

Toward a Postmodern Curriculum Framework: A Meta-synthesis of Indicators and Components**Abstract****Article Type:****Original Research****Authors:****Azadeh Saeid¹**ORCID: [0000-0003-4694-5918](#)**Hamid Ashraf²**ORCID: [0000-0001-9240-1247](#)**Hossein
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Although postmodern philosophy has substantially influenced perspectives on knowledge, learning, and curriculum development, existing research has largely examined its educational implications through isolated aspects such as learner autonomy, student participation, and alternative assessment. Consequently, a comprehensive framework of the components and indicators of a postmodern curriculum remains underdeveloped. This study aimed to synthesize existing research to identify the dimensions, components, and indicators of a curriculum grounded in postmodern educational philosophy. A qualitative meta-synthesis was conducted using the five-stage framework proposed by Erwin et al. (2011). From an initial corpus of 247 scholarly articles and publications published between 2011 and 2024, 30 studies were purposively selected according to predefined inclusion criteria. Data were analyzed through systematic coding and thematic synthesis. The findings identified five interconnected dimensions of a postmodern curriculum: curriculum objectives, curriculum content, teaching–learning methods and strategies, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum environment and context. These dimensions comprised 14 organizing themes and 53 indicators emphasizing flexibility, contextualization, learner participation, pluralism, dialogue, and autonomy. The proposed framework provides a conceptual foundation for designing curricula that are more responsive, learner-centered, and context-sensitive, with particular relevance for EFL curriculum development, educational practice, and policy.

Key Words: Curriculum Development, Curriculum Indicators, EFL Education, Meta-synthesis, Postmodern Curriculum

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1. Introduction

Curriculum is widely recognized as a central component of educational systems because it shapes the purposes, content, processes, and outcomes of learning experiences. Beyond being a mechanism for organizing educational activities, curriculum reflects broader assumptions about knowledge, learners, society, and the aims of education (Deng, 2022). Accordingly, curriculum development is closely connected to philosophical perspectives that determine how knowledge is conceptualized, how learning is understood, and how educational practices are designed. As educational contexts become increasingly complex and dynamic, curriculum frameworks need to respond to changing social, cultural, technological, and epistemological conditions (Murtiningsih & Sujito, 2025).

Rapid transformations, uncertainty, diversity, and the emergence of multiple perspectives on knowledge and human development characterize the contemporary educational landscape. These changes have challenged traditional approaches to curriculum design that are often based on fixed objectives, standardized knowledge, and universal assumptions about learning. In response to these transformations, postmodern philosophy has emerged as an influential intellectual perspective that questions absolute truths, emphasizes contextuality, recognizes multiple ways of knowing, and highlights the importance of diversity, dialogue, and learner experiences (Jong, 2025). Within educational thought, these assumptions have contributed to reconsidering conventional approaches to curriculum planning and implementation.

From a postmodern perspective, curriculum is not a fixed and universally applicable framework but a dynamic, context-sensitive, and continuously evolving process (Aksakalli, 2025). Such a view emphasizes learner-centeredness, cultural responsiveness, pluralism, critical inquiry, dialogue, and the construction of knowledge through interaction. Therefore, incorporating postmodern perspectives into curriculum design might require various curriculum elements (Pere et al., 2023). Identifying these elements can provide a clearer understanding of how postmodern philosophical assumptions can be translated into practical curriculum principles.

Although previous studies have explored different aspects of postmodern curriculum design (Larsari, 2024; Weisi & Ahmadi, 2024), their findings remain dispersed across various contexts and have emphasized different indicators and components. Existing research has highlighted issues such as pluralism, cultural responsiveness, learner autonomy, critical thinking, contextualized learning, dialogical approaches, flexible objectives, and alternative assessment practices. However, these findings have not yet been systematically integrated to provide a

comprehensive framework of the indicators and components underlying a curriculum informed by postmodern educational philosophy.

Therefore, the present study aimed to identify and synthesize the indicators and components of a postmodern curriculum through a qualitative meta-synthesis approach based on the model proposed by Erwin et al. (2011). By consolidating evidence from previous studies, this research sought to develop an integrated conceptual understanding of postmodern curriculum dimensions and provide a framework that may inform curriculum designers, educational policymakers, and higher education practitioners.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Postmodern philosophy has significantly influenced contemporary discussions in education by challenging traditional assumptions regarding knowledge, authority, objectivity, and the organization of learning experiences (Mezirow, 1996). Emerging as a response to the limitations of modernist approaches, postmodern thought questions universal explanations and fixed interpretations of reality and instead emphasizes plurality, contextuality, uncertainty, and the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Macpherson, 2025). From this perspective, knowledge is not a neutral and permanent entity transmitted from experts to learners; rather, it is developed through interaction, discourse, experience, and interpretation within particular social and cultural contexts.

These philosophical assumptions have important implications for curriculum theory and practice. Within a postmodern orientation, curriculum is viewed as a dynamic and evolving process rather than a predetermined body of knowledge or a fixed sequence of instructional objectives (Belbase et al., 2022). Accordingly, curriculum development requires attention to learners' lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, individual differences, and changing social conditions (Mpuangnan & Ntombela, 2024). Such a perspective challenges standardized and authoritarian approaches to curriculum planning and encourages more flexible, dialogical, and learner-centered approaches.

On the other hand, postmodern perspectives have also generated critical debates. While emphasizing pluralism and challenging dominant forms of knowledge may promote inclusion and learner empowerment, excessive relativism may create concerns regarding the criteria for evaluating knowledge claims and educational practices (Bowden, 2018; Holtz, 2020). Therefore,

contemporary discussions increasingly focus on balancing pluralism with critical inquiry, dialogue, and responsible knowledge construction.

