

Evaluating the 'Study Skills' Course in BA TEFL Program: A Curriculum Analysis

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KEYWORDS

Curriculum Evaluation, BA Program, Study Skills, TEFL Students, Learning Strategies

ABSTRACT

Any educational system requires some change to keep abreast of the latest national and international developments. Curriculum evaluation is one way to take this into action. This study aimed to critically examine the students' needs, course books, teaching methodologies testing and assessment procedures, and ecological features of the *Study Skills* course based on the national curriculum developed by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT). The participants of this study consisted of four university teachers and 128 BA students majoring in TEFL. The data collection instruments of this descriptive research were three questionnaires, an interview, and document analysis. The results revealed the teachers' positive perception about the quality and sequence of skills/strategies covered and unfavorable teaching sequence. Also, while teachers and students agreed on factors like students' interests in study skills and their access to resources, teachers varied regarding the availability of the equipment and having supplementary materials. The teachers also criticized the course book for the appropriate use of texts and visuals, lack of audiovisual materials, interesting tasks, and attractive layout. Students had dissatisfaction regarding lack of enough instructions on the use of technology, how to transform short-term to long term memory, and introducing old and impractical methods of study. The findings of this study can have significant implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, syllabus designers, higher education administrators, and teachers to consider the constraints and drawbacks of the Study Skills courses and benefit from the practical suggestions proposed.

ARTICLE INFO

Article type: Original article

Article history:

Received: 16 January 2025

Revised: 28 April 2025

Accepted: 30 May 2025

Published online: 30 May 2025

Introduction

English as an international language is not only a means of communication but it is also widely studied in academic centers across the world (Roozafzai, 2025). Besides the significance of enhancing language skills (e.g., Chegini, 2023; Yundayani, 2024), one key issue in streamlining the learning process in this respect is learning the fundamental language skills and strategies adopted by the students. That is why related course(s) are incorporated into the national and international programs in higher education institutions. These courses are scheduled in the earlier semesters to form the building blocks of the learning skills necessary for the students. In the context of Iranian universities, the national curriculum for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) developed by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT), includes one two-credit unit for teaching study skills to freshmen. It deals mostly with how students learn more effectively and what skills and strategies are essential and have to be internalized by the students to achieve their educational goals.

How to Cite: Zarrabi, M. (2025). Evaluating the 'Study Skills' Course in BA TEFL Program: A Curriculum Analysis. *International Journal of Practical and Pedagogical Issues in English Education*, 3(2), 86-101.
 DOI: 10.22034/ijpie.2025.500254.1084



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As these skills play a main role in a successful learning career, the *Study/Learning Skills* course is incorporated into the curriculum with the aim of getting students familiar with methods and skills of studying, enhancing concentration skills with a metacognitive approach, and increasing students' digital literacies. As prospective TEFL teachers, having a high account of literacy in the study/learning skills can also be a significant way to teach effectively in their future careers. However, despite the inclusion of this lesson in the TEFL curriculum, students still face difficulties in managing their studies in an effective way that is expected. It seems that there is a mismatch between the goals determined by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology and the objectives of the curriculum gained in the universities. In this respect, to achieve a desirable educational outcome, some aspects related to the Study Skills course of BA TEFL students, such as the students' needs, the principles, their course books, teaching methodology, context, and assessment and evaluation should be investigated thoroughly.

Review of the Literature

Curriculum is considered to be an important factor in designing an educational or pedagogical program as it is directly related to the effectiveness and success of a program. It helps the stakeholders of the program to understand the objectives of the curriculum and if they are achieved.

There are various notions of curriculum as it has been defined in different ways. Hunkins and Ornstein (2016) enumerated five definitions of curriculum: (1) A printed material designed for achieving the objectives of the course. (2) A structure for measuring the extent to which the goals of a system are achieved. (3) A curriculum is related to the students' proficiencies in general. (4) A studying framework and (5) A content or subject of the course. Gagne (1967) defines curriculum as the collection of subject matter, sequencing the content, defining goals, and the needs of the students. Venville et al. (2012) and Scott (2008) also agree that curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, procedures, and evaluation of a program.

Curriculum design is similar to the writing process as it starts with gathering ideas, ordering them, writing them, and finally reviewing and editing them. According to Nation and Macalister (2019) any curriculum includes three outside circles (principles, environment, needs) which have the main practical and theoretical role in the final product and effectiveness of a program and an inner circle which has goals in the center, and content and sequencing, format and presentation, and monitoring and assessment as parts of the inner circle. The term evaluation as a large circle encompasses both outer and inner circle completely as it deals with the adequacy of the whole program.

The main aim of curriculum evaluation is not only gaining information about students, teachers and the learning environment but also it is beneficial in deciphering possible problems in the system and finding solutions for designing a more effective program to improve the total system.

