

Bridging the Gap: Towards Developing a Preparatory English Programme for Chinese Learners Joining the International Education System

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Abstract

This paper proposes a curriculum design and suggests some evaluation processes of a bridging preparatory English programme for Chinese learners joining the international education system in a school in southern China. Taking into consideration the contextual educational background of the learners and the desired language and social skills that the programme wants to enrich, this project outlines the possible themes that can be used throughout the programme. Theoretical aspects of general curriculum design are tackled and I attempt to link this to curriculum development in language learning. Moreover, by looking into some arguments on incorporating global citizenship skills in education, I propose themes that may enhance the students' global mindedness. This is important since the target learners will be doing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in high school and will consequently be leaving their home country for overseas university studies. I have also included aspects of active learning approaches that can be utilized in the English classes. Through this proposed curriculum and by exploring the literature, I attempt to present how language learning and acquiring sociocultural awareness skills and other discourse mechanisms can be possibly achieved by prospective learners. In this paper, I have also argued how active learning strategies should be advocated for most especially in language learning classes. Moreover, I generally expect to achieve an understanding on how Chinese learners' linguistic abilities have improved and to what extent and attempt to link how active learning strategies have contributed to this development. However, since this curriculum design has not been implemented yet I will not be able to report an evaluation but rather I attempt to address this stage by presenting some curriculum evaluation mechanisms that involve various stakeholders.

Keywords: English curriculum development, Chinese learners, International Baccalaureate, international education, English language programme

Introduction

The rising demand for international education in China in the past decades has seen significant increase in the number of international schools and national schools offering international education programmes. This demand is partly fuelled by the very tight competition on the limited number of places that top tier universities in the country can offer. The notorious Chinese National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEE) or commonly called *Gaokao* also precedes constant drilling in lesson implementation and places emphasis on examination results (Wright & Lee 2014).

The increase awareness on the potential psychological stress this system may cause to the learners and the slim chances of being admitted in top Chinese universities prompted most upper middle-class families to enroll their children in the international education system and consequently sending them overseas for higher education. While this situation poses lucrative opportunities for English medium schools to educate Chinese learners in a more progressive manner, one important factor to consider is the fact that English is a foreign language in China and English instruction in Chinese mainstream schools is limited and puts emphasis on drilling (e.g. fill in the blanks, multiple choice exercises) rather than authentic use of the language (Zhao 2012; Wang 2009; Liao 1996).

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When Chinese children join the international education system, they need to adjust to the new environment, the structure of the programme, the pedagogical practices, the foreign teachers, and most importantly the language of instruction. Considering these factors, it is vital for the school to take measures to effectively integrate Chinese learners into the new system and their international peers. Whilst all subject teachers should work together to help these learners adjust to the new system, I believe that English subjects play a prominent role in assisting the learners as they adjust to the language of instruction. The bridging or preparatory English course is also an avenue for the learners to understand foreign culture and social issues that they need to tackle in other subjects.

School Setting and Learners

The boarding school where I am working at is located in southern China. It has around 3000 students but the international education division has around 350 students only. The international division opened in 2011 and currently offers Grades 7-12 education with authorization to deliver the programmes developed by Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) and the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). I have been teaching in the school for four years and currently head the English Department. We developed our own scheme of work for Grades 7 and 8, deliver the IGCSE First Language English and ESL for Grades 9-10, and the IBDP English A and English B for Grades 11 and 12. A-Level students have an internally developed English curriculum integrating IELTS skills. In school year 2017-2018, the division opened one class of Grade 10 Preparatory Programme for students from the mainstream Chinese system wanting to take the international curriculum for high school (Grades 11-12). There are 16 students in the programme and they will be taking the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme for high school. These students will be taking the DP English B: Language Acquisition course next year.