The relevance of postmodern philosophy becomes particularly evident in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, where language learning is closely connected to identity, culture, communication, and social interaction (Wang et al., 2024). Traditional EFL curricula have often been influenced by standardized objectives, predetermined syllabi, teacher-centered instruction, and outcome-oriented assessment practices (Gulnaz et al., 2015). Although such approaches can provide structure and consistency, they may overlook learners' individual identities, contextual needs, and diverse experiences.

A postmodern view of EFL curriculum encourages a shift from transmission-oriented models toward participatory and dialogical learning environments (Safari, 2019). In this view, language learning is not merely the acquisition of linguistic forms but a process through which learners construct meanings, negotiate identities, and engage with multiple cultural perspectives (Khaled & Anderson, 2023; Özdil & Kunt, 2023). Consequently, EFL curricula informed by postmodern assumptions emphasize learner autonomy, student voice, reflective practice, collaborative learning, and contextualized language experiences (Essabari & Hiba, 2025).

This perspective also requires reconsidering the roles of teachers and learners. Teachers are no longer positioned as the sole authorities who determine knowledge and classroom practices; instead, they function as facilitators who create opportunities for dialogue, inquiry, and shared knowledge construction (Moore, 2024). Learners, in turn, are encouraged to become active participants who contribute to curriculum processes and take greater responsibility for their own learning (Lam et al., 2021; Lenkauskaitė et al., 2020). Such changes have implications for syllabus design, classroom interaction, assessment practices, and curriculum decision-making in EFL contexts.

Recent studies have examined different dimensions of postmodern educational perspectives, particularly in relation to learner autonomy, assessment, participation, and the redistribution of authority within educational processes. However, most existing studies have focused on particular aspects of postmodern curriculum rather than identifying its comprehensive components and structural dimensions (Hoggan-Kloubert & Hoggan, 2022; Larsari, 2024; Weisi & Ahmadi, 2024).

In the Iranian EFL context, Larsari (2024) investigated the influence of postmodern educational concepts on learners' autonomy. Focusing on alternative assessment, process

syllabi, and self-directed learning, the study demonstrated that instructional approaches emphasizing learning processes rather than predetermined outcomes significantly enhanced Iranian EFL learners' autonomy. The findings suggest that postmodern curriculum principles can support learner responsibility by reducing teacher-centered control and promoting flexible, individualized learning experiences. Nevertheless, the study mainly addressed specific instructional practices and did not examine how such principles are reflected across broader curriculum components.

From a broader educational perspective, Hoggan-Kloubert and Hoggan (2022) discussed postmodernism in relation to contemporary epistemological challenges. They argued that although postmodern perspectives have questioned traditional assumptions about knowledge and truth, educational practices require a balanced consideration of pluralism, autonomy, and critical inquiry. Their discussion highlights the importance of learning environments that encourage dialogue, diverse perspectives, and responsible engagement with knowledge. However, their work was primarily theoretical and focused on epistemological issues rather than providing a curriculum-based framework.

Similarly, Weisi and Ahmadi (2024) explored student voice within teacher–student curriculum partnerships in Iranian higher education, particularly in TEFL contexts. Their findings indicated that meaningful student voice involves not only receiving learners' feedback but also enabling their participation in decision-making, curriculum negotiation, and the design of teaching approaches. Nevertheless, they also showed that institutional power structures may restrict authentic participation. While this study highlights the importance of dialogical and participatory principles, it focuses mainly on curriculum interaction and learner participation rather than the broader set of curriculum elements influenced by postmodern philosophy.

Taken together, previous studies demonstrate that postmodern educational principles have important implications for EFL curriculum development, particularly in areas such as learner autonomy, alternative assessment, student voice, dialogue, and contextualized learning. However, the existing literature remains fragmented, with each study emphasizing only on certain dimensions of postmodern curriculum practice. As a result, there is still a lack of a comprehensive framework that identifies the major indicators, components, and dimensions of a curriculum grounded in postmodern educational philosophy. This gap is particularly important because curriculum development is a multidimensional process involving interconnected elements, including objectives, content, teaching–learning strategies, assessment, and educational context.

Without systematically synthesizing these elements, the practical implications of postmodern philosophy for curriculum design remain unclear.

Therefore, the present study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis approach to integrate findings from previous research and identify the indicators and components of a postmodern curriculum. By synthesizing existing evidence, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive framework that may support curriculum designers, educational policymakers, and higher education institutions in developing more flexible, contextualized, learner-centered, and dialogical educational programs. Accordingly, the study addressed the following research question:

RQ. What are the indicators and components of a curriculum grounded in the postmodern philosophy of education, as identified in the existing research literature?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis design to identify and integrate the indicators and components of a curriculum grounded in postmodern philosophy of education. Meta-synthesis is an interpretive approach that systematically analyzes and synthesizes findings from previous qualitative studies to generate a more comprehensive understanding of a research phenomenon (Nye et al., 2016). Unlike a conventional literature review, which primarily summarizes previous findings, meta-synthesis seeks to move beyond individual studies by integrating their findings and producing higher-level conceptual interpretations.

Given that the purpose of the present study was not to examine the effectiveness of a specific curriculum intervention but rather to identify the underlying dimensions, indicators, and components of postmodern curriculum design, meta-synthesis was considered an appropriate methodological approach. Specifically, the five-stage meta-synthesis model proposed by Erwin et al. (2011) was adopted as the analytical framework for reviewing, coding, and synthesizing the selected studies.

3.2. Corpus and Selection of Studies

The corpus of the study consisted of academic publications that addressed curriculum indicators and components informed by the postmodern philosophy of education. The initial search identified 247 scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed articles and publications published between 2011 and 2024 (1392–1403 in the Iranian calendar).

The studies were selected through purposive sampling based on their conceptual relevance to the research purpose. The inclusion criteria were: (a) studies that explicitly addressed postmodern educational philosophy or postmodern curriculum perspectives; (b) studies that discussed one or more curriculum elements, including objectives, content, teaching-learning processes, assessment, or learning environment; (c) studies published in scholarly journals or academic repositories; and (d) studies that provided sufficient conceptual or empirical information for qualitative analysis.