There is little consensus on the definition of evaluation as it depends on the educators' views. It may be related to capability or estimating the achieved objectives or based on Talmage (1982), it concerns gathering information with the aim of determining the merits and demerits of our decision-making. Evaluation can be limited only to a small classroom, or large schools and

universities and it can determine the strength and weaknesses of any curriculum. Worthen and Sanders (1998) defined evaluation as formally determine the quality, effectiveness, and objectives. One aspect of evaluation is program evaluation which has five facets: “i) The necessity for the program, ii) The proposal of the program, iii) The program application and service provision, iv) The impact of the program and, v) Its effectiveness in terms of cost”. (Mappiasse & Sihes, 2014, p. 119)

Curriculum evaluation encompasses all aspects of the curriculum design (inner and outer circle) in order to see if the course was satisfying enough regarding the objectives of the program. That is, check if the course is highly standard, cost-effective, helps students to reach their goals, and such like. First introduced in the United States in the 1960s, the different models of program evaluation were proposed in other parts of the world. It should be noted that the type of evaluation model depends totally on the objective, the context, the outcome, and some other criteria. A brief overview of several curriculum evaluation models which have been used widely are presented here.

1. The CIPP Model

This model of curriculum evaluation proposed by Stufflebeam (2003) is a detailed and comprehensive model consisting of four major areas which have to be evaluated: Context, input, process, and product. The first one is the *context* in which the problems, needs, and assets of an environment are evaluated. The second area is *evaluating the input* which evaluates the work plans, and the strategies used in the curriculum. *Process evaluation* is the third area in which the program activities are developed, monitored, and documented, and the last area to be evaluated is the *product* or *outcomes* which in turn are divided into four parts to be evaluated: *Impact, effectiveness, sustainability, and transportability*. If the evaluation of the program shows its effectiveness, it can be continued and if not, a change is needed to improve the quality of the program.

2. The Four-Level Model of Learning Evaluation/Framework

This model proposed by Kirkpatrick (2006) consists of the four following levels: (a) *Reaction* which deals with the participants’ feelings about the program, (b) *Learning* concerns with increasing the participants’ knowledge or change of attitudes, (c) *Behavior* refers to evaluating the participants’ positive knowledge and attitudes through observations after the program, and (d) *Results* that are directly related to the extent to which the participants attend, participate, and implement the objectives of the program in their real-life.

3. Philips’ Model of Learning Evaluation

This model is complementary to Kirkpatrick’s model as a fifth level of evaluation, that is, Return on Investment (ROI) is added. This model emphasizes the way to collect data, it separates the training effect from other factors, and accounts for the total program cost.

4. Summative and Formative Evaluation

First introduced by Scriven (1967, 2008), summative and formative evaluation successively refer to the implementation and effectiveness of the program. Despite its significance, this model was criticized by Chen (1996) as he asserted that evaluation can be both summative and formative at the same time. However, evaluators still widely use Scriven’s taxonomy.

5. Competency-Based Models of Evaluation

Recently, Buker and Niklason (2019), as cited in Nouraey et al. (2020), proposed a six-step framework for curriculum evaluation to be more effective in moving toward competency-based models:

- 1) Evaluating the program's mission and aligning it with the preferred outcome; 2) Mapping the program curriculum to the adopted set of competencies; 3) Mapping the competencies to course objectives by using a defined educational model, framework, or taxonomy; 4) Designing the measures of competency mastery by using a mixture of summative and formative evaluation strategies; 5) Compiling and reviewing the results of summative assessment to ensure that student learning is efficient and leading into competency; and, 6) Developing an action plan to initiate change whenever necessary in order to improve the program curriculum and increase its competency (p. 4051).

There are several studies which have evaluated various aspects of educational curricula in different parts of the world, most of them have evaluated textbooks, needs, or other aspects of curriculum separately and many of them have ignored the environmental factors affecting the curriculum. Some of the curriculum evaluation studies are summarized as follows:

Azizifar, et al. (2010) evaluated two series of ELT textbooks for English language teaching in high schools in Iran from 1965 to 2010. Tucker's (1975) model of textbook evaluation was used for this purpose. The findings suggested that ELT textbooks have a considerable effect on the student's success in learning the English language and offers enough opportunity for communicative practice of what students have learned in the textbooks is needed. In a needs analysis in Greek tertiary education, Chostelidou (2010) identified the needs of a target group of students and create a course design based on their needs. Results revealed that developing a highly specific ESP language course with a focus on accountability (the target discipline) was needed.

Moreover, in the accountancy business, a need for providing ESP training to fulfill students' immediate needs (as students) and their long-term needs (as professionals) was recognized. Furthermore, Alhamlan (2013) assessed the English Language curriculum 'Traveller 5', which was taught in secondary Schools in Saudi Arabia to examine whether the curriculum satisfied students' needs. The results showed that generally, the requirements of the students were met using this syllabus. However, some issues like difficult materials and new vocabulary of the textbook, and students' classroom interaction, did not receive a high evaluation on the part of the students. In another study by Atai and Mazlum (2013), English language teaching (ELT) curriculum in Iran's Ministry of Education was evaluated to examine the gap between planning and practice from both teachers and students. Results indicated that there was a lack of an ELT-specific document and needs assessment. Besides, it lacked any plan or ELT evaluation model and a re-examination of national policies. Furthermore, results revealed that material developers' politico-ideological beliefs were at the same level of importance as their expertise and the top-down nature of the relationship between planning and practice levels. The reason behind the existing gap between planning and practice was that the policymaking process is highly centralized, and the teachers or local policymakers are not involved in this process.

