

An Investigation into Chinese Influence on the Current Curriculum of Bachelor of Business English Degrees at Vietnamese Universities

Anh Thi Tuyet Nguyen
Edith Cowan University, Australia;
University of Finance and Marketing, Vietnam

Christine Cunningham
Edith Cowan University, Australia

Annamaria Paolino
Edith Cowan University, Australia

Abstract—In education across the world the curriculum plays a very important part, as it guides student learning and helps to realise what the teacher has planned. A lot of research has been conducted on curricula; however, few studies have investigated the Bachelor of Business English (BBE) curriculum and even less focusing on Vietnamese universities. This project aimed to investigate the present curricula of BBE at Vietnamese universities to gain important understandings about the purposes of the curriculum of BBE. The project adopted an interpretivist, qualitative approach using document analysis to investigate BBE curricula. Information about the present curricula was collected from the official websites of Vietnamese universities and was analysed using thematic coding. The findings revealed that the present curricula of BBE, which is a national curriculum framework, is influenced by the curriculum theories of Bobbit (1918) and Tyler (1949). In addition, the results show the components of the BBE curriculum has been influenced by a Chinese influenced BBE framework. And yet, interestingly, today there is a focus on English language competence, rather than Chinese or Russian language competence. Nevertheless, the key findings reveal some concerns with the present BBE curriculum in Vietnam.

Index Terms—EFL, Bachelor of Business English, curriculum, China, Vietnam, Business English

I. INTRODUCTION

English is considered a powerful foreign language in Vietnam and it has permeated many educational and economic contexts (Nguyen & Le, 2011). It has a great impact on contemporary Vietnam, especially in education and training and in business settings. In the field of business, there has been an increasing demand for English in the workforce due to the presence of increasing number of foreign companies in Vietnam. Therefore, globalisation has seen a great demand for learning English for professional purposes. Thus, the teaching and learning of English for business purposes has become a necessity in contemporary Vietnam.

A lot of research has been conducted into the curriculum of Bachelor of Business English (BBE). In China, where English is also considered a powerful foreign language (EFL) and where Business English (BE) is viewed as a major as it is in Vietnam (Li, 2014b, p. 1872), research into this topic has focused on the indispensable role of needs analysis in curriculum design; the principles for curriculum design of BBE; the common framework of English-based bachelor program in China; general purposes; and general contents of the curriculum.

In Vietnam, very little research has been conducted in the specific area of BBE curriculum. Very little is known about the current curricula of BBE at Vietnamese universities including the curriculum theory that underpins the BBE curriculum, the approaches to curriculum development, the structure of the content and the focus of the curriculum. This project aimed to investigate the current curriculum of Bachelor of Business English (BBE) at all Vietnamese universities that offer the BBE course to gain some understanding about the theory that underpins the BBE curriculum, the content structure and the learning area that is focused on. The investigation found that BBE curricula at Vietnamese universities are influenced by the curriculum theory of Bobbit (1918) and Tyler (1949) and appear to be developed based on the combination of three approaches: *Academic or disciplined-based approach*, *Experiential or learner-centered approach* and *Social Efficiency approach*. The content structure follows the national curriculum framework and has two main components: general subjects taught in Vietnamese and Business English specialisation subjects. In addition, the curriculum of BBE focuses on developing English language knowledge and skills, whereas business English and business knowledge takes up a small proportion in the whole curriculum. This article presents a literature

review, the methodology, the findings, the discussion, and conclusion of the study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studying Bachelor of Business English (BBE) in Asia

Much research has been conducted into curriculum and curriculum development in Western countries and in Asia (Phan, 2015). For BBE curriculum, the topic is well-researched in China, where English is considered a foreign language (EFL) and where BE is viewed as a major as it is in Vietnam (Li, 2014b, p. 1872). As teaching BE as a major in China has developed for nearly 30 years (Zhu, Peng, Zhang, & Yi, 2011, p. 380), and gained important success in terms of employment status, the practice of teaching and learning BE in Chinese universities is very useful for other countries to learn from. This is of particular significance for Vietnam as both countries have many similarities in culture, political systems and in the context where English is considered an EFL. Therefore, BE is viewed as important. The purpose of this review of literature is to examine the topic of BE in China so that comparisons can be made to the curriculum of BBE in Vietnam in order to learn some expertise from China's universities in their curriculum of BBE. The review of literature about BBE curriculum in China reveals some understandings about the principles for curriculum design of BBE; the common framework of English-based bachelor program in China; general purposes; and general contents of the curriculum.

China's influence on the BBE Curriculum

"Business English is defined by Chinese scholars as a cross-discipline science combining the application of English linguistics and cross-culture communication in the context of business management" (Zhu, Wu, & Guo, 2009, p.30). There are now three perceptions of Business English in China (Li, 2014b, p.1872).

- (1) Business is a variety of ESP.
- (2) Business English is a social functional variety of English.
- (3) Business English is viewed as a major or discipline

Based on the literature review of ESP, Zhu and Liu (2014) offer some theoretical supports to design BE curricula for business contexts in China (pp.72-74). The study proposes five principles of BE curriculum design, including objective, need, scientific, systematic and developmental principles as follows (Zhu & Liu, 2014). Some of the principles are relevant in terms of the contents of the BBE curriculum in Vietnam. The objective principle states that curriculum of BBE should include three types of courses: "English courses on professional skills, English courses on professional knowledge and relevant courses on professional knowledge" (Zhu & Liu, 2014, pp. 72-73). The systematic principle states that knowledge in different areas should be organized systematically. This means that the system of BBE curriculum should have four learning areas: language skills, business knowledge, cross-cultural communication and interpersonal communication in order to develop students' comprehensive ability in business communication (Zhu & Liu, 2014, pp. 72-73).