After screening titles, abstracts, keywords, and full texts, studies that did not directly address postmodern curriculum principles or lacked relevant curriculum-related findings were excluded. Consequently, 30 studies were selected as the final corpus for meta-synthesis. The characteristics of the 30 studies included in the final synthesis are presented in Table 1, including the authors, publication year, title, publication source, and country of publication to enhance the transparency of the synthesis process.

Table 1.

Sources Included in the Meta-Synthesis (N = 30).

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Publication Source
1	Ahmadian, M., and Erfanrad, S. (2014)	Postmethod Era and Glocalized Language Curriculum Development: A Fresh Burden on Language Teachers	Journal of Language Teaching and Research
2	Atai, M. R., and Mazlum, F. (2013)	English Language Teaching Curriculum in Iran: Planning and Practice	The Curriculum Journal
3	Bishop, R., et al. (2014)	Te Kotahitanga: Towards Effective Education Reform for Indigenous and Other Minoritized Students	NZCER Press
4	Boboc, M. (2012)	The Postmodern Curriculum in a Modern Classroom	International Journal of Education
5	Courtland, D. (2022)	Reimagining a Curriculum in Crisis	Prospects
6	De Sousa, G. R., and Rossi, M. A. (2022)	Problematising Identities and Differences: Notes on Postmodern, Post-Critical and Post-Structuralist Perspectives on School Education and Curriculum	Revista Tempos e Espaços em Educação
7	Ebrahimi, F., and Sahragard, R. (2016)	Some Insights into Iran's English Curriculum Based on Iran's Major Policies	English Journal of Language Teaching and Research
8	Fahim, M., and Pishghadam, R. (2011)	Postmodernism and English Language Teaching	Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies
9	Heidari, F. (2012)	Alternative Assessment Procedures in Iranian EFL Writing Classes: The Washback Effect and Learners' Attitudes	Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Publication Source
10	Frumkina, A. (2021)	Postmodern Principles in Integrated Teaching of Foreign Languages and Fine Arts to Primary Learners in the New Ukrainian School	Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională
11	Ghaemi, F., and Sadeghi, P. (2015)	Critical Pedagogy: Concepts and Principles	International Journal of English and Education
12	Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012)	Language Teacher Education for a Global Society: A Modular Model for Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing	Routledge
13	Hosseini Largani, M. (2021)	Designing an Innovative Curriculum Model in Iran's Higher Education System: A Qualitative Study	Iranian Research in Higher Education
14	Javahery, P. (2024)	Prescribed Pedagogy: An Autoethnographic Analysis of Coursebook Constraints, Teacher Identity, and Power Dynamics in Iran Through Foucault's Lens	Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics
15	Johnson, K. E., and Golombek, P. R. (2016)	Mindful L2 Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective on Cultivating Teachers' Professional Development	Routledge
16	Kahraman, A. D. (2015)	Relationship of Modernism, Postmodernism and Reflections of It on Education	Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences
17	Karimi, M., et al. (2017)	Designing and Feasibility Assessment of a Postmodern Curriculum Model for Iran's Higher Education System	Iranian Journal of Medical Education
18	Krasny, K. A., and Slattery, P. (2021)	Postmodern Curriculum	Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education
19	Maghsoudi, N. (2016)	Postmethod Pedagogy: A Plausible Choice in Iran?	Studies in English Language Teaching
20	Merawi, T. M., and Ageze, E. T. (2023)	Curriculum Development in Ethiopia vis-à-vis Patrick Slattery's Postmodern Curriculum Principles: A Reflection	Bahir Dar Journal of Education
21	Morgan, J. (2022)	Knowledge, Culture and the Curriculum in Britain, 1944 to the Present	London Review of Education
22	Naseri Kaimvand, P., et al. (2016)	Postmethod Education: Its Applicability and Challenges in Iran	International Journal of Asian Social Science
23	Panasenko, E. A., et al. (2021)	Trends in the Development of University Education in the Postmodern Period	Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice
24	Rahnama, A., and Zabandan, M. (2023)	A Comparative Study of Educational Implications in Three Modern, Postmodern and Metamodern Approaches	Iranian Journal of Comparative Education
25	Shakouri, N. (2012)	From Method to Postmethod: A Panacea!	English Language Teaching
26	Slattery, P. (2013)	Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era: Teaching and Learning in an Age of Accountability (3rd ed.)	Routledge
27	Sun, S. E. (2020)	On the Present Situation and Future Development Trend of Liberal Mathematics General Education in	Proceedings of the International Conference on Mental Health and

No.	Authors (Year)	Title	Publication Source
		University Under Post-Modernism Curriculum View	Humanities Education (ICMHHE 2020)
28	Tesar, M., et al. (2021)	Postmodernism in Education	Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education
29	Wang, C., et al. (2022)	Curriculum Ideology and Politics Construction from the Postmodern Perspective on Doll's Curriculum	Adult and Higher Education
30	Whitaker, A. A., et al. (2022)	Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment in Early Childhood Education: Examining Alignment Across Multiple State Systems	Early Childhood Research Quarterly

3.3. Data Collection Instrument

To systematically extract and organize information from the selected studies, a researcher-developed data extraction form was used. The form included information related to bibliographic characteristics of the studies (e.g., author (s), publication year, research context, and methodology) as well as conceptual information related to the indicators and components of the postmodern curriculum.

The conceptual section of the form focused on identifying statements, findings, and interpretations related to major curriculum dimensions, including educational objectives, curriculum content, teaching–learning strategies, assessment practices, and learning environment. The extracted data served as the basis for subsequent coding and thematic synthesis.

