



Curriculum Gaps of Bachelor's Business Education in Universities of Bangladesh: An Analysis

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Abstract: This study investigates about how does a bachelor's business education curriculum experience different gaps which arise in different phases of curriculum design, development, and implementation process in some selected universities of Bangladesh. This study also proposes a curriculum gap model by defining the different types of curriculum and real-life curriculum gaps. This study conducts a sample questionnaire survey on 155 respondents selected from alumni, employers from different sectors, university faculty members, and students from Jagannath University, ASA University Bangladesh, Jahangirnagar University, University of Dhaka, Dhaka International University through personal contact and interview. Secondary data have been used for this study from different articles, publications, books, speeches in conferences and seminar classes, and from existing master's and bachelor's business education curriculum and websites of some selected universities including South China University of Technology, and The University of British Columbia, Canada. This study lists the top most important reasons, such as industry needs are different from university graduation curriculum, there is no connection among university, government, and industry, etc. In Bangladesh, there are no big research projects on industry development and/or business development funded by the companies, conducted by the university, and cooperated by the government. The curriculum gaps also arise while addressing the lessons in the class, there remains a lack of proper sources of information about real life job demand in the context of globalization. This study also lists the top most alternative solutions to minimize curriculum gaps, such as, there should be a thorough study about world-class standard curriculum of different top ranked universities in the world, and employment assessment tests format as per industry needs should be linked with the lessons of university graduation business curriculum, there should be connection among university, government, and industry, etc. This study also proposes a theory by mapping curriculum gap model. These findings and some general comments for improvement have implications to the users of curriculum and decision makers in education sector.

Keywords: Curriculum Gaps, Bachelor's Business Education Curriculum, University, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Significance

What actually do stakeholders of bachelor's curriculum expect to fulfill the actual education demands of the nation? Definitely, there are some unexpected or unseen requirements to develop world class standard curriculum in the minds of society or stakeholders of the curriculum and it is not possible to realize the exact education demands. There something might be hidden, and in this way, something might be non-written, non-communicated, something might not be realized and not be learned and this is a cyclical process.

These gaps would have never been eradicated in the context of curriculum but it is possible to minimize these gaps in every stage of curriculum planning, designing, implementing and evaluation process by conducting an extensive empirical survey on the stakeholders of the curriculum including employers as the respondents.

In the mind of author, it is generally aroused that what the returns from curriculum are that have been written, approved, published, and distributed to the teachers and students. Normally there is a gap between policies available in the official curriculum and practices in the class rooms of bachelor's business studies, but there are other gaps in different situations. From the real-life experiences of author,

this study examines and defines the different curriculum gaps. After getting experiences from the scenario of employment and unemployment status as a whole, the curriculum stakeholders like existing students and alumni, guardians, teachers, employers, government regulators, academic institutions, subject-matter experts, scholars and society as a whole might realize that they were in wrong education system. This is because of wrong curriculum contents design and wrong assessment techniques stated in the curriculum. This is called realization gap. Actually, a gap might be aroused when the society people are not so much educated to raise the right expectations from a learning process. Therefore, there is a hidden and unintended development of personal values and beliefs among learners, teachers and communities and there are some unexpected or unseen requirements to develop world class standard curriculum in the minds of society or stakeholders of the curriculum. Another way to minimize gaps is to educate the stakeholders of curriculum who contribute to and gain benefits from curriculum by becoming aware of them about the exact requirements of education in a nation, for example-developing countries require more professionals, experts, scholars and technical know-how in agriculture, ICT, service, RMG, infrastructure and education sectors rather than more leaders with general education.

Based on the above simple but critical thinking-oriented queries and confusion, it is high time to investigate the reasons behind and solutions to curriculum gaps in university bachelor's business education. As the author has more than ten years' experiences in teaching, research and in designing academic curriculum, it is common to raise such type of research question in his mind for the sake of providing some guidelines to make and implement a quality and world-class bachelor's curriculum in business schools of Bangladesh.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Definitions on Curriculum

The Oxford dictionary meaning of curriculum is that "the subjects that are included in a course of study or taught in a school, college, university etc." Curriculum refers to a well-defined and prescribed course of studies, lessons and activities, which students must complete to fulfill the requirements for acquiring the degree. The curriculum plays a crucial role in achieving the mission and objectives of the university including the intended learning outcomes and overall effectiveness of the programs. 'Curriculum means planned instructional experience designed to help learners develop and extend individual capability [1].

