

# From Co-Curricular Engagement to Sustainable Curriculum Design: Rethinking EFL Instruction in Higher Education

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## INTRODUCTION & AIM

### Background

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in higher education increasingly aims to develop communication competence, critical thinking, leadership, employability, and global citizenship. While these graduate attributes are frequently highlighted in institutional policies and curriculum documents, opportunities for authentic and experiential learning remain limited. Co-curricular activities such as debates, English clubs, seminars, community service, and student leadership initiatives offer valuable opportunities for meaningful language use beyond the classroom. However, these activities are often treated as optional rather than integral components of curriculum design.

### Research Problem

Many universities promote desirable graduate outcomes but lack structured pedagogical mechanisms that systematically connect classroom learning with authentic experiences. Consequently, a significant outcome-pedagogy gap exists between intended educational goals and actual learning opportunities.

### Aim of the Study

This study investigates how co-curricular engagement can be systematically integrated into EFL curriculum design to support transformative, experiential, and sustainability-oriented learning in higher education.

### Research Objectives

- Examine the extent to which co-curricular engagement is reflected within EFL curricula;
- Explore students' perceptions regarding the educational value of co-curricular activities;
- Investigate teachers' perspectives on co-curricular engagement and curriculum reform;
- Identify gaps between intended graduate attributes and pedagogical practices;
- Develop a sustainable EFL curriculum framework informed by empirical evidence.

## METHOD

### Theoretical Foundation

The study is guided by three complementary perspectives:

- **Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991)**
  - Learning occurs through critical reflection and perspective transformation.
- **Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984)**
  - Knowledge is created through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application.
- **Sustainability-Oriented Education (UNESCO, 2024)**
  - Education should promote responsible citizenship, social responsibility, and sustainable development.

### Research Design

- Sequential Mixed-Methods Design

### Participants

Group	Number
EFL Students	120
EFL Teachers	12

### Institutions

- Khulna University (KU)
- Jashore University of Science and Technology (JUST)
- Bangladesh Army University of Science and Technology (BAUST)
- North Western University (NWU)

### Data Sources

- ✓ Curriculum Document Analysis
- ✓ Student Survey
- ✓ Semi-Structured Interviews

### Data Analysis

- Comparative Curriculum Analysis
- Descriptive Statistical Analysis
- Thematic Analysis

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Curriculum Analysis

Comparative analysis of EFL programs revealed that communication competence, critical thinking, professional skills, and employability are strongly emphasized across institutions. However, formal co-curricular integration, community engagement, and service-learning opportunities remain limited.

### Strong Areas

- ✓ Communication Competence
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Professional Development
- ✓ Global Citizenship
- ✓ Employability

### Underdeveloped Areas

- ✗ Community Engagement
- ✗ Structured Co-Curricular Assessment
- ✗ Service Learning
- ✗ Sustainability-Focused Practice

### Key Insight

Although universities promote desirable graduate attributes, they frequently lack formal pedagogical structures capable of developing these outcomes through authentic experiences.

### Student Survey Findings

The survey results demonstrate overwhelmingly positive perceptions regarding co-curricular engagement.

Survey Indicator	Percentage
Authentic English Use Opportunities	85%
Improved Communication Confidence	82%
Enhanced Critical Thinking	78%
Sustainability-Relevant Learning	74%
Traditional Exams Limit Participation	81%

### Interpretation

Students viewed co-curricular engagement as an important platform for authentic communication, collaboration, leadership development, and experiential learning. Participants also expressed concerns regarding examination-oriented practices that restrict meaningful participation.

### Teacher Interview Findings

Five major themes emerged from thematic analysis.

#### Theme 1: Authentic Language Learning

Teachers emphasized the importance of real-world communication opportunities beyond classroom instruction.

#### Theme 2: Development of Graduate Attributes

Participants identified leadership, collaboration, confidence, and communication competence as key outcomes of co-curricular participation.

#### Theme 3: Sustainability-Oriented Learning

Teachers highlighted the role of community engagement and social participation in fostering responsible citizenship.

#### Theme 4: Institutional Barriers

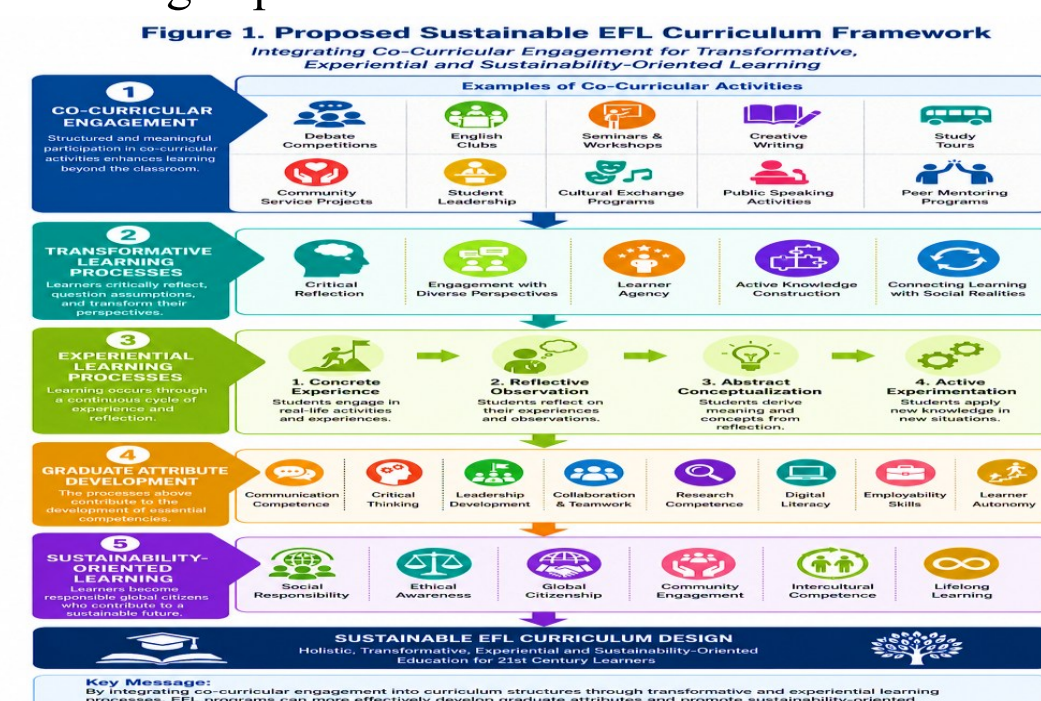
Major barriers included time constraints, examination-oriented systems, and lack of institutional recognition.

#### Theme 5: Curriculum Reform

Participants recommended formally embedding co-curricular engagement within curriculum structures and assessment systems.

### Main Finding

Teachers consistently viewed co-curricular engagement as a crucial bridge connecting curriculum goals with meaningful learning experiences.



## CONCLUSION

- Co-curricular engagement enhances authentic language learning and graduate attribute development.
- Students reported gains in communication, critical thinking, and confidence.
- Teachers viewed co-curricular activities as essential for experiential and sustainability-oriented learning.
- Formal curriculum integration can help bridge the gap between learning outcomes and practice.

## FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

- Future Work:** Cross-institutional validation and assessment of curriculum outcomes.
- References:** Kolb (1984); Mezirow (1991); UNESCO (2024); Astin (1999); Kuh (2008)
- Keywords:** EFL Curriculum • Co-Curricular Engagement • Experiential Learning • Sustainability • Employability