

**TEACHERS SPEAK OUT ON THE USE OF THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN  
SOUTHWESTERN PUERTO RICO**

By

Kevin S. Carroll

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Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Beth Virtanen, Ph.D.  
Member, Graduate Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Betsy Morales Caro, Ph.D.  
Member, Graduate Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ellen Pratt, Ph.D.  
President, Graduate Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jorge Schmidt-Nieto, Ph.D.  
Graduate School Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
José Irizarry, Ph.D.  
Chairperson of the English Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Abstract**

Teaching English as a Second Language in Puerto Rico has been a topic of debate since the occupation of the United States. Due to constant political change, the English curriculum for secondary schools in Puerto Rico has undergone many modifications. This three-part study analyzes the new *Curricular Framework* to determine its effectiveness for teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico. The first part of the study, to analyze the curriculum, used George Posner's *Analyzing the Curriculum*. The findings from the analysis were then compared with 30 teacher questionnaires as well as in-depth interviews with five high school English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico. There were three major findings: problems with teacher training/supervision; problems with textbooks / materials; and teacher burnout. The thesis concludes in an argument for a local curriculum that would provide stability for teachers and meet the local needs of high school students in southwestern Puerto Rico.

## Resumen

La enseñanza de Inglés como Segundo Idioma en Puerto Rico ha sido un tema debatido desde la ocupación de E.U. Como resultado de los cambios políticos, el currículo de Inglés ha sufrido modificaciones. Este estudio, que se compone de tres fases, analiza el nuevo *Curricular Framework* para determinar su efectividad en maestros del area suroeste de Puerto Rico. La primera parte analiza el nuevo currículo basado en *Analyzing the Curriculum* por George Posner. Los descubrimientos del análisis fueron comparados con cuestionarios hechos por 30 maestros y entrevistas a cinco maestros de Inglés de escuelas superiores en el suroeste de Puerto Rico. El estudio realza tres puntos: problemas con entrenamiento / supervisión; problemas con libros / materiales; y explotación de maestros. La tesis concluye argumentando para un currículo local que proveería estabilidad para maestros, a la misma vez que reconoce las necesidades de los estudiantes del suroeste de Puerto Rico.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

A curriculum serves as an aid in order to help teachers organize and plan their daily lessons. It is an essential document for teachers because it defines the goals that a Department of Education (DE) hopes its students fulfill. Moreover, federal, state, and local boards of education use curricula to develop tests which can measure the levels of success students have attained in learning the projected material. Furthermore, teachers must be trained to use the curriculum for these goals to be obtained. For all of these reasons it is essential to have a well-developed, organized and detailed curriculum (Apple, 1990; Posner, 1992).

While observing high school English classes throughout southwestern Puerto Rico for over 100 hours, I have found that many of the teachers are not using the *Curriculum Framework* to its maximum potential, thus limiting the teachers' effectiveness and student learning. Based on my conversations with English teachers while attending conferences, as well as in formal interviews I have conducted in past research, I have found that many classes are poorly conducted and they have little or no relation to the goals and expectations for English acquisition by students at the corresponding levels. In a pilot study I conducted in the Spring of 2004 whose results were presented at the Puerto Rican conference of Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (PRTESOL), I found that many teachers were overwhelmed with their in-class responsibilities as well as by extra-curricular activities. Moreover, they felt they did not have a stable curricular guide nor the proper materials needed to teach their classes. Through, these observations, conversations, and interviews I have come to

believe that a thorough analysis of the DE's *Curricular Framework* for the English program must be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the *Curricular Framework English Program*.

This research did not focus on the theoretical underpinnings of the DE's English curriculum, but on the content and structure of the curriculum. It is my belief that there is a fundamental difference between the DE curriculum for English teachers in Puerto Rican public schools and the kinds of curricula which are described in Posner (1992) *Analyzing the Curriculum*. Because of the differences I found, I make suggestions on how future curriculum can be developed to help future English education in Puerto Rico.

In Puerto Rico, although considerable research has been done on English education, very little research has been done to analyze the English curriculum to see what impact it has had on improving English teaching and learning in the secondary schools in southwestern Puerto Rico. Many other studies in Puerto Rico have been published, highlighting various reasons for students' lack of success in learning English. Studies such as Algren de Gutiérrez (1987), Pousada (2000), Resnick (1993), Schweers, and Hudders (2000) have mentioned the lack of teacher preparation and poor curriculum design among other reasons; however, no comprehensive study has been done to analyze the latest curriculum and what teachers think about it. All of these studies form an excellent base to draw upon for a study on the English curriculum because they all seem to propose some sort of change in English education. As Posner (1992) suggests, change should begin with the curriculum because it is the blueprint which teachers are mandated to follow to insure that students have covered the same material. Thus it is logical that

any change in English education in Puerto Rico should started with the English curriculum.

Representatives from the Department of Education, while addressing the Western Puerto Rican Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Convention at the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez in the Spring of 2004, assured people in attendance that the new *Curricular Framework* was “an excellent tool for teachers” (Cotto, 2004). There, they claimed that all teachers would be well trained in using this new curriculum. In response to the representatives’ claim, this study analyzed the *Curricular Framework* to determine whether it is “an excellent tool” as described by the keynote speaker, at the Western PRTESOL convention. As a result of a focused analysis of the *Curricular Framework* together with reference to the results of a questionnaire for teachers and various ethnographic case studies of teachers, I conclude that this tool needs refinement. In addition, this study suggests areas in which the Department of Education can improve curriculum preparation, as well as how teachers can use the *Curricular Framework* to improve English education in high schools in southwestern Puerto Rico.

### **Objectives:**

The objective of this research was to evaluate the level of satisfaction with or disapproval of the current English curriculum being used in southwestern Puerto Rico. In order to do this, I administered a questionnaire and interviewed secondary instructors throughout southwestern Puerto Rico to determine their thoughts about the document.

The questionnaire provided data concerning the reported thoughts of English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico regarding the *Curricular Framework*. However, because of the unique topic and possible political slants, I found it necessary and

beneficial to use ethnographic case studies to further highlight the findings. This combination of research methods gave me a wealth of data to interpret, draw conclusions, as well as triangulate the findings allowing me to make suggestions for future English curricular development in Puerto Rico.

**Research Questions:**

1. What are the purposes of the *Curricular Framework English Program* and does it fulfill its function as stated by Posner (1998)?
2. How do English teachers in Puerto Rico use the *Curricular Framework English Program* and in which ways do they report that it is effective and/or not effective?
3. As a document of law and reference, in what ways might the *Curricular Framework English Program* be changed to better meet the needs of teachers?

This study was divided into three equally important parts. Part I is an analysis of the DE's new English curriculum using George Posner's model (Posner, 1992) for analyzing a curriculum to systematically assess the DE's *Curricular Framework* for the English program. The analysis lends itself to pinpointing areas for potential improvements and suggestions are made for future curricular development. In Part II of the study a questionnaire was used in order to give me an idea of the different attitudes that high school teachers of English in southwestern Puerto Rico have toward the curriculum. Part III of the study focused on case studies of various teachers, which helped determine whether or not the data received in the questionnaire was representative of a larger population. Answers to the questionnaire as well as the interview questions provided insight into the effective use of the curriculum in the everyday activities of

teachers. As a result I have drawn conclusions which will further clarify just how successful the implementation of the new English curriculum can be.

## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

English education on the island of Puerto Rico, a United States territory since 1898, has had questionable success in its more than 100 year history. The movement against teaching English in the schools of Puerto Rico reached its pinnacle in 1949, when Spanish was determined to be the medium of instruction in the public schools (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987). Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) concludes that the movement against teaching English in Puerto Rico was steered by the elite political groups on the island, “Puerto Ricans who should be a bilingual people are not” (p. 141). There are many reasons put forth as to why English education on the island has not been successful. The most prominent focuses on the resistance, or resentment, towards the United States and the language spoken there (Clachar, 1997). According to Algren de Gutiérrez, Puerto Ricans must define their political status, which would allow them to lower their resistance towards the United States. Many other studies and newspaper articles, such as Baker (2001), Bliss (1994), Hernandez Beltrán (1997), Millan (2000), Ortiz (2001), Ramírez (1987), Schweers and Hudders (2000), Schweers and Vélez (1992), Vélez (2000), address other, less influential reasons for lack of success which include: students’ and teachers’ attitudes, lack of funding, motivation and identity issues.

### **Sources of Resistance from 1898 to the late 1940’s**

Since Puerto Rico has been associated with the United States for the past century, Puerto Rico has been required to include English as a 50-minute class in the public school system. The extent and emphasis on English education has varied greatly over the years. When the United States invaded Puerto Rico in 1898, they brought with them a public school system that was new to the island. With this public school system came an

English program that strived to “destroy the Puerto Rican nationality through education” (Bliss, 1994, p. 1). In the early years of colonization the United States attempted to make English the primary language of the island. However, this approach was unsuccessful. In 1901, Commissioner Martin G. Brumbaugh restricted English instruction to grades seven through twelve. The elementary curriculum was to be in Spanish. From that point on many different policies were used to implement English in all grades, and few have been successful (Department of English, 1998).

When the United States gained control of Puerto Rico it was their goal to not only make Puerto Ricans literate but to make them literate in English. Their agenda was to turn Puerto Ricans into Americans. Jorge Vélez (2000) states that, “During the first 50 years of American rule, colonial administrators implemented an educational language policy whose goal was to Americanize the population and make English the dominant language” (p. 6). From 1898 to 1949, English, to varying degrees was the language of instruction in the public school system. However, the use of English in the public school system changed dramatically throughout the years. The original focus of the U.S. Government was to convert the majority of non-literate people of Puerto Rico into literate English speakers (Algren de Gutiérrez, 1987). As time passed in the early U.S. colonial period (1898 – 1949), more emphasis was given to Spanish in the primary grades; nevertheless English was always used as the medium of instruction at the secondary level. All high school studies throughout the island, until 1949, were done in English. However, the few students who made it to high school tended to be from the elite families on the island. As Schweers and Hudders (2000) stated: “The small elite that



continued in high school, however, became fully bilingual, thus exacerbating the difference between the classes” (p. 66).

English language competence was the expected standard for the island’s elite who were able to finish their secondary education in the public school system. As a result, these students were able to attend universities in the United States as well as compete for English speaking jobs upon returning to Puerto Rico. On the other hand, the average Puerto Rican remained monolingual and was typically not able to go beyond an elementary school education. Had the poor and middle class been economically stable enough to attend school through the twelfth grade, they too would probably have been bilingual. Going to the United States for university studies, was and still is, something that is practiced by the bilingual children of the elite. In 1949, when the public school system made Spanish the medium of instruction, English lost its elite status in the Department of Education and parents were forced to send their children to private schools where the medium of instruction was either English, or a mixture of English and Spanish. Thus, the elite families circumvented the system. The children, from the Puerto Rican upper class, continued their higher education on the mainland, and then returned to Puerto Rico after graduation to work in the best paying jobs on the island; all because of one thing: mastery of the English language. It appears that the English curriculum construction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century did little to change how Puerto Ricans mastered the English language to improve their upward mobility.

As years passed, the United States’ goal of making Puerto Ricans an English speaking populous continued to fail. U.S. administrators recognized that their language policy, of creating an English populous was a disaster, and accordingly moved in the

direction of a language policy with a stronger bilingual focus. This bilingual approach periodically resurfaced with the latest being in 1993 when former Governor, Pedro Rosselló and former Secretary of Education Victor Fajardo implemented the “Bilingual Citizen” program (Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000).

### **Spanish as the Medium of Instruction, Late 1940’s until Present**

From the late 1940’s to the present, Spanish has been the medium of instruction in the public schools and English has played a less important role than before Puerto Rico gained political autonomy. The Teachers Association felt that it was foolish for their members to teach subjects in English, a language of which the majority of the teachers did not have thorough command (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). Teachers who were not bilingual were teaching classes to students in English and the students whose native language was Spanish benefited minimally. Though many teachers tried to speak in English, they often resorted back to their native Spanish while teaching. In addition to giving classes in English in the early years of colonial development, teachers were forced to pass English proficiency exams. If these exams were not passed, the teacher’s job would be in jeopardy (Vélez, 2000). The “new Teachers Association, organized precisely to challenge the department’s imposition of English proficiency examinations of teachers and the language’s privileged status in the educational system” (Vélez, 2000, p. 12). The change in government in the late 1940s gave Puerto Ricans political autonomy, and the Teachers Association had more political power than ever before.

With the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952, an autonomous territory of the United States, English and Spanish instruction on the island was changed forever. According to *Project for the Development of a Bilingual Citizen* published by

the Department of Education of Puerto Rico' English Department in 1947, Commissioner Mariano Villaronga made Spanish the medium of instruction and transformed English into a daily 50 minute required class. Spanish, the language of the majority, was to be used as the language of instruction and English was to be taught as a regular subject in kindergarten through twelfth grade. This was seen as an extremely big win for politicians and followers of the Independent Party (PIP) and the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) (Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000). For the first time since the United States took control, Puerto Ricans were able to choose the medium of instruction in the public school system, and together with the strong push from the new Teachers Association, they chose their vernacular, Spanish. The platforms of many of Puerto Rico's earliest politicians were finally realized and the Spanish language dominated instruction in the public school system. From the beginning, the United States' imposition of English on Puerto Ricans, built animosity towards both the United States and the English language. For years, politicians, the Teacher's Association, and many artists and writers fought for the right to teach Spanish in the public school system (Clampitt-Dunlop, 2000). Puerto Rican autonomy marked the end of a 50-year struggle by Puerto Ricans for the right to govern their island. At first opportunity, Puerto Ricans made Spanish the medium of instruction.

This change in the language of instruction prompted many families to pull their children out of the public schools and place them in private schools which offered English education. This marked a time in which the elite status of the public schools began to fall. According to Schweers and Hudders (2000),

...the average Puerto Rican needs and benefits from a knowledge of English. Until now bilingual ability in English has marked class divisions.

In a true democratic Puerto Rico, children from all classes should have an equal opportunity to master this necessary language (p. 70).

The 1990's marked the pinnacle of the language debate. At the beginning of the decade the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), whose platform for Puerto Rico is based on the status-quo, was in power. They felt that English was a threat to Spanish and that the official language status of Spanish and English was not a true reflection of the people of Puerto Rico (Schweers & Hudders, 2000). With the backing of the Pro Independence Party (PIP) they passed a bill on April 5, 1991, "making Spanish the sole official language of the island" (Schweers & Hudders, 2000). With a change in government just one year later, the statehood party (PNP), led by Governor Rosselló restored English as the joint official language with Spanish on the island. "During all of this legislation, polls consistently showed that the large majority of Puerto Ricans preferred having both languages official" (Schweers & Hudders, 2000). The fact that politicians from the Popular Democratic Party adopted rhetoric to justify changing the official language to Spanish is an excellent example of the resistance and controversy that surrounds the teaching of English in Puerto Rico. Elite politicians reacted by promoting their party's platform that fought English language acquisition, which was not necessarily the voice of the people. This theme reoccurs in Puerto Rican politics. Furthermore, there is often a major difference in opinion between voters and the lawmakers concerning language policy. This difference in opinion often results from party leaders' inability to change their political platforms on the language issue due to their all-important stance on making

Puerto Rico an independent country or the fifty-first state or simply maintaining the commonwealth.

In 2000, the governor's position switched hands once again and Sila Calderón was elected from the PDP. The party tried to maintain the status quo. Governor Sila Calderón appointed Dr. Cesar Rey as the Secretary of Education. His job was to clean up a corrupt DE left by the previous, and currently jailed, secretary Victor Fajardo. In order to distance their party's stance on whether or not Puerto Rico should become the fifty-first state, Governor Sila Calderón and César Rey, reallocated funds to other needy parts of the education system and closed many of the bilingual schools that had been formed in the Rosselló era. Now the Department of Education has created a new curriculum for all subjects. The document that is to be used by English teachers in the system is entitled *Curricular Framework English Program* (Department of Education, 2003). This is the document that will be analyzed in this study.

### **Other Influences on English Education in Puerto Rico**

Independentistas, members of the party who support independence for Puerto Rico, have always had a major influence on the teaching of English in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican "nationalism has been offered as the most incisive explanation for resistance to the study of and use of English leading to the unsuccessful bilingualization of the island's population" (Clachar, 1997, p. 71). The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the development of an enduring sense of identity among Puerto Ricans; according to Maldonado-Denis, it was

...the decisive period in our formation as a people, as a nationality. Our literature, our music, our painting, in effect all of our cultural expressions,

give testimony that in this century there crystallized a definitive manner a culture that we call Puerto Rican (cited in Resnick, 1993, p. 262).

The three political parties in Puerto Rico: Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP; Pro Independence Party); Partido Popular Democrático (PPD); Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP or New Progressive Party) have never been able to work together to develop a language policy that benefits more than the people in their respective parties. Morales (1999) explains: “Since the political parties are determined to maintain language as a part of their political agenda, not actually bearing in mind the opinions of the people, the language issue is not clear on the island” (p. 11). This obviously has had a major effect on the teaching of English and the English language curriculum. Because political parties have not been able to work together to develop language policy, the educational system must readapt to a new educational philosophy every time there is a change in party at the gubernatorial level.

The Department of Education, as a branch of the Governor’s cabinet, changes whenever the government changes. When there is a change in political party at this level, the party or governor in power attempts to change the educational system to reflect their platform. Party members and politicians take it upon themselves to develop language policy. They do so without the consultation of linguists and sociolinguists who are professionals in their study of language (Vélez & Schweers, 1993). Moreover, Morales (1999) reflects on Eastman’s (1983) criteria for language planning and argues that Puerto Rico has not officially developed language planning. This has consequently led to ambiguity in how and what should be taught in the education system as well as how other political departments should operate.

Other influences that have had an impact on English education in Puerto Rico have been the focus of many studies. Clachar (1997), Clampitt-Dunlap (2000), and Morris (1995) have conducted studies which focus on the attitude of students and other citizens in the area of attitudes towards English and the instruction of English on the island. Clachar (1997) found that even though her participants felt that learning English “may be a viable strategy politically, it is seen as extremely costly to the perceived high ethnolinguistic vitality of Puerto Ricans” (p. 94). Spanish language maintenance has been part of the political platform and educational agenda since Puerto Rico gained autonomy. Clampitt-Dunlap (2000) explains that “English was associated with the United States and Americanization and presented as a threat to all that represented Puerto Rican identity, most particularly the language” (p. 32). This association between English and the oppressor is what has been engraved into the minds of many Puerto Ricans and even more so into the political rhetoric on the island. It seems that as more and more parents place their children into private English immersion schools, they show politicians the association between English and the so-called oppressor is nothing more than political rhetoric. However, the political rhetoric is so powerful that the issue never dies. Nancy Morris in *Puerto Rico: Culture, Politics, and Identity* writes that “Language. The most consistently cited element of Puerto Ricanness was the Spanish language, which was mentioned in every focus group and by all interviews” (p. 82). Morris’s study reinforces the fact that when talking about culture, Spanish is a characteristic that identifies one as being Puerto Rican. This deeply rooted connection to identity that Spanish has, reaffirms the notion that Puerto Ricans will not allow anyone or anything to harm the importance that Spanish has on the island (Morales, 1999; Morris, 1995).

Pousada (2000) examined *The Competent Bilingual* in Puerto Rico. When the thirty participants in the study were asked what they thought about current English education in Puerto Rico, the majority:

... registered great disgust with the current situation and placed the blame squarely on the teachers, in particular their English preparation and their motivation of the students. Sample members remarked that if teachers had better training, taught exclusively in English, explained why things were the way they were in English instead of teaching by rote, provide more opportunities for students to speak in class, and showed students the advantages and pleasures of English, then students would not be so apathetic, unmotivated, lazy and negative toward English (pp. 113-114).

By interviewing university students at the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras, Pousada (2000) developed insight on what university students think about English education in the Department of Education. Despite the displeasure towards English teachers that was displayed in the study, Pousada (2000) chose not to make any suggestions for teachers. This study, along with a majority of the studies done regarding bilingual education in Puerto Rico, do not focus on the views of teachers in the public school system.

### **The Current State of Public School Education in Puerto Rico**

Currently Puerto Rico is the third largest public school system in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000) and its ever-expanding Department of Education, is confronted with perennially low test scores (Negron Perez, 2004) and outbreaks of school violence showing that the Puerto Rican public school system is in need of help. Over the years many articles in all of the major publications in



Puerto Rico have voiced opinions on these issues (Bliss, 2000; Hernandez Beltrán, 1997; Ortiz, 2001; Ramirez, 1987). The current state of the public school system is in disarray following the conviction of former Secretary of Education Victor Fajardo. Many parents have resorted to taking their children out of the public system every year in search of more secure private schools that promise a comprehensive English education curriculum. This shift and the resulting instability of the public school system has led onlookers to wonder what should be done.

The island has an abundance of private schools that place a greater emphasis on English education than public schools do. “It is almost a truism at the University of Puerto Rico that public school students do poorly in English, and private or Catholic school students do better” (Pousada, 2000, p. 112). The findings of Pousada (2000) reaffirms the fact that the wealthy who send their children to schools do so in order to insure their children will learn English. Learning English enables the students to attain better paying jobs. Because the highest paying jobs in Puerto Rico require knowledge of English, the children of the elite are the few who can fill these positions, allowing them to stay on top of the economic pyramid of Puerto Rican society (Ortiz, 2001).