1.2.2. Different Meanings and Views of Curriculum

According to the website of UNESCO, curriculum can be pictured from different perspectives. What societies imagine as important teaching and learning constitutes the "intended" curriculum. Since it is usually presented in official documents, it may be also called the "written" and/or "official" curriculum. However, at classroom level this intended curriculum may be altered through a range of

complex classroom interactions, and what is actually delivered can be considered as the "implemented" curriculum. What learners really learn (i.e. what can be assessed and can be demonstrated as learning outcomes/learner competencies) constitutes the "achieved" or "learned" curriculum. In addition, curriculum theory points to a "hidden" curriculum (i.e. the unintended development of personal values and beliefs of learners, teachers and communities; unexpected impact of a curriculum; unforeseen aspects of a learning process). Those who develop the intended curriculum should have all these different dimensions of the curriculum in view. While the "written" curriculum does not use the meaning of curriculum, it is important because it represents the vision of the society. The "written" curriculum should therefore be expressed in comprehensive and user-friendly documents, such as curriculum frameworks; subject curricula/syllabuses, and in relevant and helpful learning materials, such as textbooks, teacher guides, and assessment guides. In some cases, people see the curriculum entirely in terms of the subjects that are taught, set out within the set of textbooks, and forget the wider goals of competencies and personal development. This is why, a curriculum framework is important. It sets the subjects within this wider context, and shows how learning experiences within the subjects need to contribute to the attainment of the wider goals. All these documents and the issues they refer to form a "curriculum system". Given their guiding function for education agents and stakeholders, clear, inspired and motivational curriculum documents and materials play an important role in ensuring education quality. The involvement of stakeholders (including and especially teachers) in the development of the written curriculum is of paramount importance for ensuring ownership and sustainability of curriculum processes [2].

1.2.3. Negative View for a Productive Curriculum

The term "curriculum" has different clarifications among the scholars. "Curriculum is negatively viewed as a syllabus which may limit the planning of teachers to a consideration of the content or the body of knowledge they wish to convey or a list of the subjects or courses to be taught or both" [3]. Therefore, curriculum should offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content in order to be a productive or effective curriculum.

1.2.4. Views of Curriculum Design from 1910s to 2010s

From the beginning of early 1910s to 2010s, every curriculum was viewed differently as more of a science with principles and methodology [4-5]. Curriculum could be considered as a science and the purpose of curriculum is to outline the knowledge [6]. Curriculum as a series of objectives determined by variations of ideals that students must attain by way of variations of activities. There are four steps in curriculum creation: selecting objectives, dividing them into ideals and activities, analyzing them to the limits of working units, and collecting methods of achievement [7]. Curriculum signified a method of incorporating the scientific process, organization, instruction, and evaluation rather than

a limited body of content [8]. A writer in his most famous book, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, covered that four basic questions curriculum developers need to answer when writing curriculum and planning instruction: what educational purposes should the school seek to attain? what educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes? how can these educational experiences be effectively organized? and how can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? [9]. Another researcher developed an approach that included the teachers in the curriculum development process where her colleague, as per reference [9], designed a top-down approach involving administrators, content specialists, and curriculum makers. Another author included seven major steps to the design: diagnosis of needs, formulation of objectives, selection of content, organization of content, selection of learning experiences, organization of learning activities, and an evaluation [10]. Another author in his constructivist model of curriculum design believed that learning was an active process in which the learners constructed new ideas based upon their current or past knowledge while interacting with new information. In this model, the learners select and transform information, construct hypotheses, and make decisions depending on a cognitive structure and mental model and learners focus on the 'how' to learn, rather than 'what' to learn. [11]. A famous author believed that performance of disciplinary understanding occurred when students took information and skills learned, in ways they learn best, and applied them flexibly and appropriately in new and somewhat unanticipated situations. [12]. Two scholars urged that educators to engage students in learning how to question and then to construct meaning through particular questioning strategies. [13]. Another two authors in their book titled *Understanding by Design*, a backward design approach to curricular design, expected that by designing curriculum using their approach, educators would use more standard-based teaching as opposed to activity-based instruction where the work is mostly hands on without being "minds on" and coverage-oriented instruction where the teacher merely checks off topics that were covered and moves forward. [14]. Two renowned researchers thought that curriculum design would be as the way we conceptualize the curriculum and arrange its major components (subject matter content, instructional methods and materials, learner experiences or activities) to provide direction and guidance as we develop curriculum. [15]. A group of writers suggested that using personal communication as assessment and through careful questioning, educators or teachers can access prior knowledge, pique curiosity, check for understanding, provoke and explore thinking, and create new learning. [16].