3.4. Meta-synthesis Procedure

The meta-synthesis process followed the five stages proposed by Erwin et al. (2011).

- First, the research problem and guiding question were formulated to identify the indicators and components of the postmodern curriculum.
- Second, relevant studies were systematically identified and selected based on predefined inclusion criteria.
- Third, the selected studies were carefully reviewed, and relevant findings were extracted.
- Fourth, the extracted data were coded and categorized through qualitative content analysis. During this stage, meaningful concepts related to the postmodern curriculum were identified as basic codes. These codes were then compared, grouped, and organized into higher-level categories.

- Finally, the synthesized categories were interpreted to develop an integrated framework representing the major dimensions and components of a postmodern curriculum.

3.5. Data Analysis

The extracted data were analyzed using thematic analysis with a categorical approach. Coding was conducted at three levels: basic themes, organizing themes, and global themes. At the first level, initial concepts and meaningful statements were identified as basic themes. In the second stage, related basic themes were grouped into broader organizing themes representing similar conceptual meanings. Finally, organizing themes were synthesized into overarching dimensions representing the major components of a postmodern curriculum.

Through this process, five global themes emerged: curriculum objectives, curriculum content, teaching–learning methods and strategies, assessment and evaluation, and learning environment and context. These dimensions formed the basis for developing the proposed framework of indicators and components of a postmodern curriculum.

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the coding process, inter-coder agreement was examined. Four independent evaluators with expertise in curriculum studies and qualitative research reviewed and recoded a sample of the extracted data. The level of agreement among coders was calculated using Scott's agreement coefficient. The obtained agreement rate was 81%, indicating substantial consistency among the evaluators and supporting the reliability of the coding process. Any disagreements were discussed among the evaluators until consensus was reached regarding the final coding categories.

4. Findings

4.1. Characteristics of the Synthesized Studies

The present meta-synthesis was conducted by examining 30 scholarly studies selected from an initial corpus of 247 articles and publications addressing postmodern perspectives in curriculum and education. The selected studies were published between 2011 and 2024 (1392–1403 in the Iranian calendar) and examined different dimensions of postmodern curriculum, including objectives, content, teaching–learning processes, assessment, learner participation, and educational contexts. The selected studies employed different research approaches and examined postmodern educational principles across various educational settings. Table 2 details the characteristics of the included studies.

Table 2.*Characteristics of the Included Studies*

Feature	Description
Publication years	2011–2024 (1392–1403 Iranian calendar)
Number of studies	30
Types of documents	Peer-reviewed articles and publications
Contexts	Higher education, EFL, curriculum studies, educational contexts
Research approaches	Qualitative, conceptual, and mixed-method studies

4.2. Meta-synthesis Process and Emergence of Curriculum Dimensions

Following the meta-synthesis framework proposed by Erwin et al. (2011), the extracted findings from the selected studies were analyzed through a multi-stage thematic synthesis process. Initially, relevant concepts, statements, and findings related to postmodern curriculum characteristics were identified through open coding and categorized as basic themes.

In the next stage, basic themes with conceptual similarity were compared, merged, and reorganized into broader conceptual categories representing organizing themes. Finally, the organizing themes were synthesized at a higher level of abstraction to identify overarching dimensions (global themes) representing the major components of a postmodern curriculum.

The synthesis process resulted in the identification of five global themes, 14 organizing themes, and 53 basic themes. The five dimensions included: (a) curriculum objectives, (b) curriculum content, (c) teaching–learning methods and strategies, (d) assessment and evaluation, and (e) curriculum environment and context. The complete synthesis framework is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.*Synthesized Dimensions, Organizing Themes, Indicators, and Supporting Studies of Postmodern Curriculum*

Global Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Article Codes
Curriculum Objectives	Integration and Comprehensiveness	Coherence of objectives across different domains of knowledge (pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge)	8
		Emphasis on multiple competencies and skills	9, 24
		Localization (indigenization)	2, 3, 14, 25

Global Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Article Codes
Curriculum Content	Practicality and Feasibility	Flexibility and dynamism of educational objectives	19
		Needs-based educational objectives	17, 18
		Relativism of educational objectives	2, 23, 25, 27, 30
		Alignment with contemporary realities (updated objectives)	19
		Alignment with national policy documents and higher-level educational frameworks	14, 26
	Coherence and Transparency	Vertical alignment across educational levels	5, 19
		Clarity and transparency of educational objectives	19
		Reflection of society's social, political, and cultural concerns	14
		Problem-centered curriculum content	1, 4, 7
	Adaptation to Environmental Developments	Updated content aligned with societal realities	4, 15, 22, 30
		Creativity- and innovation-oriented content	1, 8
		Interdisciplinary perspective	2, 4
		Recognition of scientific uncertainty and skepticism	2, 4, 27, 29, 30
		Rejection of metanarratives	3, 27
	Learner-Centeredness	Knowledge construction based on constructivist approaches	2, 3, 8, 17, 20
		Experience-based and practical learning	1, 10, 15, 19
		Incorporation of learners' lived experiences	3, 9, 13
		Alignment with learners' abilities and capacities	14
		Emancipatory orientation	11, 16, 22, 23
	Pluralism	Recognition of others and reduction of egocentrism	3
		Pluralism and multicultural curriculum content	1, 2, 7, 25
		Non-ideological and politically neutral curriculum content	18
		Promotion of social and political awareness and responsibility	15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 28
		Dialogue-oriented learning	1, 4, 9, 11
Teaching– Learning Methods and Strategies	Communicative and Interactive Approaches	Priority of language over rationality	19, 23, 27
		Emphasis on interpersonal communication	2, 4, 12