According to the Department of Education English Department’s *Project for Developing a Bilingual Citizen* fifty minutes of English instruction daily, from grades one through twelve does not produce a student who has developed basic English language skills in both oral or written discourse. “Our students, as opposed to those graduating from the private schools, are not prepared to communicate in English” (p. 1). This document serves as evidence that the DE is not oblivious to the fact that there is competition in developing competent English users between private and public schools.

However, though the *Project for Developing a Bilingual Citizen* may have been beneficial to the general Puerto Rican populous, it was seen by other parties as a political move by PNP Governor Pedro Rosselló, to move Puerto Rico that much closer to statehood (Bliss, 2000; Hernández Beltrán, 1997).

Teachers have forever been at the center of the debate on language. In the late 1940s the Teacher's Association played a major role in making Spanish the medium of instruction. More recently, teachers have been the center of a great deal of criticism by students, parents, and the DE (Pousada, 2000). Pousada's study, though it mentions very strong findings against the preparation of teachers and their lack of motivation, does not suggest what should be done to find out if her participants' observations and remarks were true. The study focused solely on how the students could benefit from the findings. Though Pousada (2000) did not study teachers' preparation and education, the DE English Department's *Project for Developing a Bilingual Citizen* states that in 1997 the year the document was published "... almost 50% of the teachers of English do not hold an English certificate" (p. 2). The demand for English teachers has resulted in the hiring of many teachers who are under-prepared and unqualified to teach the curriculum established by the DE. Consequently the curriculum plays an even more important role in English education guiding teachers.

### **Curricular Development**

The development of a curriculum is a key factor in the implementation of language planning. Throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, English teachers are required to use curricula to guide them with their teaching of English. After the steps of language planning have been followed and the new language plan is ready to be

implemented curricular development is the next step (Eastman, 1983). However, in order to talk about curriculum we must first define it. Throughout the literature, the definition of curriculum varies because of the number of different levels associated with its development. Posner (1992) gives six different common concepts of what curriculum is, they are:

1. Scope and sequence: The depiction of curriculum as a matrix of objectives assign to successive grade levels (i.e., sequence) and grouped according to a common theme (i.e., scope).
2. Syllabus: A plan for an entire course, typically including rationale, topics, resources, and evaluation.
3. Content outline: A list of topics covered organized in outline form.
4. Textbooks: Instructional materials used as a guide for classroom instruction.
5. Course of study: A series of courses that the student must complete.
6. Planned experiences: All experience students have that are planned by the school, whether academic, athletic, emotional, or social (p.10).

In addition to the different concepts of curriculum, every curriculum has different agendas. Both Apple (1990) and Posner (1992) suggest that different curricula have elaborate hidden curricula that are often politically driven and that are often not detected by the teachers that use them (Apple, 1990, pp. 82-104).

Apart from the different definitions of curricula and the hidden curricula that reside within them, Johnson (1989) as cited in Richards (2001) describes the different “stages, decision-making roles and products in curricular development (p. 42).” Johnson

explains that there are four principle development stages in curriculum. The first state is curriculum planning which policy makers develop and the product is a “policy document.” The second step is the “specification of the ends and means” which is carried out by the needs analyst and methodologists. The end result for the second step is the development of a syllabus. The program implementation is the third step according to Johnson. The decision-making roles in this step fall into the hands of material writers and teacher trainers. This step results in teaching materials and the teacher-training program. The last step in curriculum development is the actual classroom implementation where the teacher and learner partake in the acts of teaching and learning respectively. Thus, Richards (2001) gives a four step, systematic way of developing curriculum to be used in the language classroom. Based on these ideas and paradigms, they show that curriculum development is a complex issue that has many different facets and definitions.

This review of the literature shows four principal areas. The first area is that there is a history of resentment towards English education on the island. Secondly, there have been many changes in English education throughout the relationships between the United States and Puerto Rico. The third area that the review of literature highlights is that there are class differences among those who become bilingual. The fourth areas examined the different facets of curricular development. This study shows how these four issues have filtered down to the teachers in their classrooms when they use the curriculum.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

This study used qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to develop a comprehensive idea of what public school teachers of English think about their *Curricular Framework*. The use of these different research methods makes the study more complex than studies that only use one method because numerical data can be reinforced with the reports of real people. Studies have been conducted using only one research method and questions arose so, the use of both quantitative and qualitative data has strengthened the value of the study. According to Bogdin and Biklen (2003), qualitative case studies are extremely useful in backing up quantitative studies by reemphasizing findings with the thoughts, beliefs and opinions of individuals in a particular context. Hence, this project began with the qualitative analysis of the *Curricular Framework* in order to become familiar with possible topics and ideas that could surface in the administration of the questionnaire and the case study portion of the study. The questionnaire highlighted questions that emerged from the analysis of the curriculum. The questionnaire served as the quantitative component of the study in that it quantified what many English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico think about their English curriculum. The third component of the study, the qualitative portion of teacher interviews, not only complements the previous parts, but also reaffirms earlier findings of what English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico think about the curriculum. As can be seen, this study made use of multiple sources of data and multiple methods to triangulate the data and insure internal validity (Miriam, 1998).

I decided to use both quantitative and qualitative methods of research because the two methods will add validity and offer greater insight to the reports of the teachers. I

chose not to base the entire study on a questionnaire because relying solely on questionnaires would not allow me to delve into the thoughts of the participants and accurately interpret their thoughts toward the curriculum. Questionnaires are distant and impersonal in the sense that the researcher does not get to ask follow up questions and thus cannot fully understand exactly why the participants answered the way they did. Thus, I elected to use case studies of teachers in order to provide increased depth to the questionnaire with the ideas of teachers as they relate to the new *Curricular Framework*. Furthermore, my decision not to solely base the study on multiple case studies resulted from my hope that the findings would be representative of a majority of the secondary English teaching populous in southwestern Puerto Rico. In preliminary data gathering with teachers, I found that many teachers complained about the curriculum and often made suggestions for improvement. My pilot study entitled: *Joining Voices: Three Teachers' Answers on the Importance of English Education in Puerto Rico*, which was presented at the PRTESOL convention, led me to believe that teachers have strong opinions and views on the current curriculum (Carroll, 2004). These findings led me to this study. Contemplating the development of the study, I took other research possibilities into consideration and came to the conclusion that this study would have the greatest impact if it combined the numbers of a quantitative study and the insightful reports of different teachers to accompany my thorough analysis of the current English curriculum.

## **Data Collection**

### **Analysis of Curriculum**

After consulting a number of other resources that focus on curricular matters related to language teaching such as: Apple (1990); Richards (2001); Eastman (1983); I chose George Posner's *Analyzing Curriculum*, to undertake the curriculum analysis portion of the study. Because *Analyzing the Curriculum* is well respected, systematic, and offers excellent insight into how a curriculum should be developed, I decided that using it as my primary reference was a good idea. The additional references offered definitions and advice for language curriculum, but *Analyzing the Curriculum* went one step further in actually describing the proper way to evaluate a curriculum.

In contrast to Posner (1992), Apple (1990), Richards (2001), Eastman (1983), looked at the theory behind language curriculum and the different approaches that correspond to specific language teaching. Because the purpose of the analysis of the curriculum was to analyze the structure and how the *Curricular Framework* was designed, I chose not to use the other researchers in the actual analysis because they were more theoretically oriented. Instead, I chose to use Posner (1992), who gave concrete descriptions of curriculum design and not the actual theoretical approaches.

The first part of the study includes a thorough analysis of the current English Curriculum for secondary public schools. In order to obtain this curriculum and the various other curricula, I solicited documents from the regional offices of the department of education as well as used electronic resources to gather the documents for analysis. I analyzed the *Curricular Framework English Department* published by the DE, using ten principle questions for analyzing a curriculum (see appendix A) as stated in Posner

(1992). The analysis focuses around four areas, which are further developed using ten questions that lead to greater depth in the specific areas (see Appendix A). The four principle areas of analysis include:

1. Documentation and origins of the curriculum-- How has the curriculum evolved and what are the political, social and economic underpinnings of the curriculum?
2. The appropriateness of the curriculum-- The purpose of the content in the curriculum, the assumptions that underlie the curriculum's approach to purpose and content.
3. The Curriculum in Application-- The way in which the curriculum should be implemented, what kind of things will be learned from the curriculum.
4. Critique-- Personal Judgment of the curriculum, what are its strengths and its weaknesses.

For the purposes of this research, I answered all of the guiding questions that were put forth by Posner. The analysis starts with the history and the makeup of the curriculum and moves through the document's appropriateness, its application, and finishes with its strengths and weaknesses. Thus, this curriculum analysis serves as the foundation and a springboard for the remainder of the study, which then focuses on how teachers view the *Curricular Framework* in southwestern Puerto Rico.

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were active secondary English teachers from five different municipalities in southwestern Puerto Rico: Cabo Rojo, Homigueros, Lajas, Sabana Grande, and San Germán. The different municipalities were selected because



they all fulfilled the geographical requirement of southwestern Puerto Rico and all fall into the category of rural Puerto Rico. With only one high school in each municipality (with the exception of Cabo Rojo which has two), the populations of the towns are very small in comparison to larger cities such as Ponce, Mayagüez, and San Juan. In order to protect the participants in this study, throughout the rest of the document I refer to the schools as: School 1, School 2, School 3, School 4 and School 5. I made the conscious decision not to include the high school in Boquerón, Cabo Rojo, because of its small size in comparison to the other schools in the area.

### **Questionnaire**

After I finished the analysis of the various curricula, I distributed a twelve-item questionnaire to five high schools in five different municipalities in southwestern Puerto Rico. The administration of the questionnaire required me to gain permission from the Department of Education, which meant traveling to San Juan, two and a half hours away, submitting the required paperwork, and then making revisions to the paperwork. Once this study was approved by the Department of Education, I drafted a letter directed to the principals at the various schools that I intended to visit. I contacted all of the schools by telephone and set up appointments with the respective principals. After obtaining permission to be on school grounds, and once I had a list of the room numbers and names of all the English teachers, I personally introduced myself to each English instructor and asked consent for completing an anonymous questionnaire (See Appendix E - Consent Form). Teachers that seemed to be inviting and or interested in the study were also asked if they would be interested in participating in the interview portion of the study. I told teachers that I would return to school the next day to pick up their completed

questionnaires. The day after I administered the questionnaire I returned to the schools to pick up the questionnaires. Because many teachers were absent because of illness or because they were on field trips, I found myself making more trips to the high schools than I originally planned. Eventually my study contained thirty questionnaires from a possible thirty-two which is a ninety-four percent return rate, a higher than average rate of return.

The questionnaire was divided into four areas in order to elicit data about all areas of curriculum. The four areas are:

1. Prior training and education in curriculum design (Items 1-4)
2. The curriculum's usefulness to the teachers (Items 5, 7, and 11)
3. Attitudes of the teachers towards the English curriculum (Items 6, 8, 9, and 10)
4. How teachers view the curriculum as a political document (Item 12)

At the end of the questionnaire the participants were given the opportunity to express their ideas on how the curriculum could be improved.

The quantitative data validates, complements and sheds light on the different views that are voiced in the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The purpose for this questionnaire was to elicit more specific information about what secondary English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico think of the new *Curricular Framework*. The questionnaire was developed based on the advice from Dornyei (2003) *Questionnaires in Second Language Research Construction, Administration, and Processing* (See Appendix C). In order to pilot the questionnaire I used graduate students who were either public school teachers from outside southwestern Puerto Rico or graduate teaching assistants.

The questionnaire was developed in English and was designed to be concise and easy to complete taking a minimal amount of time. In addition, instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire inform the participant that the results will be anonymous and at no time will their name or the name of their school be mentioned in the study. These measures were taken to protect the participants and the schools where they work and thus all the schools are described as secondary schools in southwestern Puerto Rico.

I decided to use yes/no questions and a Likert scale in order to solicit the data. The Likert scale I chose ranges from one to four, one meaning strongly agree and four meaning strongly disagree. I chose not to use a one to five scale because I felt that many of the teachers would have a tendency to answer in the middle or neutral, if provided the opportunity.

The questionnaire portion also provided a multitude of data, which allowed me to develop stronger interview questions to compliment the case study portion of the study. After the data was analyzed, by compiling all of the results from the questionnaires, generalizations were made that reflect the ideas/thoughts/attitudes of the participants from the study. The results from the questionnaire served as a springboard for a more in-depth analysis using interviews in the third part of the study.

## **Interviews**

In order to complement the analysis of the Department's *Curricular Framework* as well as the questionnaire, I conducted one interview with one teacher from each of the five municipalities used in the questionnaire portion of the study. As with any ethnographic case study, the most important component is the information garnered from the participants. The participants in the case study were all certified teachers of

Secondary English Education in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, I chose to interview participants who had worked in the system for a minimum of five years because these teachers will have had experienced at least one change in government. Algren de Guitierrez (1987), among others, believe that politics is a major influence on teachers and curriculum. Hence, I felt it was important that the participants should have at least witnessed first hand the changes in the school system under two different political parties.

Before administering the questionnaire I asked principals and various English teachers about who they thought would be good teachers to interview. If they replied yes, (some were not interested) I recorded their phone number and told them that I would call them at a later to date to set up an appointment. It should be noted that the principals and other English teachers always recommended that I interview the “best” teacher. One of the principals said “you need to interview Teacher X because she is the best English teacher in Puerto Rico.” Though I would have liked to interview teachers who were not perceived by others as being the best or most active English teachers, I was not able to be too selective about who I was to interview. Being an outsider in the school, coupled with the fact that I am not Puerto Rican, played a major role in teachers’ willingness to participate in the study. This point will be discussed more in detail in the limitations of the study.

Once participants agreed and were contacted by phone, I informed them of the nature and purpose of my study. In addition, I informed them of any potential risks to them and measures I had taken to reduce those risks. Only after they fully understood there was no level of risk did I provide them a consent form (See Appendix E). The participants were also assured that their names would not be mentioned in the final study

when they signed a consent form approving their participation and the future dissemination of findings from the study.

After the teachers were selected and briefed on the purpose of the study they agreed to a forty-five minute meeting that was to be taped with a digital tape recorder to expedite the transcription process. After the interviews took place, telephone calls were used as follow-up to clarify anything from the taped interviews. In order to conduct the interviews, the researcher stayed current in ethnographic interviewing from Merriam (1988), Spradley (1979). I conducted interviews lasting 40-50 minutes, with each of the five participants. All of the interviews were structured in a way that the researcher did very little talking, as is appropriate in phenomenological and qualitative approaches. The use of descriptive, structural and contrast questions among others are used to elicit the data (Spradley, 1979). An example of a structural question is: Are there different situations in Puerto Rico in which the *Curricular Framework* is necessary? And an example of a contrast question used is: Is this centralized model for education a good model for the Department of Education? As the researcher I played a minimal role next to the participant. The questions used were structured in such a way that the participant were able to develop their answers relatively easily (See Appendix F for a list of questions).

## **Chapter IV: Data Analysis of *Curricular Framework English Program***

### **Introduction to Curriculum Analysis**

In my four years as a college student in Puerto Rico I have had great difficulty in obtaining the document that serves as the official English curriculum for the Puerto Rican Department of Education. As an undergraduate, I was assigned to find and critique the English curriculum. After asking many teachers, principals, and my education professors at Inter American University where I could find the curriculum, I got a variety of different answers. The majority of them assumed that there was one, but did not know where I could find it. In 2002, the only document that I found was the *Standards of Excellence 2000*. In a critique for my course on English curriculum design, I concluded that the Department of Education (DE) needed to create a document that served as the curriculum guide and not just a list of standards to be followed. A year later in 2003, I discovered a previously enacted curriculum called the *English Program Curriculum Guide* (1994 – 1995). As a result of my difficulties in locating various English curricula, I began to wonder whether teachers were having the same problem. Furthermore, I began thinking that perhaps the DE might be doing a poor job in distributing their documents to teachers at training programs and to students who would be future teachers. Not distributing to these populations would have a negative impact on what student teachers learn from their education.

Now as a second year graduate student, I had the opportunity to go to a workshop and listen to a keynote speaker at the Western Puerto Rico TESOL convention talk about the new English curriculum published by the DE (Cotto, 2004). I have always believed that a well-developed curriculum is the sign of a well-organized, and successful,

Department of Education. A curriculum forms the very foundation for any educational program (Apple, 1990). Without a good curriculum teachers do not know what they are supposed to do, nor do they know what is expected of them. This negative standard will ultimately have an adverse effect on what a student learns, particularly in English language acquisition. Because of my interest in curriculum design and the fact that the DE had recently published the *Curricular Framework English Program*, I thought it was a good idea to analyze the curriculum to see how well it was designed, and to see how effective it can be in Teaching English as a Second Language in southwestern Puerto Rico.

Below I analyze the *Curricular Framework English Program* published by the DE in 2003. Throughout the text I will use the title *Curricular Framework* to refer to this document.

### **Objectives of Curriculum Analysis**

The main objective of this portion of the study was to critically analyze the *Curricular Framework* that was published by the Puerto Rican Department of Education in the fall of 2003. Curricular development is an ongoing process, which should be taken seriously and be prepared by professionals in the appropriate fields. The goal of this study was to look into the new English *Curricular Framework* from the Department of Education (DE) and determine whether or not it is a document that stands up under scrutiny guided by the ten principle questions of analyzing a curriculum as documented in Posner (1992).

In using Posner (1992) it was my goal to dissect and analyze the foundations of the DE's newly published curriculum. It is the researchers hypothesis that there is a

fundamental gap in what is expected of the teachers and what the teachers believe is their responsibility. Since a curriculum serves as the foundation for what teachers teach in their classrooms, it is essential for the curriculum to be well developed and comprehensible so that teachers can easily implement it. In order to answer my first research question: What are the purposes of the *Curricular Framework English Program* and does it fulfill its function as stated by Posner (1992)? I have decided to use the ten questions that Posner (1992) uses to analyze a curriculum (see Appendix A).

### **Curriculum Documentation and Origins**

#### **Question I: How is the curriculum documented?**

The *Curricular Framework* contains various parts. The document starts with an introduction and instructions on how it is to be used. In this portion of the document, the developers inform teachers and teacher trainers that the *Curricular Framework* is to be used as a guide and not to be taken as actual curriculum. However, according to teachers who I had spoken with before the research, this directive has often been misperceived. Further conversations with teachers and representatives, revealed that this is the document that English teachers in Puerto Rico use as their curriculum (Cotto, 2004; Vélez & Philpott, 2004).

After the brief introduction and purposes for the document, the developers provided a brief historical review of how English has been taught on the island. From there, the document moves into the educational reality of teaching English in Puerto Rico, defining the situation as unique: Puerto Rico is not a standard *English-as-a-Second-Language* (ESL) nor *English-as-a-Foreign-Language* (EFL) environment. Puerto Rico's unique geographic and political status creates a one-of-a-kind situation. Following the



description of the current setup of English education on the island, the document discusses the “Acquisition of English as a Process: Constructivist Approach” which leads to “Focuses on Features” and “Strategies for Positive Results in the Teaching of English in Puerto Rico.”

Also included in the *Curricular Framework* is a “Scope and Sequence” chart that describes what concepts and skills are to be learned by students from first to twelfth grades. The “Scope and Sequence” portion of the document is broken up from first to third, fourth to sixth, seventh to ninth, and tenth to twelfth. For the purposes of this research, I will concentrate only on the high school portion, grades ten through twelve. The last part of the document consists of the various references cited in the document and is followed by a number of “Attachments” that give examples of rubrics and other forms of assessment that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms, but never mention how these assessment techniques should be incorporated.

## **Question II: What situation resulted in the development of the curriculum?**

The *Curricular Framework English Program* published by the DE does an excellent job in eliciting suggestions and thoughts from teachers and other educators for its new curriculum. There were seven editors, all employees of the DE, and thirty-two other participants who helped in some capacity in the development of the document. These participants were mostly teachers and university curriculum specialists. With almost 40 educational professionals working together to produce the *Curricular Framework*, it is hard to argue that they did not cover all of the aspects of curriculum (p. iv-vi). Although a majority of the participants were from the San Juan Metropolitan area, there were participants from the Western, Southern, and Eastern parts of the island. Such

representation allowed for difference in social-economic realities, and these different needs based on socio-economic realities will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Though there is no mention of how participants were selected or how their comments were actually incorporated into the curriculum, the DE should be commended for at least publishing the names of the teachers who in some way tried to express their thoughts and experiences for future English curricular development in Puerto Rico.

The Department of Education's job of developing an English curriculum is directly linked to the political party that appoints the head of the department. Schmidt-Nieto (2001) argues that it is relatively impossible, given the political reality of Puerto Rico, to develop a curriculum that is not in some way attached to the political goals of the governing party. In 2000, Governor Pedro Rosselló of the Pro-Statehood party (PNP) finished his two-four year terms as governor and was succeeded by Popular Party (PDP) governor Sila Calderón. Thus, there was a change in governing parties in the year 2000 from PNP to PDP. The change prompted a reduced emphasis in English education which was exemplified by the new Governor and her Secretary of Education, César Rey, taking the emphasis off creating a bilingual citizen and concentrating on improving the overall quality of public education. Consequently, funding for public bilingual schools, which had been created under Rosselló's tenure, was minimized and the money was reallocated to different programs (Ortiz, 2001).

Consistently low-test scores in English also prompted a change at the curricular level. According to Negrón-Perez's article in *El Vocero*, Puerto Rican test scores in English, Spanish, and Mathematics have and continue to be extremely poor. The DE felt that it was necessary to reform the past curriculum in hope of producing students who

would be able to better succeed in island-wide exams. Moreover, the new *Curricular Framework* was designed to increase the role of technology in the classroom in order to meet the increasing need of computer awareness in the current job market.

