



Standardizing English Syllabi: A Comparative Study across Gujarat Universities

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ABSTRACT

In light of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes interdisciplinary learning, credit-based modular education, and improved employability, Gujarat's universities have begun restructuring their English syllabi. This study investigates the extent of standardization across four major universities in Gujarat: Gujarat University, Gujarat Technological University (GTU), Saurashtra University, and the Central University of Gujarat (CUG). Using a mixed-methods approach involving syllabus audits, stakeholder surveys (n=160), and semi-structured interviews, the study compares credit structures, thematic priorities, pedagogical approaches, and alignment with NEP objectives. Results indicate substantial uniformity in credit distribution but persistent divergence in pedagogical content, with some syllabi still focused heavily on literary analysis at the expense of functional communication. The findings highlight the need for deeper curricular reforms that prioritize employability, digital literacy, and communicative competence. Recommendations are offered for a needs-based, interdisciplinary curriculum that better serves students' academic and professional futures.



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

English has long served as the lingua franca of academic and professional spheres in India, particularly in Gujarat, a state with growing industrial sectors and strong international business ties. Given this backdrop, English proficiency among graduates is a key metric of academic success and employability. However, traditional English syllabi in Indian universities—often dominated by literary texts and rote grammar instruction—have not evolved in tandem with the demands of the 21st-century workplace.

The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marked a paradigm shift in Indian education, advocating outcome-based learning, multidisciplinary exposure, and curriculum design rooted in real-world applicability. Gujarat, in alignment with NEP, has introduced a uniform credit-based curriculum framework for undergraduate programs, aiming to ensure academic parity and improve student mobility across institutions.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite policy-level alignment, discrepancies persist in how universities across Gujarat structure and implement English syllabi. Key areas of divergence include the balance between literature and communication, the integration of skill-based modules, and the extent of workplace-oriented language instruction. These differences result in uneven graduate readiness for employment, affecting students' job prospects and employers' satisfaction.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the undergraduate English syllabi of four major Gujarat universities in terms of content, structure, and alignment with NEP 2020.
2. To assess the extent to which current syllabi incorporate communication skills relevant to the workplace.
3. To identify gaps and recommend a framework for curriculum standardization that promotes both academic rigor and employability.

1.4 Research Questions

- RQ1: What are the commonalities and differences in English syllabi across Gujarat University, GTU, Saurashtra University, and CUG?
- RQ2: To what extent do these syllabi integrate practical communication skills as envisioned by NEP 2020?
- RQ3: What challenges and opportunities exist in standardizing English curricula across diverse institutional settings?



1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of research focused on aligning academic instruction with labor market needs. By identifying gaps in curricular design and implementation, the findings offer actionable insights for policymakers, curriculum designers, and faculty aiming to enhance English education in Gujarat. In doing so, it supports the larger national goal of producing job-ready graduates equipped with 21st-century skills.

1.6 Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized as follows:-

Section 2 presents a review of the relevant literature on syllabus design, employability, and educational policy.

Section 3 outlines the research methodology.

Section 4 analyzes syllabus data and presents statistical findings.

Section 5 discusses the results in light of existing theories and practices.

Section 6 concludes with recommendations and avenues for future research.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Needs-Based Curriculum Design

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) introduced Needs Analysis as an essential first step in curriculum design. Their framework emphasizes that learners' present and future needs must guide syllabus formulation. In the context of Gujarat's universities, this theory underscores the necessity to integrate practical communication skills in English syllabi to serve students' future workplace requirements.

Recent studies such as Rahman (2020) and Rezaee & Kazempourian (2021) reaffirm that academic English instruction often neglects professional communicative contexts. In India, course designs largely focus on literary appreciation, whereas employer expectations increasingly stress task-based language usage, including email etiquette, report writing, and client interaction simulations.

2.2 Employability and Workplace Communication Skills

The India Skills Report 2022–23 highlights an alarming gap in job readiness, with only 45–50% of graduates considered employable. The core deficiency lies in poor communication, digital competence, and soft skills. Studies by Banerjee & Sen (2021) and Kumar (2021) argue that Indian curricula—especially in tier-2 and tier-3 cities—fail to sufficiently incorporate these vital competencies.

Ahmed (2021) suggests that reflective learning and scenario-based language activities are more effective than traditional grammar-centric methods. This aligns with NEP 2020's call for experiential learning and suggests new pedagogical approaches for English instruction.