Global Themes	Organizing Themes	Basic Themes	Article Codes
		Collaborative and cooperative learning approaches	1, 3, 20, 21, 29
		Development of critical thinking	1, 3, 18, 21, 22, 29
	Process-Oriented Learning	Inquiry-based learning	23
		Promotion of learner autonomy and independence	1, 4, 24, 28
		Non-authoritarian approaches	3, 7, 16
		Consideration of individual differences	1, 11, 18, 20
		Development of learners' metacognitive knowledge	28
		Emphasis on learners' personal and social identity	1, 14
	Technology Integration	Development of educational technologies	4, 8
		Technology-enhanced flexibility in instructional methods and approaches	8, 11, 19
Assessment and Evaluation	Integrated Assessment Approaches	Use of qualitative assessment methods	1, 20
		Diversity of assessment approaches	4, 8, 15, 24
		Peer assessment	1, 10
	Philosophy and Nature of Assessment	Learner-centered assessment	14, 20
		Promotion of self-assessment	1, 4, 10, 13, 21
		Enhancement of motivation and commitment to lifelong learning	15, 21
		Process-oriented assessment rather than outcome-oriented evaluation	1, 13, 17
		Continuous evaluation and review of curriculum elements	4, 14, 15, 18
Context and Learning Environment	Cultural Foundations	Commitment to scientific and evidence-based contemporary approaches	12
		Alignment of institutional structures with contemporary developments	11
	Financial Resources and Support	Budget adequacy	9
		Institutional capacity for financial support	9
	Professional and Academic Autonomy	University autonomy in research and curriculum planning	10, 22
		Synergy and collaboration among institutional and policy-making bodies within the university	18

4.2.1. Curriculum Objectives

The first dimension identified through the synthesis was curriculum objectives. The findings revealed that objectives within a postmodern curriculum are not viewed as fixed and universal prescriptions but as flexible, contextualized, and continuously evolving elements shaped by learners' needs and social conditions.

Three organizing themes emerged under this dimension: integration and comprehensiveness, practicality and feasibility, and coherence and transparency. The first organizing theme, integration and comprehensiveness, indicates that postmodern curriculum objectives should address multiple dimensions of learner development rather than focusing solely on disciplinary knowledge. The extracted indicators included coherence among different domains of knowledge, emphasis on multiple competencies and skills, localization (indigenization), and flexibility and dynamism of educational objectives. These indicators were identified across several studies (e.g., Articles 2, 3, 8, 9, 14, 19, 24, and 25).

The second organizing theme, practicality and feasibility, emphasizes the importance of designing objectives that are meaningful, realistic, and responsive to learners' needs and contemporary realities. The synthesis indicated that postmodern curriculum objectives should be needs-based, aligned with changing social contexts, and open to reinterpretation. This theme included indicators such as needs-based objectives, relativism of educational goals, alignment with contemporary developments, and consistency with broader educational policies and frameworks (Articles 2, 3, 14, 17, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 27, and 30).

The third organizing theme, coherence and transparency, highlights the importance of clear relationships among curriculum objectives and other curriculum elements. The identified indicators included vertical alignment across educational levels, clarity of objectives, transparency, and reflection of social, cultural, and educational concerns (Articles 5, 14, and 19).

Overall, the synthesis demonstrated that curriculum objectives within a postmodern framework emphasize flexibility, contextual relevance, learner responsiveness, and multidimensional development rather than predetermined, standardized outcomes.

4.2.2. Curriculum Content

The second major dimension identified through the synthesis was curriculum content. The findings showed that, within a postmodern curriculum framework, content is not a fixed, universal body of knowledge but rather a dynamic, contextually shaped element shaped by learners,

society, and cultural conditions. Three organizing themes emerged under this dimension: adaptation to environmental developments, learner-centeredness, and pluralism.

The first organizing theme, adaptation to environmental developments, reflects the necessity for curriculum content to respond to social, cultural, scientific, and technological transformations. The extracted indicators included problem-centered content, alignment with contemporary realities, creativity and innovation, interdisciplinary perspectives, and attention to uncertainty and change in knowledge construction. These indicators appeared across several studies in the corpus (e.g., Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 15, 22, 27, and 30). The findings suggest that postmodern curriculum content should prepare learners to engage with complex real-world issues rather than simply reproduce established information. Therefore, content selection is viewed as an ongoing process requiring continuous adaptation to emerging needs and contexts.

The second organizing theme, learner-centeredness, emphasizes the relationship between curriculum content and learners' experiences, interests, abilities, and needs. The synthesized indicators included knowledge construction through active participation, experiential learning, integration of learners' experiences, attention to learner capacities, and emancipatory orientations (Articles 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, and 22). This finding indicates that postmodern curriculum content is not simply transmitted from curriculum authorities to learners; rather, learners participate in interpreting, negotiating, and constructing knowledge.

The third organizing theme, pluralism, represents the postmodern emphasis on diversity and multiple perspectives. Indicators associated with this theme included recognition of cultural and individual differences, multicultural content, reduction of exclusionary practices, promotion of social awareness, and acceptance of alternative interpretations of knowledge (Articles 1, 2, 3, 7, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, and 25).

Overall, the synthesized findings demonstrated that postmodern curriculum content is characterized by contextual responsiveness, learner participation, cultural diversity, and openness to multiple forms of knowledge.

4.2.3. Teaching–Learning Methods and Strategies

The third dimension emerging from the synthesis was teaching–learning methods and strategies. The findings indicated that postmodern curriculum approaches require a movement away from teacher-centered transmission models toward interactive, participatory, and reflective learning processes. Three organizing themes were identified: communicative and interactive approaches, process-oriented learning, and technology integration.

The first organizing theme, communicative and interactive approaches, highlights the central role of dialogue, collaboration, and social interaction in learning. The extracted indicators included dialogue-based learning, communication-centered practices, cooperative learning, and development of critical thinking skills (Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 18, 20, 21, 22, and 29). These findings suggest that knowledge construction in postmodern classrooms occurs through interaction among learners and teachers rather than through one-way transmission of information.