According to the framework below in Figure 1, there are three components of the English based Bachelor programme in China. As is evident, the elements of practices at the centre are language education, general education and professional education. Language education refers to the development of English - Chinese bilingual ability and intercultural ability. Professional education involves the building of students' professional knowledge and skills in business management, economics and marketing. Finally, general education is concerned with the provision of knowledge of humanistic, social and natural sciences, which include the learning areas such as literature, history, culture and philosophy (Yonghou & Chen, 2015, p. 35).

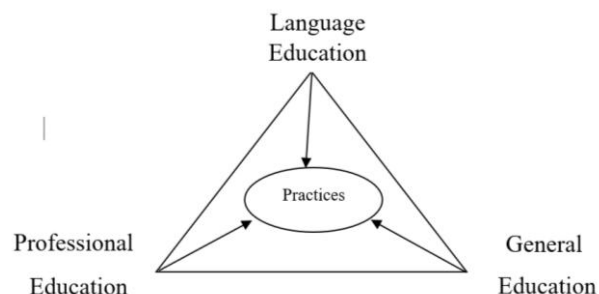


Figure 1: Common framework of English-based Bachelor programs in China (Wen, 2014, p. 123)

According to this national benchmark document, the BBE curriculums in China's universities aim to educate students with knowledge and skills. The knowledge is concerned with knowledge of language, business, culture, humanity and interdisciplinary areas whereas skills refer to the competencies of language use, cross-cultural communication, business practice, critical thinking and innovation, and autonomous learning" (Xie, 2016). Therefore, Xie proposes that there should be emphasis not only on business English language competence but also on other related learning areas such as, the development of abilities to prepare students for their success at work.

Studies investigating the curriculum of BE in China reveal that emphasis is placed on the business communication skills as it is perceived that “effective business communication is the lifeblood of every organization, and a key to success in one’s career” (Yonghou & Chen, 2015). Yonghou and Chen (2015) claim that the model of criteria of business communication competence of a Chinese Business English major consists of four types of core competence: English competence, fundamental business knowledge and skills, excellent intercultural communication competence, and humanistic quality, and three additional skills: scenario analysis competence, technology-mediated communication skills, and non-verbal communication skills (Yonghou & Chen, 2015).

Similarly, Xie (2016) focuses on student’s needs on business communication and perspectives of an effective BBE curriculum and states that BBE curriculum should be adapted to increase the oral communication content, authentic business communication situations, business terms, business knowledge input, company cases and BEC test preparation (Xie, 2016). In addition, a study into the BE curriculum of a prominent Chinese university states that the curriculum should be designed in a way that promotes student’s English ability and focuses on comprehensive business knowledge and social adaptability. Emphasis should also be placed on the comprehensive knowledge of business by incorporating business management courses in the curriculum such as contemporary business, economics, trade theory and practice (Zhu et al., 2009). In addition, for social adaptability, the curriculum must prepare and improve graduates business knowledge as employers expect and students need, a broad business knowledge related to their field of work so they can use English in international business settings (Zhu et al., 2009, p. 32).

After reviewing the studies and the national benchmark documents about the purposes of the BE curriculum of China, we came to illustrate the general purposes of BE curriculum of China’s universities in the following diagram.

