

## **The Future Reform of ELT Curriculum: Towards Empowering Leadership and Developing Entrepreneurial Skills**

**Meryem LAADEM**

*Higher School of Technology ESTM  
Moulay Ismail University of Meknes, Morocco  
mery.laadem@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to present certain facts related to English Language Teaching curriculum in Moroccan higher education institutions. There is a high demand of leadership and entrepreneurial skills for university students to participate in individual and societal development. This study reveals the findings from empirical questionnaires distributed among lecturers to reflect upon challenges, requirements, and future prospects of ELT. It examines the necessary competencies and skills targeted in the teaching process, trying to update the tools and the knowledge to the needs of the job market. The role that the reform of ELT curriculum ought to play in Higher education institutions' guidelines has not to be considered little since it can promote the quality, the skills and the capacities of students in their future jobs.

### **Keywords:**

Reform, ELT Curriculum, leadership, entrepreneurial skills

### **Résumé**

Le but de cet article est de présenter certains faits relatifs au curriculum de l'enseignement d'anglais dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur au Maroc. Il y a une forte demande de leadership et de compétences entrepreneuriales pour que les étudiants universitaires participent au développement individuel et social. Cette étude révèle les résultats des questionnaires empiriques distribués aux enseignants universitaires pour réfléchir aux défis, aux exigences et aux perspectives d'avenir de curriculum d'anglais. Il examine les compétences et les aptitudes nécessaires ciblées dans le processus d'enseignement, en essayant de mettre à jour les outils et les connaissances aux besoins de l'emploi. Le rôle que la réforme du programme d'enseignement de l'Anglais devrait jouer dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur ne doit pas être considéré comme minime, car il peut promouvoir la qualité, les compétences et les capacités des étudiants dans leur futur emploi au niveau national et international.

### **Mots clés :**

Réforme, Curriculum, leadership, compétences entrepreneuriales

## **Introduction**

Various discussions and debates surrounding education for 21st century competencies have led many researchers and experts in the field to uphold the belief that the 21st century will need individuals who possess a very different set of skills and competencies, if they are to function well in their work and personal lives.

This paper is an attempt to explore the Moroccan educational system, promote the necessary skills targeted in the teaching process and examine its English language curricula, empower leadership and entrepreneurial skills for university students to participate in individual and societal development. The role that the reform of ELT curriculum ought to play in Higher education institutions' guidelines has not to be considered little since it can promote the quality, the skills and the capacities of students in their future jobs, and reduce the gap between the university and labor market requirements.

Another area of concern is the individual behavior of young people entering the job market (MEN, 1999). More than 60% of University students lack appropriate skills; they experience difficulties in communication, interpersonal relations, even discipline, in collective and professional settings within the job market. Therefore, there is a high demand of leadership and entrepreneurial skills for Moroccan university students to participate in individual and societal development.

## **ELT Curriculum**

With the implementation of the new reform in higher education institutions (Ibid.), university teachers tend to combine between theory and practice to delineate academic and pedagogic ELT curriculum in order to target quality in education. The endurance of teachers results in the attempt to design a curriculum that solves students' problems in accuracy and proficiency in relation to their needs (Bouziane, 1999). However, according to Seymour (1996) "all Moroccan ELT teachers should carefully consider their own situation to ensure that what they are teaching is relevant" p.41.

In fact, the ELT curricula in higher education institutions were constructed eclectically based on different approaches of teaching English language. The main purpose is to establish the suitable syllabi that lead "towards building basic and academic English Language skills, self-

regulated language learning strategies and digital literacy. All of which are thought to be crucial for students' academic success at their faculties and professional achievements after graduation" (Eker, 2007 p.624).

The level and affiliation of students in the English departments implies a set of criteria to design the effective curriculum. Wang (2011) states that "the curriculum design should meet students' needs for seeking employment and career development. Students are able to go further in their professional studies by studying abroad, by access to the latest development of technology in the world"p.84.

Therefore, the majority of teachers in Morocco tend to adopt appropriate approaches that cater for all the types of learners. The communicative language teaching approach is considered as the most used approach in most departments of English in Moroccan higher education institutions, since it provides effective contexts for communication combining between fluency and accuracy. Consequently, we identify the change of teachers' roles not only as mediator or facilitator but as a curriculum designer as well.

In fact, the remaining big question is "do these curricula of the departments of English -based on eclecticism- empower Moroccan students' leadership and promote their entrepreneurial skills?"