Gathering Insights

Curriculum development is a process whereby the choices of designing learning experiences for students are made and then activated through a set of coordinated activities (Wiles & Bondi 2002). This definition is further clarified by Smith (1996, 2000), highlighting that 'learning is planned and guided and curriculum theory and practice emerged in the school'. Smith (1996, 2000) further emphasised four ways of viewing curriculum theory and practice, namely: as a body of knowledge to be transmitted, as an attempt to achieve certain ends in students (or product), as a process, and as praxis. While these approaches are a holistic take on curriculum development, Smith (1996, 2000) also highlighted the significance of context.

Considering these prescribed practices in approaching curriculum development, I thought it would be wise to identify key factors that are crucial in this project. In order to facilitate a deeper understanding of my context and the context of language teaching practices in my host country, I decided to discuss with my English teacher colleagues in school some key aspects of this project. One English teacher talked about the nature of English language teaching in the mainstream or national curriculum school. In our conversation, we talked about the content of the Grade 9 English course, the materials used, the teaching and learning practices, and assessment schemes. I also had a conversation with my colleague in the international department who is currently teaching the preparatory programme class and we have discussed the behaviour of our new Chinese learners, their responses and performance, her pedagogical practices, and most importantly I have elicited inputs on how to further improve the content of the curriculum. We have agreed that we need to strengthen and clarify key aspects of the preparatory English programme. I also had the chance to observe one of her lessons and have taught the class for a week when I had to do cover duties. In addition, I have to consider the IBDP English B Course syllabus since the students will be taking the DP English course in the succeeding year and I feel that it is also co-equally important to consider my school's vision-mission to align objectives and learning activities, in addition to various language teaching methods, approaches, and techniques to be employed.

Curriculum Development in Language Education

Prior to embarking on the task of developing a curriculum for language education, I think that it is imperative for language practitioners like me to have a sound understanding on the science of language. There are various aspects of language and language learning that we need to consider, in addition to scientifically approaching how learning works. I would like to refer to Brown's (1994) enumeration of areas to consider in linguistic

endeavour, as this can be the springboard in gaining a basic understanding on language education.

1. Explicit and formal accounts of the system of language on several possible levels (most commonly syntactic, semantic, and phonological).
2. The symbolic nature of language; the relationship between language and reality; the philosophy of language; the history of language.
3. Phonetics: phonology; writing systems; kinesics, proxemics, and other ‘paralinguistic’ features of language.
4. Semantics; language and cognition; psycholinguistics.
5. Communication systems; speaker-hearer interaction; sentence processing.
6. Dialectology; sociolinguistics; language and culture; bilingualism and second language acquisition.
7. Human language and nonhuman communication; the physiology of language.
8. Language universals; first language acquisition.

After considering the linguistic elements I have cited above, I would like to connect these to curriculum development in language education. In doing so, I think that I am able to bridge the concepts from the theoretical perspective to actual practice. According to Richards (2001) ‘curriculum development in language teaching began in the 1960s, though issues of syllabus design emerged as a major factor in language teaching much earlier’. A brief review of language teaching methods and approaches that dominated a particular decade is summarized by Richards (2011) below:

Grammar Translation Method (1800-1900)

Direct Method (1890-1930)

Structural Method (1930-1960)

Reading Method (1920-1950)

Audio-lingual Method (1950-1970)

Situational Method (1950-1970)

Communicative Approach (1970-present)

Reflecting on my experiences as a student and teacher, these methods are still employed in the present times depending on the nature and needs of the learners. For example, with low-level learners of English a teacher who is bilingual in Chinese and English may resort to translating some phrases and words into the mother tongue of the learners. When I was teaching an English aural-oral communication course in the university where most students have high level of English proficiency, the materials produced by the department were very audio-lingual in nature. Direct method seemed to be preferred as well in the teaching of English grammar, with teachers putting emphasis on grammatical rules and students memorizing these rules.

