequately involved in curriculum design differed. Similar to the finding of Albedaiwi (2014), Maram and Asma cited the reason as the Saudi Ministry of Education’s contracts with foreign companies. Ftoon partly agreed with this deduction: “The Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Development Agency, especially concerning the English language, have been separated or assigned their tasks, as [the] foreign series [are] printed abroad ... The ministry’s plans are the ones we follow in teaching English, like the number of classes and each teacher’s schedule... [the] Curriculum Development Agency [is concerned] with the curriculum, like its evaluation... We walk in parallel tracks ... The companies have nothing to do with the plan. The development agency has nothing to do with the plan ... No cooperation.”

Others, like Rawan and Fatin, blamed the perceptions of the Saudi Ministry of Education regarding Saudi English teachers; Rawan asserted “... They see that we are not qualified to participate in the curriculum. Their perception of the teacher is still less than it should be. Knowing that there are many skilled teachers than supervisors and administrators ... if they were not qualified, they would not continue in the field.” Ftoon supported this viewpoint: “There is no realization that the teacher is in the field not just to give information. No. Why? ... I’m not a statuette; I can think. I can be creative. I can give them more than that which education can benefit from. Why are you limiting me? Is it because of the possible cost? Would this thing have unfavourable circumstances for them?!” Similarly, the findings of the study by Alnefaie’s (2016) showed that the Saudi Ministry of Education viewed the teachers as implementers of the curriculum, while the participants believed that they could participate in the process of improving the English curriculum.

By contrast, some English teachers considered the mission of English curriculum development to be beyond their level of expertise and skill; Eiman explained, “I do not think

that it is a must for every teacher to participate. No, because the teacher's role is minor [compared to] establishing a curriculum ... The teacher's role is to transmit information and help students to learn. However, in curriculum adjustment or design, I don't think it is possible, except for distinguished teachers who have sufficient experience in all English curricula."

The final opinion reflects how English teachers could be responsible for their passive situation. Bassma affirmed this: "The problem with us, as teachers, I am talking as a teacher, not as a supervisor, is that we are just waiting for ... others to tell us what to do or not to do; we don't search for new things, new ideas, new ways." This finding concurs with that of Alnefaie (2016) who asserted that teachers must be responsible for empowering themselves and their involvement in curriculum development.

4.4 The Importance of Involvement by English Teachers in Curriculum Design

Sara, Rawan, Fatin, and Ftoon justified the need for involvement by English teachers in curriculum design as they are most aware of students' needs, interests, and differences; therefore, they are well positioned to align the curriculum content of the students' needs. Rawan explained, "Since we are the ones who are in the field, we are the ones who face students and their levels of intelligence, we will know how to give, and we will be able to give, ... those who are entirely far from the field, they can't. So, they are not good in composition and development like us."

4.5 The Impact of the Absence of Participation by English Teachers in Curriculum Design

Overlooking or ignoring the involvement by teachers in English curriculum design was shown to negatively impact the teachers and the students. The teachers appeared to be affected differently. Fatin, Rawan, and Ftoon reported that their lack of involvement in the curriculum design made them feel bored, restricted, overworked, and subject to time constraints. Fatin explained with frustration: "the teacher becomes dull. It becomes normal for her/him ... to give the lesson, the activities, [determine the] students' level of

achievement in tests... then my role is over; they tied me to this thing. I cannot go beyond that! They don't even allow the teacher to prove her/his abilities." Rawan demonstrated how these limitations hindered her freedom: "You do something that is imposed on you ... you feel that you are on a path; on your right is a wall, and on your left is a wall, and you must reach the other side; you can enter neither the right nor the left." By contrast, Asma and Ebtehal did not mind the limitations of their current role. Basama, on the other hand, believed that teachers prefer not to be involved: "I think it is easier for teachers to have [a] ready curriculum to deal with it. Everything is ready. You just record only a few teachers who can invent different ideas or give something different for her learners."