The second organizing theme, process-oriented learning, reflects the emphasis on learning as a continuous process rather than merely the achievement of predetermined outcomes. The identified indicators included inquiry-based learning, learner autonomy, independent learning, non-authoritarian teaching practices, attention to individual differences, metacognitive development, and identity formation (Articles 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 24, and 28).

The third organizing theme, technology integration, refers to the use of educational technologies to increase flexibility, accessibility, and diversity in learning opportunities. The synthesis identified technology-supported instructional approaches and flexible learning environments as important indicators of postmodern teaching practices (Articles 4, 8, 11, and 19).

Taken together, the findings demonstrated that postmodern teaching–learning strategies emphasize dialogue, collaboration, learner agency, reflection, and flexible approaches to knowledge construction.

4.2.4. Assessment and Evaluation

The fourth dimension identified through the meta-synthesis was assessment and evaluation. The findings revealed that assessment in a curriculum grounded in postmodern philosophy is not limited to measuring predetermined learning outcomes but is reconceptualized as an ongoing, reflective, and learner-centered process. In this perspective, assessment is considered an integral part of learning that supports learners' development, autonomy, and continuous improvement. Two organizing themes emerged under this dimension: integrated assessment approaches and the philosophy and nature of assessment.

The first organizing theme, integrated assessment approaches, indicates that postmodern assessment requires moving beyond standardized and purely quantitative forms of evaluation. The extracted indicators included qualitative approaches, diverse assessment strategies, learner participation in assessment, peer evaluation, and alternative assessment methods (Articles 1, 4, 6, 9, 14, 18, 21, and 24). These findings suggest that assessment practices in a postmodern

curriculum should recognize different ways of demonstrating learning and provide opportunities for learners to actively participate in evaluating their own progress.

The second organizing theme, the philosophy and nature of assessment, emphasizes the transformation of assessment from a product-oriented activity into a process-oriented practice. The synthesis identified continuous evaluation, self-assessment, reflection, and attention to learner growth as important indicators (Articles 1, 3, 8, 12, 20, 25, and 28).

Overall, the findings demonstrated that postmodern assessment practices emphasize flexibility, learner involvement, reflection, and the use of evaluation as a means for improving learning rather than simply judging achievement.

4.2.5. Curriculum Environment and Context

The fifth dimension identified through the synthesis was the curriculum environment and context. The findings indicated that postmodern curriculum development cannot be separated from the social, cultural, institutional, and organizational contexts in which education occurs. Unlike traditional perspectives, which often assume that curriculum principles can be universally applied, a postmodern approach emphasizes contextual adaptation and sensitivity to local conditions. Three organizing themes emerged within this dimension: cultural embeddedness, financial and administrative considerations, and professional and academic autonomy.

The first organizing theme, cultural embeddedness, reflects the importance of considering cultural, social, and contextual factors in curriculum design. The extracted indicators included localization, cultural responsiveness, recognition of diversity, and alignment with learners' social environments (Articles 2, 3, 7, 10, 15, 17, and 22). This finding suggests that a postmodern curriculum is not designed as a universal model detached from context; rather, it is continuously reconstructed according to the characteristics and needs of specific educational settings.

The second organizing theme, financial and administrative considerations, highlights the role of institutional conditions in supporting curriculum implementation. Indicators associated with this theme included availability of resources, organizational support, educational facilities, and administrative conditions (Articles 5, 11, 19, and 26).

The third organizing theme, professional and academic autonomy, emphasizes the importance of flexibility and decentralization in curriculum processes. The identified indicators included teacher autonomy, academic freedom, institutional flexibility, and participation in curriculum decision-making (Articles 1, 8, 12, 16, 20, and 29).

Taken together, these findings indicated that the environment and context of a postmodern curriculum are characterized by cultural responsiveness, institutional flexibility, and recognition of professional autonomy.

4.3. Integrated Framework of Postmodern Curriculum Components

Based on the synthesis of the selected studies, a comprehensive framework of postmodern curriculum components was developed. The framework demonstrates that the five identified dimensions are interconnected rather than independent.

The findings indicate that the postmodern curriculum is founded on several interconnected principles: flexibility rather than rigidity, contextualization instead of universalization, learner participation instead of centralized authority, and dialogue instead of one-way transmission of knowledge.

Based on Figure 1, the framework shows that curriculum objectives, content, teaching–learning processes, assessment practices, and educational context mutually influence one another. Therefore, a curriculum informed by postmodern philosophy should be understood as an adaptive and evolving system in which knowledge, learning, and educational practices are continually reconstructed according to learners’ needs and contextual conditions.

5. Discussion

The present meta-synthesis aimed to identify the indicators and components of a curriculum grounded in postmodern philosophy of education. The synthesis of 30 studies yielded five major dimensions, including curriculum objectives, curriculum content, teaching-learning methods and strategies, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum environment and context. Overall, the findings indicate that a postmodern curriculum is not defined by a single instructional technique or isolated curricular element; rather, it represents a fundamental reconceptualization of curriculum as a flexible, contextual, dialogical, and socially constructed process. This finding is consistent with the philosophical foundations of postmodernism, which challenge fixed conceptions of knowledge, authority, and universal educational solutions (Macpherson, 2025; Mezirow, 1996). In this view, curriculum is understood not as a predetermined structure to be implemented uniformly, but as an evolving process shaped by learners, contexts, and changing social conditions.