As an answer, the study has shown that the framework adopted in designing effective ELT curriculum is based on targeting six areas from the needs-analysis perspective:

1. The four skills: reading, speaking, listening, writing.
2. Personal skills: understanding learning challenges and strategies, etc.
3. Academic skills: generate main ideas, interpreting charts and diagrams, etc.
4. Interactional skills: communicating with other people, express ideas and feelings, etc.
5. Study skills: learning strategies, selecting information, etc.
6. Digital skills: understand technology and the web search techniques, use emails or social media, etc.

## **Leadership & Entrepreneurial Skills**

Students in higher education are adult learners who require being equipped with leadership skills and entrepreneurial skills. The instructional design most of the time is providing enough knowledge in the field but less leadership and entrepreneurial skills. Such a program can

enhance students' motivation to learn English once they feel that what they are learning is bridging their cognitive knowledge to the demands of the job market.

The twenty first century bets strongly on the academic achievement, which targets fundamental and professional skills for students. Then, it is necessary to build a common understanding of what is leadership. Esmer & Dayi (2017) define leadership skills as “the ability to influence others and to be able to put into action for specific goals and targets” p.113. However, they define entrepreneurship as “a concept that is considered to be the driving power behind economic growth, economic development, employment and social welfare in recent years” (Ibid.). Therefore, both concepts go hand in hand to promote university students learning combining between digital skills, inventive thinking, effective communication and high productivity. (Figure 1)



Figure 1 : The four Elements of the 21st Century Learning (retrieved from <https://www.tes.com/lessons/>)

As the figure above represents, what all students need as fundamental skills to be able to know and do in order to achieve success and fulfillment as engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with entrepreneurial spirits are:

- Creativity and innovation skills

- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Communication & Collaboration skills
- Media Literacy
- Technological Literacy
- Flexibility & Adaptability
- Initiative & Self-Direction
- Social & Cross-Cultural Skills
- Leadership & Responsibility

Keeping in view the importance of the twenty first century demands, leadership and entrepreneurial skills cannot be separated from the educational system in Moroccan higher education. The main goal is to develop the full potentials of university students so that they can be easily integrated in professional and economic life.

## **Methodology**

The study integrates insights for teachers' future curriculum development, which is based on adopting leadership theories and entrepreneurial skills to provide a fruitful ground in higher education mainly in the departments of English. To this end, the research is trying to gather data for two research questions:

**RQ 1:** What types of leadership & entrepreneurial skills do university students need in order to cope with the market change?

**RQ 2:** What kind of ELT curriculum do we need in the future?

Given the fact that research combines between theory and practice, the sample population was diversified thoroughly. Two Questionnaires were administered at random. The first one was administered via SurveyMonkey to twelve ELT university teachers from different higher education institutions, while the second one was printed and distributed to eight

Entrepreneurs; three from Meknes city, two from Oulmes, and three from Khemisset. The first questionnaire was divided to twelve items subdivided to three sections (table1)

Table 1 : the organization of the ELT Questionnaire

12 items		
Section 1	Section 2	section3
Personal demographic information: Gender age grade level taught place of work job experience academic trainings	Educators' attitudes & perceptions towards ELT curriculum	types of Competencies knowledge Attitudes skills that ELT curriculum offers for students

## Summary of the Results

The findings show that all most university teachers have common perceptions on the new reform of ELT curriculum. In this respect, descriptive statistics was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science)to find out the frequency and percentage of agreement and disagreement among the participants regarding the various issues raised in the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire items were classified into personal characteristics and necessary skills. Continuously, they are related to the educators' perceptions of the current effectiveness of University English curriculum. (table2)

Table 2 : university teachers' perceptions of the important skills and personal characteristics of future students

<i>Personal Characteristics</i>	<i>Skills</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courage</li> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Curiosity</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Enthusiasm</li> <li>• Flexibility</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>A <b>skill</b> is an ability that's learned through knowledge, training and practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Business Skill</li> <li>▪ Communication Skill</li> <li>▪ Computer Skill</li> <li>▪ Decision-Making Skill</li> <li>▪ Problem-Solving Skill</li> <li>▪ Mathematical Skill</li> <li>▪ Organizational Skill</li> <li>▪ People Skills</li> </ul>

It is worth mentioning that the research findings for entrepreneurs has given further insights to the personal qualities that students will need in their future job market. Most importantly, energy makes the first drive of students' personality towards success in their future jobs. Then it comes risk taking, because the deep spirit of any successful entrepreneur starts within taking risks and facing adventures. The rest of the qualities share parallel parts as it is shown in the figure below.