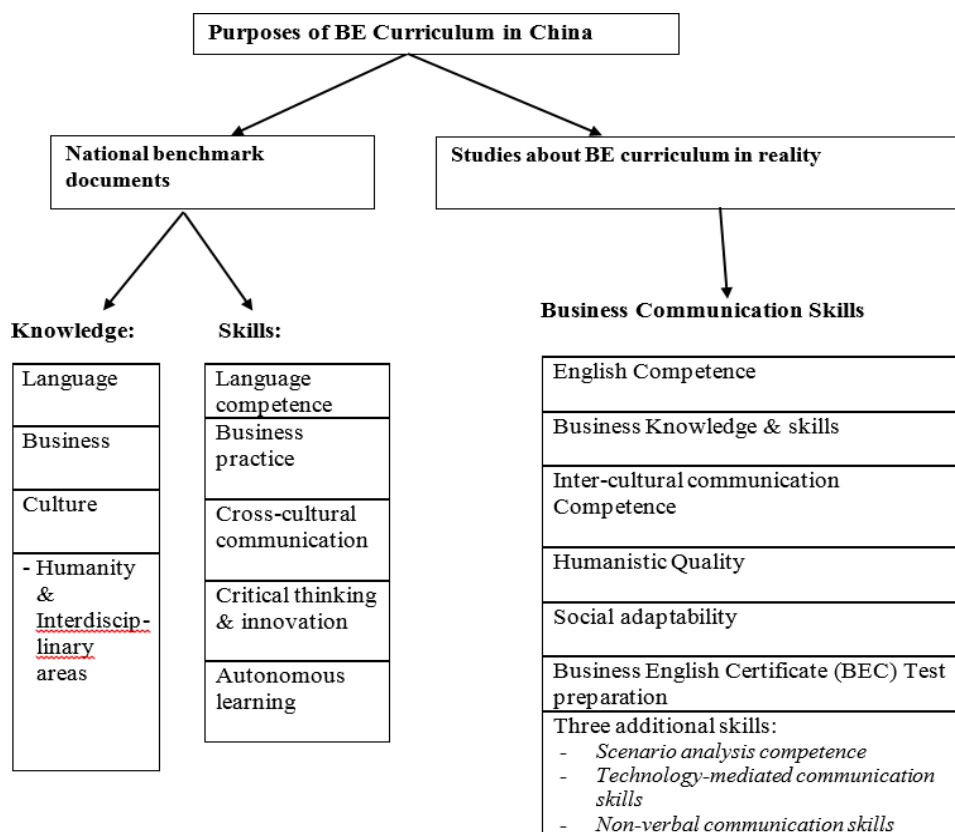


Figure 2. Purposes of China’s BE Curriculum

Figure 2 (above) illustrates the general purposes of the BBE curriculum in China. As is evident, English competence involves the acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. Business knowledge and skills refers to business knowledge and business skills. Business knowledge involves the knowledge in economics, business management, finance and international business law. Zhu et al (2009, p.32) and Wang (2010, p.119) proposes that business knowledge should be comprehensive whereas Yonghou and Chen (2015, p.28) claim that it should be only fundamental. Business skills is concerned with writing business correspondence such as business letter, memos, emails, reports, and administrative skills like negotiations and business documents. Intercultural communication competence refers to one’s ability to manage cultural differences and other experiences of stress. Humanistic quality “mainly refers to the spiritual state of a person, and the integration of qualities such as political thought, psychology, cultural, business and physical quality and so on” (Yonghou & Chen, 2015, p. 35)

In addition, for social adaptability, students are advised to broaden their knowledge and language ability by themselves to meet the requirement of recruiters (Yonghou & Chen, 2015, p. 35). The other three skills include scenario

analysis, technology-mediated communication competence and non-verbal communication competence. Scenario analysis refers to selecting the appropriate method of communication for different situations; Technology-mediated communication competence refers to the ability to use technology for communication such as Internet, Intranet, teleconferencing and so on; Non-verbal communication competence involves “the manner engaged in intercultural communication and the gathering of clues about underlying and values” (Yonghou & Chen, 2015, p. 36)

Li (2014b) suggests that a curriculum for a Business English major should balance “Four Modules”, namely English knowledge, business knowledge and skills, cross cultural communicative competence and humanity knowledge. Li (2014b) claims that universities, colleges and Business English training institutions should find out the needs of learners and set the proper proportion of these modules. An accurate need may save both time and efforts of teaching institutions and help achieve the objectives of the course.

The BBE Curriculum in Vietnam

In Vietnam, BE is considered a variety of ESP or a specialisation, a minor within an English major. For BE as a branch of ESP, BE is taught to non-English major undergraduates whereas BE specialisation is taught to Business English undergraduates in 28 Vietnamese universities that offer the Bachelor degree of BE specialisation for four years. Within an English major there are several specializations such as translation and interpreting, methods of teaching English, English language, tourism English and/or business English. As BE is a small branch of English major, students graduating from BE are called Bachelor of English.

Curriculum

According to the Vietnamese government, the curriculum of a Bachelor degree is a plan that consists of the aims, required knowledge, and skills learners acquire after completion, contents, methods of assessment, and level of the course and that ensures the conditions for transfer between levels and other curriculum (Vietnam National Assembly, 2012).

This study adopted the definition of curriculum by Glatthorn et al. (2009) who define curriculum as being prescriptive and descriptive. According to them, “curriculum is the plans made for guiding learning in the school, usually represented in retrievable documents of several levels of generality, and the actualization of those plans in the classroom, as experienced by the learners, and as recorded by an observer, those experiences take place in a learning environment that also influences what is learned” (Glatthorn et al., 2009, p. 3).

Curriculum theories

This research has been framed according to the work of two theorists who have had an influence on the curriculum of BBE in Vietnam: Ralph Tyler and Franklin Bobbitt, who are recognized as the most influential curriculum theorists in America (Hayes, 1991). According to Bobbitt (1918), curriculum is a science:

The central theory [of curriculum] is simple. Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class they can be discovered. This requires only that one go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which their affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite and particularized. The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of obtaining those objectives (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42)

Under this theory, curriculum planning begins with the identification of objectives which aim at activities that prepare students for different aspects of their life such as occupation, citizenship, family and other social roles (Franklin, n.d.)

Influenced by Bobbitt, Tyler’s (1949) Behavioural theory focuses on the identification of behavioural objectives.

Since the real purpose of education is not to have the instructor perform certain activities but to bring about significant changes in the students’ pattern of behaviour, it becomes important to recognize that any statements of objectives of the school should be a statement of changes to take place in the students (Tyler, 1949, p. 44).

Accordingly, Tyler proposes that curriculum design is a procedure that consists of the identification of needs, formulation of objectives, selection of content and learning experiences, organization of content and learning experiences, and evaluation (Tyler, 1949).

Research shows that there are four major approaches to curriculum development: *the Academic or Discipline- Based Approach; the Social Efficiency Approach; the Experiential Or Learner-Centred Approach*, and *the Critical Approach* (Phan, 2015, p. 2). Each approach reflects different assumptions of knowledge, different views of the way a curriculum is developed, of the role of teachers and learners, and of the purposes of learning.

Regarding the purposes of a curriculum, *the Academic or Discipline-Based Approach* suggests that goals are pre-identified or set at the beginning of a course with the aim at equipping students with sound knowledge in the field. *The Social Efficiency Approach* advocates the idea of training students with necessary skills and behaviour to help them perform well in their future jobs. According to *the Experiential or Learner-centred approach*, a curriculum aims at personal development of students, meeting their needs and interests, and developing their intellectual competence. The critical approach proposes that a curriculum aims at training students to have self-realisation and critical awareness of their own point of view and outlook of the world (Phan, 2015, pp. 33, 38).