The above literature focused mainly on different meanings of curriculum including negative meaning. This literature also concentrated on concepts of curriculum and its formulation, design, development and implementation in the respective area of knowledge, but did not focused on curriculum gaps except the concepts of curriculum given by the website of UNESCO.

Therefore, there is a literature gap on the research area of this study. So, this needs a new research on that area. There is a significance of study on searching the curriculum gaps and associated solutions to solve the problems available in higher education of Bangladesh. Consequently, this study selects the following objectives.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study mainly investigates about how does a bachelor's business education curriculum experience different gaps which arise in different phases of curriculum design, development, and implementation process in some selected universities of Bangladesh. To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following specific objectives:

- 1) to identify and define the different curriculum gaps focusing on bachelor's business education curriculum in some selected universities of Bangladesh;
- 2) to investigate the reasons behind curriculum gaps specifically in business education curriculum in some selected universities of Bangladesh;
- 3) to propose a curriculum expectation gap model by mapping the gaps; and
- 4) to suggest some solutions to minimize the curriculum gaps to design and develop a world-class standard business curriculum for bachelor's degree.

2. Research Methods and Techniques Used in the Study

2.1. Nature of the Study

The research is analytical and descriptive in nature. This article/study is the modified, revised, and precise version of the research project report that was prepared and submitted by the author himself for the financial year 2017-2018. That research project was supported and funded by the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh in cooperation with Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh (Grant Code No. 4829.1, Grant Name: Research Project Expenditures, reference No. JnU/F&A/Advance un-adjustment/131/2011/1540) [17].

2.2. Study Place

The study has been conducted in some selected universities situated at Dhaka in Bangladesh.

2.3. Primary Data Collection Techniques

An empirical study was conducted on what causes curriculum gaps and their consequent solutions by designing and using a sample survey questionnaire which was held through personal contact and interview.

2.4. Population

All existing students and some alumni of the Department

of Management Studies, Jagannath University, faculty members of the Department of Management Studies, Jagannath University¹, ASA University Bangladesh, Jahangirnagar University, University of Dhaka, Dhaka International University, employers, subject-matter experts, scholars and society as a whole.

2.5. Sampling Technique

The study also used convenience and purposive sampling technique. As the author is the faculty member of a public university, it is easy to conduct an interview or to do personal contact with the students and faculty members who are the respondents of this study.

2.6. Total Sample Size

Total sample is 155. Out of 155 respondents, 120 from students of both Bachelor's and Master's levels programs, 13 from faculty members, and the rest 22 from employees/employers have been selected from Business School of Jagannath University, ASA University Bangladesh, University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University and Dhaka International University.

2.7. Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data have been used for this study from different articles, publications, books, speeches in conferences and seminar classes, and from existing Master's and Bachelor's Business Education curriculum and websites of some selected universities including South China University of Technology², and The University of British Columbia³ and also from the website of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh- UGC⁴.