The DE also points out that it has followed “state and federal legislation that govern the Puerto Rican Department of Education” and has improved and addressed “goal number three (3) of Puerto Rico Goals 2000, which requires the development and implementation of rigorous standards of excellence for students” (Department of Education, *Standards 2000*, p. i). Although the *Standards* were published in 2000, the new *Curricular Framework* reiterated those standards. However, each document is silent regarding how the different standards were to be implemented in the classroom.

Social, economic, political, and educational factors also provided justification for the creation of the new English curriculum. As mentioned by Schmidt-Nieto (2001), the political party in charge will do everything in its power to create a system that reflects the political platform that their particular party promotes. The *Curricular Framework English Program* does an excellent job in being realistic and objective in its assessment of the social, economic, political, and educational factors. In pages six through nine, the document explains the history and the current situation of English education in Puerto Rico. Unlike previous curricula, such as the DE’s *Standards* (2000) and the Department of Education’s *English Program Curriculum Guide* (1994), the new *Curricular Framework* (2003) defined the unique situation of teaching English in Puerto Rico and argued that educators should move “away from the traditional definition of teaching and learning ESL and stressing the meaning of second as sequential in terms of timing” (p. 8). Consequently, Spanish becomes the first language and all students will learn English

second. Then Puerto Ricans will “move away from the traditional concept and its various emotionally and politically charged connotations” that English is the language of the oppressor (p. 8).

Posner (1992) presents twelve fundamental planning elements that all curricula should account for (see Appendix B). In the case of the *Curricular Framework*, the planning elements that dominate the curriculum are based on recent findings in second language acquisition. However, when examining the planning elements “to which we might expect some attention,” they are not as thorough and descriptive as needed (Posner, 1992, p. 43). The DE’s English curriculum covers the majority of the twelve planning elements, but fails to explain their importance and practical implementation in the classroom. The objectives, educational philosophy, content, and evaluation are examined and explained effectively. However, the characteristics of the target audience remain unaddressed. The *Curricular Framework* states that it was developed to aid teachers in the development of their own curriculum, which should reflect the needs and wants of the unique students and the communities that nurture them. This document represents one of the first times that a curriculum from the DE has suggested that teachers at the local level should be in charge of assessing the needs of the students and creating their own curriculum. The only problem with the delegations of responsibility is that the document does not advise teachers on ways of accomplishing such a task. Explicit guidelines for the development of an individual curriculum is a particularly important topic, given the diverse population of students in the public school system, and thus will be a major area of discussion in the remaining portions of the study.

Another planning element that is not accounted for is the activities that teachers can use in order to fulfill the curriculum. Because of the broadness of the curriculum, it is understandable that this particular framework does not give explicit suggestions for different activities that can be used. However, it could have mentioned specific materials that should be incorporated. By ignoring to incorporate materials as well as more guidance, it is weakened as a guide for teachers. Materials, the sixth planning element, often provide teachers with ideas to develop their own activities. It would also serve as a reference source for many teachers. The document mentions that materials should be “chosen and/or adapted by teachers in consultation with each other, not by the Department of Education at the central level” (p. 19). The burden that teachers face when purchasing, choosing, and creating their own materials will be discussed in the remaining areas of the study.

The sequencing principles and schedule, which are seven and eight respectively on the list of planning elements, are mentioned but not fully explained in the document. The *Curricular Framework* gives different performance standards for its four content standards, which are Oral Communication, Written Communication, Reading Comprehension, and Literary Appreciation. Each content area has a list of different performance standards which students are expected to have mastered at the end of their three years in high school. These different content standards are explained in the “Scope and Sequence” portion of the document. The words have changed but the concepts that were published in DE’s *Standards* (2000) remain the same. The *Curricular Framework* spends a meager four pages describing the four content standards. Each of the four pages is dedicated to one of the content standards, and each page is subsequently divided into

four areas: “concepts, skills, attitudes and values, and assessment” (pp. 36-39). These content standards offer teachers little, or no support in choosing materials, nor do they give teachers an idea of how much time should be allocated to the various concepts and skills. An example of this oversight from the “Reading Comprehension” content area states the following: “Uses a range of automatic monitoring and self-correction methods (e.g., rereading, slowing down, consults another source, etc).” Neither in this portion nor in any of the other content standards does it say when, where or how these content standards should be implemented. The document does not even provide a schedule explaining how or when these performance standards should be executed. This omission must leave teachers asking themselves if they are supposed to cover a specific topic in their classes. These oversights bring to light the inherent problems involved in spreading the performance standards among three grades, resulting in ambiguity because teachers do not know exactly who is responsible for teaching what.

One of the main reasons for the broadness of the *Curricular Framework* is because the DE is trying to move in the direction of decentralization. As a result of this trend, the developers did not want to create rigid guidelines that teachers must follow. However, the *Curricular Framework* does not state how teachers and local administrators are to be held accountable for developing their own materials, nor is there any mention of how they will attain the money that is necessary to purchase the various materials needed in an English classroom. Thus, the *Curricular Framework* has not done a successful job in taking into consideration all of the other factors that go into creating a curriculum.

### **Question III: What perspective, if any, does the curriculum represent?**

The Department of Education's *Curricular Framework* for the English program is one that is grounded in Stephen Krashen's second language acquisition theory (1982). In addition to using Krashen's theories, the DE has decided to take a constructivist approach to teaching English on the island. The use of the constructivist approach requires teachers to create an environment in which students are encouraged to build on their previous knowledge in the particular area being covered. By adding to schemata that has already been formed it is understood that the students will partake in more meaningful learning and thus acquire English more efficiently.

The framework does an effective job explaining the rationale behind using the constructivist approach and goes so far as to incorporate a section that gives an overview on applying the approach. In the document overview, it stresses the importance that "learning and teaching is learner-centered and students learn how to learn" (p. 11). Furthermore, the authors mention how Paulo Freire's participatory approach and the whole language approach fit into the constructivist theory they are proposing. Citing these approaches and names it shows that the authors consulted recent developments in second language education. However, the lack of explanation as to how these approaches should be implemented in the classroom many leave teachers wondering how these two approaches relate to what actually happens in a classroom. As a result, it is easy to see that this document was written from the perspective of people who have been detached from the classroom. Although the theory-based segment of the curriculum is advantageous, the developers needed to have gone one step further by supplying useful applications which classroom teachers could adopt.

## **The Curriculum Proper**

### **Question IV: What are the purposes and content of the curriculum?**

When analyzing the actual “Scope and Sequence” portion of the *Curricular Framework*, it was difficult to answer the questions posited by Posner (1992). My difficulties stemmed from the fact that the “*Curriculum Framework* is neither a curriculum guide nor a curriculum” (Department of Education, *Curricular Framework*, p. 3). Reading this line came as a surprise, considering the document I am analyzing is the only document that the DE has produced that in any way resembles a curriculum. Furthermore, at the Western Puerto Rican Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (PRTESOL) Conference at The University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez on April 24, 2004, I asked keynote speaker, a representative from the English Sector of the Department of Education, if there was a true curriculum for English teachers. She replied “yes” and referred me to the *Curricular Framework* (Cotto, 2004). While investigating further, I discovered that the *Curricular Framework* is indeed the primary document that English teachers in public schools are required to follow. In addition, when teachers are trained they are told to create their lesson plans using the *Curricular Framework* (Vélez & Philpott, 2004). With that said, I will only be analyzing the four pages dedicated to high school education, published in the DE’s *Curricular Framework*.

The sole purpose of the *Curricular Framework* is to provide teachers, evaluators, technicians and university professors with a document that highlights the “parameters” of teaching English in the public schools of Puerto Rico (p. 3). In addition the document offers a number of different rubrics and other documents that can be used for assessment purposes. Thus, the document’s focus is on creating a frame in which teachers and



school administrators will be able to develop “their own curriculum” (p. 3) inside the constructs provided by the document.

The curriculum states that it has “four fundamental purposes.” Which are to:

- A. To establish the mission, goals, focuses, objectives, contents, and methods of the processes of teaching and learning of the Program studies,
- B. To guide the elaboration of investigations and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum and academic achievement,
- C. To guide the processes of teacher preparation and development of in-service training by subject,
- D. To guide the elaboration of the curriculum in its diverse levels (basic national – guide of courses, courses – school unit and instructional) (p. 3-4).

In other words, the *Curricular Framework* is to be used at all of the various levels that allow for curricular development from an island-wide curriculum to the curricula created by individual teachers. In addition to these rather broad purposes, the developers of the document acknowledge that the learning of English “has become a language of social empowerment. Gatekeepers that permit socioeconomic mobility in this society use it as a ‘door-opener’” (p. 5). Up until the 1990’s, the documents published by the DE did not acknowledge the growing gap between the speakers of English (the gatekeepers) and the non-English speakers.

The development of students who can think critically is a common thread that stretches throughout the curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to develop teaching

methods that promote critical thinking, yet they are never told how they should go about doing this. Teachers are left with a major responsibility that they may, or may not, be adequately prepared for. Developing critical thinking skills among students can be a daunting task when teachers lack materials. A teacher is not only responsible for finding his or her own materials, but also responsible for creating activities that will develop critical thinking skills. Furthermore, developing materials to enhance students' critical thinking skills requires teachers to be properly trained and be given access to relevant materials.

With the goal of developing critical thinkers at the foundation of the curriculum, the writers were undoubtedly focused on using the cognitive perspective by “considering the development of the mind to be the central purpose of education” (Posner, 1982, p. 97). The high school curriculum “provides for the development of the language skills using Balanced Literacy” (p. 22). With the Balanced Literacy approach teachers are supposed to create and develop critical thinkers through the reading of “classics” which will allow students to develop “individual projects in oral and written form” (p. 22). The writers have broken the “Scope and Sequence” into four different content standards: Oral Communication; Written Communication; Reading Comprehension; Literary Appreciation. These four areas are supposed to be balanced in that the teacher is to give equal emphasis to all of the areas so that students will develop in all of them.

**Question V: What assumptions underlie the curriculum’s approach to purpose or content?**

There are some fundamental assumptions that underlie the curriculum’s approach to foster students who can use English effectively and think critically. The first

assumption that is made by the writers of the *Curricular Framework* is that all English teachers are willing to put in the time and the effort necessary to develop their own curriculum. Most teachers, including those in Puerto Rico, are not highly paid with a starting salary of \$1,500 per month (the salary was quoted by a DE representative from the Mayagüez district). In addition to being underpaid, many of them may not believe that it is their responsibility to develop their own curriculum. The assumption that all English teachers are willing to develop their own curriculum and materials presents a major problem when analyzing this document. In one sense, the DE is trying to decentralize and give more power to teachers to develop their own curriculum, but on the other hand they assume that teachers have the time, energy, resources and knowledge necessary to develop an effective curriculum.

In addition, the *Curricular Framework* assumes that teachers are being effectively trained on how exactly they are supposed to create their own curriculum. The implicit message to teachers is that they are held responsible for the development of an effective curriculum that falls within the parameters set forth by the *Curricular Framework*. It is also understood that if teachers are going to have an increased responsibility in creating their own curriculum, administrators and supervisors will also have added responsibilities, as they will be in charge of assessing the effectiveness of each teacher's new curriculum. However, the document fails to mention what is being done to train teachers, administrators and supervisors for their new responsibilities. This oversight is a major weakness, and it will be further discussed in the questionnaire and interview portions of this study.

Clearly the writers of the English curriculum are operating from two major assumptions. The first is that teachers have the time and are willing to devote their energy and resources towards the development of their own curriculum. The second assumption is that teachers are being properly trained. Within these assumptions rests a fallacy: if teachers do choose to take the time to create their own curriculum, then they have the knowledge and the tools to do so correctly. These two assumptions are fundamental to the success of the curriculum and will be areas that are further examined in both the questionnaire and the interview portions of the study.

#### **Question VI: How is the curriculum organized?**

The *Curricular Framework* is organized in an easy to read and an extremely attractive arrangement. From the beginning of the document the reader realizes that the developers of the *Curricular Framework* are addressing the curriculum at a macro-level in order to give teachers the framework that they will need when they create their own curricula at the micro-level. However, after skimming through the document, the teacher realizes that only four half-filled pages are dedicated to the actual high school English curriculum. The rest of the document focuses on the history, legalities, theories, approaches and goals of teaching English in Puerto Rico. These important aspects of the curriculum should not be negated; however, very little attention is given to the “Scope and Sequence” portion of the curriculum. The “Scope and Sequence” covers in rudimentary form, four different content standards. All of the content standards: Oral Communication, Written Communication, Reading Comprehension, Literary Appreciation are set up in a vertical fashion as described in Posner (1992). This vertical

layout of the concepts, skills, attitudes and values, and assessment correspond to each of the four content standards, and is easy to read, but difficult to interpret.

The difficulty in interpreting the curriculum stems from the ambiguity of the skills and the lack of cohesion among different grades. Tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade are displayed as separate courses in that they are divided by lines so the reader does not confuse one with the other. However, the curriculum makes no effort to explain how a student will take what was learned in tenth grade and apply it in eleventh grade. An example of this comes from “Content Standard #3 Reading Comprehension” (p. 38). In tenth grade the student is supposed to finish the year with skills in recognizing figures of speech, organizing the steps in a process, identifying facts that support a conclusion, predicting outcomes, and identifying facts that support an opinion. When the student goes to eleventh grade they are supposed to be able to identify an inferred main idea, paraphrase ideas and sentences, identify figures of speech and identify relevant details to support a fact or an opinion (p. 38). The problem here does not lie in the skills that we want the students to walk away with; the problem lies in the fact that the curriculum does not explain to teachers that students should try to use what they already have learned to better understand the desired skills as required of the Constructivist Approach. The developers of the curriculum premise the document on the Constructivist Approach hoping teachers and students are able to make connections between what was learned in previous classes and can then build on their previous schema (p. 11). However, the skills portion of the curriculum does not illustrate the importance of reviewing previous learned skills and building on those in future classes.

In addition to the lack of continuity between the desired skills in the three grades, the “Concept” portion of each of the content standards seems to be a list, in no particular order, of different elements of language that should be learned within the three-years of high school. It appears that the concepts were just thrown in to fill space. Any English teacher understands that the different concepts may belong in the column, but the curriculum offers no insight or advice, as to how these different concepts should be attacked and incorporated to reach the desired objectives.

Furthermore, the “Scope and Sequence” section of the curriculum divides the different components of language into four different areas of language acquisition. Earlier in the document the writers of the curriculum stressed the importance of using the Constructivist Approach, and Whole Language Approach, which are pedagogical approaches that can be further applied to more detailed approaches to teaching another language such as the Balanced Literacy Approach mentioned in the introduction to the “Scope and Sequence” (p. 22). In the Whole Language Approach, the teacher is not supposed to divide the language into different content standards. On the contrary he/she is supposed to teach the language as a complete entity, while placing secondary importance on the different elements (content standards) of language. Thus, the document seems to be contradicting its fundamental foundation, which provides teachers further confusion instead of support.

Another area that the “Scope and Sequence” portion of the curriculum does not account for is the incorporation of other subjects into the English class. Because the curriculum is supposed to be based in Constructivist theory, it would seem obvious that there would be some reference to material being taught in other subjects. This would

remind teachers they need to incorporate what students are learning in other classes into their English work. Incorporating other subjects into the English classroom is even more important in an English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum because it is imperative that the students use their prior knowledge, critical thinking skills, and native language knowledge to help them learn and develop the skills that are required of them (Richards, 2001 p. 117).

One could argue that the developers of this document did an excellent job in creating the “Scope and Sequence” and I would argue they did a reasonable job. However, the “Scope and Sequence” portion of a curriculum is just one of the many elements in a well-organized curriculum. This curriculum uses the “Scope and Sequence” portion of the document as the final word on what content should be taught in the classroom. It gives teachers some sort of idea of what should be taught, but stops far short of giving a detailed description of how and when its different concepts and skills should be carried out.

**Question VII: What assumptions underlie the curriculum’s organization?**

The developers from the Department of Education made four large assumptions when they created the *Curricular Framework English Program*. The four assumptions are focused on a teacher’s knowledge and experience with the curriculum. The first assumes that current teachers know how to create curriculum and have the desire to create their own curriculum because the *Curricular Framework* requires teachers to do so. It also assumes that teachers want to improve their teaching and their students’ learning by following a specific curriculum.

The second assumes that English teachers communicate not only with other English teachers, but also with teachers of other subjects. English teachers within a school need to communicate and work together so that the same material and/or content is not being repeated every year and to reassure themselves that all of the areas in the framework are adequately covered. In addition, communication between teachers would reassure that there is consistency among what is being taught and that there is a smooth transition between grades. At the same time teachers should be collaborating with their colleagues who are teaching in other disciplines inside the school in order to create lessons that draw on the students' prior knowledge.

The third assumes that supervisors and principals are evaluating the effectiveness of teachers' curricula. Teachers must be held accountable and the *Curricular Framework* asks teachers to do something that they have not before been asked to do. A supervisor's role is critical because it is his or her responsibility to make sure that all of the teachers have created their own curriculum, and that they are following it.

The fourth assumption assumes that all of the students in Puerto Rico will benefit from a curriculum that is focused on reading literature. This curriculum seems to have been created for students who are planning to go to college and thus they will need to know how to read and write essays and think critically. However, the assumption here is that students will benefit more from a curriculum based on literature than a curriculum that was based on English for Specific Purposes. Because many students go right into the workforce it might be more beneficial to create a curriculum that meets the needs of students who will be in the workplace and not in the collegiate classroom.



Without mentioning any of these assumptions in the curriculum, I think the Department of Education has overlooked some potential problems in their development of the English curriculum. A teacher's expertise and willingness to work harder is something that should not be assumed. Furthermore, teachers of other subjects and supervisors should be informed in this document that they have a new role that will have a major impact on the success of the new curriculum. The curriculum should be all encompassing and should allow the possibility for English to be taught for special purposes.

### **The Curriculum in Use**

#### **Question VIII: How should the curriculum be implemented?**

In order to effectively implement this curriculum the current political party in power must encourage other political parties to support the new curriculum. Too much division among party lines in Puerto Rico will deter what could have been a good plan.

Funding will more than likely have to be increased, or reallocated, in order to support the growing need for teachers retraining administrative supervision. The *Ley de la Carrera Magisterial*, a law that requires teachers to participate in continued education in order to get pay increases, needs to be enhanced (Department of Education, 1999).

University teacher training programs must be revamped to include curricular development, which will add cost to educating future students. In addition to continuing education at the University level, teachers could benefit from specific curriculum workshops that train teachers to create their own curriculum. However, educating existing teachers and those in teacher training programs to create a curriculum is the only way by which this curriculum can be successful. Furthermore, courses in curriculum

should be required for teacher certification, which would force universities in Puerto Rico to create classes that would train teachers to create their own curricula.

The way in which teachers actually interpret the current *Curricular Framework* is something of great interest. There seems to be a great deal of discrepancy in the layout of the “Scope and Sequence” portion and its relation to the Whole Language approach mentioned in the “Features of the English Program Curriculum” section (p. 18). The curriculum leaves teachers wondering how exactly they are supposed to incorporate the four divided content areas into one Whole Language Approach. Teachers, who are grossly underpaid are now forced to add one more task to their already taxing schedules.

**Question IX: What can be learned about the curriculum from an evaluation point of view?**

According to Posner (1992), there are two ways to learn about curriculum from an evaluation perspective. “The first is by examining information provided by the curriculum developers in the form of data, suggestions, or instruments for collecting data. The second way is by planning a hypothetical evaluation of the curriculum as a means to identify your concerns about it” (p. 240). After reading the curriculum numerous times, I think its developers used the most current data pertinent to the learning of English in Puerto Rico. The following researchers: Resnick (1993), Schweers & Hudders (2000) and Vélez (2000), are well known for their insight and views in the area of English education in Puerto Rico. They favor giving more autonomy to teachers as far as curriculum development, and this reallocation of power shows it is apparent that the developers agreed with these noted researchers. The move towards decentralization and depolarization of the DE is the curriculum’s greatest strength because for the first time

the DE is giving teachers power over curricular matters. This conclusion is highly significant because for the first time the English curriculum from the DE is attempting to decentralize, de-politicize and give more local power to those who are actually teaching.

In order to evaluate the effect of the *Curricular Framework*, I assessed the effect that it has had on the curriculum development of individual teachers throughout the island. My main concern with this document is that the DE does not provide enough guidance and training to develop teachers who are capable and have the time and resources to create their own curriculum. The curricula that have been published within the last ten years have provided teachers with a framework and theory, but never have teachers been given the authority to create their own curricula (Department of Education, 1994; Department of Education English Department, 1998; Department of Education, 2000).

Another aspect that can be learned about the curriculum from an evaluative point of view is the fact that the document does not mention the role or importance of supervisors / facilitators. Furthermore, the *Curricular Framework* does not specify that teachers should be attending courses and workshops related to curricular development. Also, there is ambiguous writing which never really specifies or gives examples of a curriculum that teachers should be creating.

The broadness of the curriculum opens doors for teachers to develop their own curriculum arbitrarily. Teachers are responsible for tailoring their curriculum to meet the needs of their students. However, the official curriculum does not provide a sufficient explanation of how teachers are supposed to go about assessing their students' needs, which is needed to insure teachers are using similar assessment techniques. Moreover,

the *Curricular Framework* is so general that teachers can rationalize using any language learning activity regardless of its effectiveness.