Previous research on the Bachelor of Business English (BBE) in Vietnam

In Vietnam, there has been a lack of studies about curriculum for BBE at universities although currently, there are approximately 28 universities that have established English major with emphasis on Business English. Phan, Watters and Lupton (2016) investigated various understandings of curriculum from the perspective of stakeholders such as staff, academics and students at a Vietnamese university. The findings revealed diverse understandings and that curriculum tended to be textbook driven, product focused and teacher focused. Although the results were significant for developing the understanding of a curriculum in general at a Vietnamese university, the study did not focus specifically on the curriculum for BBE at Vietnamese universities.

The most recent and relevant research was an investigation into approaches to curriculum development at a higher education institution (Phan, 2015). The study involved the understandings of the curriculum development at a Vietnamese university from the view of teachers, administrators, and students. Phan mentioned that a curriculum for Bachelor degree consists of two components: general knowledge and professional knowledge. The general knowledge covers six learning areas: social science, humanities, natural science, mathematics, foreign languages and physical education and military training and the professional knowledge involves learning areas of the training program (Phan, 2015, p. 110). Phan also describes that the aims of higher education of Vietnam are to train human workforce to develop their mental competence, talents, ability to do research, to apply technology, to meet the needs of society, and to protect country and to integrate into the world; and to train students to have “political qualities and ethics; knowledge, professional skills, capacity of doing research and applying science and technology corresponsive to training levels; being healthy; being creative and being professionally responsible, being able to adapt to the workplace; being” (Phan, 2015, p. 107). However, the research is concerned with general curriculum of one higher education institution rather than a curriculum for a specific major, or for BBE at all Vietnamese universities.

Thus, it can be seen that although there has been some research around the general topic of curriculum understanding and development of BBE, no specific research has been conducted into the curriculum of BBE in Vietnamese universities.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study sought to investigate the present curricula of BBE degrees in all Vietnam’s universities which offer the course. The study examined the current status quo regarding the theory and approaches behind them, the content structure, and the learning area that is focused on in the curriculum of BBE. Therefore, the research aimed to seek the answers to the following questions for Vietnamese university that offers a BBE:

1. What are the purposes of the current curriculum of Bachelor of Business English (BBE) at Vietnamese universities?
2. What is the content structure of the curriculum of BBE?
3. What learning areas does the curriculum focus on?

A qualitative and interpretivist approach was employed for this project (Bogdan, Biklin, & Biklen, 2007), using document analysis to obtain the information to answer the research questions. The curriculum details such as purposes, content structure and percentage of each learning area was obtained on the websites of Vietnamese universities. In addition, the scope of the research, 28 university curricula, was manageable within the time frame allowed, three months. For ethical consideration, the researchers applied and received all the required ethics approvals for a project which did not involve human participants.

The data used for this project were collected by accessing the official websites of 28 universities in Vietnam that provide a BBE degree. There were 23 out of 28 universities (82%) that provided their curriculum details online. However, among these, some failed to publicise all the required information. The information then was gathered and entered into an Excel table according to themes. The themes consisted of demographic features, purposes of the curriculum, content structure, and the curriculum percentage taken up by each learning area.

The demographic features included the name of universities, the sector of university: public or private, the year and the total number of credits of the whole curriculum. This theme helped to identify each university. The purposes of curriculum consisted of goals and learning outcomes of curriculum. The theme about purposes helped to answer the research question about the purposes of the curriculum, which then revealed the theory and approaches that underpin the curriculum. The content structure comprised learning areas of general subjects taught in Vietnamese, and learning areas of BE subjects; this theme answered the question about the content structure: what are the components or the learning areas of the content structure? Finally, the theme about the percentage of each learning area includes the number of credits of each learning area, curriculum percentage taken up by general subjects, curriculum percentage taken up by BE specialisation subjects, and percentage of each learning area in BE specialisation subjects. The theme about percentage of each learning area helped to identify about which learning area is focused on most in the curriculum of BBE. The information was then grouped, synthesized and tabulated using descriptive statistics.

IV. FINDINGS

Our findings in regard to the BBE curriculum in Vietnam uncovered extensive details about what is offered to students when they study such a degree. In this section we detail information about the BBE. All the goals of the BBE

are pre-determined at the beginning of the course structure and then followed by the content. They are summarised in the Table 1 as follows:

TABLE 1
GOALS OF BBE CURRICULUM

	Goals	Number of universities	Private	Public
1	Knowledge & skills	3	1	2
2	Knowledge & skills + Political & moral qualities	4	2	2
3	Knowledge & skills + Political & moral qualities + Health	7	3	4
4	Knowledge & skills + Political & moral qualities + Health + Ability to do Research	2	0	2
5	Knowledge & skills + Political & moral qualities + Health + Responsibility to country	1	1	0
6	Knowledge & skill + Ability to do research	2	1	1
TOTAL		19	8	11

As shown in Table 1, the highest number of universities, 7 out of 19, aim at training students to have knowledge and skills; political and moral qualities; and good health in order to work efficiently in their future job. Four out of 19 universities intend to educate students to acquire necessary knowledge and skills and political and moral qualities whereas three out of 19 universities aim at providing only necessary knowledge and skills for students' future job. Besides the acquisition of knowledge and skill, political and moral qualities, and the enhancement of good health, the development of ability to do research or to have sense of responsibility to country are the main goals of only three universities. Two other universities aim at students' acquisition of knowledge and skills and ability to do research.

