A Critical Analysis of the 2001 National Foreign Language Standards-Based Curriculum in the Thai School System

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Curriculum in the Thai School System
This dissertation is dedicated to my father and mother. Their hope and inspiration have strengthened my desire to finish this dissertation strongly and well.
Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance given by a large number of people during the research project. In particular, the author wishes to acknowledge the contribution made by Emeritus Professor Andrew Lian for his patient and generous help and direction throughout the years as a primary supervisor, mentor and as a father. His belief in my ability to undertake the research project from the first day until the end has meant a lot to me. Professor Lian is the key person to help me develop new concepts in learning and has broadened my life both in the academic field and the living world, like a father guiding his child. The author also would like to present her gratitude to Dr. Ania Lian for an intellectual support to the completion of this research.

The author also wishes to acknowledge Dr. Jeremy Jones, a secondary supervisor, for his patience and support. In addition, special thanks should be given to Kate Wilson, my supervisory panel, whose help and support have always been unquestionably the highest. Her encouragement and academic input and warm heart made life at the University of Canberra more pleasurable.

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The reason for going to university is not only to study, but also to enjoy the company of beloved friends. Two in particular are Assistant Professor Maliwan Buranapatana - for her motherly advice and a love that is given freely from a warm heart, as well as
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Special thanks are also due to Todsaphon Sirawattananon. His caring stories and technical support have fulfilled this PhD learning process. I also thank all my friends and others for creating a wonderful learning environment during the time of my PhD Program.

I owe special acknowledgement to all of the interviewees, especially to all the Thai English language lecturers, scholars and Thai English language curriculum committees, whose willingness to be part of this research is appreciated. Without their insightful information, this thesis would have been meaningless.

Most of all, my thanks to my parents and Dr. Piya Louis Siangsukone, my greatly admired partner. Their support could not be questioned nor counted. Their care and patience have filled my PhD journey with happiness, serenity and inspiration that is pertinent to the completion of this dissertation.
Abstract

The status of English language has increased over the years as a tool for international communication. The Thai government emphasises that English language education has now become part of the full driving force for national development. This research implies that in order to cultivate Thai learners of English to meet social demands, sound theoretical and coherent philosophical bases of curriculum are essential in the curriculum planning process. This research analyses the new official English language curriculum for the Thai school system: "English language learning strands and standards under Basic Education curriculum 2001" (English language standards-based curriculum, ESB Curriculum), which in 2001 was promulgated as the new official English language curriculum. This research reveals both the coherence and incoherence of the theoretical and philosophical bases of the Thai ESB curriculum, identifies strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and makes recommendations for curriculum revision and curriculum development that could result in positive and effective changes in English language teaching and learning in Thailand. This thesis rests on the premise that principles underlying decisions made in curriculum planning will have a major impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum. It follows that difficulties with foreign language education nowadays are a consequence of the incoherence of philosophical, theoretical, and social bases of curriculum design.

This research analyses the English language curriculum by asking questions about who was involved in the curriculum planning process and what were the decision-making mechanism and processes involved in its planning. The research is different from other research in curriculum studies in Thailand that aim only at curriculum implementation and evaluation. Three sources of data have contributed to the analysis of the curriculum: curriculum-related documents, interviews with the curriculum committees, and interviews and questionnaires with school teachers.

The analysis has shown that (1) the curriculum was developed with input from numerous experts and various groups of stakeholders which affected the underlying principles, philosophical and theoretical bases of education and English language
teaching and learning; (2) the theoretical and philosophical bases of the curriculum were found to be incoherent among curriculum elements; (3) the curriculum has problems at the level of meaning and this has led to the difficulty of conveying the philosophy of Thai education to the school level. The study has found that the incoherence of the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum elements leads to misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misuse of the curriculum.