The last area that can be learned from an evaluation point of view is that teachers must collaborate with other English teachers as well as teachers from other disciplines. In order to implement the Constructivist Approach, teachers need to actively search what students have learned and what they are interested in. In doing so the teachers build on the students' previous knowledge. Thus, communication and collaboration among teachers within the school is essential.

## **Critique**

### **Question X: What is your judgment about the curriculum?**

The *Curricular Framework* is a document that is based on Krashen's theory of second language acquisition and the Constructivist Approach. As a "framework" it provides public school teachers and trainees an idea of what is expected of them when they teach, but does not go into the specifics of how or what exactly should be covered. Possibly more important, the Department of Education has gone to great lengths to remove itself from previous administrations' personal agendas and to start a movement toward decentralization which will create a system in which the specific needs of students are being met (Schweers & Hudders, 2000). This is an admirable move because for the first time the DE is redistributing its power over curricular matters, which was unheard of in previous curricula and will give power to teachers who know their individual student's needs better than those who are not in the classroom everyday. Though the move towards decentralization could potentially be a positive move, it is too drastic because all of the power is going directly to the teachers, and is not passing through an intermediary

position. Furthermore, little research has been conducted to highlight the positive effect that this drastic decentralization may have on teachers. Currently, the English program has teachers who are not accustomed to developing their own curriculum because previous curricula have not required them to do so. Furthermore, teachers applying for certification in Puerto Rico are not required to take a class in curriculum design and development. Thus, the DE is not guaranteed that its teachers have the experience and educational background needed in order to effectively develop their own curriculum.

Though the developers of the *Curricular Framework* offer the document as “neither a curriculum guide nor a curriculum; (p. 3)” it is indeed a guide to create individual curricula. While, the *Curricular Framework* is referred to in the document as “neither a curriculum guide nor a curriculum” representatives from the DE are presenting this document as the English curriculum (Department of Education Representatives, 2004; Representatives of the Department of Education, April 23, 2004). The word “framework” is used correctly in this situation in that it is supposed to be used only in the development of future curricula. This leads to ambiguity because from my class observations I have found that many teachers think that the *Curricular Framework* is indeed the curriculum.

The curriculum also contradicts itself in that it is a proponent of the constructivist approach. Yet there is no mention of teachers interacting with teachers of other disciplines to insure that they are teaching issues and areas that have been covered or mentioned in other classes. The use of content-based instruction, coupled with team teaching, would force teachers to sit down and plan the best way of teaching their students. The constructivist approach depends on the English teachers’ abilities to make

reference to and facilitate in enhancing and reemphasizing themes and concepts already familiar to the students.

Teachers are supposed to be able to understand and embrace their curriculum. However, it is possible that when teachers are given a document that is so broad and ambiguous and training for the curriculum is ineffective, teachers get confused and may choose not to use the document. Another important area that affects the curriculum is, because of the extreme broadness of the document, teachers can easily justify to themselves that what they are doing fits within the guidelines of the framework. This leads to the question of supervision and teacher accountability. A curriculum that is so broad leaves the teachers the freedom to do practically whatever they want. Teachers being able to do whatever they want is quite ironic, considering the standardized tests that students are required to take follow a strict formula of different skills and concepts. If the curriculum were tighter and more structured, teachers would be forced to cover certain material, at a particular pace, in order to insure that the necessary skills and concepts were being learned by students in time to take their standardized tests. A curriculum with more structure, detail and definition would lead to additional teacher accountability and less wasted time in the classroom and better test scores.

## **Chapter V: Data Analysis of Questionnaire**

Thirty out of thirty-two active English teachers in their respective schools completed a questionnaire that was distributed to five different high schools in five different municipalities in southwestern Puerto Rico. As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire was broken up into four different areas: Prior Training and Education in Curriculum Design (items 1-4b); The Curriculum's Usefulness to Teachers (items 5,7, and 11); Attitudes of the Teachers towards the English Curriculum (items 6, 8, 9, and 10); and How Teachers View the Curriculum as a Political Document (item 12). In addition, item 13 was developed as an open ended question in order to elicit supplementary opinions and ideas that the teachers had on how the curriculum could be improved. Apart from the thirteen items, I left a space in the upper right hand corner of the questionnaire where teachers recorded their total years of experience. In order to facilitate the analysis of the data I have decided to first look at the years of experience and then look at the different questions and how they apply to their specific areas. The questions have been broken into four respective tables, which are displayed in their respective sections.

The years of experience of the participants in this study ranged from one to thirty-three. This range is extremely large and gives testament to the fact that the English teachers in these five towns are varied in age and experience. The average number of years of experience among my participants was 19.36, meaning that many of the teachers in this area are very experienced and have encountered numerous changes within the DE and the different Secretaries of Education. The various levels of experience might be a possible explanation for the variance among teachers' responses.

Each high school was extremely top heavy in terms of older English teachers. Only five teachers had less than ten years of experience. Fourteen teachers will have completed thirty years of teaching in the next ten years, making them eligible for retirement. As these older, more experienced teachers retire, younger, less experienced teachers will be hired to take their positions. With an abundance of new teachers, the *Curricular Framework* plays an especially vital role in the development of English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico. With the different levels of experience in mind I will now start to look at the teachers' perceptions of the *Curricular Framework*.

### **Prior Training and Education in Curriculum Design**

In order to find out about prior training and education in curricular design, several functions were addressed. Table 1 is a summary of this information.

Table 1  
Prior Training and Education in Curriculum Design

1. Do you have a copy of the new <i>Curricular Framework</i> for the English program, distributed in the Spring of 2004?	<u>Yes</u> 28 93%	<u>No</u> 2 7%
2. Does the <i>Curricular Framework</i> require all teachers to create their own curriculum?	<u>Yes</u> 10 33%	<u>No</u> 20 67%
3 A. Have you ever taken a university course in curriculum Design?	<u>Yes</u> 10 33%	<u>No</u> 20 67%
B. How long ago?	1,1,4, 5, 6, 7, 7,10, 13, 15	Avg. 6.9 years ago



4 A. Have you participated in the Department of Education's training for the new English <i>Curricular Framework</i> ?	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>			
	18	12			
	60%	40%			
B. The training for the <i>Curricular Framework</i> was effective and helped me better understand the new curriculum.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	3	14	1	0	0
	17%	77%	6%	0%	0%

The first item on the questionnaire assessed how many participants actually had the *Curricular Framework* document. Almost all of the English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico, ninety-three percent, reported that they had the document (see Table 1). Only two of the participants, or the remaining seven percent, reported that they did not possess the document. After asking one of the participants who reported she did not have a copy of the *Curricular Framework*, I was told that, she probably did sign for it and may have had it at one time, but she never read it and does not currently know where it is. Because such a large number of teachers have the document, it appears that the Department of Education did a sufficient job of supplying all of their English teachers with the document and this is a positive finding.

The second item on the questionnaire examined whether or not teachers perceived the *Curricular Framework* to be a document that requires them to create their own curriculum. Only ten of the participants, or one-third, reported that the *Curricular Framework* requires teachers to create their own curriculum. The other twenty participants reported “No” they were not responsible for creating their own curriculum. The second item suggests that there is a problem in teacher interpretation of the word “curriculum.” The majority of the teachers seem to believe that they do not have to create their own curriculum. The ambiguity in the meaning of the word “curriculum”

determines what exactly is expected of teachers in the creation of the individual curriculum and is a major problem. For example in the introduction of the curriculum it reads: “It (the *Curricular Framework*) is a general document that serves as the reference frame for the curriculum design” (p. 1). Exactly what is meant by “curriculum design” is not discussed in the document. More detailed views on what teachers believe about the wording will be discussed in the interview portion of the study, but the ambiguity in the wording and the use of the word curriculum is an area that could potentially create difficulty for many teachers.

The third item on the questionnaire attempted to ascertain how many teachers had taken a course in curriculum design. It seems a course in curriculum design would be a logical course that the DE would want their teachers to have taken, if they are going to be required to “evaluate and design their own curriculum” (p. 3). Though a university-level course in curriculum development seems useful and a worthy requirement for certification, according to Law 6234 published by the Department of Education in 2004, a class in curriculum is not a required class to become certified by the Department of Education. Because it is not a requirement for certification, I was curious to find out how many teachers had taken a course that would help them design and develop their own curriculum. According to the teachers, only one-third had taken a course in curriculum design (see Table 1). This is problematic since teachers are expected to create their own lesson plans based on the *Curricular Framework*, yet majority of them have not taken a course in curriculum design. The one-third of the teachers who did report that they had attended a course in curriculum design did so within the last seven years. The fact that the teachers had taken their course in curriculum design recently is significant in that

teachers who have not participated in continued education more than likely have not taken a course in curriculum development either. .

The fourth item on the questionnaire looked at teacher's perceptions regarding previous training they had received on the *Curricular Framework* (training provided by representatives from the DE.). Sixty percent of the participants reported that they had attended training on the new curriculum (see Table 1). However, it is more noteworthy that forty percent of the participants had not. Of those who attended the training, eighty-four percent of the teachers reported that the training was effective and helped them to better understand the new curriculum. This is a positive finding in that teachers do agree to have learned something from the training. Why teachers may have agreed to this question and not strongly agreed will be covered in the interview as well as the discussion sections of this research.

In summary, in the area of Prior Training and Education in Curriculum Design, teachers demonstrated a great deal of variation. On the positive side, a majority of the teachers have the *Curricular Framework*. On the negative side a majority of the teachers misunderstood the document and concluded that they were not required to create their own curriculum. In addition, sixty-six percent of the teachers had not taken a college course in curriculum design leading one to believe that teachers may need additional training before creating their own curriculum. Furthermore, it seems ironic that eighty-four percent of the teachers who attended the training got something out of the training, yet two-thirds of the teachers reported that they were not required to create their own curriculum, it was merely a presentation of the document they created.

## The Curriculum's Usefulness to Teachers

The second area: The Curriculum's Usefulness to Teachers (items 5, 7, and 11), examined the usefulness of the document. The fifth item on the questionnaire specifically was aimed to focus on teachers' perceptions of how important the curriculum was in teachers' actual creation of their own courses.

Table 2  
The Curriculum's Usefulness to Teachers

5. In my assessment of the new <i>Curricular Framework</i> I find it to be a document that restricts the way in which I plan and structure my classes.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	0	6	18	6	0
	0%	20%	60%	20%	0%
7 A. Do you use specific parts of the curriculum daily?	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>			
	20	10			
	66%	33%			
B. The <i>Curricular Framework</i> is useful in my everyday planning.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	5	15	0	0	0
	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%
11. The <i>Curricular Framework</i> significantly helps my daily lesson planning.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	3	16	10	0	1
	10%	53%	33%	0%	3%

Although the *Curricular Framework* forces its users to focus on the skills and objectives laid out in the "Scope and Sequence" as discussed in the curriculum analysis, it is extremely broad and allows teachers to pick and choose almost anything to teach in their classrooms that is somehow relates to the skills and objectives set forth in the curriculum. The broadness of the curriculum was reflected in the results of item five of the questionnaire, in that eighty percent of the participants disagreed that the curriculum

restricts the way they plan and structure their classes (see Table 2). These are significant numbers because they work against the fundamental purpose of the *Curricular Framework* since they do not provide the teachers set boundaries. The whole purpose of a framework is to set boundaries by which additional curricula is created; however, according to Item 5 the *Curricular Framework* does not restrict the teachers planning. The significant number of participants who reported that the document does not restrict the way they plan or structure their classes is an indication that the document is too broad and does not provide direction.

Item seven examines the usefulness of the curriculum in daily activities. One third of the participants responded that teachers do use at least some specific parts of the curriculum in their daily planning (see table 2). Of those who replied yes to item 7A, only twenty five percent strongly agreed to the statement: “the *Curricular Framework* is useful in my everyday planning” found in item 7B. The other seventy-five percent of the participants agreed with this statement. This agreement seems to indicate that the document is helpful to some of the teachers, yet could be made more useful in daily planning activities. However, it is obvious that some teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico do not feel it is necessary to use the curriculum. Exactly why they do not use the curriculum for their daily planning is not reflected in the questionnaire, but will be discussed later in the interview portion of this study.

Item eleven shows that sixty-three percent of the participants felt that the *Curricular Framework* significantly helps their planning, which it is designed to do. However, there still seems to be a lingering one-third of the teachers that do not think that the document considerably helps them create daily lesson plans. The fact that only ten

percent of participants strongly agreed shows that there is room for improvement so that teachers would have a tool that would notably help them with their daily planning.

Teachers' perception varied greatly regarding the effective use of the curriculum. Sixty-three percent of teachers reported that the *Curricular Framework* does help them plan their classes (Item 11). However, the fact that teachers believe that the document does not restrict the way in which they plan their classes raises a red flag (item 5). If teachers felt that the curriculum was useful, I would have expected more teachers to answer, "strongly agree" in item 7B and 11. But the relatively low percentage of teachers responding with the answer "strongly agree" could indicate that there is some degree of ineffectiveness in the curriculum document or its implementation. Moreover, in each of the items in this area, a third of the participants disagreed with the usefulness of the curriculum. In fact, eighty percent of teachers reported in Item 5 that the curriculum did not restrict the way in which they plan or structure their classes. There is no consensus among high school English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico on the *Curricular Framework's* usefulness to teachers. However, the teachers who did report that they used the document reported that it was to some degree useful, which is a positive finding.

## Attitudes of the Teachers Towards the English Curriculum

The third area of the questionnaire focused on Attitudes of the Teachers towards the English Curriculum and replies were elicited in items 6, 8, 9, and 10, which can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3  
Attitudes of the Teachers towards the English Curriculum

6. I feel I have liberty in teaching whatever is necessary for my students.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	17	9	2	1	1
	57%	30%	7%	3%	3%
8. I have confidence that the <i>Curricular Framework</i> was developed according to the latest in research and methodology.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	5	15	9	1	0
	16%	50%	30%	3%	0%
9. The <i>Curricular Framework</i> is a legal document that represents my needs as a secondary teacher of English.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	2	16	8	4	0
	7%	53%	27%	13%	0%
10. The <i>Curricular Framework</i> is a legal document that represents the needs of my students.	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
	2	13	12	2	1
	7%	43%	40%	7%	3%

The sixth item was designed to measure teacher's perceptions on how much liberty they thought they had to teach whatever was necessary for their students to learn successfully. Only twenty-nine out of the thirty participants answered. Nonetheless, I found that an overwhelming majority, eighty-seven percent, agreed that they have the power to teach whatever is necessary for their students. This finding is in line with what the *Curricular Framework* was aiming for by allocating authority to the teachers to develop their own curriculum. On the other hand, the *Curricular Framework* does not explain how teachers are supposed to assess or diagnose what exactly should be taught in

their classes. By having no standard form of assessment there is no way that one can insure that the students' needs are actually being met.

The results from item eight were similar to item six in that two-thirds of the participants agreed that they had confidence "that the *Curricular Framework* was developed according to the latest in research and methodology." These numbers seem to imply that the majority of the teachers have confidence in the curriculum. However, the remaining thirty-three percent represent a rather large contingency of teachers who do not have confidence in the curriculum nor because they do not use the curriculum frequently (Item 7A).

The ninth item on the questionnaire focused on teachers' perceptions of the *Curricular Framework* as a legal document that represented their needs, as teachers. Sixty percent perceived the document to represent their needs and forty percent did not. With forty percent of teachers reporting that the document does not meet their needs, there are a large number of teachers who do not perceive their curriculum to be as affective as it should. This large group of teachers shows that there are indeed many teachers who have a lack of confidence toward the document. Nonetheless, the most interesting finding comes when item 9 is compared to item 10.

The tenth item was phrased very similar to the ninth item with the exception that it questioned the needs of the students instead of the needs of English teachers (See Table 3). The tenth item was the only item in the questionnaire in which the participants were almost equally split. Forty-three percent of the participants agreed to the statement: "The *Curricular Framework* is a legal document that represents the needs of my students." Fourteen percent of the participants who felt that the curriculum met their needs as



teachers did not think that the curriculum met the needs of their students. This transition in agreement towards the document shows that some teachers might believe the curriculum is appropriate for their use, but that it might not be the best document when referring to the needs of their students. If teachers do not believe that the document represents the needs of their students, they would have a valid reason not to use the curriculum. There seems to be an inherent insecurity and a lack of confidence among many of the participants over their perception of the document meeting the needs of their students. This will be further analyzed in the interview portion of the study.

To summarize, in the area of Attitudes of the Teachers towards the English Curriculum, there is a great level of variance among the teachers. Most of the participants were in accordance with the goals of the *Curricular Framework*. However, similar to the other areas in the questionnaire, one group of teachers does not have much confidence in the document. When a group of teachers does not have confidence or has a negative attitude towards the curriculum, the document may be rendered ineffective. With teachers relatively split in both items 9 and 10, it is possible that some teachers have a negative attitude towards the curriculum. This negative attitude will be explored in depth in the interview portion of the study.

### **How Teachers View the Curriculum as a Political Document**

Table 4 focuses on the area of the questionnaire which looked at how teachers view the curriculum as a political document.

Table 4

## How Teachers view the Curriculum as a Political Document

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>DA</u>
12. The Department of Education's English Curriculum changes dramatically every time a different party wins the governorship.	19 63%	8 27%	3 10%	0 0%	0 0%

The twelfth item considered the teachers' views on curricular changes as a result of changes in governorship on the island. This item offered the most one-sided results of any other item on the questionnaire. An overwhelming majority, ninety percent of the participants, agreed that the DE's English education curriculum changes every time there is a change in governor (see Table 4). Whether the curriculum dramatically changes or not is not the importance of this finding. The significance is that majority of the teachers perceive the document to be constantly changing, which is a sign of curricular instability.

Furthermore, this item shows a perception that the teaching of English is closely related to politics. The publication of the *Curricular Framework* was an attempt to de-politicize and decentralize as discussed in the curriculum analysis, however the results from item twelve show that teachers do not believe that it is entirely effective as a tool for teachers to teach their own classes. According to the results from Item 12, ninety percent of English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico perceive a strong relationship between curricular changes and changes in the government. The relationship between curricular change and politics will be discussed in detail in the interview portion of the study.

### Teachers Suggestions for Future Curricular Development

The last item on the questionnaire, item 13, was the only open ended question which asked the participants to provide suggestions that they believed would help the DE

in future curricular development. Of the thirty participants, fifteen answered item thirteen. The reoccurring themes that were mentioned as suggestions to improve future English curricula were materials/technology, meeting students' needs, additional training, ESL vs. EFL, and separation of politics and education. Many of the participants made suggestions that fell into multiple areas. Teachers mentioned most frequently Materials/Technology with eight different tokens highlighting the need for either additional or different textbooks and more classroom technology. Five teachers mentioned the importance of revising the curriculum to cater to the specific needs of students. In addition, four different teachers mentioned the need for additional teacher training, and two teachers wrote about ESL vs. EFL, and the separation of politics and education. Moreover, the need for different forms of instruction and the issue of "teacher burnout" were also mentioned. The complete transcribed answers to item thirteen can be seen in Appendix G.

As was mentioned in the curriculum analysis portion of this study, the *Curricular Framework* does not make reference to any specific textbook at any level of English education. According to the *Curricular Framework*, "the collaborative effort allows a team (of teachers) to choose and develop pertinent materials that will be used for a "customized" ESL curriculum" (p. 17). Thus, there is no specific textbook that teachers must use. However, many of the participants in this study showed utter disgust towards the textbooks that were provided to them by the DE. Teacher #5 wrote: "The Department of Education should buy textbooks according to the curriculum. Some textbooks have no relation at all with the curriculum suggestions." Teacher # 8 added, "The Department of Education should use only one series of textbooks from K-12. That way the students

progress through a research-based program instead of learning one thing this year and a completely different thing next year with no progressive level.” The two teachers who voiced these opinions on the current textbook situation illustrate the need to find a new textbook. Another teacher added, “Right now we have a lack of books. The books they give are with us for long years” (Teacher #22). It seems the textbook situation needs to be examined.

Meeting students’ needs was also an area that was mentioned frequently in the open-ended portion of the questionnaire. With thirty-three percent of the participants mentioning the need to create a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the students, clearly a number of English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico do not believe the new *Curricular Framework* meets the needs of their students as measured in item ten. For example, one teacher reported, “The curriculum should provide options for students that are not interested in going to college. Conversational English courses should be an alternative for students who would like to go to work and not earn a college degree” (Teacher #5). These students who are planning to go directly into the workforce after high school create an additional complication for teachers and curriculum developers. This complication however, is never mentioned or referred to in the *Curricular Framework*. “The Department of Education needs to evaluate textbooks according to our students’ needs. I consider grammar should be taught separately from the reading. My students prefer it this way so I do my planning according to their needs” (Teacher #20). Planning according to the needs of the students is something that is mentioned repeatedly throughout the *Curricular Framework*. However, Teacher #20 felt that grammar should be taught separately from reading, which goes against the *Curricular Framework’s*

adoption of Stephen Krashen's theory on second language acquisition (p. 10). Teacher #24 wrote, "Try to give or reach students' needs specifically, urge teachers to teach specific skills, not what they think." This comment which shows the importance of meeting the students' needs as well as the fact that some teachers are teaching, "what they think" and not necessarily the skills that are outlined in the curriculum.

Teachers also reported additional training as another area that they could benefit from. "Better and extensive training for teachers on how to use the *Curricular Framework*. It should provide ideas and examples" (Teacher #7). Because of the sheer broadness of the document, as discussed earlier, it is difficult to force teachers to create new materials, write new lesson plans, and develop their own curriculum if there are no comprehensive training sessions that offer hands on examples that the teachers can use and emulate in their future curricular development (Teacher #11). Teacher #24 felt that the DE needed to give more seminars to teachers and that it must be clear to teachers what the realistic goals of the DE are and how they want them to be carried out.