4.6 The Impact of the Absence of Participation by English Teachers in Curriculum

Design on Learners

The participants believed that by ignoring their input, especially regarding the need for extra time; different contexts in which to practice the language; topics of interest to learners and cater to different proficiency levels; and practical and varied ways of conducting assessments, their students' level of achievement was negatively affected; Asma reported, "Students, unfortunately, think they fail, while the content of the curriculum [is] higher than their level." Ebtehal, who teaches at a Quran Memorization school in which English periods were reduced to half, described how ignoring her demands for extra time and new topics had affected her students: "Sometimes, the students feel bored about it. *Actually*, their level is not good, their attitude toward language learning [is] negative because they only have one class and during this class, they need to be evaluated, [and got] exposure to it. [or] they have an exam. I feel they are afraid always."

4.7 Responses to the Suggestion of a Collaborative Curriculum Design Method as a Way of Involving English Teachers in Curriculum Design

On the completion of each interview, the use of the CCDM was suggested as a way of addressing the contradictions associated with the lack of involvement by English teachers in curriculum design and development. The participants were asked to share their thoughts

about the suggestion and how it could enhance their teaching proficiency. All the participants were in favor of the suggestion and responded with positivity and excitement. Asma said “It could be a solution, but teachers have to get something back, like give them one day off a week or less classes so they will have time to do this extra work. It is a possible solution and good one.” She explained how she thought her involvement in this regard might impact her: “First of all, I will know more about how to design a curriculum. Second, I will see so many points of view and perspectives, and this will enlighten me more.” She believed that the benefits would extend to her students “teachers who work on themselves. They will be more confident, more solid in their knowledge, and that will affect my students by the type of knowledge I give them or the way I teach my students in a very positive way.”

Sara suggested that using the CCDM would help change community attitudes toward learning English: “An excellent idea if they apply it because our society has not yet felt the importance of [English] language and its learning ... to be honest, until now, some deal with English language as an experimental curriculum and not essential; maybe if the evaluation tools and methods change, the way parents and students view the material will change ..” In terms of her own development, she anticipated the following: “I might be more aware and up to date with the studies about developing a curriculum where the student learns not for the sake of grades, success, and failure, but rather for the value of practicing it in his life in general.”

Finally, the supervisors were asked about the possibility of the solution being accepted by the educational authorities. Ftoon suggested that a project should be established in which the CCDM could be applied for a trial period to determine its potential. Conversely, Basma anticipated a high level of acceptance: “We are jumping, not moving, nowadays; everything is going to be accepted.”

5 Discussion

This qualitative study evaluated the involvement of English teachers in the process of curriculum development in the Saudi context through an exploration of related causes and the effects and by providing an alternative solution to the current approach.

The data revealed that English teachers were merely involved in curriculum development at the level of evaluation. Specifically, they were asked to evaluate the textbooks (i.e., changes to the content) but not adjustments to the time of English classes nor the methods of assessment used or any other aspects of the curriculum, this finding is similar to Al-Seghayer's (2005) and Binobaid's (2016).

Notably, English teachers are aware of the critical value of their position in the EFL learning process. They perform a vital role in helping learners acquire a foreign language since they have the power to facilitate or prevent language learning (Alrabai, 2016). The approaches followed to achieve the desired objective differed. Some applied a teacher-centered approach; some adopted the student-centered style of teaching the English language, and others opted not to utilize a specific approach, preferring instead to adjust the content according to the context. The diversity of the participants' opinions reflects the belief that "There is no one right answer to how languages should be taught or learnt. Different environments require different approaches, and different teachers and learners are comfortable with different approaches" (Macalister & Nation, 2010, p. 200). Therefore, it is not reasonable to design one curriculum and impose it on various views and contexts without considering their learning principles and objectives. Such diverse views indicate the richness and diversity of knowledge that English teachers have and will share if they are fully involved in the English curriculum development process.

The different answers providing by the participants regarding the reasons for limitations to their involvement included a lack of sufficient knowledge of the logistics of English curriculum design and decision-making and knowledge of which parties were involved. A lack of transparency causes confusion among English teachers in relation to their

tasks, limits, and the possibilities available to them. The bureaucracy of power forces a top-down manner of curricula development (Gherzouli, 2019). Thus, failure by the Ministry of education to provide the details behind the curriculum design and development may be owing to the nature of the top-down educational system, which, in turn, causes misunderstandings, for example, the case of choosing the McGraw Hill series as the standard English curriculum, where the supervisors provided two interpretations.