Overall, all the universities aim at providing students with necessary knowledge and skills to prepare them for a job. Besides, there are 14 universities, about 74%, which focus on knowledge and skills, and moral qualities. About more than 50% of universities aim at training students to have not only knowledge and skills and moral qualities, but also good health. In addition, a small number of universities, only 2, aim at educating students to have responsibility to country or to develop ability to do research. Our research findings indicate learning outcomes are categorized into the expected results about behaviour, learning areas, skills and employment for graduates. These have been tabulated and discussed below.

TABLE 2
BEHAVIOUR

	Type of behaviour	Number of universities	Private	Public
1	Professional work Ethics	1	1	0
2	Professional work ethics + Civic responsibility/loyal to country	1	0	1
3	Professional work ethics + Individual morality	2	1	1
4	Professional work ethics + Civic responsibility/ loyal to country + Individual morality	6	3	3
TOTAL		10	5	5

According to Table 2 all the graduates are expected to have a sense of professional work ethics such as honesty, responsibility, compliance with a company's rule, sense of professionalism, professional ethics, confidence, awareness of professional development, openness to differences in multicultural working environment, and collaboration. For most universities, graduates need to have not only professional work ethics but also civic responsibility, loyalty to country and individual morality. However, two universities attend to behaviour for professional work ethics and individual morality only whereas another university target at professional work ethics and civic responsibility or loyalty to country. Overall, a combination of professional work ethics, civic responsibility to country/loyalty to country and individual morality are the most common behaviour that are expected from graduates.

TABLE 3:
LEARNING AREAS OF BBE SPECIALISATION

	Learning area	Number of universities	Private	Public
1	English language	1	1	0
2	English language + Business	2	2	0
3	English language + Business + Career development knowledge	5	3	2
TOTAL		8	6	2

Table 3 demonstrates that most universities require graduates to have a good command of English language, usually at the advanced level; a basic level of knowledge in business and in career development so that they can work efficiently in their future job. Several other universities expect students to master English language and business knowledge. Only one university requires graduates to be knowledgeable at English language only. Overall, all the universities specify as compulsory that graduates have to meet an advanced level of English language and a basic level of business knowledge although five universities also need graduates to acquire additional knowledge of career development.

TABLE 4:
SKILLS

	Type of skills	Number of universities	Private	Public
1	Language + social skills	1	0	1
2	Administration skills + social skills	1	0	1
3	Language + Administration skills + social skills	3	3	0
4	Language + Administration skills + Social skills + ICT	5	2	3
TOTAL		10	5	5

Table 4 highlights that all the universities expect graduates to develop social skills such as negotiation, critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking and collaboration. In addition, a combination of language, administration and social skills are what graduates need to acquire by the end of the course. By this combination of learning outcomes, graduates are capable of using English fluently, managing their office work well and developing good relationship with other people. Besides, ICT is also compulsory for graduates at half of the universities surveyed. However, learning outcomes about skills vary greatly among the curricula. Further, the content of each type of skill is different among different curricula, especially, one curriculum requiring students to gain Business English Certificate (BEC) as a condition for graduation.

TABLE 5:
EMPLOYMENT

	Jobs	Number of universities	Private	Public
1	Administration work	3	2	1
2	Administration work + Translation & Interpreting	5	3	2
3	Administration work + Tourism	1	0	1
4	Administration work + Teaching	1	1	0
5	Administration work + Translation & Interpreting + Teaching/Doing research	2	0	2
6	Administration work + Translation & Interpreting + Tourism + Teaching	1	1	0
TOTAL		13	7	6

Table 5 shows which type of employment BBE graduates are likely to gain after graduation. All the BBE curricula are intended to train students to be able to work as administrative staff in offices or in businesses where English is used. Most of the universities expect graduates to work as translator or interpreters in business settings, and administrative employees. A small number of universities also prepare for graduates to work as teachers of English, or tour guides. In two universities, graduates are not expected to work as translators or interpreters, but as administrative staff, teachers of English or tour guides only. Overall, the most common employment that graduates are prepared for are administrative staff, translators and interpreters.

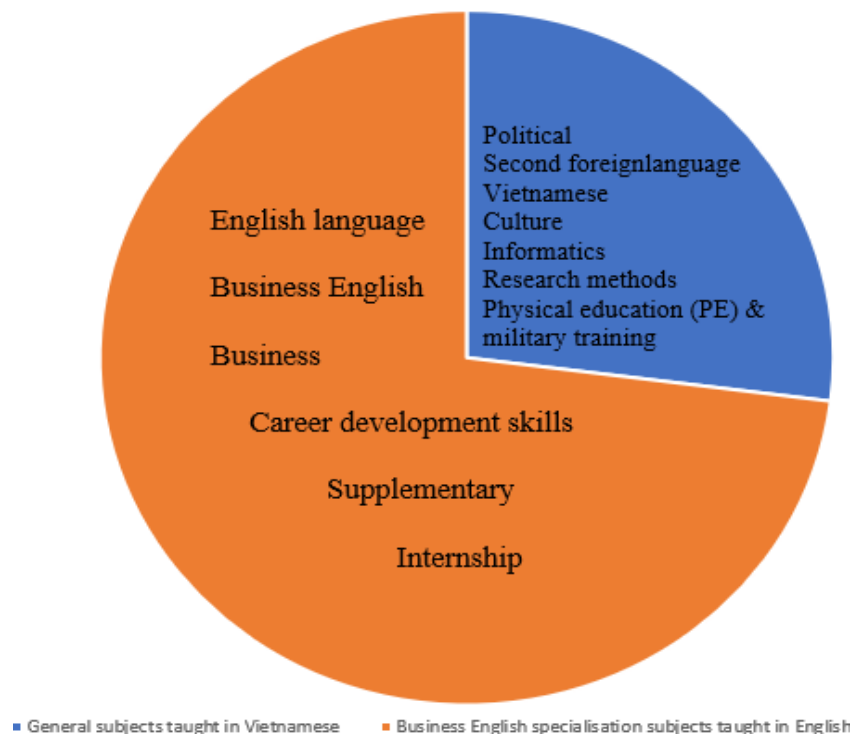


Figure 3: Content structure of BBE curriculum

Figure 3 demonstrates that the content structure of all the curricula has two components: general subjects taught in Vietnamese and Business English specialisation subjects taught in English. The first component is concerned with offering of general subjects of seven learning areas: Political knowledge, second foreign language, Vietnamese language, Vietnamese culture, Informatics, research methods and Physical education and military training. These learning areas take up 27% of the whole curriculum on average and are usually taught in the first two years of the curriculum.