2.8. Data Processing, Analyses and Presentation Techniques

The data originated from working experiences of the author, sample questionnaire survey and then data have been analyzed descriptively with the help of author's cognitive ability and experiences. By using computer software like Microsoft office package, the qualitative data have been presented in the report. A great effort has been made to avoid data error. However, though the study is qualitative based, some graphical presentation has been used to make the interpretation clearer and to reduce the descriptive

statements.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Types of Curriculum and Development of the Curriculum Gap Model

The author of this study identified the different meanings and aims of curriculum which have been collected from the website of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as per reference [2]. There is a common question among general people on what actually do stakeholders of bachelor's curriculum expect to fulfill the actual education demands of the nation? Definitely, there are some unexpected or unseen requirements to develop world class standard curriculum in the minds of society or stakeholders of the curriculum and it is not possible to realize the exact education demands. That is why, there something might be hidden, and in this way, something might be non-written, non-communicated, and also something might not be realized and not be learned and this would be a cyclical process. This creates the gaps which would have never been eradicated but it is possible to minimize. As a result, this study identified a set of relevant causes of curriculum gaps and associated solutions. From the real-life experiences of researcher, this study could analyze and define the different types of curriculum and some subsequent gaps as stated or modeled in the figure 1 presented below:

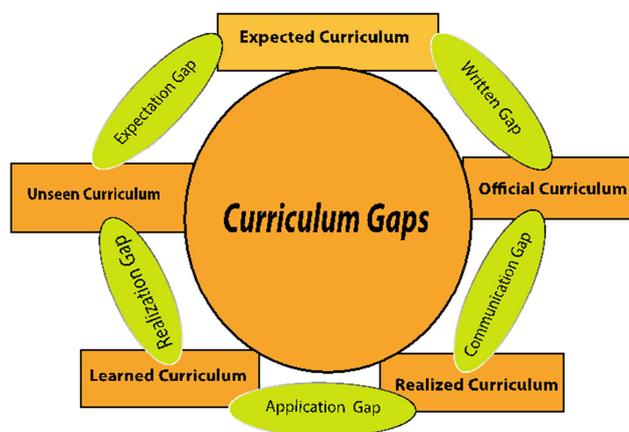


Figure 1. Curriculum Gap Model.

Source: Qualitative data analysis by the researcher using author's own analytical skills and experiences

3.1.1. Types of Curriculum

This study identified and defined five types of curriculum which have mentioned in the above figure of curriculum gap model. These are stated below:

- i Expected curriculum means what the societies expect as important contents of teaching and learning.
- ii Official curriculum means what the educationists incorporate in the brochure.
- iii Realized curriculum means what is actually delivered among the students and learners.

1Jagannath University, "Academic Rules and Regulations," retrieved on June 20, 2018, available at: <http://www.jnu.ac.bd/>.

2South China University of Technology, Student Handbook of Master Program at School of Business Administration, Thesis Writing Specifications and Processes, Master's Thesis to complete the degree of MBA of 2017 at School of Business Administration, South China University of Technology completed by Md. Shahidul Islam Fakir, supervised by Prof Li Min, PhD, retrieved on June 20, 2018, available at: <http://en.scut.edu.cn/library/e-resources.jsp>

3 The University of British Columbia, Education System of Canadian Universities, retrieved on May 22, 2018, available at: <https://www.ubc.ca/>

4 University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh, Quality Assurance, retrieved on May 22, 2018, available at: <http://www.ugc.gov.bd/>.

- iv Learned curriculum means what learners really learn.
- v Unseen or hidden curriculum means what the societies do not expect as important contents of teaching and learning.

3.1.2. Curriculum Gaps

This study also examined and defined five types of curriculum gaps which have been emerged from the applications of the five types of curriculum in the real working place in the education sector of the country. These are stated below:

- i Written gap: When concerned authority designs, makes approval and publishes the curriculum as book format, some expected contents might be missing while designing brochure, because in this case, the different opinions have been summarized and finalized. This is called written gap.
- ii Communication gap: When teachers or education service providers interact with the students or education service receivers, some curriculum contents might be missing during the learning process. In the communication process, encoding and decoding methods might be different and between sender and receiver, there might be some channel and environmental barriers like noise in the class room. This is called communication gap.
- iii Application gap: Application gap occurs from mismatch between university graduation and job demands in the reality. When students or learners really learn from the learning process, they obtain learning outcomes and they realized their competencies while they are in process of getting jobs and doing jobs efficiently and effectively and also while employers certify the fresh university graduates as the knowledge workers. However, in most of the cases, fresh university graduates are not entitled to get a right job or in some cases, if they are entitled to get a job, they need to complete some basic training programs or need to pursue higher studies in foreign countries. This is because of learning methodologies and not practical-orientation education systems and lack of professional education in the country. This is referred to as application gap.
- iv Realization gap: Realization gap occurs from feelings of the university graduates about missing of some lessons which were hidden after getting experiences from the scenario of employment and unemployment status as a whole. Then the society, academic institutions, students, guardians, employers and other relevant stakeholders might realize that they were in wrong education system. This is because of wrong curriculum contents design and wrong assessment techniques stated in the curriculum. This is called realization gap.
- v Expectation gap: Actually, a gap might be aroused when the society and other relevant stakeholders are not so much educated to raise the right expectations from a