Although only a few teachers mentioned the areas of ESL vs. EFL and the separation of politics and education, these two areas may provide us better insight into ways in which the curriculum can be improved. The ESL vs. EFL debate is covered in the *Curricular Framework*, in which writers decided to move,

away from the traditional definition of teaching and learning ESL and stressing the meaning of "second" as sequential in terms of timing, i.e., sequence of language acquisition, we can move away from the traditional concept and its various emotionally and politically charged connotations (p. 9).

By creating this new paradigm for English education in Puerto Rico, the developers of the curriculum hope to redefine the way English is taught and, by doing so, they hope that teaching English will distance itself from the political connotations that it currently holds. Nevertheless, some of the participants in this questionnaire were not convinced that the curriculum indeed separated politics from English education. “I strongly think and feel that the department of Education should be separated from the different parties we have in Puerto Rico... The problem we have is that the department is color-coded Red/ Blue/ Green. That’s very sad” (Teacher #6). The way in which English is taught varies across the island. Depending on the place on the student’s environment and so on. Teacher #15 states:

I have always believed English should be taught as a foreign language not as a second language (in P.R.). The techniques, methods and books are completely different. When a second language is taught, we assume the students hear/communicate in English outside the school (with their friends, family, store etc.). This is not the case in P.R.

Another area that was mentioned briefly but seems as though it could have great relevance to this study was the need for different forms of English instruction. Teacher #5 mentioned the need for conversational English classes that would benefit students who are not planning on going to college and probably do not need to know how to read and write about literature. Teacher #20 mentioned the idea that students would benefit from more language instruction in a language laboratory. These testimonials point to two fundamental goals for students. The first goal is for the student who is planning to go to

college and thus must learn academic English; the second is for the student who does not plan to go to college and thus needs English for specific purposes and this will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections of the study.

### **Summary of Questionnaire Data Analysis**

The results of the questionnaire show that English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico have varying opinions on the English *Curricular Framework*. Although almost all of the teachers in the area have the document, it is unclear whether teachers are using it the way in which it was designed to be used. A majority of the teachers have participated in a Department of Education training session pertaining to the curriculum. However, sixty-six percent of the teachers who participated in the study did not feel that the *Curricular Framework* required them to create their own curriculum. The curriculum is quite specific in that it requires teachers to meet, discuss and develop materials and a curriculum for their students, but even the DE presents it as though teachers need not bother with such work (Vélez, & Philpott, April 23, 2004). In addition, sixty-six percent of the participants in this questionnaire have not ever taken a course in curriculum design, which presents a problematic situation for teachers who, according to the *Curricular Framework*, are required to create their own curriculum.

The attitudes that teachers have towards the curriculum also vary. On one hand, many teachers think the curriculum helps them in their daily planning and, on the other hand, some teachers do not perceive the document to be very useful. One of the major findings this study revealed is that a group of teachers demonstrated a lack of confidence in the document as exemplified in the results from items eight, nine, and ten.

According to the responses given on the questionnaire, teachers do not see the curriculum as a stable document. With ninety percent of the participants agreeing that the curriculum changes dramatically every time there is a change in governorship, one can speculate that there might be a desire for more stability and continuity in the curriculum. When there is constant change in the Department of Education, and funds, textbooks, materials and curricula are consistently being changed, manipulated and done away with, teachers have the right to question when another version of the curriculum surfaces. Therefore, teachers' past experiences with erratic changes in curriculum is testament that some teachers will have a lack of confidence with future curricula.

Many of the participants made suggestions about how English education and the curriculum in particular could be improved. Among these were the need for up-to-date materials and textbooks. In many cases, textbooks are used as a form of curriculum (Posner, 1992); however, if the textbooks and materials provided by the Department of Education do not meet the needs of the students in the schools, then they are of little use. The next section, the interviews of five English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico, will give deeper insight on what these teachers think about themes that have already been discussed.



## **Chapter VI: Data Analysis of Interviews**

The perceptions of thirty of thirty-two secondary English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico were examined in the questionnaire portion of this study. The results from the questionnaire pointed to specific areas of need / problems related to the curriculum, but the numerical data does not provide the in-depth thoughts and perceptions of the teachers regarding those questions. Consequently, I chose five teachers to interview, each one representing one high school in one of the five municipalities, of southwestern Puerto Rico. In this portion of the study I analyze the reports of these five English teachers.

All of the participants were either referred to me by other teachers or principals, or they offered to be interviewed when they were approached for the distribution of the questionnaire. Thus, the teachers in this part of the study are not necessarily representative of all English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico. In order to keep the interviews and schools anonymous, I chose to give each teacher a letter and each school a number.

Teacher A from School 1

Teacher B from School 2

Teacher B2 from School 2

Teacher C from School 3

Teacher D from School 4

Teacher E from School 5

As I read over the transcribed interviews multiple times, I looked for re-occurring themes or domains that emerged from the interview data (Spradley, 1979). The questions in this interview portion of my research were created as a result of my own prior observations in public high schools in Puerto Rico, as well as the questions that arose in the analysis of the *Curricular Framework* and the questionnaire data. After I conducted the interviews I went back and double-checked that all of the questions were answered and started to group them into different themes. After identifying all of the different themes in the interviews, I was able to categorize those themes and put them into the following five areas where all play a role in the way teachers relate to the curriculum:

- I. Areas under the DE's Control that affect English Education
- II. Areas Outside the DE's Control
- III. Teachers' Conditions
- IV. The Way Politics Influence the Curriculum
- V. Teachers Thoughts on Developing a Local Curriculum

I use these areas in the analysis of the different facets of the English curriculum to develop a grounded theory on English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico and their use of curriculum (Merriam, 1998).

### **I. Areas Under the Department of Education's Control**

According to the teacher's interviewed, the Department of Education (DE) is directly responsible for a variety of areas that directly affect English education in Puerto Rico. First, the DE is responsible for insuring that their teachers have been properly trained in their area of expertise. Second, the DE is responsible for adequately

supervising teachers. The third area under the DE's control is the purchasing of textbooks and materials for teachers and students. These three areas under the control of the DE emerged from the interview data, and which are now discussed in detail.

### **Training**

As stated earlier, it is apparent in the results from the questionnaire that many of the English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico were disappointed by previous training sessions sponsored by the DE (Item 4A). In addition, sixty percent of the participants had not taken a course in curriculum design, raising questions as to how prepared teachers are to create their own curriculum (Item 3A). Thus, in the interview portion of the study, I wanted to find out to what extent the training sessions on the *Curricular Framework* were helpful. In addition, I hoped to find out how teachers were supposed to develop their curriculum.

I found that all five of the interviewed participants believed that the training sessions, though informative to a certain extent, did not do anything that was new or beneficial that would help them to develop their curriculum (Teacher A). When Teacher C was asked about the training that pertained to the *Curricular Framework* and how effective it was, she initially replied "It was helpful." And after asking what was discussed she replied: "Well now that was the problem, we did receive a training in the superintendents office... and it was presented in a way that was stressing the standards and the philosophy of education (but) that was another booklet that we received that was simply skimmed over." Teacher C expressed the same concern that seventy-six percent of the teachers did when they agreed that the training was informative but only eighteen percent strongly agreed to the same statement showing that the training was not perceived

as effective as it could have been (Item 4B). When Teacher A was asked how successful the training session was, she replied, “They didn’t do anything that we hadn’t done already,” thus reaffirming that the training could have been more effective.

Teacher B, the only participant who reported that she did not plan according to the new *Curricular Framework*, said that, if she had received the document, she did not know where it was. She also explained that neither she nor the other teachers in her school had attended training on the new curriculum. However, when asked about previous training offered by the DE she said that she had “never gone to a really interesting meeting where I feel (she felt) really motivated.” Teacher B validates the information found in Item 4 on the questionnaire, which showed that 40% have not received any training on the new curriculum.

Though none of the interviewed teachers spoke highly of their training for the teaching of the regular ESL courses, two teachers, Teacher C and Teacher E, mentioned they received additional training because they both teach Advanced Placement English (AP) courses. Teacher E explained that because they teach the AP course, (a course that all of the participating schools have) they are required to attend additional training sessions, use different materials, and meet with other AP teachers in surrounding municipalities. Teacher E said that AP teachers are responsible, dedicated and active in teaching their students who are working to receive college credit in English. Teacher E also pointed out that AP teachers do not receive any additional pay or any other perks. Teacher C, who also teaches AP English, reported that she had learned a variety of different skills, such as the use of different textbooks and the development of activities in training sessions that are exclusively for teachers who teach the AP class.

It is evident from the reports of these English teachers that there is inequality in training. Two teachers received training that was helpful for the teaching of their AP class. However, their classes represent a relatively small portion of the senior class. It is puzzling that not more is being done for those who teach the regular ESL classes. This lack of equality between AP teacher training and the training devoted to teachers of regular English classes will be addressed in the discussion portion of the study.

### **Supervision**

Supervision, the second area under the DE's control, is supposed to offer individual assistance and feedback to teachers. English facilitators, the new name for persons who are responsible for the training and supervision of teachers, serve as the link between the DE and teachers.

Teacher B explained that the supervision process "...isn't like it was before. Before it was like me feeling intimidated by my English supervisor; right now when we ask him to come to the school he comes, not like before when he would come with that long face." When asked how often the facilitator/supervisor came to observe her class, Teacher B informed me that without the teacher's invitation the facilitator could not enter the classroom.

Some teachers go long periods of time without ever being observed which is proof that teachers are not being given important feedback that could be used to improve their teaching (Teacher C). Teacher D explained that supervision in her school happens once a year in the middle of the second semester. In her case she reported that she is visited by one of the principals who does not understand English, and thus, the supervision is not as affective as it should be. Teacher E reiterated that the supervision at

her school is torn between two different supervisors, one from the town that she works in and the other from the regional headquarters. She described the supervision process as confusing and bothersome because “she (one of the supervisors) wants it (a lesson plan) one way and the other wants it the other way.” Creating lesson plans that please both supervisors is a difficult task and hence must create a level of stress among teachers. Teacher E was the only participant who spoke of having two supervisors that function outside of her school. However, in her case there is a municipal supervisor and a district supervisor, both are asking for different things of the teachers.

The “mentor system” is another form of supervision that the DE has control over and is cited in the *Curricular Framework* (p. 18). This mentor system was never mentioned by any of the participants in the interviews. Teacher A did, however, mention a CDA, which is the name that teachers in School 1 use to refer to their facilitator. Teacher A spoke about a recent visit in which the CDA visited her school and implored the different English teachers to work together to develop a plan (lesson plan) that was then taken to other schools and used as an example. Teacher E also expressed disappointment and anger because the *Curricular Framework* proposes the implementation of a mentor system, yet nothing has been done to enact it. “The mentor system doesn’t exist. It says that teachers will assist in designing the curriculum and the choice of preparation and/or adoption of materials. That is false, that is a fallacy” (Teacher E).

Ironically, because there are many experienced teachers in the system (see Years of Experience from questionnaire Appendix D), new teachers in the system would benefit greatly from a mentor system. Because no teachers mentioned the mentor system as a

component of their training or supervision, and no mention of the mentor system was revealed in the handouts prepared for the *Curricular Framework* training (Vélez & Philpott, April 23, 2004), I contend that supervisors/facilitators have not yet implemented this system. With no mentoring system, teachers report that they do not meet with other teachers to discuss curricular matters.

Another facet of supervision is making sure that teachers are meeting to share materials and discuss curricular matters. Teacher C expressed that she finds it difficult to persuade all of the teachers in her school to agree on a time to meet. When they do meet they often discuss other aspects of English teaching, such as English Week (a week of the year that the school dedicates to learning English). When asked how often English teachers meet to discuss curricular matters, Teacher D responded, “We only meet like once or twice a year and that is to coordinate English week. We plan activities and workshops and stuff like that, but we never really discuss the curriculum.” Though some schools have meetings for English teachers, the brunt of what is discussed has little relation to the English curriculum. Unlike the teachers of the Advanced Placement course who meet with other AP teachers from neighboring municipalities, most English teachers often do not meet with teachers from their own schools, much less teachers from other schools, to discuss curricular matters. Teacher A was the only teacher who described her colleagues as extremely close and communal in the way they plan and use their materials. One of the reasons why Teacher A described being so close to her colleagues was because majority of them had recently finished their master’s degree together at a nearby university. The interaction among the teachers in graduate courses

along with teaching together daily obviously helped the relationship between the English teachers in School 1.

### **Textbooks / Materials**

In addition to training and supervision, the DE is in charge of the selection, purchase and distribution of textbooks that are to be used by teachers and students. The textbooks that have been distributed in the past represent a form of curriculum (Posner, 1992). In Item 13 on the questionnaire, many teachers mentioned textbooks and materials as one of the major areas that needed to be improved to enhance future curricula. Based on the *Curricular Framework*, it is unclear whether or not the DE is going to continue purchasing books for English classes or whether they are going to depend on the creation of materials by teachers, which the new curriculum requires. Nevertheless, the teachers' comments on the questionnaire match up almost identically to the repeated expressions of disgust that four of the five interviewed teachers issued toward the textbooks. Teacher D was the only teacher who thought that her students could relate to the stories that were published in their literature textbook. Even though Teacher D thought that her students could relate to the stories in the textbook, she reiterated how important she thought it was for her to include other materials from outside the textbook, citing the use of the San Juan Star, an English language newspaper on the island.

The other four teachers who participated in the interview portion of the study all spoke negatively of the textbooks and said they used them to varying degrees. Teacher A said that the teachers in her school do not even use the books. "I have 300 some books of



another level in my room and they aren't worth anything (Her books are in another teacher's room).” When asked why the books were not worth anything she responded,

Because some of these books are just bought to say that we bought new books but they are not related to our students... We have these literature books that are 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade books in the United States, but they are not even associated culturally or literary culture associated (students do not culturally relate to the literature) to what we would want to teach (Teacher A).

Teacher B reported that she believed that the textbook was too difficult for her students to relate to because they were written for an American audience. She said, “How am I going to know or teach a student from Puerto Rico stories in here that have to do with snow storms?” These strong opinions supplemented with the various tokens in the questionnaire, exemplify the dissatisfaction that many English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico have with their textbooks.

As a result all the teachers said that they thought that they had to go beyond the textbook in order to incorporate material that their students could relate to. Additionally, the teachers shared other problems related to textbooks. They all believed that the experiences, lifestyles, and home environments of their students varied from other students of the same level in other parts of the island, mainly San Juan. All of the teachers described differences in the lack of exposure to experiences that students in the San Juan area take for granted, for example airports, nightclubs, tourists and museums. All of the teachers agreed that the needs of their students were different from the ones of students in San Juan. One of the differences that Teacher B mentioned was the amount

of educational activities that teachers and students have in San Juan. Students in the San Juan metro area can easily take field trips to museums, plays and other educational opportunities that present themselves. Teacher B also mentioned the sacrifice that teachers and students have to endure every time they go on a field trip to San Juan. Waking up at four in the morning to take a school bus two and a half hours to go see a play or visit a museum is something that students and teachers in the San Juan area do not have to suffer. Furthermore, the rural countryside of southwestern Puerto Rico does not have airports, large buildings, large hotels and an international atmosphere comparable to San Juan. The five teachers felt that these differences create students with different needs.

The area of textbook and material selection is something that is difficult to monitor. In one sense the DE controls what textbooks it buys for the students in the public school system, yet it has no control over how the needs of students vary throughout the island. As was mentioned in the review of the literature, Puerto Rico has the third largest public school system in the United States and a population that is spread out in diverse geographical regions; therefore, it is understandable that the specific needs of students would vary (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000). When four out of five of the interviewed teachers speak negatively about textbooks, one can conclude that the Department of Education should attempt to do something to provide teachers a textbook that meets their students' needs.

The three areas that emerged from the interviews with the teachers were: Training, Supervision, and Textbooks / Materials. The interviewed English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico reported that the training that they were given for the new

*Curricular Framework* was not adequate. Furthermore, teachers who are not receiving adequate training are left confused as to what exactly is expected of them. The participants also spoke of a supervision process that needs to be improved. The lack of supervision gives unbalanced power to teachers and leaves supervisors with little power. The lack of supervision and training has created areas in which there are clear misinterpretations between what the curriculum says and what teachers actually do. For example training sessions present the *Curricular Framework* as the English curriculum, yet teachers are not aware that they have to create their own curriculum. The five participants used the textbooks provided by the DE to differing degrees. However, they all acknowledged that their students' needs were unique and they all felt it important and necessary to create their own materials.

## **II. Areas Outside of the Department of Education's Control**

When analyzing the interviews of the five English teachers, I saw that, in addition to the domain of Areas Under the Control of the DE, teachers' reports show that there are additional domains that reside outside of the DE's immediate control but that effect teachers and the way they use the curriculum. The domains that emerged from the interview data are: The Creation of Materials, Students' Needs, and Busy Teachers.

### **The Creation of Materials**

As was shown from the interview data, some teachers do not use the assigned textbook. Consequently, they have a lot of experience in creating their own materials. The creation of their own materials is one of the fundamental premises that the *Curricular Framework* is based on. "I enrich the course with all kinds of selections right from books like *Chicken Soup*" (Teacher B). Even Teacher D, who said that she enjoyed

the textbook, incorporated different poems and news articles from outside the textbook. All of the teachers who participated in the interviews were dedicated to creating new and innovative materials for their students. However they also explained that creating their own materials adds stress and may be one of the reasons why the more experienced teachers undergo burn out (Teacher A, Teacher E). Teacher E, described the situation in more detail when she explained:

Pay is low so teachers aren't really motivated. Why should we create new materials? They (the other English teachers) tell me, your kids are already college grads...you have plenty of time to prepare materials and you like to. But most of them are burnt out. They feel like that. My colleagues have been working for more than 20 years.

Although many teachers do develop their own materials and are very dedicated to their work, this is testament that there are some teachers who either do not have time, do not feel they are getting paid enough or just "don't care" to create their own materials (Teacher B). Unfortunately, the DE and their supervisors/facilitators have little or no control over these teachers because they do not visit teachers regularly, nor do they provide useful training in the development of different materials (Teacher B). Thus, it is difficult for supervisors to know or control what kinds of materials are being used in English classes throughout their jurisdiction.

When all of the teachers were asked how dedicated their respective colleagues were in creating their own materials, the interviewees' responses differed. In all of the interviews the participants acknowledged that there were teachers in their school who were not planning or developing materials to the best of their ability. None of the

teachers seemed to believe that all of their colleagues were irresponsible; however, Teacher E reported that her fellow colleagues were not as committed as they should be. She stated, “most of them are burnt out” (Teacher E). Teacher B repeatedly hinted that there were English teachers in the system who did not want to change from what they had been teaching in the past or from using their “faded away plans all the time.”

The creation of materials is an important part of the *Curricular Framework* and according to the teachers interviewed, on one hand, they report that teachers must create materials because they do not want to use textbooks that do not satisfy the needs of their students. On the other hand, there are teachers who are not creating new, innovative materials.

### **Students’ Needs**

All of the teachers that participated in the interviews and the questionnaire reported that the needs of their students were different from the needs of students in other parts of Puerto Rico, primarily, those from the San Juan area. As concluded in the analysis of the curriculum, the *Curricular Framework* does not account for the possible needs of all students who are required to take English. The participants in the interviews spoke of division among their students as far as how necessary English would be in their future.

The teachers reported that the *Curricular Framework* does not acknowledge the diverse students in their schools. There are different needs based on how much English students will need in their future. Teacher D explained that there were many students who did not necessarily need to know about American literature if they were not planning on going to college. Teacher B, reconfirmed Teacher D when she spoke of the

importance of creating conversational English classes. These teachers' voices, along with the division created between the AP English course and the ESL courses, is testament that there are different needs for English among students in high schools in southwestern Puerto Rico.

As mentioned before, in the area of supervision under the control of the DE, two AP teachers at their respective schools are required to plan for two different classes, their AP section and their regular student (ESL) sections. The AP students represent proficient English speakers who are destined for college, but there are also two other groups of ESL students. The first group is comprised of the ESL students who plan to go to college. The second group is made up of ESL students who do not plan on going to college. In addition, both Teacher D and Teacher C explained that many of the students in their schools did not necessarily plan on going to college. They do not want to study in college and they have no interest in reading poetry or literature. They want Conversational English (Teacher D). Teacher A described the needs of her students as "more vocational" which could be seen as an additional reason for the implementation of Conversational English and/or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. One of the assumptions mentioned in the Curriculum Analysis portion was that the developers assumed that students would need to use literature, writing skills and other important areas of the curriculum in the future. According to three of the interviewed teachers (Teachers A, D, E), some of their students, mainly the ones not planning on going to college, would benefit more from Conversational English than their current English course which is based on literature.

## **Over-burdened Teachers**

From teachers' reports, another noteworthy area that presents a disparity for the current curriculum is the burden on their time. According to Teacher A and Teacher E, a number of teachers are too busy with other obligations and cannot dedicate the time required by supervisors. Because of the low pay in the public school system, it is common for teachers to hold additional teaching jobs. As a result of working sometimes two jobs in addition to receiving low pay, Teacher E explained that some of her colleagues "work evening courses so they really do not want any changes in their day classes because they are over worked and they are over stressed" (Teacher E). Teacher A reiterated that although she and her colleagues are very close and share many different ideas and materials, they seem to get bogged down in planning. "Truthfully, they (supervisors/facilitators) want us to have all this planning, you have to have preparation, you have to have this, you have to have that, we don't have the time for that. Truthfully, we (English teachers) do not have time for that." Moreover, these reports suggest that there are teachers in the system who do not have time to plan and create their own curriculum as the *Curricular Framework* requires and thus the document should provide more guidance for teachers who feel and perhaps are overburdened.