The second component involves the provision of Business English specialisation subjects taught in English, which account for 73% of the whole curriculum on average. They include subjects across six learning areas: English language, Business English, Business, Career development skills, Supplementary, and Internship.

TABLE 6:
PERCENTAGE OF EACH LEARNING AREA OF BE SPECIALISATION

Learning area	Number of universities					TOTAL
	≤10 %	10% – 20%	20% – 30%	30%- 40%	40%- 50%	
1 English language skills	1	0	5	5	7	18
2 Business English	9	5	1	1		16
3 Business	12	3	2			17
4 Career development skills	15	3	0	0		18
5 Supplementary	8	0	0	0		8
6 Internship	18					18

Table 6 shows that all the universities allocate the biggest number of credits to English language skills; therefore, this is the focus of all the curricula. The acquisition of English language takes 20% to 50% of curriculum time. This is followed by Business English, which accounts for 11% of the whole curriculum on average and is also the second focus of most of the universities. However, knowledge of business at most universities takes up only less than 10% of the whole curriculum whereas only universities in banking sector provide the highest number of credits for business, from 20% - 30%. Three universities offer between 10% to 20% to business knowledge. In addition, career development skills take up less than 10% of number of credits of the whole curriculum at 15 universities whereas it occupies from 10% to 20% at only five universities. Internship and supplementary knowledge occupy the least number of credits of the whole curriculum at all the universities surveyed. Overall, English language takes up the highest percentage of the whole curriculum, 35%, followed by Business English, which accounts for 11% on average. Business knowledge comes third, about 9% on average, and career development and internship occupy the lowest percentage of the whole curriculum.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal some important understandings about different aspects of the curriculum of BBE at

Vietnamese universities: the purposes of BBE curriculum of Vietnam, the content structure, and the curriculum percentage taken up by each learning area.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Purposes of BBE curriculum of Vietnamese universities

The purpose of all the curricula investigated indicate that the curriculum of BBE is influenced by Curriculum Theory of Bobbitt (1918), of Tyler (1949), and by a combination of three approaches to curriculum design: *the Academic or discipline-based approach*, *the Experiential or Learner-centred Approach*, and *the Social efficiency approach*. In addition, the curriculum follows the Higher Education Law 2012 of Vietnam. In comparison with the purposes stated in the national benchmark documents in the curricula of many universities in China, and the Vietnamese curriculum, there are several similarities and differences between China and Vietnam. Moreover, the findings about the purposes of curriculum show a lack of uniformity among different curricula of BBE in Vietnam.

First, the results about the purposes show that all the curricula's goals and learning outcomes are pre-identified at the beginning of the BBE course and aim to prepare students for their life and their future jobs. The pre-specification of purposes with the aims of providing students with knowledge of the field presents itself as the evidence of *the academic or discipline-based approach*, which proposes that goals are set at the beginning of a course and are intended to provide students with sound knowledge in the field. In addition, the aim of preparing students for life and future job indicates the evidence of *the Social efficiency approach*, according to which, students are trained with necessary skills and behaviour to help them perform well in their future jobs (Phan, 2015, pp. 33, 38). The combination of these two features together: the pre-specification of purposes and the aims of preparing students for their life and future job reflects the influence of curriculum theory of Bobbitt: *Curriculum as a Science* (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42), which states a curriculum planning begins with the identification of objectives that aim at activities of preparing students for different aspects of their life such as occupation, citizenship, family and other social roles (Franklin, n.d.). Further, as curricula are intended to develop students' "intellectual abilities" and "thinking process", it appears that the curriculum is designed based on *The experiential or learner-centred approach*, which focuses on personal development of students, meeting their needs and interests, and developing their intellectual competence (Phan, 2015, pp. 33, 38). Additionally, the purposes of the curriculum aim to develop students' behaviour such as individual morality, professional work ethics, civic responsibility, and loyalty to country. This feature implies that the aim of education is to "bring about significant changes in the students' pattern of behaviour", an evidence of curriculum theory Behavioural by Tyler (1949) (Tyler, 1949, p.44).

Secondly, the identification of purposes of the curriculum follows the Higher Education Law of Vietnam 2012 as they include the knowledge and skills, political and moral qualities, good health, ability to do research and responsibility to country. The purposes described in the curriculum are very closely related to the aims of higher education stipulated by the MoET (Phan, 2015, p. 107). Thirdly, in comparison with the purposes of curriculum of BBE in China, there are many similarities and some differences. To compare the purposes of BBE curriculum stated in the national benchmark document, the aims of Vietnamese BBE curriculum are almost the same as those of the Chinese curriculum as they both aim at training students with knowledge and skills. This knowledge includes the language, business, culture and humanity and inter-disciplinary areas whereas the skills refer to language competence, business skills, self-study or autonomous learning and critical thinking or social skills (Xie, 2016). The only difference is that the Chinese curriculum aims to provide cross-cultural communication, which does not appear to be found in most of the Vietnamese curricula. The knowledge and skills in cross-cultural communication is very important as it prepares students for working in the foreign companies or multi-national companies, where English is used and where BBE graduates are expected to work. Therefore, the lack of cross-cultural communication skill in Vietnam's BBE curriculum is a concern that needs to be considered.