I decided to present this overview on the development of language teaching methodologies because I think that it is necessary for various teachers to combine or alternate their teaching approaches to cater to students’ needs, objectives and learning preferences. While teachers have their preferred ways of teaching, it is imperative that learners are exposed to various ways of acquiring a language (Zhou 2011; Tamura 2006). Indeed, when it comes to the grammar translation method, Larsen-Freeman (2000) hoped that ‘through the study of the grammar of their native language students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them speak and write their native language better’. While the grammar translation puts emphasis on the grammatical structure of the native and target languages, the direct method places emphasis on communicative skills (Mart, 2013). This is essential as speaking in the target language is one of the challenges faced by Chinese learners. Behlol (2010) also reported on the effectiveness of the structural method in terms of vocabulary learning. He reported that this is due to ‘morphological analyses of a word, experimenting with the word, and role of the students as the partner in the learning process’ among others. The reading method, of course, cannot be neglected especially in the foreign language-learning context.

However, one has to be careful when to employ oral reading, sub-vocalization, and silent reading (Alshumaimeri, 2011). In turn, the situational method enables the learners of a language to ‘form links between new words and constructions and real situations (Hornby, 1950).

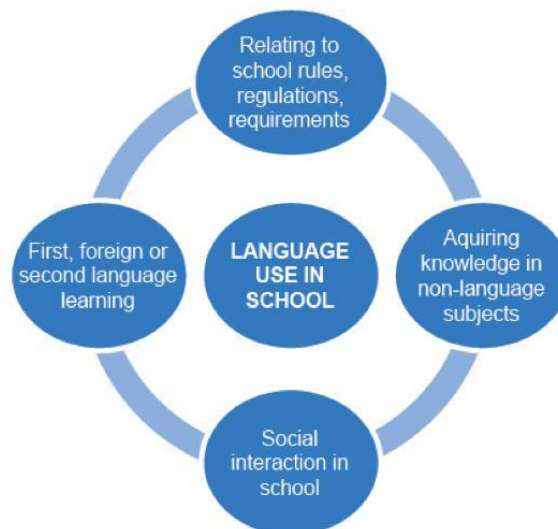
The presentation in this section, although not exhaustive reflects the basic areas of language education that I feel must be taken into consideration prior to the designing of the curriculum. Through the discussion of various theories, methods, approaches, and techniques, it has become clear that differentiation matters and that language teaching must be taken from both the humanities and science perspective. This has also raised some issues regarding teacher quality, training and professional development, especially with the ever-growing demand for English language teachers in the Asian region.

Project Design

Wiles and Bondi (2002) posited that ‘curriculum development usually begins with a set of questions that initially reveal value preferences and then later undergird planning efforts and program evaluation’. They further commented that for the curriculum development process to be logical, practitioners must be able to establish boundaries for inclusion and exclusion.

In 2015, the Council of Europe published a document entitled *Language Skills for Successful Subject Learning*. The framework developers argued that the main aim of primary and secondary education is to prepare students for their future lives by empowering them with the relevant skills and knowledge to enable them to live and work as social and independent human beings. I believe that one crucial factor in reaching this aim is equipping students with the necessary language skills in order to better facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and thrive in both the school and outside environments. It is also worth mentioning that access to language of instruction or schooling is one of the determining factors in the promotion of equity. This is an important case in my school as I have noticed that only those students who have higher level of proficiency in English language are able to excel in both academics and co-curricular activities. The following figure shows the language situations students need to cope with in school as taken from the Council of Europe document.

Figure 1. Language situations students need to cope with in school



Source: Council of Europe, 2015

In the development of this curriculum, it is necessary that I take into consideration the immediate language needs of the students to thrive in the new environment and justify how acquiring the skills from this course can benefit them in the long run. The primary target learners of this course are mainly Chinese students who have had 9 years of basic education in the national education system. When my school decided to open the Preparatory Programme, the management gave each department autonomy to decide the content as long as vertical and horizontal articulation are taken into consideration. It is also a known fact in China that sensitive

materials and issues must not be tackled most especially in international schools environment, hence, these topics must be avoided.