Sardabi and Koosha (2015) employed Tucker's (1975) textbook evaluation model to evaluate the English textbooks in the Iranian junior high schools. The findings reveal that while "Prospect" does not fully address all the shortcomings of "Right Path to English," its design, which is aligned with the Communicative Language Teaching approach, represents a significant advancement in the development of contemporary English teaching resources for Iranian educational institutions. Kader (2016) evaluated the students' learning feedback, their expectations, and the challenges regarding academic grading of the ELT/TESOL curriculum in Bangladesh. A mixed-method approach was used by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from enrolled or passed out MA in ELT, TESOL students, and their instructors from 2 public and 3 private universities. Adopting Stufflebeam's CIPP model of program Evaluation, the results revealed that the Professional Post-graduate ELT/TESOL programs were moderately satisfying students' expectations and the job market's demand. Also, the cost-effectiveness of these programs in that country became evident.

In the local context of this study, Banaruee et al. (2023) evaluated the systematic planning and teaching materials in Iranian schools and highlighted a notable deficiency in the inclusion of sociopragmatic language and cultural elements in English teaching materials authored locally in Iran. The research aimed to determine the compliance of English textbooks in Iranian high schools with standardized principles related to Communication and Culture, as well as the integration of cultural knowledge and technology. Using the 5 Cs checklists from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, feedback from 120 English language teachers indicated that the Vision textbooks meet standards at a low level and inadequately foster learners' cultural competence in English. Chang and Wang (2024) also assessed the primary English education in China collecting data from teachers and students using CIPP model. They found out that, since the introduction of primary English education curriculum, the teachers' qualities and students' interest and language proficiency were improved while teaching methods and teaching equipment have diversified. In another study, Shaheen and Mahmood (2024) evaluated the Teacher Training Module within Single National Curriculum (SNC) collecting data from trainees and 15 master trainers. The results indicated that while there was enough material and content for the general competencies, writing skill and vocabulary knowledge, little attention was paid to the content and material for ethical issues and receptive skills.

Curriculum evaluation and its effective implementation which is in an integral part of any educational system are often ignored in the context of Iran. Designing and implementing an appropriate and efficient course program is of utmost importance since the future results of a course depend on an efficient curriculum matched with the objectives of the course. Nunan (1992) states that those involved in language learning and teaching possess different views regarding the curriculum and thus, for a program to be effective, diverse points of view of students, teachers, administrators, stakeholders, evaluation experts, and such like should be considered. Thus, this study attempts to evaluate the curriculum of the study skill module of the BA TEFL program in Iranian universities. It also deals with analyzing the needs of the students to match the policies and the objectives of the course with those of the students to see to what extent they are enacted in practice. To this end, questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis will be utilized for different stages of this curriculum evaluation.

The major purpose of the study is to determine the following research questions:

RQ 1: What is the teachers' perception of the pedagogical principles of Study Skills Course in the BA program in TEFL?

RQ 2: What are the environmental constraints of the course syllabus as perceived by students and university teachers?

RQ 3: How do teachers evaluate the course books taught in the study skills course in the BA program in TEFL?

RQ 4: To what extent do BA students' needs regarding study skills match the ones proposed by the national syllabus proposed in the course?

Method

Design

The study followed the descriptive research design which is “non-experimental in nature” and describes “a social phenomenon by describing the relationship among the variables in a target population” (Riazi, 2016, p. 88). Different research questions in the study were quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research. In the quantitative section, frequency analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the target participants for the pedagogical principles and environmental constraints of the course book as perceived by teachers and students. In the qualitative section, the data collected from the participants' interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to describe the students' needs regarding study skills course book. The explanatory mixed-methods research was adopted for the fourth research question, which had both quantitative and qualitative research via course book evaluation survey and needs analysis interview to integrate the results and further elicit the students' perception toward the drawbacks of the course book and suggestions for further modifications.

Participants

The participants in the study included university teachers and students related to the course and the program. They were from three branches of Islamic Azad University where they present the TEFL program at the BA level. All were selected based on convenient random sampling. Four university teachers, both male and female, taught Study Skills Course for at least three semesters and had 4 to 25 years of teaching experience in universities. Data was also collected from 128 male and female university students who study TEFL at the BA level. They were either freshmen or sophomore students. Their age ranged from 19 to 29 years old. The participants' details are presented in the tables below:

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of the University Teachers

Statistics Participants	Age	Level of Education	Years of Experience
Teacher 1	29	PhD	5-10
Teacher 2	34	PhD	Above 10
Teacher 3	56	PhD	Above 10
Teacher 4	49	PhD	Above 10

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the University Students

Participants	Age						Gender				Learning Experience (years)					
	18-25		26-35		+ 36		M		F		1-4		5-10		+ 10	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Students	118	92	3	2.3	7	5.4	103	80.5	25	19.5	29	22.7	75	58.6	24	18.8

Instruments

Data were collected using four instruments including three surveys and an interview:

1) *Pedagogical Principles Evaluation Survey*: it is a researcher-made questionnaire with 25 items which were developed based on 20 pedagogical principles listed by Macalister and Nation (2019) administered to teachers (Appendix A). It was administered to collect data on the adaptability of the course book with the pedagogical principles. The responses are based on the Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* as 1 to *strongly disagree* as 4.