To compare the BBE curriculum of China with that of Vietnam in practice, the curricula of both countries are aimed at developing students' English competence, business knowledge and skills and humanistic qualities such as political and moral qualities. However, Vietnam's curriculum does not aim to prepare students for BEC test or to develop students' inter-cultural communication competence; social adaptability; scenario analysis, technology-mediated competence and non-verbal competence. Among these differences, the purpose of developing students' social adaptability as suggested by China's curriculum, is to raise students' awareness of broadening their comprehensive business knowledge and their English competence in business context (Yonghou & Chen, 2015, p. 35). This suggestion is very critical for graduates' employability and professional development as the knowledge and skills they learn at university are never sufficient for the changing work environment.

Finally, concerning the purposes of all the curricula of BBE at Vietnamese universities, it is obvious that the goals and learning outcomes vary among different universities, which may lead to different ways of selecting and organising contents for the curriculum. Therefore, it is hard for students transfer from one university to another in the middle of the course. In addition, it may lead to different qualities of training and different qualifications of graduates of the same BBE. Therefore, there is lack of uniformity in the goals and learning outcomes of all the curricula of BBE in Vietnam.

The content structure of BBE curriculum in Vietnam universities

The content structure of BBE curriculum of Vietnam follows the national curriculum framework of MoET and it appears similar to China's common curriculum framework of English-based Bachelor program. This has revealed differences in level of business English competence, level of business knowledge and the offering of cross-cultural

communication.

According to the national curriculum framework, a curriculum for Bachelor degree consists of two components: general knowledge and professional knowledge (Phan, 2015, p. 110). The contents of current BBE curriculum at Vietnam's universities are selected and organised according to the national curriculum framework of MoET. Therefore, it can be argued that although the Higher Education Law approved in 2012 allows higher education institutions the autonomy in developing, evaluating and implementing their own curriculum (Phan, 2015, pp. 105- 106), the Vietnamese universities are now still following closely the model framework proposed by MoET. It may be explained that despite the autonomy given to institutions, MoET still "regulates the minimum knowledge, and learners' competencies required after graduating for each training level; the process of developing, evaluating, and implementing a higher education curriculum...; regulates required units/ subjects" (Phan, 2015, p. 106).

In comparison with China's common curriculum framework of English-based Bachelor program (Wen, 2014, p. 123), it appears that both Vietnam's and China's curriculum of BBE consist of subjects for general, language and professional education. However, the proportion for each type learning area in the whole curriculum of Vietnam as well as the depth or comprehensiveness of knowledge cannot be identified. Vietnam's curriculum also includes general subjects in humanity and social sciences, natural sciences such as literature and culture. Concerning the professional education, like China's curriculum, both the Chinese and Vietnamese curricula comprise professional knowledge and skills in business management, economics and marketing. In the language education, Vietnam's curriculum aims to develop student's language ability in the native language, English and another foreign language like Chinese, Japanese or French while China's curriculum comprises subjects to develop students' competence in Chinese and English through the bilingual teaching mode. However, the only difference is that it seems Vietnam's curriculum does not include the subjects for developing students' intercultural ability like China's.

One of the factors that contribute to the success of BBE Curricula is claimed to be the students' competence in English proficiency and profound business knowledge (Zhu et al., 2009, p. 32). According to Zhu et al. (2009), the curriculum should focus on two components to develop students' capacity in English proficiency and knowledge of a wide range of areas related to business, and cross – cultural communication. Vietnam's curriculum of BBE has two components: English knowledge and knowledge in business. However, English competence is developed mostly separately from the business knowledge. According to Li (2014b) a BBE curriculum should balance the "Four Modules": namely English knowledge, Business Knowledge and Skills, Cross Cultural Communicative Competence and Humanity Knowledge. Therefore, it can be seen from the content structure of Vietnamese curriculum that it does not include the module of developing Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence. Thus, students may not have cross-cultural communication skills, which is really important for their acquisition of business communication competence, a critical part of their BE major skills.

Curriculum percentage taken by each learning area of BBE specialisation subjects

Results about the percentage of each learning area of BE specialisation subjects reveal the focus on English language, the small proportion of Business English and Business knowledge and the difference among Vietnam's universities in their curriculum. The results indicate that all the curricula of BBE at Vietnamese universities focus on the English language and skills whereas Business-related knowledge such as BE and business subjects are considered less important as they take a smaller percentage, 11% and 9% respectively. Noticeably, at most universities, English is taught mainly separately from business contexts. Therefore, it can be argued that while graduates possibly gain proficiency in English, which is mainly general English, their business knowledge and skills may be superficial or limited.

According to the findings about the causes of success of China's BBE curriculum, one reason that enables graduates to be welcomed and accepted by well-known employers is their English competence and comprehensive knowledge about business and cross-cultural communication (Zhu et al., 2009, pp. 31-32). Their English competence is acquired through the teaching of business knowledge in both Chinese and English; therefore, their English is quite real and practical in social, economic situations. Moreover, for the comprehensive knowledge, students are taught many business subjects and cross-cultural communication subjects such as *Economics, International Business Law, Contemporary Business, Trade Theory and Practice, Cross- cultural communication, etc.* Accordingly Chinese graduates can gain English competence and sound comprehensive knowledge, which meet the requirements of recruiters (Zhu et al., 2009, pp. 31-32).