Although the course description is in place, I admit that there is no clear syllabus or scheme of work and the content was haphazardly designed without considering various aspects of curriculum development. It also does not help that the current teacher is newly employed by the school and has never taught a formal English class before. Hence, there is an immediate need to review the content and establish a framework for the teaching of the course.

In English language teaching and learning aspect, Li & Billauf (2011) argued that in the Asian region, the emphasis of the objectives set out in the English curricula has changed from 'linguistic knowledge and skills to communicative language competence'. As a language practitioner, this claim is ideal as this totally supports the Council of Europe's thrust on lifelong learning. Although Li & Billauf (2001) reported that the national English language curriculum in China for primary and secondary schools has as its focus the quality of students' overall education achieved through task-based, learner-centred methods and communicative language teaching, this seems to be a contrast to what is being practiced as manifested in my conversation with an English teacher from the Chinese mainstream school. In this regard, my discussion with two English teacher colleagues reveals salient points for the design of this curriculum. According to the teacher in the mainstream side, key characteristics of the Grade 9 English programme (the preceding grade level of PP) at Chinese mainstream side are the use of drilling and memorization of grammatical rules. There are also the traditional assessment practices such as the use of multiple choice questions, cloze tests, fill in the blanks, and oral reading without follow-up activities. In terms of writing, my colleague at the mainstream side said that usual writing activities only allow students to write a maximum of 80 words, without emphasis on coherence and even writing a topic sentence. With these observations and comments, we have agreed that the bridging Grade 10 English preparatory English must review basic grammatical rules, introduce advanced grammar lessons, and put emphasis on speaking, listening, writing, and critical viewing.

Our school follows the quarter system and the instruction period for each term usually lasts for 9-10 weeks with one week for assessment. Continuous assessment is used for the first and third terms and semestral assessment for the second and fourth terms (these are major examinations where students usually take the full papers). Considering the school's grading periods, I have divided the Grade 10 Preparatory Programme into the following themes:

Term 1: *Relating with Others and Diversity in Culture*

Term 2: *Beliefs, Customs and Traditions and Language and Mass Communication*

Term 3: *Fitness and Health and Global Issues*

Term 4: *Science and Technology and Leisure and Well-being*

Contrary to the English curriculum design in the mainstream Chinese education system, I think it would be beneficial for the students to learn and consequently increase their level of proficiency in the English language if the thematic approach is used. As I have taught English subjects for lower levels before, I am familiar with how instructional books are designed in order to cater not only to the English language needs of the learners but also to reinforce concepts from other disciplines. The thematic approach would also be beneficial for the teachers as it would be easier for them to choose texts from other subject matters. This is also an avenue for collaborative teaching, with both the language and the so-called non-language subject teachers being involved in curriculum development. Indeed, this view is supported by Reading & Reid (2004), claiming that 'in an effort to better support the learner and to avoid problems associated with students' fragmented view of the curriculum', developers and teachers must consider a more holistic approach to the content. To validate this claim, I again refer to the document produced by the Council of Europe. The following table indicates relevant discourse functions that can be first learned in the English class, making it easier for the learners to have access on the contents of other subjects.