As can be seen from the interview reports, the DE has a limited amount of control over the ways teachers undertake English education in their classrooms. The DE cannot control the amount of time that teachers dedicate to making new materials, nor can they control whether or not teachers are making innovative materials. Likewise, teachers report that the needs of their students are different from students in other parts of Puerto Rico. Finally, teachers report that some are over-burdened and must work extra jobs

because of low pay. As a consequence, they have little time to invest in the creation of materials as is required by the new *Curricular Framework*.

### **III. Teacher Conditions and their Consequences**

English Teachers in Southwestern Puerto Rico vary in experience, age and gender. In the previous section I showed how teachers are over-burdened. In this section I will discuss different conditions that they reported as problematic. Noteworthy in this area are frustration with the system, bad experiences with previous curricula, and eventual burnout of teachers

#### **Frustration with the System**

Throughout all of the interviews the teachers shared similar frustrations about training, supervision and the use of the textbook that was provided by the DE. Moreover, all of the teachers, with the exception of Teacher D, expressed frustration or spoke of their colleagues' frustrations in teaching high school English in southwestern Puerto Rico. The first reason for frustration that three teachers reported was that they felt as though English teachers were not being treated as well as the other teachers. The second reason that all of the interviewed teachers reported was frustration with the lack of meaningful textbooks and materials. The third cause of teacher frustration was the lack of supervision that was reported by three of the teachers. All teachers having to work individually to create their own lesson plans and materials was the fourth area that emerged as an area under frustration with the system.

When interviewing Teacher B, another teacher came into the room and participated in the interview for roughly ten minutes. This teacher will be referred to as Teacher B2. Teacher B2 reported that the bulk of the money from the DE was given to



the Math and Science programs and that English and Spanish were left with little funds. Likewise, Teacher E described English teachers as always having “felt that we are the ugly ducklings of the DE.” Teacher B and Teacher E felt frustrated that other courses have priority over English as well as feeling isolated from others within the DE.

The second area of frustration was textbooks and materials. Teacher B was frustrated that she did not have enough textbooks, and the ones that she did have were delivered without the CDROM, an instructional tool that she would have liked to incorporate in her classes. Teacher A was frustrated that she had to create all of her own materials because the textbooks that the DE sent to her school “are not worth anything...because some of these books are just bought to say that we (DE) bought new books but they are not related to our students” (Teacher A). Moreover, Teacher E spoke about her dissatisfaction with not having a grammar book for her students. Her disappointment stems from the fact that the standardized island-wide English proficiency exam requires a relative knowledge of grammar.

The third reason for teacher frustration was supervision. Teacher C expressed frustration that the supervision in her school is erratic. Some years there are meetings and others there are not. She described their latest training session as a “high and bye” meaning nothing substantial was covered in the training. She also said that the week before the interview, there was a meeting and “we (English teachers in School 3) were not invited. And it hurts us because the little we receive we don’t really receive.” Teacher C also mentioned numerous times that materials were never delivered to her school. She stated that she felt as though her high school was isolated from the others because they always received materials and paperwork last, and sometimes they did not

receive them at all. Teacher E's commented on her frustration explaining how she was torn between two different supervisors, which is additional proof that some teachers view supervision as an area that can cause frustration.

An additional reason for frustration stems from teachers developing their own lesson plans and materials without meeting with other teachers. According to the interviewed teachers, only School 1 had a cohesive group of English teachers who worked together and shared their ideas, plans, and materials. Though School 1 does not meet very frequently to discuss curricular matters, their unity provides them with a support network that is not present in the other schools. The *Curricular Framework* implores teachers to work together to develop their materials and to develop their own curriculum. Nevertheless, it does not seem as though the majority of the teachers are meeting to discuss materials or curricular matters. The rest of the teachers felt that more needed to be done to open communication between other English teachers to assure that they are "all on the same boat" (Teacher A). Instead of working efficiently by working as a team, many of the teachers are left to fend for themselves, which puts the burden squarely on the individual teacher. This burden in many instances has equated to frustration which can cause stress and may lead to eventual burnout.

### **Bad Experiences with Previous Curricula**

Erratic changes in previous English curricula have consequently made English teachers reluctant to adopt new curricula. Bad experiences as a result of abrupt changes prompted both Teacher A and Teacher B to speak of times within their tenure when the DE changed the way in which teachers were supposed to teach English, and within that same year they had dropped it. Teacher A explained:

We were supposed to design the curriculum for the courses we wanted to give based on the texts that were sent to us. We spent weeks working on how we were going to plan it, who was going to give what, preparing forms and plans and the new textbooks arrived and before the next semester, Poof! Everything was like, you know what? It is not working we are not going to use it.

Obviously, the English teachers in School 1 who had toiled diligently in the creation of their own curriculum and lesson plans must still have reservations about using new curricula after such an experience. A similar situation of a curriculum that was drastically changed happened a few years ago when classes were set up into different English classes. For example a student would take conversational English for 90 days and then take English writing for another 90 days. Teacher B liked the system because it was different and teachers were able to teach different classes, but the program was discontinued shortly after it started, without ever really being able to assess its effectiveness. The negative experiences of these two teachers with past curricular change, coupled with the numerous comments that suggested dissatisfaction with the curriculum (Item 12 from the questionnaire), are testimony that teachers view the English curriculum as a document that lacks stability and changes whenever there is a change in government.

### **Burnout as a Consequence**

Teacher burnout, the major consequence of teachers' constant frustration with the system, stems from their perceived instability in the DE. Teacher burnout occurs when teachers are overworked, taken advantage of, frustrated, tired and no longer enjoy their

job. There are countless reasons for teacher burnout, and most of the participants believed that it exists in Puerto Rico. Teacher A explained how the older veteran teachers, who had been in the system, did things the way they wanted to, and did not pay much attention to changes in the curriculum. She informed me about her overwhelming experience as a new teacher seven years ago. As a new teacher she was forced to rotate from classroom to classroom. She tried to do her best and she tried to create innovative plans and materials for her students. However, colleagues always told her “you (Teacher A) are just beginning, you will have that state of mind, but in a couple of years you will be just like us (burnt out teachers).”

Teacher E spoke about her colleagues being burned out when she said that they are not taking the time to create their own materials explaining that “They are an 8 to 3 kind of teacher (teachers who come to work their required hours and go home) who do not believe they have to do any kind of work outside of school” (Teacher E). She also reported that teacher burn out is a major problem because “most of them are burnt out... my colleagues have been working for more than twenty years.” In order to remedy the situation, Teacher E stated that the “Department should let us retire after 25 years to let the new people come in with new attitudes and more stamina. Since the pay is so low and the retirement pension is so low, we aren’t really motivated to do more.” A school, whose English teachers have all been teaching for over twenty years, would benefit to get younger teachers into the school. Hiring new teachers will be inevitable in the near future at School 5. Moreover, the hiring of new teachers makes control over the training and use of the English curriculum even more important.

With reports that many English teachers are suffering from burn out, one might assume that, as a consequence, teachers are not developing materials as well as they would if they were more motivated and felt well-compensated for their work. The creation of materials and their own curriculum is one of the fundamental premises of the *Curricular Framework* as assessed in analysis of the curriculum. However, if teachers are not motivated and if they suffer from burnout, it is difficult to imagine that they are teaching to their maximum potential.

In spite of their frustration and burnout, the teachers in this study are dedicated to their work. Teacher D and Teacher C both cut out relevant articles from the English Puerto Rican newspaper *The San Juan Star*. Teacher B tries to take her students on many memorable field trips, and teacher E plans for both her AP course and her ESL course with no extra compensation. They all genuinely care about their students and for years “they have been asked to do too much with too little” (Teacher E).

In summary, this section described and interpreted teachers’ reports on specific teachers’ conditions with their consequences. The participants reported they were frustrated with three principal areas: the instability of training, supervision, and the lack of textbooks and materials. Furthermore, two of the participants spoke of the consequence of erratic curricular change. Teacher A spoke of a bad experience with a previous curriculum that has teachers questioning whether to bother with a curriculum because it is always changing. Frustration with the system, perceived curricular instability, and low pay have caused resulted in burnout among some English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico.

#### **IV. Teachers' Perceptions of Political Influence on the Curriculum**

Since the United States' occupation in 1898, English education on the island of Puerto Rico has been associated with politics. It has been the center of debate interrelated and connected to the never-ending political battle over the island's political status. Algren de Gutiérrez (1987) concluded that Puerto Rico would not become a bilingual island until the political status of Puerto Rico was further defined. In spite of this on-going dispute, and as was mentioned in the analysis of the curriculum, the *Curricular Framework* does a good job in recognizing the importance of de-politicizing English education by referring to English proficiency as a gatekeeper that allows for "socioeconomic mobility in this society" (p. 5). One of the aims of the new curriculum is to decentralize and de-politicize English education. With this in mind, I turn to the different opinions that teachers had on the influence of politics on English education in general, and on the curriculum in particular.

When the interviewees were asked if English teaching and the curriculum were politically charged, they all believed that they were not. However, all of the teachers expressed that there is a strong connection between politics and the DE. This is very similar to what was seen in the open-ended portion of the questionnaire, where four out of the fifteen who answered the item expressed their discontent in the way politics influences English education. Though many teachers thought that the curriculum changed drastically every time there was a change in government (Item 12), Teacher C stated that "it is not the curriculum that changes, but only its cover". When asked about the difference between the past curricula and the present *Curricular Framework*, Teacher C replied, "It's the same, it's the same." She explained that there is not really anything

fundamentally different from the new curriculum when compared to past curricula. Teacher D had a similar outlook to the question when she replied, “The curriculum doesn’t really change much, just more use of technology and things like that.” Though these two teachers do not perceive major change in the latest curriculum, the other teachers, both in the questionnaire and the interviewees, expressed that there is substantial curricular change whenever there is a change in government. Teacher A summarized the dilemma when she said: “...the problem here is that the education is closely related to the politics of the island and this is like the four year frustration. You never know what is going to come next.” Teacher E added a comment that one of her colleagues voiced at a recent school faculty meeting, saying: “oh don’t worry about whatever Cesar Rey did, don’t worry, that’s going to change later on.” Again reiterating that the curricular moves by the DE are erratic and will soon be changed again. These reports suggest that many teachers believe that the constant change in the Secretary of Education leads to instability in curricular issues. When teachers “never know what is going to come next” (Teacher A) they are less likely to change the way they have been teaching because of the fear of being forced to change again the next time there is a change in government.

Instability in the curriculum, as a result of constant changes in the Department of Education has had an impact on teachers. For example, Teacher A, created an elaborate curriculum over the course of a whole summer only to find out there was a change in the curriculum and that all of her work was of no use. This teacher would obviously be weary of change. No matter how explicit the wording of the curriculum is, teachers do not perceive the curriculum to be de-politicized. Although Teacher D did not believe that

English education was connected to politics in Puerto Rico, she admitted that she was among the minority of teachers who thought so. Curricular change as it equates to political change every four years is the reason why the interviewees have reported that there is a strong connection between politics and English education.

A new Governor usually names a new Secretary of Education and thus, changes are inevitable. An example of this was the change of Secretary of Education in 2001. When Governor Sila Calderón won the governorship for the PDP party she appointed Cesar Rey as the new Secretary of Education. This change in Secretary prompted change all the way down to teachers (Teacher A, C, E). Taking into consideration the inevitability of change, it is important that teachers feel stability in the system. One of the areas that the teachers mentioned to be the least stable is the area of supervision. This is a logical change that occurs when new secretaries of education are reallocating money to support programs that seem to be more representative of their party's educational platform, goals and interests. As mentioned in the area on training and supervision, under the areas that the DE has control over, it is evident from the interviews as well as from the teachers who participated in the questionnaire, that supervision and training needs to be improved. This rests in the hands of supervisors/facilitators who undoubtedly face their own challenges whenever there is a change in power. Hence, it seems to be imperative that change and instability be cut to a minimum. This can only be done if political parties agree to leave the curriculum alone and not make drastic changes when they come to power. Supervisors/facilitators must persuade teachers to believe that the new curriculum is here to stay, that it will only minimally change, and that it will be successful in the future. It is my feeling that when teachers feel this stability they will be



more likely to use the curriculum as a tool, and less like a document that was published merely as a formality because of the change in government. In conclusion, four out of five of the participants perceive English education to be political and all of the participants perceive this as a catalyst for instability in English education.

### **Summary of Interviews**

The participants in the interview portion of the study had very similar views in the domains that emerged from the interviews. Their views and opinions complement those of the participants in the questionnaire portion of the study. The interviewees reported that the Department of Education is not being as efficient as it possibly could be in the implementation of areas under their control. Specific areas that need to be evaluated and improved are training, supervision, assessment of students, and textbooks and materials that the DE provides. These problematic areas were also voiced in many of the studies that were mentioned in the review of the literature. Furthermore, four out of five of the interviewed felt that the materials that the DE supplied did not meet the needs of their students.

Regarding the areas over which the DE has little control, the participants expressed consistently that there were fundamental differences in the needs of their students. The difference between lifestyle and the experiences of a student in southwestern Puerto Rico is quite different from a student in the San Juan metropolitan area, and this is a major concern to teachers in this study. Because of the differences in student needs, the department should reevaluate the teaching of conversational English, or English for specific purposes, to students who do not plan to go to college. Likewise, the teachers reported that the creation of their own materials is necessary, but sometimes

quite difficult given the insurmountable circumstances in which they are forced to work. Though the needs' of students and teachers is not under the control of the DE, it is inherently linked, since the DE should be supplying materials that meet the needs of its students.

The conditions that teachers face when planning and undertaking a new curriculum play a significant role in the success it will have. Though none of the teachers that I interviewed admitted to burnout, they all clearly stated or insinuated that there were English teachers in their schools that have or will soon be experiencing burnout. The frustration that teachers have with the system has been consistently influenced by factors that are both outside and inside the control of the DE such as: low pay, and the expectation that teachers create their own materials "from scratch." This is an extra burden on teachers, which can be demoralizing. In addition, the lack of teacher preparation meetings and curricular continuity among English teachers raises questions about what exactly is being taught in English classes.

Moreover, politics is seen as a major burden for English teachers. Many feel politics has seeped into all of the different facets of English education, and has an influential pull in the amount of materials teachers are provided, as well as how they are supervised and is evidence that a hidden curriculum does operate (Apple, 1990). Though the new curriculum aims for decentralizing and de-politizing the DE, it is apparent that teachers do not perceive it to have happened yet.

## **Chapter VII: Discussion**

Through the analysis of the *Curricular Framework*, the questionnaire and the interviews of five English teachers, I identified five areas that consistently appeared throughout the three components of the study: The Curriculum's Usefulness; Training and Supervision; Textbooks and Materials; Teacher Frustration / Burnout; Politics and its Effect on the Curriculum. In the following section I discuss the five areas and then recommend the creation of a local curriculum for secondary English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico.

### **The Curriculum's Usefulness**

The *Curricular Framework* is a document that was created in order to guide teachers in the development of their own curriculum (p. 1). In contrast to previous curricula this document acknowledges the DE's need to move toward decentralization in order to meet the local needs of its populous. Schweers and Hudders (2000), argued that English education must be democratized, stating that all students should get an equal opportunity to learn English. Though the writers of the curriculum would probably disagree, the new curriculum is set up in a way that does not legitimately give all students an equal opportunity to learn English. The *Curricular Framework* is responsible for this inequality because it allows teachers to teach whatever they deem necessary as long as it fits within the parameters of the document. As described in the results section of the interviews, teachers vary considerably in the methods and materials they use to teach their students.

The creation of their own curriculum is confusing because the curriculum does not provide examples or give references explaining what the teachers' "curriculum" is

supposed to look like. This lack of definition has created ambiguity as to what exactly is expected as a result of the *Curricular Framework*. According to the questionnaire, Item 2, sixty-six percent of the participants did not believe that they had to create their own curriculum. In all of the interviews the teachers reported that they believed that the creation of their own curriculum meant creating their own lesson plans. Furthermore, none of the participants in the interviews felt that they were responsible for creating an additional curriculum above their lesson plans. In the Power Point slides that were used in one of the training sessions for the new *Curricular Framework*, there was no mention of how the DE wanted teachers' individual curricula to be organized (Vélez & Philpott April 23, 2004). These examples are testament that English teachers do not currently know what is expected. In order for the *Curricular Framework* to be successful the writers and trainers must be specific and tell teachers what exactly is expected of them.

According to Posner (1992), a curricular framework is a document that facilitates in the creation of more detailed curricula. Though Posner (1992) does not mention the creation of daily lesson plans as a form of curriculum. Richards (2001) suggests that the creation and implementation are the very last steps in curriculum development and are preceded by: "curriculum planning; specification; programme implementation" (p. 42). Even though according to Richards (2001) lesson plans could be considered a curriculum it can only be done if the previous steps have been realized and this is not happening in the Puerto Rican public school system. According to the reports of the teachers, they are developing their own lesson plans based on the *Curricular Framework* which coincides with the "curriculum planning" stage. The middle stages of "specification and programme implementation" have been bypassed. Therefore teachers are not really

developing their own curriculum because they are not following all of the steps, but are skipping from the first to the fourth. Furthermore, data from Item five on the questionnaire suggests that eighty percent of the participants believe that the *Curricular Framework* does not restrict the way in which teachers plan and structure their classes suggesting that the planning that they do undertake does not have an effect on what is taught in the class. This is a fundamental problem because it suggests two things. One, teachers do not recognize the curriculum as a document that they must abide by. And two, if teachers do not feel that the document restricts the way they plan and structure their classes then it serves no real purpose. The goal of a framework is to highlight parameters by which teachers plan and structure their classes. If teachers do not see the framework as restrictive, it is because the curriculum is so broad that almost anything can be justified within the current parameters. Hence, an additional document needs to be created that gives teachers a much clearer idea of what is supposed to be taught and what measures of accountability are to be used to show when the student has mastered the curriculum.

The *Curricular Framework* was set up in a way that provides teachers with numerous pages dedicated to theory and history, but it devotes only four pages to the scope and sequence portion of the high school curriculum. It is the lack of detail in the scope and sequence, and the overall mission of the curriculum that confuses the curriculum's users. The broadness of the curriculum and the ambiguity of what exactly is expected in terms of the creation of a teacher's personal curriculum, are areas that must be defined and reiterated in training sessions. According to Teacher A and Teacher E, many of the English teachers view this new curriculum as just another change that will

not have an impact on how or what they teach, resulting in teachers giving their classes the same way they have taught in the past.

### **Training and Supervision**

Another domain that was mentioned in all three areas of the study was training and supervision. Training and supervision play important roles in any educational environment. Training keeps teachers up to date with changes in the department, and keeps teachers informed about the latest in theory and practice. Likewise, supervision is important because it is the mechanism that reassures the DE that teachers are teaching the appropriate areas in an acceptable manner. The reports of the teachers in the questionnaire and the interviews suggest that the DE did indeed assume that training and supervision was adequate and effective. However, the teachers in the interview portion of the study all reported that there is room for improvement in both supervision and training.

In the analysis of the curriculum, I mentioned that the DE assumes that teachers have been properly trained and educated in curricular development. However, Item Four from the questionnaire shows that forty percent of the teachers who participated, had not attended any of the DE's training sessions on the new curriculum. Consequently, these teachers were not able to benefit from asking questions or being able to discuss the new curriculum with the designated supervisors and facilitators representing the DE. With such a large number of teachers not attending *Curricular Framework* training sessions, many teachers must still be left wondering what exactly the new curriculum proposes. Moreover, two-thirds of the participants in the questionnaire reported that they had never taken a class in curriculum development. This is not a surprise considering a course in

curriculum is not a requirement for teacher certification according to Law 6234; however, a course in curriculum development seems as though it should be a requirement if the DE expects their teachers to create individual curricula (Department of Education, 2004). The lack of curriculum training before and after becoming a professional teacher is a problem that the DE must face. Teachers need to be trained whenever they are asked to create new types of plans, use new assessment techniques, and use materials provided by the DE, which they are unfamiliar with. Without proper training, teachers do not know what is expected of them, and thus departments will have teachers who are doing whatever they think is necessary and not necessarily what the curriculum says should be done.

With the curriculum as broad and ambiguous as it is, the role of training and supervision is all the more important. It is puzzling that teachers reported that the training session was effective in the questionnaire Item 4B, yet the results from Item 2 revealed that teachers did not believe they had to create their own curriculum. This discrepancy may show that training is not as effective as it should be.

Teachers may have in fact learned a number of new things about the curriculum at the training. For instance teachers may have learned for the first time that the curriculum is based on the Constructivist Approach (Vélez & Philpott, April 23, 2004). According to the Power Point handouts from Vélez and Philpott on April 23, 2004, teachers were told many new things about the curriculum. However, the handouts and the training session that I attended failed to inform those in attendance of exactly what is expected of them in terms of creating their own curriculum, which is required by the new curriculum. The omission of the need for teachers to create their own curriculum in the training

session was a major problem because it is the individual creation of curriculum that separates the *Curricular Framework* from previous curricula in Puerto Rico, and thus this major difference should have been covered in detail.