2) *Needs Analysis Written Interview*: included 3 open-ended questions adopted and adapted from Kader (2016) conducted for both students (Appendix B) and teachers (Appendix A). It collected data on the students’ and teachers’ needs to be able to compare the course book objectives and contents with those collected from the students.

3) *Textbook Evaluation Survey*: This instrument was adopted and adapted from Mukundan (2011) and administered to university teachers (Appendix A). It had 17 items with a Likert Scale response format from 1 *Strongly agree* to 4 *strongly disagree*. The items covered such areas as activities, physical conditions, topics, layout, and resources.

4) *Environmental Constraints Survey*: This was a 17-item survey adopted from Macalister and Nation (2019) administered to both students (Appendix B) and teachers (Appendix A). The survey aimed to gather data on the contextual and physical aspects of the course.

The items of the surveys and the interview were reviewed in terms of content validity by two university professors who had PhD in TEFL and had experience in policymaking, curriculum development, as well as teaching in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Suggested modifications were made which ranged from adding or deleting an item to rewording some of the items.

Procedure

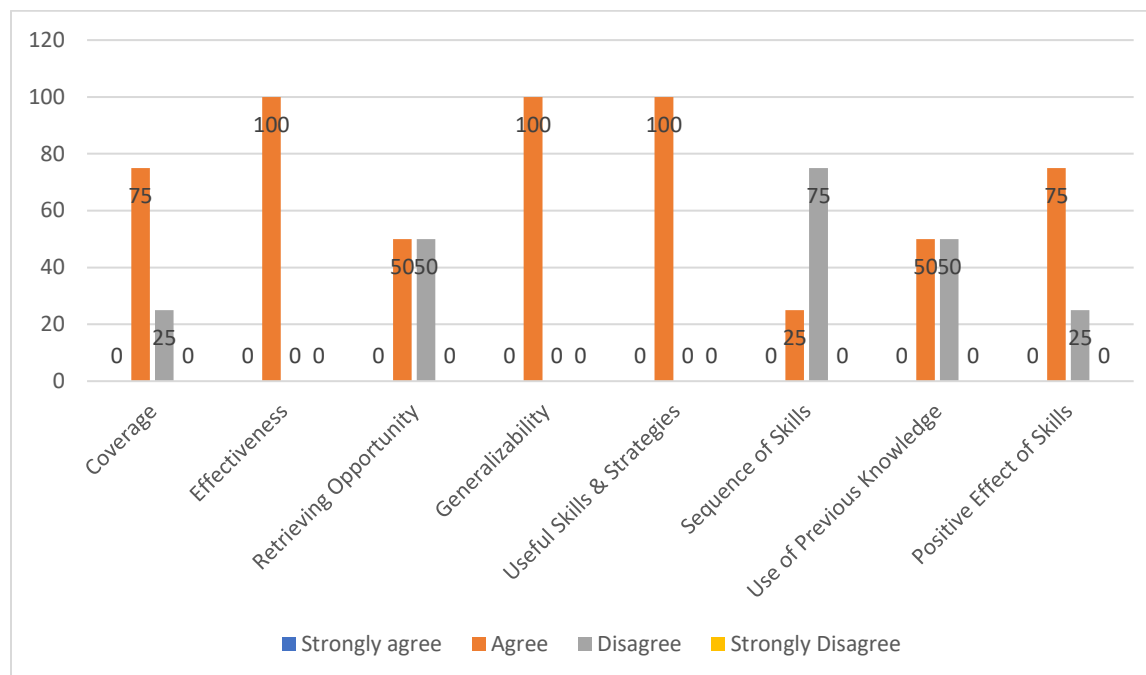
Prior to administering the surveys and conducting the interviews, the researcher searched among the universities that are suggesting similar books for Study Skills Courses. Three branches of Islamic Azad University were finally selected. The surveys to measure the pedagogical principles, textbook evaluation, and environmental constraints were administered to students and teachers. Later, there was a needs analysis interview which was conducted with four university teachers from these two universities. To respect the university teachers’ time and busy schedule, they were requested to write back the answers to the interview questions. Having collected the data, the researcher codified the texts of the interviews, and themes were extracted to be able to analyze the data.

Results

To answer the first research question inquiring into the teachers' perception of the pedagogical principles of the Study Skills Course, the responses to eight items of the questionnaire were analyzed.