However, teachers were aware of the limitations of the role and were unsatisfied with their current position. The Saudi Ministry of Education is responsible for the provision of the formal guidance on English teaching and manages teachers and their English instruction by forming their practice, introducing parameters within which the program must be applied, and narrowing the range of individual creativity that teachers need to practice when preparing learning plans for students (Albedaiwi, 2014). The participants in the current study expressed frustration when their opinions were ignored and felt restricted in their inability to be productive and creative in designing an English curriculum from the inception.

The current study's data revealed that the lack of involvement by English teachers in the curriculum design in Saudi Arabia had negative influences and limitations. Both teachers and learners suffered by having to study boring topics, in the same format, with insufficient time, and characterized by a lack of diversity in terms of the assessment tools. Problems such as these would be solved if English teachers had the power and freedom to create and adjust the English curricula. Drawing on my personal experience as a teacher for more than four years, who teaches in a remote suburb in the southern region where there is no internet, the time of the English classes is less than 45 minutes, and my teaching is interrupted for periods due to rain and mountain landslides. Nonetheless, I am obliged to teach the entire syllabus, regardless of whether the content is suited to the students' level of proficiency, circumstances, or interests, and I will be accountable if I do not do so. This requirement limits my ability to teach effectively and impacts the learning process. The educational legislation governing public education in Saudi Arabia emphasizes that teachers must

complete the material content given in the curricula produced by the Ministry of Education, so English teachers struggle to complete the syllabus and do not have enough time to produce extra materials for students on areas that they find challenging or those in which they are most interested, which are not covered by the curriculum (Albedaiwi, 2014).

The use of a CCDM is a feasible alternative to current approaches and could simultaneously work as a tool to design a curriculum that meets learners' needs and helps teachers develop their proficiency (Valmori & De Costa, 2016). The CCDM would solve the problem I face as I would be able to collaborate with colleagues facing similar problems to adjust or even create a new curriculum that suits learners' needs and their environment to achieve the desired learning objectives. The participants in the current study supported the suggestion of using a CCDM with enthusiasm and high levels of readiness. In general, this model would enhance the English curriculum design process in Saudi Arabia and would enrich the professional development of the English teachers in particular. They would be able to interact with educational specialists, other teachers, and educational designers, which would promote their expertise since the other teachers' output could be their input. This would constitute an invaluable professional practice that would assist teachers to improve, develop and assess their language curriculum (Macalister & Nation, 2010). This collaborative method of design would grant teachers the opportunity to reflect upon the plans and suggestions for changes. Typically, external specialists would be included in the process and would equip their partners with the most current theories regarding the grounds for the proposed reforms (Voogt et al., 2015). When teachers communicate in design communities, they exchange experiences, share views, and explore diverse expertise (Voogt et al., 2015).

Overall, the data demonstrated that English teachers were involved in the process of curriculum development merely at the level of evaluating the curricula content. However, to ensure the efficient development of the curriculum, teachers must have more opportunity for inclusion at the level of choosing goals, themes, and methods of implementation and assessment. The current role of English teachers does not correspond with the creativity and

productivity demonstrated by the participants during their interviews.

This study examined a sensitive topic, which may have prevented some participants from frankly expressing their opinions. In addition, the data reflected the opinions of English teachers and supervisors only and did not explore the perspectives of the Saudi Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Agency on this issue. However, the small sample size might be considered a limitation of the current study. It could be argued that the nine participants were representative of English teachers and supervisors across Saudi Arabia since the public schools implement the same curricula practices and follow similar regulations countrywide.

6Conclusion

The involvement of English teachers in curriculum design and development would be of benefit to all parties through alignment of the English curriculum with Saudi learners' needs and interests, while simultaneously enhancing English teachers' professional development. Practices that improve the curriculum would help to develop teaching proficiency and, in turn, by developing the ability of students, further improvements in the curriculum would be facilitated (Voogt et al., 2016), ultimately improving learning outcomes.