learning process. Therefore, the hidden and unintended development of personal values and beliefs of learners, teachers and communities, unexpected impacts of a curriculum and unexpected returns from a learning process etc. are usually not raised in the minds of concerned stakeholders of curriculum. This is called expectation gap.

3.2. Causes That Create Curriculum Gaps

Based on the data analysis, this study identifies the different causes for which curriculum gaps arise at different stages of bachelor's curriculum design, development, and implementation of curriculum in business schools of some selected universities in Bangladesh. Actually, there are different types of curriculum, such as expected curriculum, official curriculum or brochure, realized curriculum, learned curriculum, and unseen or hidden curriculum. During the process of defining such type of curriculum, there are a number of curriculum gaps for example, written gap, communication gap, application gap, realization gap, and expectation gap which have been defined in the previous section of this paper. This study addresses the research questions on these gaps. The respondents who have been selected as sample in this study gave their valuable opinions about the possible reasons of curriculum gaps depicted in percentage figure. According to the maximum number of responses (more than 30%) given by the respondents fulfilling the questionnaire with closed questions, the most important reasons behind curriculum gaps are as follows:

- (1) Industry needs followed by employment assessment tests formats are different from university graduation curriculum with examinations criteria.
- (2) While addressing the lessons in the class, there remains a lack of proper sources of information about real life job demand in the context of globalization.
- (3) Lack of proper sources of information about standard curriculum world-wide.
- (4) Sometimes, teaching materials do not meet the requirements for course study.
- (5) Lack of proper professional knowledge to expect the exact requirements of the standard Business education curriculum.
- (6) Students learn all lessons in the university only for examinations and after exams they forget them.
- (7) Lack of concentration while drafting and revising the curriculum.

In addition to the closed questionnaire with four alternative reasons, some of the respondents also gave opinions about reasons behind curriculum gaps. Firstly, there is a skill gap while writing the draft copy of the curriculum. Many of teachers cannot provide actual teaching while taking classes. Sometimes, there may occur unethical practices by referring desired topics or text book intentionally to publish or select to do profit. Then, there is a lack of practical tests and traditional course and old teaching method in the prescribed brochure. The concerned parties of curriculum do not think globally, just think about the average people and students

could not get proper flavor of knowledge which are actually linked with organization. Moreover, a university does not provide the society with knowledge by which they are reaching the society demands. There is a common thing that there is a lack of teaching materials and consequently that create difficulties for the teachers and teachers do not try to understand the demand of students, their problems, and expectations and they always ignore the students' interests. In respect of communication gap, sometimes students face the problems from noise outside and inside the class room. Sometimes, teachers are hardly well-prepared about what they are teaching and that is why, communication gap may occur. In case of forming curriculum development team, there is a nepotism and favoritism while selecting the members of the team.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

This study has found the different views of curriculum and curriculum gaps. In Bangladesh, there does not exist any triple helix among industry, government, and university. Triple helix model mainly focuses on the interactions among government, university, and industry, which facilitate creation, transformation, and distribution of knowledge across the boundary of the three entities [18]. In Bangladesh, there are not big research projects on industry development and/or business development funded by the companies, conducted by the university, and cooperated by the government. Moreover, In Bangladesh, students are good at studying, but they do not develop other soft skills, and are not connected with practical world. Students do not have enough chance to share their own cultures, traditions and thoughts to each other which does not meet societal challenges with diverse knowledge. The delivery process in addressing the lessons in the class does remain a lack of diverse sources of information. This study has also proposed a theory by mapping curriculum gaps. The gaps would help to collect right opinions to fulfil the demands of the society. Among all these gaps, the most relevant gap is curriculum expectation gap that is related to design of curriculum and other gaps are related to curriculum implementation and evaluation. All types of curriculum application gaps would have never been eradicated but it is possible to minimize only curriculum expectation gap in every stage of curriculum planning, designing, implementing and evaluation process by conducting an extensive empirical survey on the stakeholders of the curriculum including employers as the respondents. The study has been done on a small sample (sample size is 155), it should be more than 300). Therefore, the study suffers from comprehensive study/research.