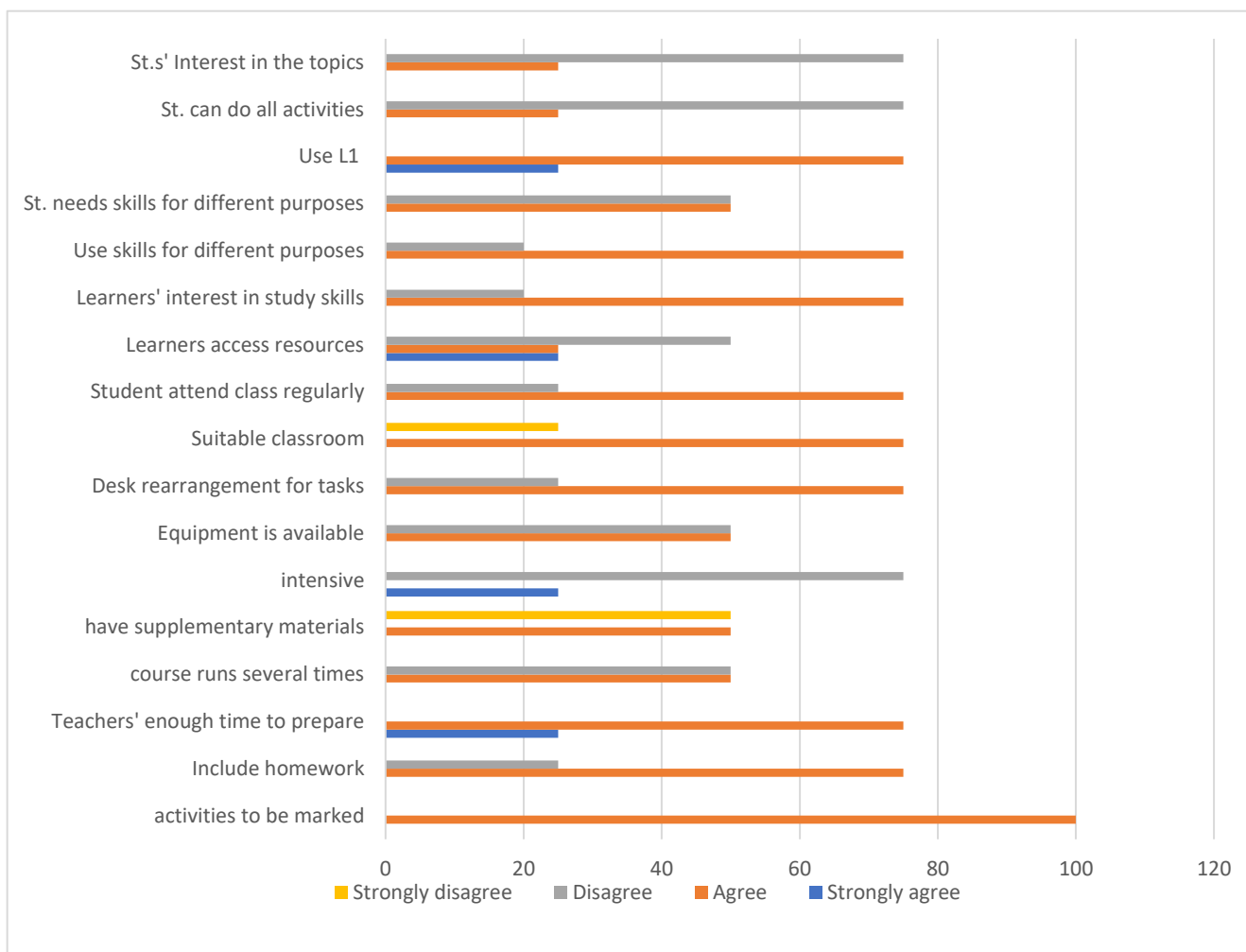
Figure 1

Teachers' perception of pedagogical principles



As can be seen in Figure 1, the majority of the teachers have a positive (100%) or nearly positive (75%) perception about the principles related to *covering the best study skills in use, learning skills to make effective and independent students, focusing on generalizable skills, covering useful skills and strategies, and sequencing skills to have positive effects on each other*. For the other two principles of providing opportunities to retrieve what they learned and helping students to use their previous knowledge effectively, the teachers reached no unanimous priority. For the last principle, teaching skills in a sequence to fit the students' readiness, the teachers perceived the course as lacking it.

The second research question investigated the environmental constraints of the course syllabus. The data collected from the survey completed by teachers are summarized in Figure 2 below. As Figure 2 shows, most teachers (75%) believed that the topics were not very interesting for students, and they could not do all the activities perfectly. Also, the majority strongly disagreed that the course was a very intensive one. Furthermore, all teachers unanimously (100%) accepted that there were some useful activities which had to be marked by them. Nearly 75% of the teachers agreed that the course has such advantages as *using L1 to help learning study skills, utilizing skills for a wide range of purposes, students' interest in study skills, attending the class regularly, suitable classrooms, the possibility of rearrangement of the desks for group works, teachers' enough time for preparation and marking, and giving assignment during the course*.