History	Science	Literature	Mathematics
Beacco (2010: 20-21)	Vollmer (2010: 21)	Pieper (2011: 20)	Linneweber- Lammerskitten (2012: 27)
Discourse functions/cognitive operations and their verbal performance			
analyse	analyse	analyse	analyse
argue	argue	argue	argue
illustrate/exemplify	classify	classify	classify
infer	compare	compare	compare
interpret	describe/represent	describe/represent	describe/represent
classify	deduce	deduce	deduce
compare	define	define	define
describe/represent	distinguish	distinguish	distinguish
deduce	enumerate	enumerate	enumerate
define	explain	explain	explain
discriminate	illustrate/exemplify	illustrate/exemplify	illustrate/exemplify
enumerate	infer	infer	infer
explain	interpret	interpret	interpret
judge/evaluate/assess	judge/evaluate/assess	judge/evaluate/assess	judge/evaluate/assess
correlate/contrast/ match	correlate/contrast/ match	correlate/contrast/ match	correlate/contrast/ match
name	name	name	name
specify	prove	prove	prove
prove	recount	recount/narrate	recount
recount	report (on) a discourse	report (on) a discourse	report (on) a discourse
report (on) a discourse	summarise	summarise	summarise
summarise	specify	specify	specify
calculate	assess (also mentioned above)	assess (also mentioned above)	assess (also mentioned above)
quote	calculate outline/sketch	outline/sketch	calculate outline/sketch

Table 1. Relevant discourse functions in history, science literature and mathematics
Source: Council of Europe, 2015

Second language acquisition is a complex continuous process (Menezes 2013; Gass & Selinker 2008; Gass & Mackey 2002) with several theories being proposed regarding this are of inquiry (see Krashen 1982, Tricomi 1986, Song 2018). While debates have been going on for decades, I think the consensus is that language is a special faculty for cognition and has direct influence in social functions and interactions (Yamaguchi et al. 2014; Kockelman 2010; Nassaji 2017; Beckner 2009) and that language acquisition and language instruction are a complex interplay (Nassaji, 2017). It is sufficing to claim that language practitioners will have varying perspectives when it comes to the acquisition of second language but as I have claimed in the earlier part of this paper and supported by Lee et. al (2014), a significant aspect of language education is the integration and implementation of contents and activities that enhance the learners' socio-emotional well-being. Of course, practices must also encourage 'flexibility and variety to cater for learner diversity and promote assessment for learning' (Cooley et al. 2012).

In my host country's foreign language schooling context, there is a tendency to rely heavily on the technicalities of language in instruction (i.e. grammar rules) and while to some extent this is ideal especially

that the end goal is standardized testing, I would like to subscribe to Underwood's (2007) idea that grammar teaching should be integrated with communicative work. This poses a great challenge to both the teachers and the learners as this entails the activation of metacognitive process, which admittedly is difficult to approach. However, I agree with Tanewong (2018) that there are several ways that can be utilized depending on the target skills. For instance in listening activities, Tanewong (2018) reported that learners who are engaged in key metacognitive process such as 'predicting, planning during pre-listening, monitoring, evaluating, and problem-solving with peer through dialogue and collaboration' have increased performance in listening activities. Among others, there is also the emphasis on diversity training in the classroom which I think would be beneficial for the learners with the given aim of creating global citizens. Arias (2008) proposed activities such as 'tell a story as a group', 'spell everything' and 'hot seat'. I find these activities suitable as the level of difficulty is easy to adjust and the themes can easily be used.

Another relevant approach in the acquisition of 21st century skills is task-based language teaching. Chen & Wright (2017) have reported that meaningful and authentic tasks are more relevant and more time spent on task-based activities made students become more proficient in the language. I believe that in my context, this approach would not only increase our learners' language proficiency but this would also enhance other skills. In practice, what we want is for our students to 'see the connections between current tasks and their personal goals and interests- self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making' (www.casel.org). If this is the case, I surmise that task based approach is fundamental in collaborative learning and consequently in the development of students' affective domain. I think the notion in the east that classrooms are highly for academic discourses should change and that development of 'caring' attitude must be one of the focal points in language learning. Lee & Schallert (2008) posit that 'caring is enacted in complex and reciprocal ways, influenced by interwoven factors from greater society, the course, the teacher, and the student'. They further added that 'students' level of trust in the teacher's English ability, teaching practices, and written feedback, as much as the teacher's trust in particular students based on how they revised their drafts, played a great role in the development of caring relationship between them'. The implication of this research in my context is on the teacher's feedbacking practices and most importantly in supporting learners and learning inside and outside the classroom. This also implies that foreign English teachers must establish connection and a healthy relationship with the learners, considering cultural differences and language barriers.