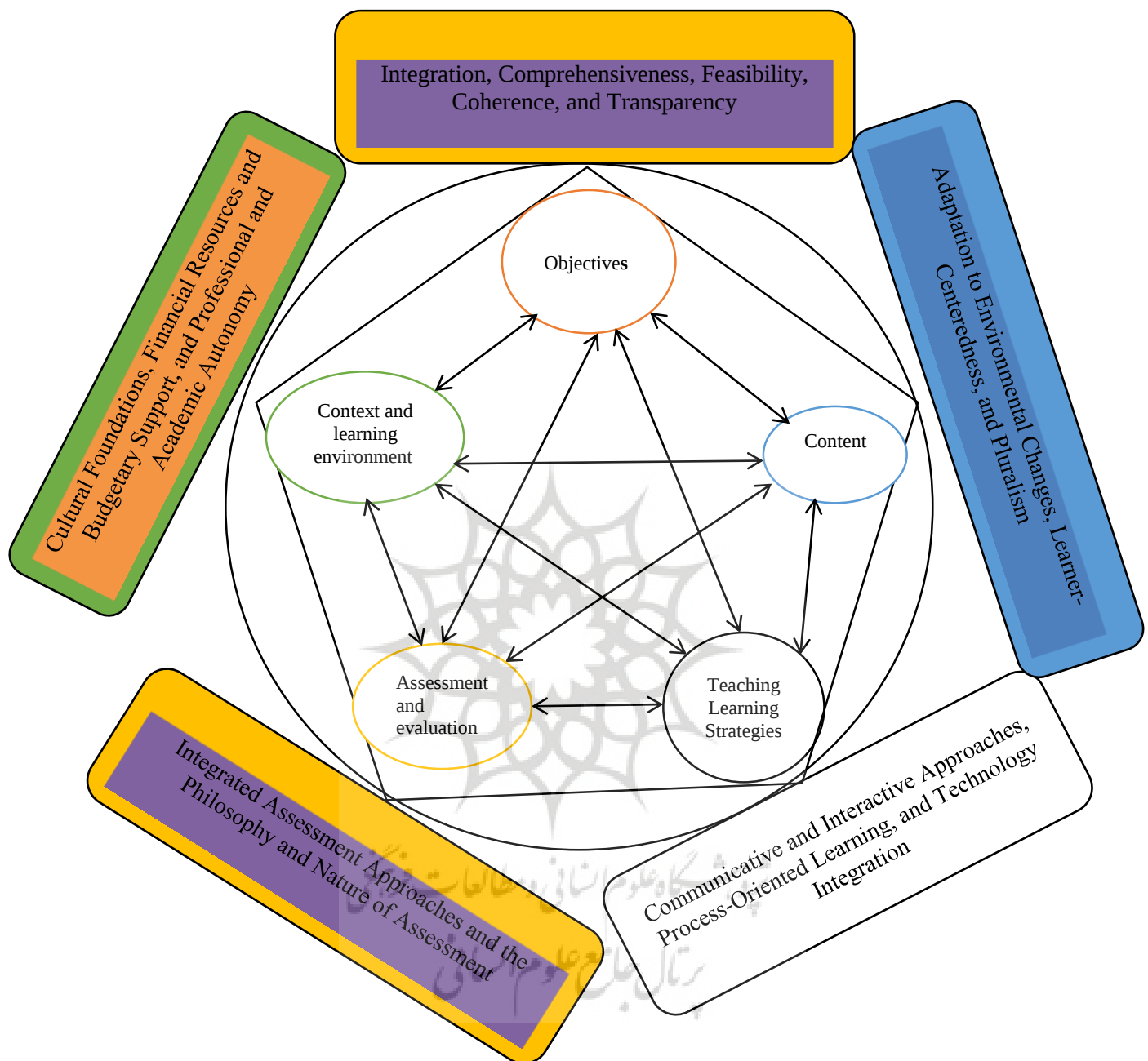


Figure 1.

Integrated Framework of Curriculum Components Grounded in Postmodern Philosophy of Education

One of the central findings of this study was the identification of curriculum objectives as a major dimension of postmodern curriculum development. The synthesized indicators, including comprehensiveness, localization, flexibility, contextual relevance, and responsiveness to contemporary needs, suggest a shift away from traditional objective models based on universal standards and predetermined outcomes. This finding supports Belbase et al. (2022) and Mpuangnan and Ntombela (2024), who emphasized that postmodern curriculum perspectives challenge rigid curriculum structures by recognizing the influence of learners' experiences and social contexts on educational purposes. However, the current synthesis extends these discussions by showing that postmodern transformation is not limited to curriculum content or classroom practices; rather, it begins at the level of curriculum objectives themselves. The emphasis on localized and adaptable objectives indicates that educational aims are increasingly viewed as negotiated and context-dependent rather than fixed universal expectations.

The findings regarding curriculum content further demonstrate the influence of postmodern assumptions on curriculum design. The emergence of learner-centeredness, pluralism, and responsiveness to environmental changes indicates that content selection in a postmodern curriculum is based on multiple sources of knowledge rather than a single authoritative perspective. This finding aligns with the argument of Özdil and Kunt (2023) and Khaled and Anderson (2023) that language and learning experiences are connected to identity construction, cultural interpretation, and social interaction. Particularly in EFL contexts, where language learning involves encounters with diverse cultural meanings, a curriculum based on a single dominant linguistic or cultural model may fail to address learners' identities and experiences.

The emphasis on pluralism identified in the present study also supports the arguments of Hoggan-Kloubert and Hoggan (2022), who highlighted the importance of maintaining diverse perspectives and meaningful dialogue in contemporary education. Nevertheless, the present findings also reveal an important theoretical tension within postmodern curriculum discourse. Although pluralism encourages inclusion and challenges dominant narratives, curriculum designers must avoid interpreting pluralism as the rejection of all forms of shared knowledge. As Rebecchi et al. (2024) and Hoggan-Kloubert and Hoggan (2022) argued, education requires a balance between openness to diverse perspectives and the development of rational and responsible engagement with knowledge. Therefore, the findings suggest that postmodern curriculum should not replace established knowledge structures with complete relativism but should create spaces where different perspectives can be critically examined.