The questionnaire and interviews offered additional insight into training and supervision. Teacher C described training as a “Hi and Bye” meaning that the supervisor did not actually provide any meaningful training. Furthermore, teachers in both the questionnaire and interview portion reported the need for additional training and supervision. Though Item 4A showed that seventy-seven percent of the participants agreed that the training helped them to understand the curriculum, only seventeen percent of the participants strongly agreed the training was extremely effective. It is imperative that training for a new curriculum be exceptionally effective. Teachers need to be told exactly how they are supposed to write up their lesson plans. Furthermore, there should be training sessions that deal with the development of a course syllabus so teachers create their lesson plans as they relate to the unit or area that is designated for that week. An additional workshop that would benefit teachers is one that would teach them how to create their own scope and sequence. Teachers need these specific workshops in order to be able to develop their own curriculum effectively.

In addition to being told exactly what is expected of them, teachers should be informed of the similarities and the differences between previous and current curricula. In the case of the training for the new curriculum, it does not appear that teachers were informed that creating curriculum is now a requirement of their job. As a result teachers continue doing what they have done in the past, which restricts the potential of anything new in the form of curriculum.



According to the teachers interviewed, the relationship between the teachers and their supervisors / facilitators is not strong. Teachers C reported that the teachers in her school are often left out of important meetings and that she feels they are isolated from the rest of the schools in the area. Moreover, the in-class supervision of teachers does not seem to be effective because, according to Teacher D, she is only supervised once a year. Teacher A and Teacher B also reiterated that supervisors / facilitators are not allowed to observe classes unannounced creating an additional problem. If teachers do not invite their facilitator to come and observe them, they will go long periods of time without receiving constructive feedback.

The role of the supervisor has changed from past years. Their function now is to help teachers improve teaching English, and not to intimidate, criticize, and ridicule (Teacher B). Even though the focus of supervision has changed over the years, it is evident that there is friction between teachers and their supervisors because supervisors are not allowed to observe classes unannounced. This friction has been the result of previous notions that supervisors were there to intimidate teachers and tell them all of the things they were doing wrong. However as Teacher B said a number of times, the role of the supervisor has changed. This change in the supervisors' role allows for additional supervision because teachers should not be intimidated by supervision, but contrarily embrace it and see it as a mechanism that will allow them to improve. In addition, they need to be told what they are doing well, and what they can improve upon. In order to ensure that teachers are adequately supervised, teachers need to give their supervisors an open invitation to come in and observe their classes. However, according to the teachers this is not something that is presently happening. In order to improve language

education, teachers and administrators need to come to an agreement on what is the best for their students and this agreement should come from a clear negotiated understanding of the expectations set out by the curriculum.

Connected to supervision is the implementation of the mentor system, which is an excellent idea that is promoted in the *Curricular Framework* and that serves two important functions. First, the mentor system allows experienced teachers to share their experiences and expertise, while mentoring younger, less experienced teachers. Second, the mentor system gives English teachers time to discuss curricular matters. English teachers from different schools need to meet to develop materials and discuss curricular matters. Teacher A reported that the DE wants her and her colleagues to do work that they do not have time for. Likewise, Teacher E reported that many of the teachers in her school were already burned out. One reason for this burn out is that too much is being expected of English teachers. The implementation of a mentor system could remedy the situation because it would require teachers to meet and share experiences and materials. This sharing could result in less duplication and thus lessen the already heavy burden on teachers who must construct curriculum.

Even though there is great disparity between the regular ESL teachers and the AP teachers, the work of AP teachers shows that collaboration and effective training can help. The two AP teachers in the interview portion of the study, Teacher C and Teacher E, stated that the training they receive as AP teachers is different from those teachers who teach the ESL classes. Teacher E described the AP teachers when she said, "...we are very committed. We correspond with each other, we develop materials together we work together, we have developed an advanced placement curriculum." In the interviews of

the ESL teachers none of the participants described regular training or meetings where they develop materials and curricula. When I asked Teacher E if the other teachers in her school were able to attend these meetings she replied “no.” Additional training for the few teachers who teach the advanced students instead of training the majority creates inequality among teachers, because AP teachers are given additional materials and guidance that ESL teachers are not. This inequality in training and supervision between AP and regular ESL classes is a problematic area of contention in the DE and should be remedied. All teachers can benefit from additional workshops (Department of Education English Department, 1998). Teacher E said that she incorporates a lot of the materials and activities that she learns in her AP teacher training sessions. Because these activities and materials are not accessible to regular teachers, they are being left out from many benefits that would help them bring the curriculum closer to the needs of the students. In a sense, the ESL teachers as well their students are being neglected while their more proficient peers reap the benefits. Inviting and allowing all teachers to attend the workshops designed for AP teachers would level the playing field and decrease the discrepancy between AP teachers and ESL teachers in the high schools.

In the area of training and supervision there are specific areas that need to be improved if the new *Curricular Framework* is to be successful. Improvements that are necessary include the following: First, training sessions should clearly state differences between present and past curricula. Second, all teachers should be required to take a course in curriculum before applying for certification. Third, there should be improvement in supervision of teachers. Teachers must feel comfortable with their supervisors; likewise supervisors must be approachable and willing to help. The

difference in training that AP teachers receive in comparison to ESL teachers is ineffective because by providing the AP teachers, who teach more talented students, with more training creates a wider gap between the “haves” and the “have nots.” The gap between the haves and the have nots has already existed between public and private school students who become more proficient in English (Schweers & Hudders, 2000). The reoccurring practice of giving more opportunities to the haves than to the have nots was mentioned in a parallel situation in the review of literature where the wealthier students have a tendency to go to private schools and become more proficient in English (Pousada, 2000). The exacerbation of division is not a positive trend in Puerto Rican society because it will only create greater class division in the future.

In addition, training and supervision could be improved if the mentor system was enacted. Such a system would provide the opportunity for the less experienced teachers to learn from the more experienced, while sharing materials and discussing curricular issues. Finally, the area of training and supervision could be improved if teachers were encouraged or required to meet with teachers of other disciplines to discuss areas that overlap in order to teach concepts and areas that are relevant and interesting for their students.

### **Textbooks and Materials**

In the curriculum analysis portion of this study, I stated that the writers of the *Curricular Framework* assumed that public school teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico had the time, energy, and resources necessary to choose and/or create the materials for their classes. According to the teachers who answered item thirteen on the questionnaire (see Appendix C), as well as all of the participants in the interview portion of the study,

not all teachers have the time to develop all of their own materials. Therefore teachers need to get together and develop them in teams. Creating original materials is time consuming and difficult. Moreover, teachers who are underpaid, frustrated with their job, and burned out, are less likely to develop new innovative materials. The DE has supplied teachers with textbooks that Teacher A described as “not worth anything.” Teacher D, the one teacher who said she uses the books regularly, reported that her students still only read five selections from the textbook per semester. Because there is no mention of a textbook in the *Curricular Framework*, it is unclear whether or not the DE is planning to purchase new textbooks or whether teachers will have to create all of their own materials. The Department of Education needs to help teachers find a textbook that the teachers feel will fit their students’ needs, or they need to compensate them for the time, energy and money that teachers spend while creating and finding their own materials.

The new English curriculum implores teachers to create their own materials, yet it does not mention a textbook that teachers can use to guide their curriculum. Teachers are given the authority to create and develop their own materials, and there is no other mention of any textbook that is required to be used at any level of English education. By omitting the textbook situation from the *Curricular Framework*, the writers have inadvertently created a major problem. If teachers are expected to do all the work choosing and developing materials, they should also be granted the power to purchase, or at least consult in the purchase of, textbooks that will be used in their schools. Teacher A felt that the textbooks that were purchased for her school were bought only to “say that we (the DE) bought books.” The curriculum must address the situation of textbooks and inform teachers what influence they will have in the textbook selection process.

Despite the omission of textbooks in the curriculum, all of the teachers who participated in the interview reported that they create the majority of their own materials. However, these teachers also reported that many of their colleagues were frustrated and burned out. These burned out teachers are less likely to continue creating innovative materials for their students because they lack motivation and “they simply don’t care” (Teacher B). It is apparent that many teachers could use help in developing their own materials and the mentoring system would be an excellent first step in getting teachers to do just that. The mentoring system, as discussed in the previous section, would force teachers to meet, and in these meetings teachers could discuss, select and develop relevant materials for their students.

All of the teachers in the interview portion of the study mentioned that the needs of their students are different than the needs of students from the San Juan area. Therefore, the materials that are developed in southwestern Puerto Rico will be different because they will reflect the specific needs of their students. Currently the textbooks that have been provided by the DE are books that are designed for native English speakers in the United States. Because the textbooks are designed for students in the U.S. they do not necessarily meet the linguistic or cultural needs that students in Puerto Rico have (Teacher A). In addition, according to the teachers’ reports, students in southwestern Puerto Rico have different needs than students in San Juan, which creates an additional problem for having one textbook for the whole island. Due to all of the difference in students’ needs, it is logical that textbooks be chosen at the local level to insure that the materials meet the needs of the students.

## **Teacher Burnout**

Based on the comments from the interviews it is clear that burnout is a problem facing English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico and it is something that needs to be addressed. Teacher E described her colleagues in School 5 when she said “most of them are burnout. They feel like that. My colleagues here have been working for more than twenty years.” As a result of this burnout she said that her colleagues often ask her “why they should create new materials?” In order to remedy the situation, Teacher E stated felt that the DE should allow teachers the option of early retirement. A school, whose English teachers have all been teaching for over twenty years, would benefit with younger teachers in their school. The hiring of new teachers makes control over the training and use of the English curriculum even more important, because new teachers need to know from the beginning what is being expected of them.

Teachers who have become frustrated with erratic changes in curriculum and materials over the years no longer view the DE as a stable system. This perception of instability carries over into the way teachers view the curriculum. Teachers undoubtedly get tired of hearing about all of the changes made every four years when there is a change in governor. After years of experience, teachers decide to continue teaching whatever they have been doing in the past, which gives the curriculum little influence over what exactly is taught in the classroom. Furthermore, as was mentioned in the review of literature, teachers are getting attacked from both administration and parents / students. For example, the DE pressures teachers to adequately prepare their students to do well on standardized tests. Teachers are also attacked from parents and students report that teachers are not prepared and lack motivation in the classroom (Bliss, 2000; Pousada,

2000). According to the reports of the teachers in this study, the consistent criticism with few suggestions for reform or improvement results in teacher frustration and ultimately teacher burnout. In order to limit teacher burnout, the DE should give more control to local and regional entities that experience only minor political change. If the DE were to provide local districts or regional districts with the authority over curricular development, teachers would really have a say in how English is being taught in their specific area. This input would motivate teachers and make them feel part of the curriculum's development. Getting teachers involved in curricular development is essential because it will cut down on teacher burnout and, as a result, teachers will feel as though they are needed and appreciated. In addition, involvement in curricular development would give teachers the feeling that the curriculum reflects both their needs as teachers as well as the needs of their students. In order to curb teacher burnout, the DE needs to work hand-in-hand with teachers to develop teachers who feel useful and who perceive stability within the department. If these two changes can be instituted, future English curricula will have the potential to be much more effective and more useful for English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico.

### **The Effect of Politics on the Curriculum**

The great influence that politics has had on English education throughout the history of the United States' occupation of Puerto Rico is indisputable. Morris (1995) argued that there is an important relationship between language, politics and culture on the island. Because politics plays such an important role in island affairs, there is no question that the English curriculum is affected by politics. In the analysis portion of the *Curricular Framework*, I found that the DE is making a conscious effort to de-centralize,



and de-politicize in order to separate the negative political rhetoric that teaching English has evoked in the past. The acknowledgement of the need to give more authority and autonomy to local teachers and administrators is something that separates this curriculum from previous curricula. However, according to the results from the questionnaire and the interview portions of this study, it is clear that teachers in the public high schools of southwestern Puerto Rico feel that politics still has a strong influence on English education. The first influence politics has is on education results in constant flux when the DE develops a new curriculum every time there is a change of the Secretary of Education. The second major influence that politics has on English education results in language policy that is constantly being changed. The third influence results in the purchase of textbooks and materials, just to say they were purchased, but do not necessarily relate to specific students' needs because teachers do not use a standard needs assessment used by the DE. A fourth influence and potentially the biggest influence that politics has on English education results in some English teachers feeling as though they are the "ugly ducklings" of the DE (Teacher E). The last influence that politics has on English education is the relationship between teachers and supervisors. The DE has control over how much teachers are supervised and how much training is given. Thus, the relationship between teachers and supervisors is also influenced by who holds political power and how much money they are willing to allocate towards supervision. With so much instability and with constant changes from one administration to another, it is understandable that teachers would not accept the new curriculum without a critical eye.

Every time there is a change in governorship, teachers feel that there is going to be another change in the education system. Thus, this relation to politics is contingent on which party holds power. The change in the Secretary has previously meant curricular change; however, the move towards decentralization could potentially change that by making the curriculum a local issue, which in many situations, would not succumb to changes as frequently. The only problem is that the *Curricular Framework* gives all of the power directly to the individual teacher, who creates his or her own curriculum. The theory of decentralization is a positive aspect of the framework that I commended in the curriculum analysis. However, the DE, in an attempt to decentralize, has done so too drastically and thus, has left teachers more confused than they may have been before. Moving from a centralized curriculum to an overly decentralized curriculum has left teachers and administrators at a distance too vast to bridge. There needs to be an intermediate level between the DE's *Curricular Framework* and individual teachers' curricula.

### **The Argument for a Local Curriculum**

After analyzing the curriculum, the data from the questionnaires, and the interviews, I conclude that English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico would benefit from an intermediate curriculum that is in between the current framework and their daily lesson plans. As I mentioned in the analysis of the curriculum, the *Curricular Framework* document is so general that teachers can potentially teach whatever they want and could justify doing so by the broadness of the framework. Therefore, at the end of each of the interviews, I asked the interviewees if they thought that the creation of a regional or local curriculum implemented in five to ten municipalities would be possible

and whether or not they would be interested in working on one. After asking these questions it was apparent that the teachers were unfamiliar with the concept of creating a curriculum at a local level, providing evidence that again verifies that teachers have little knowledge of curriculum design. Nevertheless, after explaining the concept of a local curriculum, they all understood and responded positively to this possibility.

Figure 1  
Structure of Curriculum in Puerto Rico versus Grosse Pointe Public School System, MI

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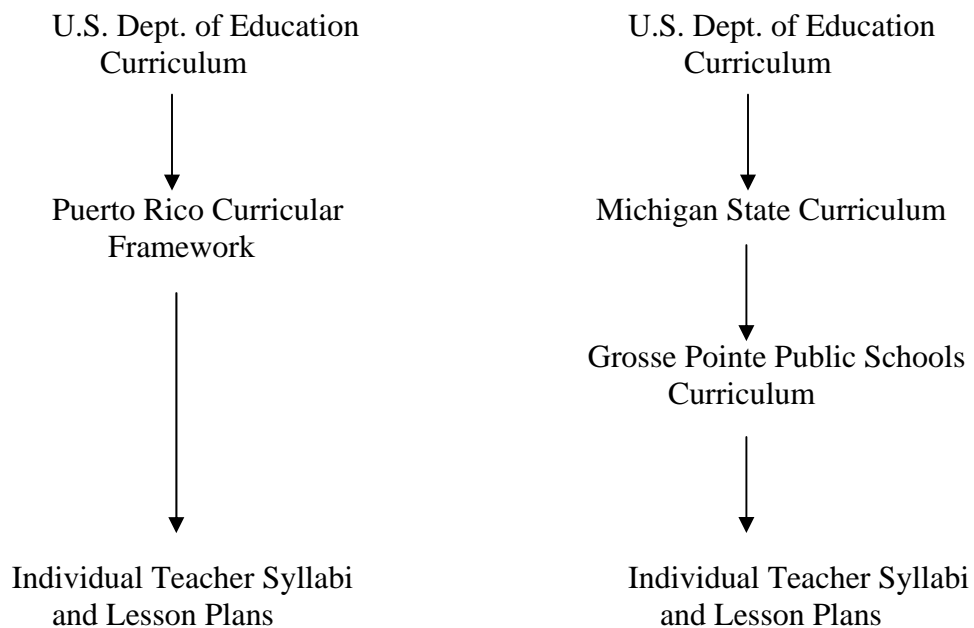


Figure 1 illustrates the way in which the curriculum is structured in Puerto Rico compared to most districts in the United States. A local curriculum serves as a middle area between the *Curricular Framework* and the daily lesson plans that teachers are using as their own curriculum. Most states in the United States have a state curriculum, which could be interpreted as a curricular framework. This state curriculum is adapted to abide by requirements and parameters set forth by the U.S. Department of Education. In most

states, in addition to the State curriculum, there is a more specific local curriculum. This local curriculum is usually set up at the district level. Puerto Rico is in a unique situation because it is the third largest school district in the United States, and encompasses 78 different municipalities.

The creation of a local curriculum would allow teachers to come together and share their ideas on how to teach English based on the local needs of their students. The teachers explained to me that a curriculum at the regional level would allow teachers from a particular region to assist in the creation of a curriculum that would meet their needs as teachers. In addition, a local curriculum would be developed to take into consideration the needs of the unique geographic, social and cultural situations that their students face. Teacher C believed that there was need for a local curriculum because of the diversity of Puerto Rico. She added, “I firmly believe that we should get together and design our own curriculum based on our students needs in southwestern Puerto Rico.” Though all of the interviewed teachers agreed that the creation of a local curriculum would be beneficial, Teacher B mentioned that she knew teachers in her school that would not follow the curriculum if it did not represent what they thought was the best way to teach. Teacher D explained that she thought most teachers would be inclined to use a local curriculum, but reported that some teachers already have what works for them and therefore probably would not change. As discussed previously, it is evident that there are teachers who are burnt out and who do not want change, as Teacher D explained, these teachers are not going to be receptive to a new curriculum. However, new teachers who come to fill vacant positions might be more receptive and should benefit from a local curriculum. Though there will be teachers who will choose not to

use it, the teachers who do care, which I think is the majority, will have a curriculum that offers more guidance and structure as to how English should be taught in its respective grades. In addition, there will be an influx of new teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico due to the vast amount of teachers who have been teaching for over twenty years (see Appendix D). These new teachers will be entering the system fresh and could be of great help in the creation of a local curriculum.

All of the interviewees said they would be willing to participate in the creation of a local curriculum. When Teacher A was asked whether or not she would be willing to participate in its creation she replied: “a political one or a specific one.” This remark by Teacher A, reiterates the notion that the relationship between English education and politics is deeply embedded in the minds of teachers. Nevertheless, the teachers’ positive remarks and overall optimism suggest that English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico would benefit from a local curriculum. Furthermore, because the local curriculum would be developed far from San Juan, it would be distanced from the politics of Puerto Rico, the party in power, and the DE.

Another benefit of a local curriculum is that it could save the DE money (Pérez Román, October 8, 2004). Training teachers to effectively develop their own curriculum is time consuming and costly. As it stands now for the curriculum to be successful the DE will have to train and educate every teacher on how to create his or her own curriculum which would be extremely costly.

There are obviously many different ways that a local curriculum could be enacted. One possible way would be to first pool together all of the teachers in the designated area who are willing to help in the creation of a new curriculum. The second step would be to

find a curriculum specialist that has experience not only creating curricula but also collaborating with teachers. The next step would then be for the teachers and curriculum specialist to gather ideas about what should be taught and how it should be taught. The local teacher input would incorporate the social, cultural, and historical information pertinent to the curriculum. The fourth step would be to actually create a monthly scope and sequence so that teachers know exactly what material they are responsible for covering. After the scope and sequence is in place, the teachers and curriculum specialist would pool together texts and materials providing them with varied resources that correspond with the new scope and sequence. The final step would be for teachers and curriculum specialists to agree on forms of assessment that should be implemented to verify whether or not students are learning. Throughout the development of the local curriculum, teachers and administrators would work together in choosing materials and possibly even textbooks that they believe fit the specific needs of their students. This collaboration could also help by bringing supervisors and teachers together, which could potentially open up more possibility for dialogue. The new curriculum should be field tested and revised based on the experiences from the field-testing.

A curriculum is supposed to help all teachers, but can be potentially more important for new, relatively inexperienced teachers who want to know what to teach and how to teach it. Teacher A recounted her experiences, and what could be the future experience of new teachers in schools similar to hers. She described her experience as a new teacher too “overwhelming,” with little resources to help. She agreed that new teachers in the system would greatly benefit from a local curriculum. Teacher E, added that the teachers who worked in the creation of a local curriculum would have to be

teachers that “don’t say yes yes yes... we need people who are going to question and who will demand things to happen.” I agree with Teacher E in that teachers who participate in developing a local curriculum must be outspoken and analytical. If teachers from the same area are grouped together to develop a curriculum together, their confidence and familiarity with one another would put them in the situation where they could stand up for themselves and actively help in the creation of a new local curriculum.

Whether or not the creation of a local curriculum is viable in terms of implementation and DE support is left to be debated. However, according to the thoughts and views of the participants in these interviews, it seems that many teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico would benefit from and would be willing to work on a local curriculum. If the DE truly wishes to decentralize, they should do so gradually. Teachers are already over-burdened with their in-class responsibilities. The creation of a local curriculum would help to decentralize control, while at the same time alleviating teachers from having to create all of their own materials as well as create their own curriculum.