Another aspect that is very relevant in the development of this curriculum project is Global Citizenship. While the key focus is the acquisition of technical and pragmatic competence in the English language alongside developing lexical resources in the various themes, this English programme must be able to equip students with concepts pertaining to global citizenship and consequently contribute in shaping their thinking as global citizens. MacKinnon (2011) argued that 'it is not just internal structures which are causing rapid and major change in schools and that these changes have come about in response to the changing nature of society, employment structures, types of work, technologies- especially communication and that the media is rapidly shifting expectations, changing social norms, and a new connected awareness in globalisation'. Indeed, Cambridge (2002) supported this by commenting that 'curriculum must embrace an existential and experiential philosophy of education which values the moral development of the individual and recognizes the importance of service to the community and the development of a sense of responsible citizenship'.

The fact that these students will be taking the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in the succeeding year highlights the justification on the inclusion of global education concepts. Indeed, as what Tsolidis (2002) has posited, 'learning to negotiate a range of cultural understandings is an extremely valuable component of cross-cultural learning and it would seem that the more distinct that cultures are which students experience, the more challenging their curriculum'. I believe that limited it might be, the themes included in this course would facilitate this understanding of various cultural practices and issues across the globe.

I recently attended a workshop on Active Learning and Assessment for Learning in English conducted by Cambridge Assessment International Education and gained further insights on how active learning can be best addressed in English language and literature classes. Based on constructivism, a theory that learners construct or build their own understanding, active learning is a process that has student learning at its centre (CAIE 2018). I would argue that this approach is most importantly relevant in English language classes where integration of cultural and social awareness is essential. The learners build and develop their prior knowledge and there is an emphasis on problem so there is an active stimulation of ideas from the students. Bonwell and

Eison (1991) postulated that active learning instructional strategies include a wide range of activities that share common element of “involving students in doing things and thinking the things they are doing”. (*Please see Appendix II for some suggested activities.*)

The design of this curriculum takes into consideration the development of the learners’ competencies in all micro-skills of language learning. A balanced mixture of grammar exercises, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing activities must be utilized every term. Language learning and teaching can be messy and controversial. There is no exact or right method but as long as there is variation in approaches, clear objectives, understanding of the needs of the learners, well-chosen instructional materials and active participation of the learners in the teaching and learning process, some degree of success can be attained in every day instruction by both the teachers and the learners.

Project Evaluation

The assessment of curricula is always subjective since the plan always reflects preferences and values (Wiles & Bondi 2002). As elaborated by these experts, curriculum development as a process is neutral and can be judged by its efficiency. According to them, these assumptions pose this main question: *Does the program developed served our intentions?*

I would like to treat the project that I have designed as something new because although there is already an existing English preparatory class in my school, the existing one has not been properly designed and is only a course outline. In the evaluation of my project, I feel that I have to involve three things. Firstly, the organization’s core values, desired student outcomes, and strategic thrust for students. By referring to these aspects, I will be able to view evaluation from the perspective of the school management, the parents, and the teachers as stakeholders. Secondly, since my school delivers both the Cambridge and International Baccalaureate programmes, I would like to explore how the Cambridge Learner Attributes and the IB Learner Profile can be used to evaluate my project. Although these are two different curriculum providers, the values are overlapping and clearly promote 21st century skills. Lastly, I would like to consider the evaluation process from the language teaching and learning perspective.