To compare with graduates of BBE at Vietnamese universities, who acquire mainly general English competence and limited business knowledge, employability may be an issue for them. Therefore, the curriculum percentage taken up by Business English and Business knowledge may be a concern that needs to be considered for curriculum design. Finally, different universities allocate different amount of time to each learning area. Thus, there is a lack of uniformity among universities in the curriculum percentage for each learning area. In summary, the results about the percentage of each learning area of BE specialisation subjects indicate that all the curricula of BBE at Vietnamese universities focus on English language and skills whereas Business English and Business knowledge are considered less important, which may be a concern in terms of employability. In addition, there is lack of uniformity among Vietnam's universities in the time allocated to different learning areas in their curriculum.

VI. CONCLUSION

This investigation into the current BBE curriculum at Vietnam's universities has provided important understandings about the purposes of the curriculum, the content structure and the curriculum percentage taken up by each learning area. The findings about the purposes of the curriculum show that the current curriculum of BBE aims at training students to have knowledge and skills; political and moral qualities; and health to enable them to be capable at work. Graduates are required to demonstrate appropriate behaviours, knowledge, skills, and to be capable for certain jobs. The findings imply that there is evidence in the current curriculum which indicates the influence of the curriculum theory of Bobbitt (1918), and Tyler (1949) and the combination of three approaches: *the Academic or discipline-based approach*, *the Experiential or the Learner-centred approach* and *the Social efficiency approach*. The curricula's purposes appear to follow the Higher education law of Vietnam approved in 2012 and there seem to be similarities in the purposes of China's curriculum and Vietnam's curriculum except only one difference in the cross-cultural communication according to the national benchmark documents. Further, in comparison with China's curricula, both curricula aim to develop students' English competence, business knowledge and skills, and humanistic qualities. However, Vietnam's curriculum does not include BEC test preparation; inter-cultural communication competence and social adaptability.

This research has highlighted how the contents of BBE curriculum are organised according to the national curriculum framework of MoET and its similarity to China's common curriculum framework of English-based bachelor program. It has also identified that by focusing on English language and skills rather than Business English and Business knowledge may pose an issue of employability for Vietnamese graduates, as does the lack of curriculum uniformity among Vietnamese universities. This project is very significant as it could have a great impact on the teaching practice of BBE English in Vietnam, on BBE curriculum design and on research on BBE curriculum. The investigation reveals some concerns that could be considered to improve the existing BBE curriculum such as the lack of cross-cultural communication, the lack of focus on business knowledge, and the lack of uniformity of all the curricula of BBE in Vietnam. Therefore, the findings of this research could pave the way for further research on curriculum of BBE in the future. This could contribute to a further understanding of the present curriculum and contribute to the improvement of teaching BBE in Vietnam and in other countries where English is an EFL.

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY

- **BE:** Business English (which can include: English for management, English for marketing, English for finance and banking, English for accounting, English for commerce, English for import-export.)
- **BEC:** Business English Certificate
- **BBE:** Bachelor of Business English
- **Business subjects:** Management, Marketing, Finance and Banking, Accounting, Foreign trade, etc
- **Career Development skills:** Translation and Interpreting, Administration skills, Presentation skill
- **English language skills:** Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Grammar, Pronunciation, British and American literature, British and American culture, linguistics
- **ESP:** English for Specific Purposes
- **MoET:** Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam
- **Political knowledge:** Fundamentals of Marxism & Leninism; Revolution Policy of Vietnam Communist Party, and Ho Chi Minh's ideology
- **Second foreign language:** Chinese, Japanese, or French
- **Supplementary knowledge:** report writing, introduction to teaching, Editing skills, technology in project management, online journalism, TOEFL skills, business knowledge, etc.

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Anh Nguyen is a PhD candidate in the School of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Australia, researching higher education curriculum for Bachelor of Business English and graduates' competences. She is also Deputy Head and a lecturer of Foreign Language Department at the University of Finance – Marketing (UFM) in Vietnam. She teaches General English, Business English, Phonetics, and Translation to Business English major undergraduates. Before she started working at UFM, she had been teaching General English at several reputable English language centres in Vietnam. Anh's research interests are Business English, higher education curriculum, English teaching methodology, and graduate competences. Email address: ttnguy10@our.ecu.edu.au

Christine Cunningham (ORCID: 0000-0003-1216-9623) supervises Anh Nguyen's PhD. Dr Cunningham is a senior lecturer who coordinates the School of Education's Higher Degrees by Research courses at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. She teaches and researches on international educational leadership policies, practices and paradoxes. She is the author of the book *Corrupted principles and the challenges of critically reflective leadership* (Peter Lang, 2011) and has been published in multiple Australian and international academic journals. Prior to becoming a university academic, Dr Cunningham spent 15 years as a secondary teacher and school principal in Australia, Bolivia and Timor Leste. Email: c.cunningham@ecu.edu.au

Annamaria Paolino (ORCID: 0000-0003-4204-8523) supervises Anh Nguyen's PhD. Dr Paolino is a lecturer and teaching researcher working in Edith Cowan University's School of Education. Currently, she is teaching in the undergraduate Bachelor of Education (Primary) course. Annamaria conducts and supervises research in Languages education, education within social settings and using the Arts to facilitate the learning of languages. Prior to becoming a university academic, Dr Paolino was a primary classroom teacher, specialising in Music and Italian for 17 years. She was a Level 3 classroom teacher and has taught across sectors and in metropolitan, rural, remote and online school settings in Western Australia. Email: a.paolino@ecu.edu.au