The current study aimed to evaluate the extent of English teachers' participation in curriculum design and development in Saudi public schools by investigating related causes and effects and providing a solution. The data showed that the involvement of English teachers was limited to evaluation after the curriculum had already been implemented, which had negative consequences for both English teachers and learners. The CCDM seems a reasonable alternative to current solutions, with the potential to overcome the gap that exists between English curricula designers/developers and teachers in the field.

Implementing these changes may be challenging. Thus, as a first step to achieving transformation, further research is warranted. In addition, teachers need to empower themselves, for example, by starting a union or conducting studies that support their claims as a way of drawing the Ministry of Education's attention to challenges in the field. The Ministry of Education should also inform and involve English teachers in the curriculum design process and consider applying the CCDM to an experimental project to examine its effectiveness.

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Appendix

- Semi- structured interview questions:

1- To what extent Saudi teachers at public schools are involved in the EFL CD process?

- What is the role of teachers in the pedagogical process in Saudi Arabia context?

- Does teachers' perspective matter in developing or designing a curriculum?

- Do you think teachers are involved at a certain level of CD process?

- Can you add or delete any part or activity that you feel does not fulfill the learning process's desired objective? HOW \ WHY (ask them for clarification and explanation)

-Why is there an assessment of the teacher and the students' level at the end of each semester?

(Is it only to evaluate teachers or to evaluate the effectiveness of the book as well?)

- What is the reason behind not involving {or marginalizing} teachers in curriculum design process in KSA?

2- What are the impacts of ignoring teachers' opinions and perspectives regarding English curriculum design and development?

-How may the involvement of teachers help promote students' achievement levels?

-How may their absence affect teachers and learners negatively?

- If you can develop or adjust something in the English curriculum that you teach, what would it be and why?

3- (I will provide a brief introduction of the CCDM)

How will teachers' participation in improving curriculum designing (using CCDM) enhance their teaching career?

- Have you ever been a member of a professional learning community? If yes, how did that add to your experience?

- What do you think of CCDM as an alternative to involve EFL local teachers in CD process?

- 1- الى أي مدى تشارك معلمات اللغة الانجليزية في عملية تطوير وتصميم مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية بالمملكة العربية السعودية؟
- ما هو دور المعلم/ه في العملية التعليمية في المملكة العربية السعودية ؟
 - هل يؤخذ رأي المعلم/ه بعين الاعتبار اثناء تطوير او تصميم مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في السعودية ؟
 - هل تعتقد/ين ان معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية يشاركون في أي مرحلة من مراحل تصميم كتب اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة؟
 - هل يمكنك كمعلمة لغة انجليزية إضافة او حذف أي جزء من المنهج الذي تدرسينه في حال كان لا يتناسب مع اهداف العملية التعليمية؟ لماذا/كيف؟
 - لماذا هناك تقييم للمعلم/ه بشكل دوري خلال العام الدراسي؟ هل هو تقييم فقط لأداء المعلم/ه ام انه تقييم لمدى فاعلية المنهج الدراسي؟
 - باعتقادك ما هو السبب في عدم أشارك المعلمين في عملية تصميم مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الحكومية في المملكة العربية السعودية؟
- 2- ماهي أثار تجاهل رأي معلم اللغة الإنجليزية في عملية تصميم وتطوير مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في السعودية على المعلم والطالب؟
- كيف من الممكن لمشاركة المعلمين في عملية تصميم المناهج في تحسين مستوى التحصيل للطلاب؟
 - كيف من الممكن ان يؤثر تجاهلهم سلبا على الطالب المعلم؟
 - لو كان من الممكن لك تعديل او تحسين جزء من المنهج الذي تدرسينه الان ما هو هذا التعديل ولماذا؟
- 3- (سيتم التعريف بايجاز عن طريقة التصميم التعاوني للمناهج)
- كيف من الممكن ان يضيف اشراك المعلمين في عملية تصميم مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة الى تطورهم المهني؟
- هل سبق و شاركت كعضو في مجتمعات التعلم المهنية ؟ اذا كانت الإجابة نعم : كيف أضاف ذلك لتجربتك وخبرتك؟
 - ما رأيك في نموذج التصميم التعاوني للمناهج كخيار لإشراك المعلمين في عملية التصميم؟