The implication for future research is to stress a critical literacy approach to English language education and curriculum development. In this way, English language is seen as a language for empowerment, knowledge enhancement, social development and development of learners as a part of Globalisation and Information Age in the 21st Century as also stated in the Thai National Education Act 1999.
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEC 2001</td>
<td>Basic Education Curriculum 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESB curriculum</td>
<td>English Standards-Based Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCID</td>
<td>Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGE</td>
<td>Department of General Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTLP</td>
<td>Description of Teaching and Learning Principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBE</td>
<td>International Bureau of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAM</td>
<td>Lists of Approaches and Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEA 1999</td>
<td>National Education Act 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEC</td>
<td>Office of Education Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONEC</td>
<td>Office of the National Education Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONES</td>
<td>Office of National Education Standards and Quality Assurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONESQA</td>
<td>Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONPEC</td>
<td>Office of the National Primary Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLD</td>
<td>Proficiency Level Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBC</td>
<td>Standards-Based Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBM</td>
<td>School-Based Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>STLM</td>
<td>Suggested Teaching and Learning Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLM</td>
<td>Teaching and learning management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO-ACEID</td>
<td>UNESCO- Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword: Life Long Process

I am delighted that the four years I have spent in the PhD program have opened up a brand new world to me. It is a world with choices, differences, and an endless definition of life. I learned that life is what we can define and that we can live within the condition that we have. I learned to combine two different ends and create brand new thinking or a convergence of a dichotomy of theories and practices, contradictions and compromise, the philosophical mind and the practical mind. These are the practices that have emerged from the learning process of undertaking PhD studies. These are the practices of problem solving, challenging and questioning those things we have found. Furthermore, I have learned that life is more pleasant when you can live with what you love to do and at the same time give something back to those whom you love and who love you. I have gained a valuable experience in life which I had never thought of having.

A PhD is not the answer to all questions about living in this world, but it is a means in the search for more meaning, more courage to challenge the world and more life experience to be found. It is an ongoing process that will never end.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, my aunts and most of all to my parents whose unquestionable love brought me their great experience and the means to live in this world. Without their combined strength and endeavour to engender love in our family, I would have given up and left my dream behind.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

January 23rd -25th, 2003 “Eliminating constraints in applying second language teaching theories and methodologies by developing teacher meaning-making mechanisms (the 3Ms)”, Annual Thailand TESOL International Conference, whose theme was “ELT 2003: Culture, Content and Competency”, Thailand
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August 11th, 2004 Presentation of research on Thai foreign language policy and the development of the foreign language curriculum, at a seminar conducted by the School of Languages and International Education, University of Canberra.


November 28th - December 1st, 2005 “An Insightful Analysis of National Foreign Language Curriculum in the Thai School System”, AARE 2005 International Education Research Conference, whose theme was compelling, challenging and advocating what could be described as "a generative politics for doing education research”, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, Sydney.

Semester 1, 2004 to Semester 1, 2005 ProVice-Chancellor’s 50% Fee Waiver, Division of Communication and Education (AUD$10,800.00)
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................. V

ABSTRACT .................................................................................. VII

ACRONYMS ............................................................................... IX

FOREWORD: LIFE LONG PROCESS ........................................... XI

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................... XIII

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ...................................................... 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

1.2 PRESENT SITUATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THAILAND .......... 2

1.2.1 Educational Reform: Goals and Policies ........................................ 2

1.2.2 The New English Language Curriculum ....................................... 4

1.2.3 The Process of Implementation .................................................. 7

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE ...................... 8

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH .......................................... 11

1.5 AMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ...................................... 16

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .......................................................... 17

1.7 CONCLUSION ........................................................................... 17

1.8 THESIS OUTLINE ................................................................. 18

CHAPTER 2 CRITICAL REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE ............ 21

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................... 21

PART I: THE PROVISION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE THAI SCHOOL SYSTEM ......................................................... 23

2.1 TRADITIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROVISION .......................... 23

2.2 A STEP TOWARD MODERNIZED EDUCATION: FORMAL EDUCATION .......... 24

2.3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION .................. 25

2.4 THE INTRODUCTION OF A "COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH" .............. 28

2.5 THE MOVEMENT TOWARD A LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACH TO ELT ......... 32

2.6 THE QUEST FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND THE NEW EFL CURRICULUM .......... 36

2.7 "BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM 2001" - THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF EFL EDUCATION ................................................................................. 39