Xuesong (2006) mentioned that ‘if language teachers and researchers could pass on some of the wealth of knowledge about learner development in accessible forms to parents and other social agents, we would contribute to the creation of a wider social environment facilitating learners’ language learning and development’. Hence, in the future evaluation of this curriculum, I would like to involve the assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, the English Department Subject Head for Grades 7 to 10, the English teacher, and the Head of English Department. Although it is very ideal to involve the parents in the process of evaluation, it is very difficult to do so in my context because most of these parents do not speak English. However, I believe that parents can support the curriculum in other ways and as a reflection from this project, I intend to orient the parents especially those of Grades 7 and 8 on our English curricular offerings. Considering that the educational system is totally new for them, communication is vital and I feel that this practice should enhance the school and parents relationship. Moreover, from the school’s point of view it is necessary to evaluate how the programme satisfies the school’s ethos.

The scheme of work will be the basis for exploring how the content such as the themes, instructional materials, learning activities, and assessment schemes reflect the school’s ethos and the desire learning outcomes. It is important that Key Performance Indicator and Targets are also reflected and evaluated.

My school has also released a directive regarding the integration of the values promoted by our curriculum providers, Cambridge and the International Baccalaureate. As previously mentioned, I argue that these two organisations’ learner characteristics as overlapping as they aim to promote 21st century skills. In the same manner as the evaluation of the curriculum from the school ethos’ perspective, I thought that it would be logical to make a more holistic approach in the evaluation process by exploring how both learner profiles are reflected in the design of my curriculum.

School Vision

A global centre of excellence that promotes holistic education in a vibrant, multi-cultural environment anchored in local values.

School Mission

We create an environment geared towards nurturing independent life-long learners who strive for excellence and serve with a reflective awareness of self and the community.

Core Values

P.R.I.D.E. – Purpose, Respect, Integrity, Dynamism, Empowerment

Desired Student Outcomes

Scholars, Leaders, Global Citizens

STRATEGIC THRUSTS

THRUST 2: Affective and Effective Learners

-Active learners who are imbued with moral values and embrace humanistic endeavours in the application of knowledge and skills for achieving success.

LTO 2.1:

Active Learning - Learners strive to achieve excellence in their learning.

LTO 2.2:

Values Education – Learners develop a sense of social awareness and are actively engaged in serving the community.

LTO 2.3:

Skills Mastery – Learners develop research skills to attain global literacy and embrace international mindedness to produce creative and innovative ideas.

Table 2. School Ethos

Source: *Department Action Plan, Own School, 2017*

The Cambridge Learner Attributes	The IB Learner Profile
<p>Confident in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others. Cambridge students are confident, secure in their knowledge, unwilling to take things for granted and ready to take intellectual risks. They are keen to explore and evaluate ideas and arguments in a structured, critical and analytical way. They are able to communicate and defend views and opinions as well as respect those of others.</p> <p>Responsible for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others. Cambridge students take ownership of their learning, set targets and insist on intellectual integrity. They are collaborative and supportive. They understand that their actions have impacts on others and on the environment. They appreciate the importance of culture, context and community.</p> <p>Reflective as learners, developing their ability to learn Cambridge students understand themselves as learners. They are concerned with the processes as well as the products of their learning and develop the awareness and strategies to be lifelong learners.]</p> <p>Innovative and equipped for new and future challenges Cambridge students welcome new challenges and meet them resourcefully, creatively and imaginatively. They are capable of applying their knowledge and understanding to solve new and unfamiliar problems. They can adapt flexibly to new situations requiring new ways of thinking.</p> <p>Engaged intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference. Cambridge students are alive with curiosity, embody a spirit of enquiry and want to dig more deeply. They are keen to learn new skills and are receptive to new ideas. They work well independently but also with others. They are equipped to participate constructively in society and the economy – locally, nationally and globally.</p>	 <p>IB learner profile</p> <p>The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.</p> <p>As IB Learners we strive to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INQUIRERS We make our curiosity developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life. KNOWLEDGEABLE We develop and use conceptual understandings, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance. THINKERS We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions. COMMUNICATORS We examine ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups. PRINCIPLED We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences. OPEN-MINDED We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the views and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience. CARING We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us. RISK-TAKERS We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and to seek out strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change. BALANCED We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live. REFLECTIVE We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development. <p>The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like these, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.</p>