## Chapter VIII: Conclusions

The Puerto Rican Department of Education's *Curricular Framework English Program*, is a document that was intended to aid in the teaching of English on the island. In this study I sought to answer three questions. The first question had two parts. The first part looked at the purpose of the *Curricular Framework* and the second established whether or not the curriculum fulfilled the function of a curriculum as stated by Posner (1992). To answer this question I analyzed the *Curricular Framework* using ten principle questions from Posner (1992). The second question analyzed how teachers report they use the curriculum and how effective it is. In order to come to conclusions for the second question I used both the quantitative and qualitative data compiled in the questionnaire and interview portions of this study. The third research question was developed so that I could incorporate conclusions from the first two questions into suggestions that would promote an English curriculum that would better meet the needs of English teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico.

In looking at the first research question, it is still not clear whether or not the *Curricular Framework* fulfills its stated purpose. The writers of the curriculum contradict themselves in saying that "it is a general document that serves as the reference frame for the curriculum design" (p. 1). Yet in a presentation given by representatives of the DE at the Western Puerto Rico TESOL Convention in 2004, I was informed that the *Curricular Framework* was indeed the English curriculum (Cotto, 2004). The writers of the curriculum also wrote: "The *Curriculum Framework* is neither a curriculum guide nor a curriculum" (p. 3). The fact that the developers of the curriculum do not consider the *Curricular Framework* to be a curriculum has puzzled me throughout this research. All



of the teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico that I have spoken to believe that the *Curricular Framework English Program* is the English curriculum that they are to implement in their classrooms. If the document is indeed “neither a curriculum guide nor a curriculum” the teachers of southwestern Puerto Rico as well as myself have been misinformed. Furthermore, it leaves this huge district with no real curriculum of any sort. However, according to Posner (1992), the English curriculum analyzed in this research is indeed a curriculum that meets the requirements of a curriculum framework. The problem is the interpretation of the document, not the document itself.

The purpose of a curriculum framework is to guide teachers, administrators and others in further curricular development. Hence the *Curricular Framework* should be as broad as it has been described to be in the analysis of the curriculum. The fact that it is broad is not negative. What is negative is that supervisors and DE representatives present the *Curricular Framework* as a curriculum from which lesson plans should be created. Teachers cannot be told to use the *Curricular Framework* to plan their classes; they need to be informed that they are responsible for creating their own curriculum.

The second research question looked at how teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico use the curriculum and how effective it is. In the questionnaire I found that almost all of the teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico had the new English curriculum, yet only one-third of them felt that the *Curricular Framework* required them to create their own curriculum. The creation of an individual curriculum, which is not clearly defined, is something that is different from previous curricula and is not entirely understood by teachers. The results from the questionnaire also offered insight to potential problems with the curriculum in that eighty percent of the teachers reported that the *Curricular*

*Framework* did not restrict the way they plan and structure their classes (Item 5).

Another noteworthy finding was from the interviews in which all of those interviewed with the exception of Teacher B, said that the teachers in their schools used the curriculum to develop their own lesson plans. This is a positive finding which suggests that teachers are indeed using the document to some extent on a regular basis. On the other hand, teachers in both the open-ended portion of the questionnaire and the interviews suggested that training and supervision was an area that needs improvement. The teachers that participated in this study reported that the curriculum was useful in the creation of their lesson plans; however, I have interpreted from their comments that the curriculum would be more useful if it was accompanied by more informative training sessions as well as textbooks and materials that meet the local needs of their students.

The third research question focused on how the curriculum could be improved to meet the needs of the teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico. In order to answer this question I synthesized my findings from the three different areas of this study. I conclude that the best way to continue the move towards decentralization, yet not overburden teachers, is to create a local curriculum that falls within the parameters set fourth in the *Curricular Framework*. By doing so, supervisors, teachers, administrators and community leaders would be forced to work together to create a curriculum that meets all of their needs. The creation of a local curriculum would alleviate some of the burden that teachers are currently feeling with having to create their own materials and having to plan from a document that is extremely broad and ambiguous.

The English teachers of southwestern Puerto Rico have reported that the English curriculum could be significantly improved. Many of these English teachers are skeptical

about curricular change because they recognize the connection between politics and the teaching of English on the island and this connection causes them to be insecure about change. They agree that there must be a separation of education and politics to secure curricular development in the face of political change every four years. However, this is not a possibility given the current governmental structure and relationship between education and politics in Puerto Rico (Schmidt-Nieto, 2001). Thus, in order to dilute or distance the direct control of government over education, the DE must turnover curricular authority to the local level. The creation of a local curriculum is a practical and useful way to distance the relationship between politics and English education, while leaving ultimate authority with the DE.

It is apparent after analyzing the English curriculum, the data from the questionnaires and interviewing five English teachers from southwestern Puerto Rico, that there still is an undeniable relationship between politics and the teaching of English (Clachar, 1997; Clampitt-Dunlap, 2000; Morales, 1999; Schweers & Hudders, 2000). As was mentioned in the review of the literature, the relationship between politics and English education is so strong and so obvious that many cannot see beyond it. Politics is so engrained in the culture and everyday life of the people that trying to remove it will take time, if ever. But, until the political rhetoric is distanced and diluted from the policy makers in control of curricular development, English education will not change. The new *Curricular Framework English Program* addresses the issue of de-politicizing and decentralizing the curriculum but it does so in such a drastic manner that it is both unrealistic and set up for failure. This research highlights the positive notion that the DE has realized that the English curriculum must be decentralized and de-politicized;

however; negatively it goes about it in the wrong way. Curricular change takes time and must be done in steps (Richards, 2001). The DE needs to take its time and develop a local curriculum in which the DE retains their control but also dilutes the political rhetoric often attached to English education by giving more power to the local municipalities, which is then passed on to teachers.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Clearly, curricular development in Puerto Rico is a complicated matter that is influenced by many factors. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted to look at what types of curricula work in the schools of Puerto Rico. Further research is needed which compares the curricula used in both private and public schools. Furthermore, curricula in Puerto Rico should be compared to other curricula in the United States as well as other countries to find other ways in which the curriculum could be improved.

Another fascinating idea that has emerged from the interview portion of this study is the life of the frustrated teacher. Research needs to be done that examines how and why teachers are becoming burnt out and what can be done to prevent it. Specifically in Puerto Rico, AP teachers could be compared to regular English teachers to more clearly understand the differences in these two teaching situations and why one maybe more successful than the other.

In addition to examining teacher burnout, further research should probe into what exactly is being done at training sessions. With the interviewed teachers reporting that training sessions could be improved, assessment needs to take place to identify areas that teachers need help in. Because the DE has provided textbooks and materials that do not coincide with students' needs, teachers need to be given ideas on how they can develop

additional materials for their students. Further research should probe into ideas of what teachers deem effective in teaching their students and what students report they enjoy.

Yet another area that needs to be researched is the relationship between standardized tests and the curriculum. The teachers interviewed had differing opinions about whether or not the standardized tests actually correlate to the curriculum. Future studies need to bring light to the area of standardized tests and their relationship with the curriculum.

Politics has always been an issue in education on the island, but there has been historical change since earlier investigations into this area. An investigation into current political views and connections in education and language needs to be revisited. A historical analysis that takes into account happenings in recent years needs to be conducted. After the study, the new information should be used by curriculum developers to negotiate ways to keep a curriculum that works and can be maintained by the DE and upgraded without upheaval and disarray in the schools in the face of political change. Somehow politicians need to put on their platform that they will not disrupt the current curriculum if they are working.

This study, which has attempted to unite the voices of the English teachers of southwestern Puerto Rico, should be done in all areas of the island. Teachers need to unite and voice their opinions for curricular development. It would also be interesting to find out whether or not English teachers from other parts of Puerto Rico report the same suggestions for curricular development as the English teachers of southwestern Puerto Rico.

## **Limitations of the Study**

As an American graduate student studying in Puerto Rico, I am considered an outsider looking in. Although I hold a Puerto Rican teaching certificate for secondary English education, I have never actually taught full time in the public school system. Furthermore, I speak English as my first language and Spanish as a second; thus I acknowledge that my presence as a native speaker of English may have restricted my access to some of the English teachers. Regardless of these limitations, I persevered. Teacher E, explained to me that many of the teachers in her school refused participating in the interview because “they feared talking and posting their views on the program.” I am aware that not being an insider in the schools hurt my chances of interviewing reluctant teachers who could have potentially provided excellent insight into the study.

Another possible limitation to my study is that there were some areas from the questionnaire that did not match up exactly with the reports of the teachers in the interview portion of the study. Mainly in the area of training where the respondents from the questionnaire responded relatively positive to the training and the interviewees responded negatively. This is one of the inherent problems of questionnaires in that it is possible that the participants might be reporting what they think the researcher wants to see. This was precisely my reason for using triangulation because it allowed for these problem areas to be looked at from other angles.

Furthermore, my findings come from a small select group and may not represent the views of all the teachers in southwestern Puerto Rico. I recognize that these participants are only a small sample of all the English teachers in Puerto Rico, and a larger study with a questionnaire and statistical analysis may have revealed other

findings. Despite these limitations, the information gained from this study adds valuable data to the debate surrounding the English *Curricular Framework*. The combination of analyses, survey, and interviews provided a wealth of information that can be added to the body of knowledge on English curriculum development in Puerto Rico.

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## **Appendix A: 10 Principle Questions used in the Analysis of a Curriculum**

### First set: Curriculum Documentation and Origins

1. How is the curriculum documented?
2. What situation resulted in the development of the curriculum?
3. What perspective, if any, does the curriculum represent?

### Second set: The Curriculum Proper

4. What are the purposes and content of the curriculum?
5. What assumptions underlie the curriculum's approach to purpose or content?
6. How is the curriculum organized?
7. What assumptions underlie the curriculum's organization?

### Third set: The Curriculum in Use

8. How should the curriculum be implemented?
9. What can you learn about the curriculum from an evaluation point of view?

### Fourth set: Critique

10. What is your judgment about the curriculum?

(Posner, 1992)

## **Appendix B: Planning Elements (Posner, 1992)**

1. Objectives: What knowledge , skills, or attitudes should students acquire?
2. Rationale or educational philosophy behind the curriculum: Why should they learn this? What is the value of this?
3. Content: What content, i.e., what topics, concepts, skills, etc., should be covered?
4. Characteristics of target audience: Who is this for? (Consider interests, abilities, background knowledge)
5. Activities: What should they do?
6. Materials: What resources will they need?
7. Sequencing principles: In what order should this be done?
8. Schedule: How long will each part take?
9. Teacher training and attitudes: What do the teachers need to know, be able to do, and be committed to?
10. Evaluation: How will success be determined? What will count as success?
11. Administrative structure, school facilities, and financial constraints: How will it be implemented in the school?
12. Other parts of the curriculum: how will it relate to other subjects.

## Appendix C: Teacher's Reports on the English "Curricular Framework 2004"

Total years of teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Kevin Carroll and I would like to ask you to help me by answering the following questions regarding the Department of Education's new "Curricular Framework" for English. The questionnaire is being administered for my Masters Thesis at the University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez in order to evaluate what secondary English teachers think about the new *Curricular Framework*. It is designed to be rapid, anonymous and the results will not reveal the school you work in. This is not a test, so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. Thank you very much for your participation.

Here is an example:

Ex) High school teachers in Puerto Rico want their students to be successful.	Strongly Agree (SA) 1	Agree (A) 2	Disagree (D) 3	Strongly Disagree (SD) 4
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If you were to circle 1 then you would **Strongly Agree (SA)** with the statement: High school teachers in Puerto Rico want their students to be successful. If you were to have circled 4 it would mean you **Strongly Disagree (SD)** with the statement.

- |  |                          |        |        |         |
|--|--------------------------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. Do you have a copy of the new <i>Curricular Framework</i> for the English program, distributed in the Spring of 2004?                               | YES                      | NO     |        |         |
| 2. Does the Curricular Framework require all teachers to create their own curriculum?  | YES                      | NO     |        |         |
| 3. A. Have you ever taken a university course in Curriculum Design? (Circle one)   | YES<br>(If yes answer B) | NO     |        |         |
| B. How many years ago?   | _____ years              |        |        |         |
| 4. A. Have you participated in the Department of Education's training for the new English <i>Curricular Framework</i> ?                                | YES<br>(If yes answer B) | NO     |        |         |
| B. The training for the <i>Curricular Framework</i> was effective and helped me better understand the new curriculum.                                  | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3 | SD<br>4 |
| 5. In my assessment of the new <i>Curricular Framework</i> I find it to be a document that restricts the way in which I plan and structure my classes. | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3 | SD<br>4 |
| 6. I feel I have liberty in teaching whatever is necessary in teaching my students.  | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3 | SD<br>4 |

- |     |   |                          |        |                   |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| 7.  | A. Do you use specific parts of the curriculum daily?   | YES<br>(If YES answer B) |        | NO                |
|     | B. The <i>Curricular Framework</i> is useful in my everyday planning.   | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3<br>SD<br>4 |
| 8.  | I have confidence that the <i>Curricular Framework</i> was developed according to the latest in research and methodology.                                       | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3<br>SD<br>4 |
| 9.  | The <i>Curricular Framework</i> is a legal document that represents my needs as a secondary teacher of English.   | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3<br>SD<br>4 |
| 10. | The <i>Curricular Framework</i> is a legal document that represents the needs of my students.   | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3<br>SD<br>4 |
| 11. | The <i>Curricular Framework</i> significantly helps my daily lesson planning.   | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3<br>SD<br>4 |
| 12. | The Department of Education's English Curriculum changes dramatically every time a different party wins the governorship.                                       | SA<br>1                  | A<br>2 | D<br>3<br>SD<br>4 |
| 13. | Do you have any suggestions that you think could improve the Department of Education's English Curriculum? Please feel free to write as much as you would like. |                          |        |                   |

## **Appendix D: Results from Questionnaire**

N=30 except in years of experience where N=25 (5 teachers did not report their years of experience)

The total amount of English teachers in the 5 schools is 32, of them 30 have answered the questionnaire resulting in 94% return rate for the questionnaire.

Years of teaching experience: 1, 4, 6, 6, 7, 10, 13, 15, 18, 18, 18, 21, 22, 24, 24, 25, 25.5, 26.5, 27, 27, 27, 28, 29, 29, 33

Range = 33

Mode = 18, 27

Median = 20

Mean = 19.36

### **Item 13. Do you have any suggestions that you think could improve the Department of Education's English Curriculum?**

#2 More workshops, technology, bilingual test in other areas, movies to compliment teaching, computers in every classroom.

#4 The latest edition of the Curriculum is adapted to many needs. However, the book as a whole talks a lot about nothing. It should provide ideas for those teachers that are reluctant to updating their own education.

#5 The Department of Education should buy textbooks according to the curriculum. Some textbooks have no relation at all with the curriculum suggestions. The curriculum should provide options for students that are not interested on going to college. Conversational English courses should be an alternative for students who would like to go to work and not earn a college degree.

#6 I strongly think and feel that the department of Education should be separated of the different parties we have in Puerto Rico. The department should not allow the Government to select the secretary of education. I think that the department should have rules requirements in order to select a good secretary I believe that the Secretary of the department should be someone that has worked in the system of educ. from the 1<sup>st</sup> step and work their way up to the very last step. Even if the person comes from the States. As long as it is someone that has the experience. The person should be fluent in both language. The department of education should have one main goal that is a good education. The problem we have is that the department is color-coded Red/ Blue/ Green. That's very sad. Thank you.



#7 Better and extensive training for teachers on how to use the Curricular Framework. It should be provide practical ideas and examples. These examples should also be part of workshops for teachers.

#8 The Department of education should use only one series of textbooks from k-12 that way the students progress through a research based program instead of learning one thing this year and completely different thing next year with no progressive level.

#11 They cold add another section of examples that we could use in the classroom.

#15 I have always believed English should be taught as a foreign language not as a second language (in P.R.). The techniques, methods and books are completely different. When a second language is taught, we assume the students hear/communicate in English outside the school (with their friends, family, store etc.) This is not the case in P.R.

#16 You have to really see what kind of students we have in that year to really know their needs. From where they come and from what places (homes) they come.

#17 Yes, I feel that English shouldn't be treated (taught) as a second language in the schools of Puerto Rico. It should be taught as a foreign language. This way the message would be much clearer and students will learn how to really survive in the real world.

#19 The Department of Education should integrate the English language to other subjects in the elementary level. If students familiarize themselves in other courses by using textbooks in English, they will learn the language and communicate more effectively with their peers.

#20 The Department of Education needs to evaluate textbooks according to our students needs. I consider grammar should be taught separately from the reading. My students prefer it this way so I do my planning according to their needs. Laboratory should be a requirement in our English program. Our students are lack of vocabulary, listening and pronunciation practice!

#22 First of all! There could be lots of improvements in the English Dept. Right now we have lack of books. The books they give have usually are with us for long years. I think that they should be upgraded every two or three years. Times change and so do the young people today. We lack grammar books and workbooks. I've been a teacher for 21 years and I have never seen a good grammar book. We need to teach the language we need to teach grammar before anything else.

#24 Try to give or reach students need specifically. Urge teachers to teach specific skills, not what they think. Give seminars to teachers. Help them understand what the goals of the Education wants, according to real situation in P.R. and not standard American students. All materials.

#28 The English Curriculum (Curricular Framework) was created to establish high expectations and reach the different goals of education. Teachers know the skills to be taught by grades, they also know the attitudes they should have in order to comply with the goals of the Dept. of Educ. It is just that sometimes as you write in your questionnaire when a different party wins the governorship, what has been done at that moment, is changed because it's no longer useful and they bring "new ideas" which turn to be the same thing. Papers, agendas, records, evaluation sheets and other are to be changed. This mostly affects the teacher and then the students. Let us progress without depending on who or what party are you from.

## **Appendix E: Consent Form**

### **Consent Form – Interview**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give permission to Kevin Carroll, Graduate student at UPR Mayagüez, to use information provided by me to be used in his MA thesis.

This research may be published in local, regional, national and international channels, including professional conferences and symposia as well as in professional journals, newsletters, books and other print and electronic forms. I understand that this study is comprehensive in nature and relies on quantitative and qualitative methods.

I also understand that my participation is strictly voluntary and that I will not receive any compensation for my contribution to any proceedings or results. I am aware that nothing bad or incorrect will occur if I decide to terminate my participation in this study at any time.

I understand that by signing and dating this form I give my consent to Kevin Carroll to use the information I provide through interviews and audio taped sessions, as a part of a research project that will likely result in publication.

I understand that I will be given a pseudonym to protect my identity and maintain the confidentiality of the research. In addition, the specific name and location of the school I teach at will not be revealed. All of the tapes and or written notes that are collected will be placed in a secure area under code until they are eventually destroyed.

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My Signature

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Date

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My Name Printed

## **Appendix F: Interview Questions**

1. How do you define “curriculum”?
2. Can you describe to the function of “Curricular Framework” for the English Program.
3. Have you developed your own curriculum?
4. Do you feel like you are responsible for creating your own curriculum?
5. Could you please tell me the ways in which the “Curricular Framework” affects your daily planning and why?
6. Do you think most English teachers in Southwestern Puerto Rico have been trained thoroughly enough to create their own curriculum? Why or why not?
7. Tell me about the ways you have been orientated on how to use the “Curricular Framework”. What was the training like? Did they teach you how to develop your own curriculum?
8. Are the needs of the students in your High School different from the needs of students in other areas of Puerto Rico like the Metro area? How are their needs different?
9. Tell me any problems that you have had using this curriculum or any previously published DE curricula. Do you have any suggestions that might help improve the use of the “Curricular Framework” in other English Classrooms?
10. Many still say that English teaching in Puerto Rico is politically charged. What is your view on this? Do you see the curriculum as a political document?
11. Is there any affect on the curriculum when there is a change in the political party of the governor?
12. How often do English teachers meet at your school to discuss curricular matters?
13. Can you describe to me the supervision process in your high school?

14. Do you think teachers in Southwestern Puerto Rico would benefit from a curriculum that was developed by the English teachers from Southwestern Puerto Rico? Is something like this possible? Would you be willing to work on a project like this?
15. In terms of curriculum, if you would, tell me about the differences between a new teacher in the Public school system and a teacher who has taught for many years?

## **Appendix G: Excerpt of Teacher E's Interview**

*Interviewer: So have you developed your own curriculum?*

Teacher E: I have developed my own materials, I have two boxes, three this year I respond to my director who knows nothing about English and he doesn't dare walk into my room. My previous boss was elected to regional sub director and my English supervisor she was very active coming here because her son was an AP student here and she finally realized what I was doing in school. So two years ago she finally realized what I was doing in the AP course and was amazed with the amount of work I was doing with my students.

*Interviewer: And afterwards?*

She just comes once a year or she invites me to a meeting with the other elementary and secondary teachers. I used to teach at Junior colleges and the Inter in San German but I don't do any of those things any more.

The daily plans that were given from the Regional headquarters. Now I have two supervisors one in my town and one that was appointed by the former Secretary of Education who said that we must change our lesson plans. She wants it one way the other one wants it the other way. So that is one of my main conflicts to whom should I please? So what I do is I keep old lesson plans you see those files over there, and I have made everything into CDRoms and I keep them for the lady when she comes from the Regional headquarters. The women from the local level know I have everything on a CD and so when she wants something she just comes by and asks. The women at Regional headquarters, she actually came down from the States, she is actually doing her Ph.D. and isn't satisfied with the way Puerto Ricans are teaching in English because "she has found teachers teaching in Spanish" and I said well that is the reality among most of my colleagues and the reason why they drop my course after enrolled with me for two weeks. I have the highest dropout rate of students in this school and that has happened for the 27<sup>th</sup> year.