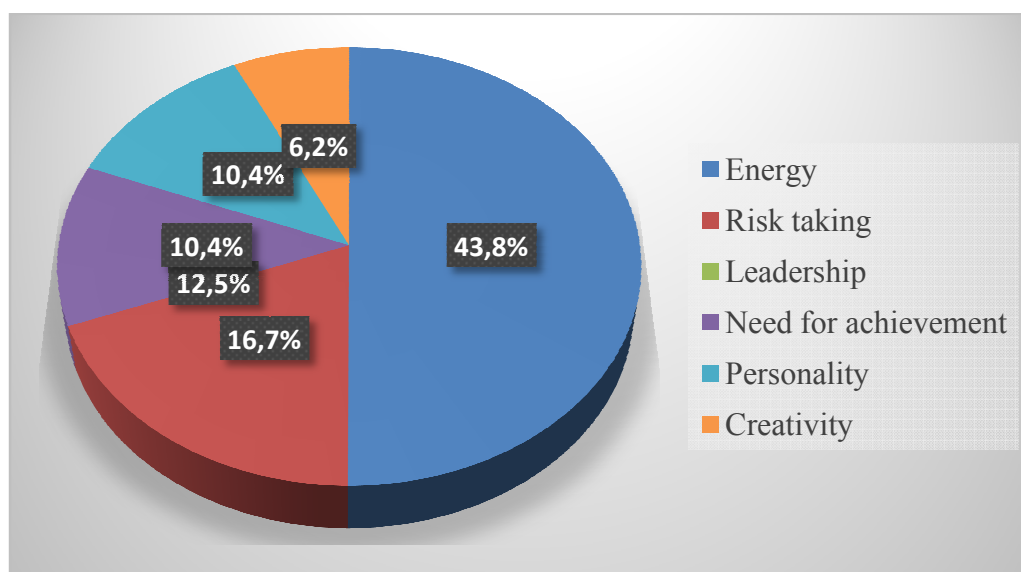


Figure 2 :personalQualities of Successful Entrepreneurs

From this perspective, both questionnaires have led to different characteristics elicited from educators and from entrepreneurs. They were listed, classified and then compared, resulting in a list of common characteristics.

The distribution pattern outlined in the table below reveals some guidelines to the reform of ELT curriculum design.

*Table 3 : Data Analysis of ELT teachers Evaluation of the Curriculum*

1. The English language is perceived as a means of communication.	57%
2. Work-based learning strategies are used in the university class.	14%
3. The university English courses help students understand foreign cultures.	54%
4. English teaching/learning in the university class is linked to the labor market.	30%
5. The current English courses provide students with opportunities for future career development.	43%
6. The university English courses help students to develop communication ability.	31%
7. The university English courses emphasize the relationship between English and employability	14%
8. The teaching staff discusses global issues and universal values with students.	66%
9. The teaching staff trains students to think critically.	17%
10. Leadership skills are emphasized in the current English courses.	8%
11. The teaching staff aims to develop entrepreneurial skills in their lectures.	24%
12. The class provides many opportunities to experience learning through practice.	50%

From the table above, items 1/3/6&8 reflect the emergence of the communicative aspect in most ELT courses. Communication is well established through discovering other culture,



through discussions of universal values and issues, and through learning techniques of communication in everyday life with other people.

While items 2/9&12 denotes the focus on the teaching-learning process of the English language in Moroccan educational system, and on the importance of mental processes such as critical thinking, work-based strategies and practical learning. However, items 4/5/10&11 points to the lack of courses which develop entrepreneurial skills and emphasize leadership skills, also it uncovers the great gap between the curriculum from one side and between employability and career development from another side.

Based on the data analysis, a strong ELT syllabus does not need to overload students with language structures and grammatical items or monotonous reading passages. Accordingly, it has to provide better opportunities to successful communication, individual self-development. University students need to sharpen their entrepreneurial skills, and promote their leadership and personal characteristics that would prepare them for the future challenges of the job market.

## **Conclusion**

In the 21st century, education will progressively stretch the emphasis to expand competence beyond subject content and common knowledge. Indeed, many countries throughout the world have moved to making leadership and entrepreneurial competencies central to their educational reform efforts as a way to help their university students engage actively in future global job market. Consequently, the new reform of today dictates the implantation of a curriculum that focuses on the theory and the practice of English for occupational purposes (EOP).

In fact, Higher education institutions in Morocco have shown flexibility and creativity to meet the needs of diversification and specialization of the economy, by multiplying vocational streams, changing the curricula and diversifying English courses through the academic modules especially in vocational colleges. These, generally, are of limited and selective access, and the young people who come out of it find to employ themselves without much difficulty. However, the results could not be generalized because still there are deep gaps between studies and employability all over Morocco.

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