Table 3. Cambridge Learner Attributes and IB Learner Profile

Source: CAIE and IBO Websites

The third and last factor that I want to consider in the future evaluation of my curriculum is from the English language teaching and learning perspective. In his book 'Curriculum Development in Language Teaching', Richards (2001) raised some important questions that need to be answered once the curriculum is already in place. From a summative wider perspective of curriculum evaluation, I would like to adopt Richards' (2001) overarching questions:

- Is the curriculum achieving its goals?
- What is happening in classrooms and schools where it is being implemented?
- Are those affected by the curriculum (e.g., teachers, administrators, students, parents, employers) satisfied with the curriculum?
- Have those involved in developing and teaching a language course done a satisfactory job?
- Does the curriculum compare favourably with others of its kind?

By reflecting on these questions in a focus group discussion session, I believe that we will be able to identify strong and weak points in the curriculum design. Of course, this will be extended to specific questions such as those designed by Richards (2001) in the following table.

1.	How effective was the course? Did it achieve its aims?
2.	What did the students learn?
3.	How well was the course received by the students and teachers?
4.	Did the materials work well?
5.	Were the objectives adequate or do they need to be revised?
6.	Was the amount of time spent on each unit sufficient?
7.	How appropriate were the teaching methods?
8.	What problems were encountered during the course?

Table 4. Specific Questions for Evaluation

Source: Richards, J. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*

While curriculum evaluation process directly involves administrators and teachers, it is imperative that we hear from the students. I think that one of the best ways to ensure that evaluation is holistic is to gain insights from the learners either directly or indirectly. This can be done by creating an evaluation checklist with focus on how the learners respond to the topics and the learning activities. This can be done both by the teacher and administrator. Additionally, I would want the students to be directly involved in the evaluation process. The Preparatory Programme is designed to be a small size class (ideally 15 students) so it is very easy to hear insights from the students. The following questions taken from Richards (2001) can be used for structured student interviews:

- What did I learn?
- How well did I do compare to others?
- How well will I rate this course?
- How will this help me in the future?
- Do I need another course?

Finally, I would like to go back to the main aims of this curriculum which is primarily to enhance the students' grammatical competence in the English language, enhance their writing skills in various genres, increase global awareness and consequently promote global citizenship, and develop competence in speaking and listening. Most importantly, the main aim is to promote active learning, consequently creating independent reflective learners. The following reflective questions can be used to interview the students or as written reflection activities.

1. How well do you think you have improved your English grammar skills? How have you used these skills to become a better communicator?
2. Have the various English lessons helped you in other subjects? In what ways?
3. What is your understanding regarding cultural respect? Has this course helped you become aware of respecting other cultural practices?
4. Do you think this course has helped you understand global issues and taking actions to help the world and humanity in your own small ways?
5. Do you think this course has helped you prepare to become a global citizen? What are the concepts learned in this course that will help you interact with people from other cultures when you study abroad?
6. Does this course help you understand your culture more?
7. Does this course help you establish a relationship with various people in the new school environment? Has this helped you develop your self-confidence?
8. What are the activities that you like in this course?
9. What activities can you further suggest to make this course interesting and relevant?

Table 5. Reflective Questions

Source: Richards, J. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*

There are various methods and frameworks that can be used in evaluating this programme. Presumably, the easiest way to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum would be to take a look at the learners' progress in the learning activities that the teacher designed. The regular writing activities, quizzes and other forms of testing could also indicate something about the learners' performance. It is also essential to conduct periodic speaking activities, be it in the form of individual or group presentations.

Alongside looking at the school's ethos, the learner profiles or attributes and the content and students' responses to the interviews, it is also important to take a look at how the curriculum has developed the learners' socio-emotional skills. The bottom line is that various stakeholders are involved in the process of curriculum evaluation.

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