2.3 Academia–Industry Gaps in English Syllabi

Several researchers have investigated the gap between English syllabi and workplace needs. Gulati et al. (2020) and Singh & Joshi (2023) report that literature-heavy courses leave little room for professional skill development. Patel & Joshi (2024) noted that only 15% of colleges surveyed included modules on report writing, email composition, or digital communication, despite 80% retaining canonical literary content.

Such findings indicate a systemic inertia in syllabus revision. As a result, employers often find new hires lacking in critical communication abilities, undermining onboarding and productivity.

2.4 Impact of the National Education Policy 2020

NEP 2020 encourages a shift from content-heavy instruction to skills-focused, outcome-based curricula. It promotes flexibility, interdisciplinary learning, and stronger academia–industry linkages. Gujarat’s education department responded by introducing credit-based modular syllabi across universities beginning in 2023.

Yet, analysis shows uneven implementation. Some institutions, like Gujarat Technological University, have adopted communication-focused modules, while others continue to emphasize traditional literary frameworks. The establishment of Kausalya Skill University in Gujarat is an example of a structural response to NEP, but curricular innovation in English courses remains patchy.

2.5 Summary of Literature Findings

Area	Key Findings
Needs-Based Design	Curricula must align with students' future professional contexts
Employability Gap	Communication and digital literacy deficiencies reduce job readiness
Syllabus Audits in Gujarat	80% of colleges focus on literature; only 15% include workplace communication
NEP 2020 Implementation	Structural changes made; curriculum-level reforms lag in many institutions

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative strategies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of English syllabus standardization across Gujarat universities. Quantitative analysis includes credit structure comparison and syllabus content audits, while qualitative data were gathered via stakeholder interviews and surveys.

3.2 Data Sources

The primary data sources for this study include:



- Official English syllabi (AY 2023–24) from Gujarat University, GTU, Saurashtra University, and the Central University of Gujarat.
- Surveys administered to 160 participants: 100 undergraduate students, 40 faculty members, and 20 industry professionals.
- Semi-structured interviews with a subset of 10 faculty and 10 industry experts.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants from the four universities. The inclusion criteria ensured diversity across academic streams and stakeholder roles. Industry participants were drawn from sectors such as IT, finance, marketing, and education.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

1. **Survey Questionnaire:** A structured Likert-scale survey was designed to assess perceptions on syllabus relevance, communication skill focus, and alignment with industry needs.
2. **Interview Guide:** Semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights into faculty challenges, industry expectations, and institutional support mechanisms.
3. **Syllabus Audit Rubric:** A content analysis rubric assessed syllabus components such as course objectives, thematic units, skill-building modules, assessment methods, and credit weightage.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Descriptive statistics were calculated for survey responses. Paired-sample t-tests were used to identify statistical differences between perceived academic instruction and industry needs.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Thematic coding was applied to interview transcripts to identify recurring concerns, gaps, and recommendations related to syllabus implementation.
- **Document Analysis:** Each university's syllabus was coded against predefined benchmarks derived from NEP 2020 and best practices in needs-based curriculum design.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the study's purpose and assured of confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and all responses were anonymized.

3.7 Limitations



While the study draws on diverse institutional data, it is limited to four universities and may not represent the entirety of Gujarat’s higher education landscape. Additionally, implementation details may vary across affiliated colleges, which were not individually surveyed in this study.

Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Overview of Syllabus Structure

A comparative analysis of English syllabi from Gujarat University, GTU, Saurashtra University, and CUG was conducted using a rubric based on NEP 2020 guidelines. The primary categories examined included credit weightage, balance between literature and functional communication, presence of skill-oriented modules, and modes of assessment.

Table 1: Credit and Course Category Distribution (AY 2023–24)

University	Core Literature (Credits)	Communication Skills (Credits)	SEC/AEC Courses	Total Semester Credits
Gujarat University	8	6	6	24
GTU	6	9	5	20
Saurashtra University	8	4	4	22
CUG	8	6	4	24

The data indicates structural alignment in credit frameworks, but variation in content emphasis. GTU stands out with a higher focus on communication modules, whereas Saurashtra University leans more toward traditional literature.

4.2 Survey Findings: Stakeholder Perspectives

The survey results underscore a significant gap between academic content and industry expectations.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Communication Skill Importance vs. Syllabus Representation (n = 160)

Skill	Industry Mean	Academic Mean	t-value	p-value
Report Writing	4.6	2.1	12.5	<0.001
Email & Digital Communication	4.3	1.8	11.0	<0.001
Presentation Skills	4.1	2.4	9.2	<0.001
Critical Reading	3.8	3.5	2.0	0.05
Literary Analysis	2.7	4.2	-9.1	<0.001



The t-tests reveal statistically significant mismatches ($p < 0.05$) between industry-rated importance and curricular emphasis in key skill areas such as email writing and report drafting.