2.7.1 The Main Elements of the ESB Curriculum .................................... 43

2.8 CONCLUSION: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THAILAND ......................................................... 44

PART II: A REVIEW OF MOVEMENT IN ESL/EFL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT ............. 47

2.9 DISTINCTION BETWEEN SYLLABUS AND CURRICULUM .................. 47
Table of Contents

2.10 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFL LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT ........................................... 48
2.11 PRACTICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFL CURRICULUM ...................................................... 49
2.12 "STANDARDS MOVEMENT" AND THE STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM ........................................ 50
  2.12.1 School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) ................................................................. 53
  2.12.2 Issues of Accountability ....................................................................................................... 55
2.13 LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN POLICY CONTEXTS ....................................................................... 56
PART III: CURRICULUM ISSUES AND APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM ANALYSIS ................................ 59
  2.14 THE NATURE OF CURRICULUM ANALYSIS ................................................................................... 59
  2.15 CURRICULUM ANALYSIS AND CURRICULUM PLANNING ......................................................... 61
    2.15.1 Curriculum Planning Process ............................................................................................... 62
  2.16 THE COHERENT CURRICULUM .................................................................................................... 65
    2.16.1 The Face of Incoherence and the Analysis of Policy Rhetoric .............................................. 65
    2.16.2 The Possibility and Sustainability of Curriculum Coherence ......................................... 68
  2.17 THREE MAJOR ISSUES RELATED TO CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING ................................. 69
    2.17.1 Participants in Curriculum Planning – the Decision Makers ............................................. 69
    2.17.2 Philosophical and Theoretical Bases Underlying a Curriculum ..................................... 72
    2.17.3 Forces of Curriculum Decision Making .............................................................................. 78
  2.18 CONCLUSION OF ANALYSIS APPROACH .................................................................................... 81
PART IV: REVIEWS OF TRADITIONAL-CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL BASES OF EFL CURRICULUM
  PLANNING AND CURRICULUM ........................................................................................................ 83
  A. TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF EDUCATION AND THE CURRICULUM ................................................ 85
    2.19 MASTERY OF SUBJECT MATTER AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL .................................................. 85
      2.19.1 Curriculum Planning Approach – the Curriculum as Product ........................................... 86
      2.19.2 Academic Rationalists and the Foreign Language Curriculum ....................................... 87
      2.19.3 Criticism of Academic Rationalist Perspective and the EFL Curriculum ......................... 89
    2.20 TRAINING OF TECHNICAL SKILLS AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL ........................................... 91
      2.20.1 The Curriculum Planning Approach – Curriculum as Product ....................................... 92
      2.20.2 Social and Economic Efficiency and the Foreign Language Curriculum ....................... 97
      2.20.3 Criticism of Social and Economic Efficiency Conception .............................................. 102
  B. CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM ................................................ 105
    2.21 LEARNER-CENTEREDNESS AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL ......................................................... 106
      2.21.1 Curriculum Planning Approach – Curriculum as Process .............................................. 111
      2.21.2 Learner-Centeredness and the Foreign Language Curriculum ....................................... 113
      2.21.3 Criticisms of the Learner-Centeredness Perspective ......................................................... 122
    2.22 SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL ....................................................... 123
      2.22.1 Curriculum Planning Approach - Curriculum as Reflective Action ................................. 135
      2.22.2 Social Reconstruction and Foreign Language Curriculum ............................................. 138
    2.23 AN ECLECTIC CURRICULUM ...................................................................................................... 146
CONCLUSION: THE RELEVANCE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................... 147
### Table of Contents

**CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** ........................................... 149

3.1 OVERVIEW .............................................................................. 149
3.2 NATURE OF THE STUDY ......................................................... 150
3.3 THE TRIANGULATION OF DATA ............................................. 150
3.4 GATHERING OF DOCUMENTATION ....................................... 151
   3.4.1 Document Collection Procedures .................................. 152
   3.4.2 Accessibility of Documents ........................................... 152
3.5 INTERVIEWS WITH POLICY MAKERS AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS ........................................... 153
   3.5.1 Procedure for Interviews with Curriculum Developers ...... 154
   3.5.2 Participants ............................................................... 154
   3.5.3 Interviewing Methods .................................................... 156
   3.5.4 Interview Questions – Open-Ended ................................ 157
   3.5.5 Indirect Question Type ................................................ 158
3.6 INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES WITH SCHOOL TEACHERS ........................................... 159
   3.6.1 Interviews with School Teachers .................................... 160
   3.6.2 Questionnaires ............................................................. 164
   3.6.3 Description of Questionnaires ....................................... 165
   3.6.4 Procedure of Questionnaire Distribution ........................ 166
3.7 LIMITATION OF THE METHODOLOGY ................................ 167
3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .................................................. 168
   3.8.1 Informed consent ......................................................... 168
   3.8.2 Recruitment ............................................................... 169
   3.8.3 Risk concern ............................................................. 169
   3.8.4 Privacy ................................................................. 170
3.9 THE DATA ANALYSIS ............................................................. 170
3.10 SUMMARY ........................................................................... 171

**CHAPTER 4 THE DELINEATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE ESB CURRICULUM PLANNING PROCESS** ........................................... 174

4.1 INTRODUCTION ....................................................................... 174
4.2 SETTING THE SCENE ............................................................ 174
4.3 CAST OF CHARACTERS: LIST OF THOSE INVOLVED .................. 175
   4.3.1 Numbers on the Committees and Relative Controversies ........ 176
   4.3.2 Two Major Curriculum Committees ................................ 178
4.4 THE APPROACH TO THAI EFL CURRICULUM PLANNING ........... 180
4.5 THE PLANNING PROCESS AND THE WORKING COMMITTEES’ RELATIVE ASSIGNMENTS .................. 181
   4.5.1 Basic Principle Drafting Stage ........................................ 182
   4.5.2 Editorial Stage ............................................................. 187
   4.5.3 Revision Stage ............................................................ 190
   4.5.4 Agreement on Numbers of Strands and Standards ............ 191
Table of Contents

4.6 CONCLUSION .......................................................................................................................... 192

CHAPTER 5 THE ORIGINS OF THE ESB CURRICULUM: INTERNATIONAL AND WESTERN INFLUENCES .................................................................................................................. 194

5.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................... 194
5.2 THE "STANDARDS" MOVEMENT AND THE THAI ESB CURRICULUM ................................................. 194
  5.2.1 The ESB Curriculum and American Content Standards ............................................................. 198
5.3 VARIETY OF DESIGNATION AND ITS POSSIBILITY OF MISINTERPRETATION ................................. 203
  5.3.1 Conflicts between the Document and Curriculum Developers .................................................... 206
  5.3.2 The Conventional Term 'English Language Standards-Based Curriculum' (ESB Curriculum) .... 208
5.4 CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................................... 209

CHAPTER 6 AN ANALYSIS OF THE PHILOSOPHIES UNDERPINNING THE ESB CURRICULUM OVERARCHING GOALS AND CONTENT STANDARDS .................................................................. 210

6.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 210
6.2 SETTING THE SCENE ........................................................................................................ 211
6.3 THE SUBSTANCE OF THAI EDUCATION LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE ESB CURRICULUM ........ 211
  6.3.1 Thai Education and the Holistic Approach .............................................................................. 213
  6.4.1 Knowledge .......................................................................................................................... 216
  6.4.2 The Learning Process: Progressive education .......................................................................... 227
  6.4.3 Affectivity ............................................................................................................................. 233
  6.4.4 Controversial Issues in the Development of the Core Principles in the ESB Curriculum .... 234
6.5 SUMMARY: THE HYBRIDITY OF THAI ESB CURRICULUM CONCEPTION ...................................... 236
  6.5.1 Concerns about the Terms and Their Interpretation ................................................................. 238
6.6 CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................................... 239