4.2. Suggested Strategies to Minimize Curriculum Gaps

Firms should act like universities by investing in research laboratories and corporate universities. Whereas, universities would act like firms by capitalizing knowledge and starting

up new commercial entities, and are becoming more entrepreneurial. In between, the government should take the role of industry in supporting development of industry relevant research and technology transfer to industry, and plays a role directly and indirectly in supporting and setting up trilateral networks and hybrid organizations. There should be connection among university, government, and industry. The respondents who have been selected as sample in this study gave their valuable opinions about the possible solutions to curriculum. According to the maximum number of responses (more than 20%) given by the respondents fulfilling the questionnaire with closed questions, the most important reasons behind curriculum gaps are as follows:

- (1) There should be a thorough study about world-class standard curriculum of different top ranked universities in the world;
- (2) Industry needs followed by employment assessment tests formats should be linked with the lessons of university graduation business curriculum;
- (3) The curriculum stakeholders should utilize their respective and area-wise proper professional expertise and knowledge to expect the exact requirements of the standard business education curriculum;
- (4) The course teachers should use and make students follow course curriculum in the class. Course teachers should give adequate information/knowledge considering students level and make topics easily understandable;
- (5) Students should learn deeply all lessons in the university which should relate with future career goals;
- (6) While addressing the lessons in the class, the course teachers should provide proper sources of information about real life job demand in the context of globalization;
- (7) The course teachers should supply the diverse sources of teaching materials (online source is good enough) which would meet the requirements for course study. Case study should be closely connected to course theory;
- (8) As most of the jobs require Information Technology (IT) skill and language skill, the university business education curriculum should focus on non-credit courses covering Information Technology (IT) skill and language skill;
- (9) The course teachers should prepare specific and individual course outlines and should follow them in the class. After class, course teachers should provide extra tutoring (if needed). The course teachers also should give proper feedback to homework;
- (10) The students in developing country should be used to world-class standard lessons with versatile knowledge and skills;
- (11) The responsible parties should be more concentrated while drafting and revising the curriculum;
- (12) Students should first concentrate on their graduation lessons and then side-by-side do practices on

quantitative analysis and English verbal (e.g. GMAT, GRE and IELTS etc.) to pursue foreign higher studies and to get a job internationally.

In addition to the closed questionnaire with four alternative reasons, some of the respondents also gave opinions about the possible solutions to curriculum gaps. Firstly, the business schools of the universities should reduce skill gap (if any) by mapping skills like strategy mapping. To minimize the unethical practices, the teacher should not refer any learning materials intentionally. The teachers and students both should make the class enjoyable by taking participatory sessions. Sometimes, university should permit different companies to organize the job fair and interview facilities. There should be real course and new teaching method in the curriculum design of business graduation program. The concerned stakeholders of curriculum should increase the societal knowledge, what actually need for the society or what they actually want. In the university, infrastructure should be improved so that noise in the class room and outside the class room could be reduced. Before going to the class, teachers should be well-prepared about what they are teaching, and consequently communication gap could be reduced.

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Biography



Mohammad Shahidul Islam Fakir has been working for Jagannath University from 12 OCT 2008 to till date. His current position is Associate Professor in Management. Moreover, he served ASA University Bangladesh as a Lecturer in Business from May 10, 2007 to October 11, 2008. He did his MBA at South China University of Technology in 2017 and he also completed his MBA in HRM and BBA in Management at University of Dhaka in 2004 and 2003 respectively. He has eight publications in Bangladeshi and international journals. He participated and completed advanced training on different areas including research techniques.