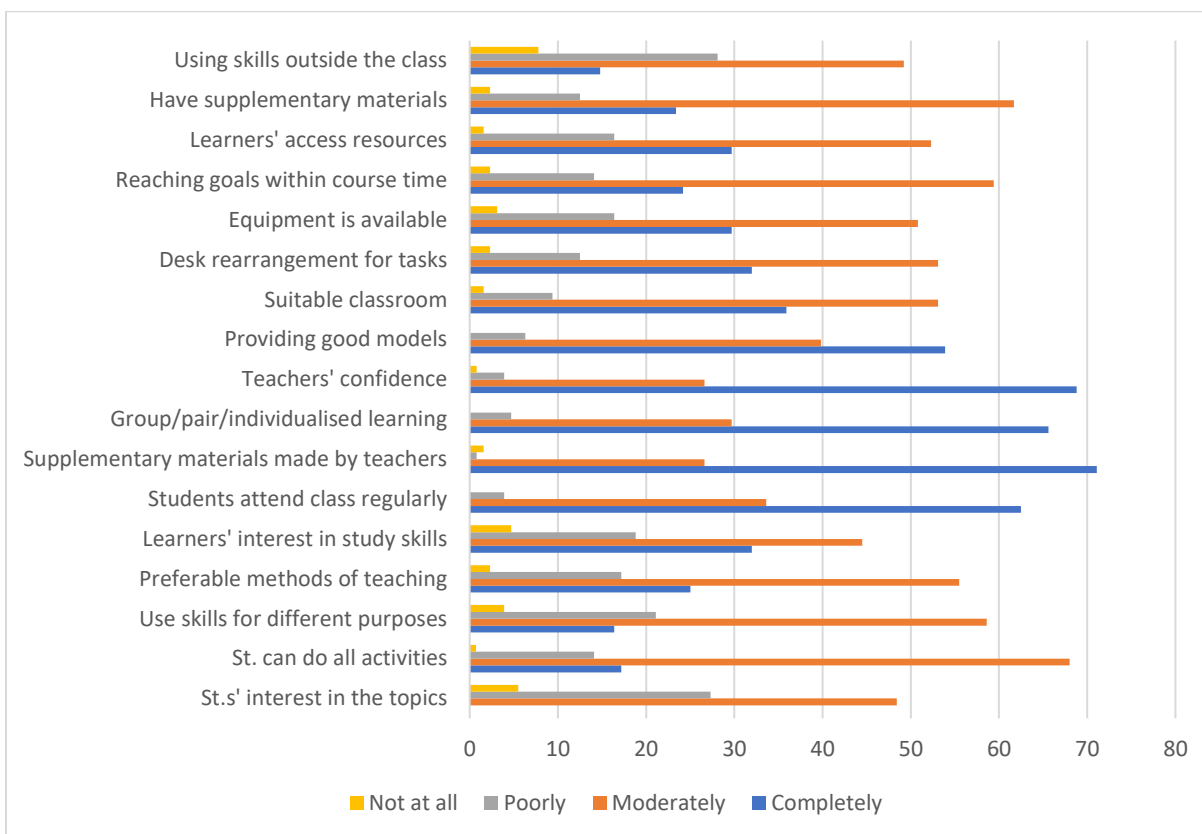
Figure 2*Teachers' perception about environmental constraints*

However, the teachers reached no unanimous priority with respect to *students' needs to the skills for different purposes, availability of the equipment, running the course several times, and providing supplementary materials during the program*. About 50% of teachers claimed that students do not have enough access to resources while the rest disagreed or strongly disagreed with this claim. In addition to environmental constraints presented by the teachers, 128 students also completed the survey for environmental constraints about the course. The collected data are summarized in Figure 3 below.

Based on the gathered data, the majority of the students (between 53% and 71%) completely agreed that the course provided good models, teachers had confidence, there were group/ pair/individualized learning, and students regularly attended the classroom. Furthermore, 44.5%-68% of the students moderately agreed with the rest of the items. Some students poorly agreed (about 20%-28%) that the topics were interesting, being able to use the skills outside the classroom for different purposes, the methods of teaching were preferable, and they were interested in study skills.

Figure 3

Students' perception about environmental constraints



Comparing the results gained from teachers' and students' perception of the environmental constraints, both had strong positive views regarding *students' interests in study skills, their access to resources, desk rearrangement for tasks, using skills for different purposes, and suitable classrooms*; and nearly positive perceptions towards *attending the class regularly*. However, teachers did not believe in the *students' interests in the topics and being able to do all the activities perfectly*, while students have a moderately positive attitude towards these items. Moreover, teachers have different points of view regarding the availability of the equipment and having supplementary materials, whereas the majority of students showed positive views regarding these items.