Another significant finding concerns teaching–learning methods and strategies. The emergence of communicative approaches, dialogue, collaboration, learner autonomy, and process-oriented learning reflects a transformation in the relationship between teachers and learners. Rather than positioning teachers as the sole authorities responsible for knowledge transmission, postmodern curriculum emphasizes shared knowledge construction. This finding is strongly consistent with Larsari's (2024) study, which demonstrated that postmodern concepts such as process syllabi, alternative assessment, and self-directed learning enhanced Iranian EFL learners' autonomy. While Larsari focused on specific instructional practices, the present synthesis expands this perspective by demonstrating that learner autonomy is embedded within a broader curricular system involving objectives, content, teaching practices, and assessment.

Similarly, the finding regarding learner participation and dialogue is closely connected to Weisi and Ahmadi's (2024) research on student voice in Iranian higher education. Their study showed that genuine student voice involves more than collecting feedback and requires meaningful participation in curriculum decision-making. The present study supports this view by identifying participation, interaction, and autonomy as core components of postmodern curriculum. However, the current synthesis further indicates that student voice should not be considered an isolated classroom practice but rather a principle influencing the entire curriculum system.

The findings related to assessment and evaluation indicate another major departure from traditional curriculum approaches. The identification of alternative assessment, continuous evaluation, learner reflection, and process-based assessment suggests that postmodern curriculum challenges assessment models focused primarily on measurement and standardized outcomes. This result corresponds with Larsari's (2024) findings regarding the positive influence of alternative assessment on Iranian EFL learners' autonomy. The present study, however, places alternative assessment within a larger philosophical framework by showing that assessment transformation is connected to broader assumptions about knowledge, learning, and learner agency. In other words, changing assessment practices requires reconsidering the purpose of assessment itself: from controlling learning outcomes toward supporting learning development.

The final dimension identified in this study, curriculum environment and context, highlights that postmodern curriculum cannot be separated from cultural, institutional, and professional conditions. The findings regarding cultural embeddedness, contextual adaptation, and academic autonomy confirm the argument that curriculum practices are socially and culturally situated (Mpuangnan & Ntombela, 2024). This dimension is particularly important for EFL and higher

education contexts, where imported curriculum models may not always correspond with local educational realities. The emphasis on localization suggests that postmodern curriculum development requires sensitivity to learners' cultural backgrounds, institutional conditions, and societal expectations.

At the same time, the findings regarding professional and academic autonomy reveal a practical challenge. Although postmodern curriculum encourages decentralization and greater participation, Weisi and Ahmadi (2024) showed that institutional power structures may restrict authentic learner participation. Therefore, implementing postmodern curriculum principles requires not only philosophical acceptance but also structural changes within educational institutions. Without supportive organizational conditions, concepts such as student voice, teacher autonomy, and collaborative curriculum development may remain symbolic rather than genuinely transformative.

Overall, the findings contribute to existing literature by providing a comprehensive framework that integrates previously fragmented discussions of postmodern curriculum. Previous studies have mainly examined individual dimensions, such as autonomy (Larsari, 2024), epistemological pluralism (Hoggan-Kloubert & Hoggan, 2022), or student participation (Weisi & Ahmadi, 2024). In contrast, the present meta-synthesis demonstrated that postmodern curriculum represents an interconnected system in which objectives, content, pedagogy, assessment, and educational context are mutually dependent. The contribution of this study, therefore, lies not only in identifying individual indicators but also in showing how these indicators collectively represent a broader shift from standardized curriculum models toward flexible, contextualized, and dialogical approaches to education.

6. Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify the indicators and components of a curriculum grounded in postmodern philosophy of education through a qualitative meta-synthesis of existing research evidence. Following the five-stage meta-synthesis framework proposed by Erwin et al. (2011), 30 relevant studies were systematically analyzed and synthesized. The findings led to a comprehensive framework consisting of five interconnected dimensions: curriculum objectives, curriculum content, teaching–learning methods and strategies, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum environment and context. Overall, the findings indicated that a postmodern curriculum represents a shift from fixed, standardized, and authority-centered approaches toward more

flexible, contextualized, participatory, and dialogical models of education. In this framework, curriculum is viewed as an evolving process shaped by learners, cultural contexts, and changing social conditions rather than as a predetermined body of knowledge.

The findings may have important implications for EFL education. Teachers can translate postmodern curriculum principles into practice by creating more interactive learning environments, encouraging learner autonomy, incorporating students' experiences and cultural backgrounds into classroom activities, and using assessment practices that emphasize reflection and continuous development rather than focusing solely on final outcomes. Learners, in turn, can become more active participants in their learning by setting personal goals, engaging in self-reflection, contributing to classroom decision-making, and connecting language learning with their social and cultural experiences. For curriculum developers and educational policymakers, the findings may highlight the importance of designing flexible and context-sensitive EFL programs that recognize learner diversity, support teacher autonomy, and provide opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. Curriculum planning and evaluation should therefore move beyond standardized achievement indicators and consider broader outcomes such as learner engagement, independence, critical thinking, and contextual relevance. At the institutional level, successful implementation of postmodern curriculum principles requires supportive policies that promote teacher autonomy, professional development, and collaborative curriculum design.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. As a meta-synthesis, the findings depend on the scope and methodological quality of the available studies included in the analysis. Moreover, because postmodern curriculum principles are strongly influenced by cultural and educational contexts, the proposed framework should not be considered a universal model that can be applied identically across all settings. Future research can examine the applicability of this framework in specific EFL contexts through empirical studies and explore how postmodern curriculum components influence learner autonomy, engagement, critical thinking, and language development. Further qualitative investigations involving teachers and learners can also provide deeper insights into the practical challenges of implementing postmodern curriculum approaches across different educational contexts.

Overall, this study contributes to curriculum theory and EFL education by synthesizing fragmented evidence and presenting a holistic understanding of how postmodern philosophical assumptions can inform curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation.

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