CHAPTER 7 ANALYSIS OF THE ORGANISATION OF CURRICULUM CONTENT ....................................... 240

7.1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 240
7.2 SETTING THE SCENE ........................................................................................................ 241
7.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PROFICIENCY LEVEL DESCRIPTION (PLD) .................................................. 242
  7.3.1 Proficiency level: Description of Entry and Exit Levels ............................................................. 242
  7.3.2 The Thai PLD and International Proficiency-Based Guidelines (ACTFL and ISLPR): Characteristics and their Premises ................................................................. 245
  7.3.3 PLD and Its Theoretical Coherence with the ESB Curriculum Overarching Goals .......... 247
7.4 THE PLANNING OF BENCHMARKS ....................................................................................... 249
7.5 ANALYSIS OF UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF BENCHMARKS AGAINST THE ESB CURRICULUM OVERARCHING GOALS ........................................................................ 250
Table of Contents

7.5.1 The Characteristics of the Benchmarks ................................................................. 250
7.5.2 The Previous Curriculum and ESB Curriculum Content ........................................ 253
7.5.3 The Contradiction of Principles Underlying Benchmarks ........................................ 257
7.6 Characteristics of the Scope and Sequence of Benchmarks ...................................... 268
7.6.1 The Meaning of “Simple to Complex” .................................................................. 268
7.6.2 The Influence of Bloom’s Cognitive Domain ......................................................... 273
7.7 Evidence Supporting the Claims Made in Relation to Culture in ELT, Technology in ELT and Integrated Learning ................................................................. 277
7.7.1 Cultures and ELT .................................................................................................. 277
7.7.2 Technology in ELT ............................................................................................. 278
7.7.3 Integrated Curriculum .......................................................................................... 279
7.8 The Contradiction between an Atomistic and Holistic Approach to ELT ..................... 281
7.8.1 Whole Child Approach and the Benchmarks ......................................................... 281
7.9 Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 283

CHAPTER 8 AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHING METHODOLOGIES AND LEARNING ASSESSMENT ................................................................................................................. 284
8.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 284
8.2 Setting the Scene .................................................................................................... 285
8.3 Characteristics of STLM (Suggested Teaching and Learning Management) .............. 287
8.3.1 The Description of Teaching and Learning Principles (DTLP) ......................... 288
8.3.2 List of Approaches and Methods (LAM) .............................................................. 290
8.4 An Analysis of STLM with Reference to the ESB Curriculum Philosophies and Theories .................................................................................................................. 296
8.4.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Its Definition .............................. 298
8.4.2 The Learning Process and Activities-Based Learning ......................................... 307
8.4.3 The Conflict between “Teacher-centred” and “Learner-centred” Approaches to Language Learning ................................................................. 316
8.5 An Analysis of Learning Assessment with Reference to the ESB Curriculum Philosophies and Theories .................................................................................................. 318
8.5.1 Incoherent Theoretical Bases Underlying ESB Curriculum Elements and Learning Assessment ................................................................................................. 319
8.5.2 The Linear Approach and National Testing and Accountability ......................... 323
8.6 Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 326

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .................................................. 328
9.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 328
9.2 Major Findings and Discussion ................................................................................ 328
9.2.1 The Shifting Roles of Responsible Parties and the Distortion of Underlying Principles of the ESB Curriculum ................................................................. 331
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.2.2</td>
<td>The Philosophies and Beliefs of Curriculum Developers and How these Affected Approaches to Curriculum Planning and Influenced How School Teachers Developed Their School-Based Curriculum</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.3</td>
<td>The Critical Nature of Definitions and Meanings of Terms Used in the Curriculum and Their Impact on the Theoretical Coherence of the Curriculum</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.4</td>
<td>Contemporary Education in the Form of Traditional Practices</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY AND PRACTICE</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.1</td>
<td>Development of an English Language Literacy Curriculum</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4.2</td>
<td>Holistic EFL Curriculum Development</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5.1</td>
<td>The Public Sector: Curriculum Stakeholders</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 1</td>
<td>STRANDS AND STANDARDS</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 2</td>
<td>BENCHMARKS</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 3</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTRY AND EXIT PROFICIENCY LEVEL</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 4</td>
<td>INFORMED CONSENT FORM</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 5</td>
<td>THE MAIN DETAILS FOR THE INTERVIEW SESSIONS</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX 6</td>
<td>THE TRANSLATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>