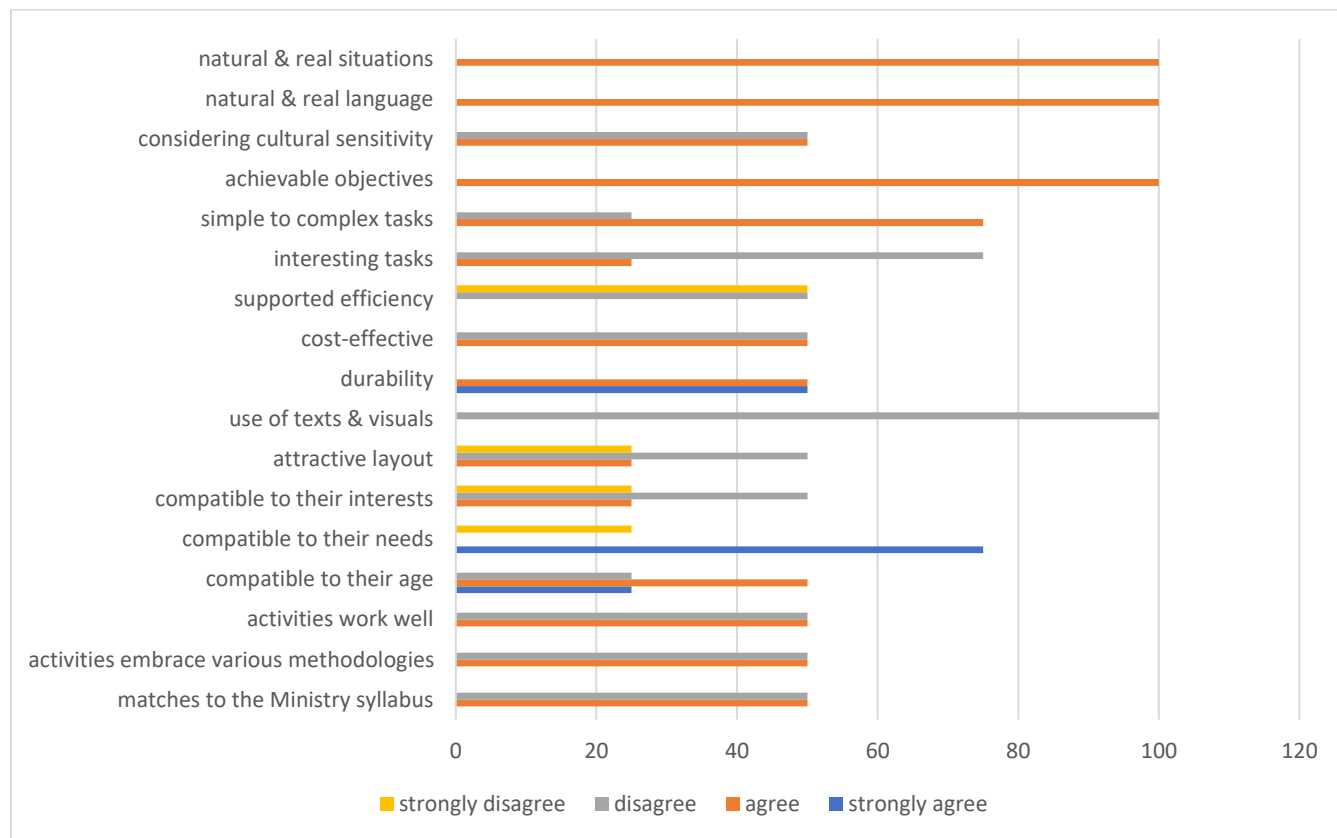
In respect to the third research question, that is, teachers' evaluation of the course books taught in the Study Skills course in BA program in TEFL, the data are summarized in Figure 4 below. The results gained from the textbook evaluation by teachers revealed that teachers agreed 100% that the study skills textbook has provided natural and real language and situations, and its objectives are achievable.

The other mostly agreed items were *compatibility of the textbook to students' needs* (75%), the *durability of the textbook* (100%), *sequencing the tasks from simple to complex* (75%), and *compatibility of the textbook with students' age* (75%). However, the teachers reached no unanimous priority regarding the *cultural sensitivity of the textbook, cost-effectiveness, whether the activities embrace and work well using various methodologies*, and if

the textbook matches the syllabus developed by the Ministry of Science, Research & Technology. Additionally, teachers possess negative perceptions toward some of the items such as the use of texts and visuals (100%), efficient support of the textbook by essentials like audio-materials (100%), interesting tasks (75%), attractive layout (75%), and compatibility to students' interests (75%).

Figure 4

Study skills textbook evaluation by teachers



To answer the fourth research question which deals with the extent to which TEFL students' needs regarding study skills match the ones proposed by the national syllabus, students' needs were analyzed using questionnaire and interview. The results, then, were compared to goals of the syllabus of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT). Students' need analysis using questionnaire revealed that the course was moderately beneficial in fulfilling most of the students' needs (18% - 66.4%), providing enough time for practical activities (21% - 56.3%), improving their study skills (38.3% - 47.7%), equipping students with useful study skills/strategies (27.3% - 56.3%), and implementing what they have learned in their study time easily (20.3%-57.8%). Also, they stated that the course has nearly fulfilled their expectations (16.4%-62.5%), it was cost-effective (20.3%-63.3%), and they felt they needed to learn the skills (38.3%-45.3%).

The results of the content analysis of the students' written interview were almost in line with the questionnaire as many students generally declared the course as being effective and useful. However, there were diverse opinions regarding each question. In response to the first

interview question, that is, “what skills/strategies are not taught in the course?”, there were some dissatisfactions of the lack of enough instructions about how to use modern technology, how to use library and dictionary, how to prepare for the examinations, how to learn faster in a short period of time, how to study more fluently, how to move the learned information from short-term to long-term memory; introducing old and almost obsolete and not applicable methods of study; no instruction for new ways of learning, no opportunity to use the learned material in practice, not enough strategies to increase accuracy and way of sharing ideas, no strategies and instructions for searching the internet, lack of enough practical activities, time management, and lack of time.

The second interview question was about the skill(s) that the course needed to focus/develop most. Based on the thematic analysis of the students’ responses, a number of skills that students felt they needed more to focus were as follows: Teamwork skills to motivates the student to listen to the lesson, how to deal with complex topics, how to take notes, how to present and use the library and its resources, students’ class participation, their self-confidence and motivation, regular study, using technology, concentration skills, do different types of exercises, how to study for exams, how to use an English dictionary, practicing the learnt skills during the class, how to learn English, and how to manage their time.

The third question asked the students if they think the current syllabus needed any change. Although most students did not feel a need to change in the syllabus, some of them mentioned several drawbacks of the course such as (they are quoted as they were):

- *“There are too many chapters that should be taught in a very short period. It reduces the quality of education”*,
- *“It has a lot of extra details”*,
- *“It includes a pile of unnecessary stuff”*,
- *“The time is not enough for this amount of content”*,
- *“The textbook is overly dense for first-semester students”*,
- *“There is very little time for accurate learning”*.

Considering the drawbacks, they provided some suggestions like:

- *“...focusing more on the skills needed during studying”*,
- *“...some unnecessary parts have to be omitted as it's a matter of quality and not quantity”*,
- *“...more focus on practical lessons with practice and repetition”* and,
- *“...including more useful words”*.

Examining the teachers’ point of view regarding the time to achieve the goals of the course, teachers accepted that the time was not enough to cover the whole book and think deeply about it. However, they believed that there are some unnecessary contents (exercises) which can be easily omitted from the syllabus and teaching process, and in this case the determined time is appropriate. They also suggested that this course would be better to be a two-credit unit course for fresh men to be effective enough since students were not well equipped with the study skills and strategies in their high school.

Comparing the drawbacks and the needs mentioned by students and teachers with the goals declared by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT), that is, familiarizing students with different skills and study methods, strengthening students' focus on learning with a metacognitive approach, and teaching and strengthening digital literacy of students,

demonstrated that they share the same goals and needs. Nevertheless, comparing the implemented syllabus in the universities by university teachers with that of the course description of MSRT (Appendix C), confirms the fact that the determined time for implementing a comprehensive study skills course as claimed by MSRT is really limited since there should be enough opportunity for the students to practice the skills repeatedly.

Discussion

Every new curriculum requires continuous evaluation to upgrade its productivity (Zohrabi, 2011), so that all the stakeholders can maximally benefit from the conditions and the missions of the curriculum, especially when the curriculum is newly modified. This study, then, investigated the pedagogical principles, environmental constraints, textbook evaluation, and needs analysis of the university teachers and students in the “Study Skills” course in BA program in TEFL. The results of teachers’ perception toward pedagogical principles were positive and they feel that the changes to the new syllabus by the ministry were significant. With regards to the environmental constraints, while teachers supported such features as attending the class regularly, suitable classrooms for the course, and the possibility of rearranging the seats for group work, they claimed that students’ access to useful resources is not sufficient. The responses from the students also revealed more or less the same with more emphasis on the ability to use the skills outside of the class.

With the new skills assigned by the curriculum developers in the syllabus, it seems that the reason for this disagreement is either due to the teachers’ teaching methodology or the lack of resources to practically involve in the development of the skills in the class period. As for the evaluation of the textbook, it seems that the same book used by these participants could not all in all satisfy the expectations presented by the national syllabus. While they agreed on the sequence of the tasks, durability, natural and real language, ... they perceived that the textbook lacks visuals and the supplementary resources like audio-visual materials, attractive layout, and compatibility with the interests of the students. This might be due to the fact that the book is an old one published in the 1980s and, therefore, cannot meet the expectations of present-day university students. This can also be evident in assessing the needs of the students when compared with the objectives of the national curriculum developers of Study Skills, which only indicated a moderate level of goal achievement on the side of the students.

Unlike studies which investigated other course books for university students (Zohrabi, 2016), there is no study exclusively investigating Study Skills course in TEFL program in tertiary education. However, the findings here support the results of Atai and Mazlum (2013) and Shaheen and Mahmood (2024) who revealed the gap between planning and practice. The reason similar to what they found might be that the policymakers’ mind is mostly centralized while the teachers with varied interests, teaching methodologies, and resources the students’ access might not fulfill the national syllabus expectation. The results of Kader (2016) were in moderate contrast with the results here where he found that the course could satisfy the students and their job market demand.

Conclusion

The results of this study have implications for the teachers, teacher trainers, and policymakers. The stakeholders are advised to provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their professional development to be able to design strategies and techniques to facilitate the

instruction in such courses. Also, as claimed by the students and teachers, supplementary audio-visual resources are to be provided for the teachers and students to facilitate the process of learning and teaching within the classroom setting. Despite the quality and the sequence of the study skills/strategies within the course book, the syllabus designers and material developers are recommended that they refine and revise the course book and include more updated skills necessary for the university students in the 21st century.

The study has its own limitations. The data, in the current study, collected from teachers and students of only two universities which cannot be generalized to all the universities which implement the curriculum. Furthermore, the analysis is based on the data collected with few teachers which could make the result more solid if there were more teachers who participated in the data collection. More students from different universities across the country could make the results more realistic and generalizable. Individual differences and the macro-cultures of the teachers and participants can also be influential in the outcome of this study. The policymakers can also be one of the stakeholders and act as one of the sources of data collection. Curriculum evaluation is one step forward to enrich the quality of a curriculum and add to the efficiency of the courses; however, the more important thing is implementing these suggestions and making changes in the curriculum to help curriculum meet its missions and objectives.

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