4.3 Interview Insights

Thematic analysis of interview data from 20 faculty and industry experts revealed the following recurring themes:

- **Theme 1: Curriculum Imbalance** – "There is too much focus on Shakespeare and too little on the skills our graduates actually need to survive in the modern workplace."
- **Theme 2: Rigid Frameworks** – Faculty cited bureaucratic delays and lack of autonomy as obstacles to updating syllabi.
- **Theme 3: Simulation-Based Learning** – Industry experts recommended modules that mimic real-world communication tasks like team meetings, negotiations, and client interactions.

4.4 Content Gaps Identified in Syllabi

Document analysis showed that only one out of the four syllabi included dedicated units on resume writing or workplace etiquette. Email and digital communication were almost entirely absent or treated superficially. Literary texts still dominate core papers, which contradicts NEP 2020's emphasis on skill-based learning.

4.5 Summary of Results

- **Structural Similarity:** Uniformity in credit distribution aligns with NEP.
- **Content Divergence:** Major gaps in workplace communication skill modules.
- **Stakeholder Disparity:** Strong agreement among students, faculty, and employers that syllabi are outdated in practical skill emphasis.
- **Assessment Gaps:** Syllabi rely heavily on written exams and essays; authentic performance tasks remain underutilized.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

The analysis indicates that while Gujarat's universities have achieved structural parity in terms of credit frameworks, significant content-based and pedagogical discrepancies persist. Core literature continues to dominate syllabi, with limited scope for practical, job-oriented communication modules. This imbalance is particularly concerning in light of NEP 2020's emphasis on skills-based learning and employability outcomes.



- **5.2 Alignment with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

NEP 2020 calls for interdisciplinary, flexible, and outcome-based learning models that prepare students for real-world challenges. While credit systems have been standardized across Gujarat, the lack of harmonized, skills-focused content in English syllabi indicates only partial compliance with NEP objectives. Notably, few syllabi include experiential or project-based learning modules, despite NEP's recommendation.

- **5.3 Implications for Employability**

The data reveal that employers rank functional communication—particularly report writing, email correspondence, and presentation skills—as crucial for workplace success. However, these are underrepresented in most university syllabi. This mismatch may contribute to Gujarat's average employability rating stagnating at 45–50%, consistent with national trends. Graduates lacking digital literacy and workplace communication skills may struggle to integrate into professional environments, leading to extended onboarding periods or limited career progression.

- **5.4 Academic Constraints and Institutional Challenges**

Faculty interviews indicate that bureaucratic inertia and lack of curricular autonomy hinder timely syllabus updates. Rigid administrative processes and exam-centric assessment structures further constrain efforts to innovate teaching practices. Additionally, resource limitations—such as access to training in communicative pedagogy or industry collaboration—compound the issue.

- **5.5 Prospects for Standardization**

A shared curricular repository, periodic state-level syllabus review panels, and industry-academic committees could drive harmonization across Gujarat universities. Gujarat's proactive policy stance (e.g., creation of skill universities and adoption of common credit frameworks) provides a strong institutional foundation for these reforms.

- **5.6 Comparison with National and International Practices**

The findings align with studies from other Indian states (e.g., Karnataka, Tamil Nadu) where syllabus standardization has improved academic portability but not necessarily employability. In contrast, global best practices from countries like Singapore and Germany integrate real-world tasks, internships, and modular soft skills training into undergraduate English education, offering replicable models for Gujarat.

- **5.7 Synthesis of Literature and Field Data**

The literature consistently highlighted the need for outcome-oriented, communication-rich syllabi. This study's field data affirm those conclusions with empirical evidence from four distinct university contexts. Together, they suggest that while progress has been made, a full alignment of syllabi with workplace expectations and NEP goals remains an urgent priority. The discussion underscores a key insight: structural alignment alone is insufficient. True



standardization must involve not only the format and credit count but also the content, pedagogy, and evaluation strategies that directly impact student success in real-world applications.

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the degree of standardization in English syllabi across four major universities in Gujarat in the context of NEP 2020 reforms. The findings indicate a high level of uniformity in credit distribution and structural alignment, reflecting the state's commitment to NEP's modular framework. However, there exists a significant disconnect in terms of pedagogical content, particularly regarding the inclusion of workplace communication skills and task-based learning.

The evidence from syllabus audits, survey data, and stakeholder interviews shows that literary studies continue to dominate the curriculum, while modules on professional communication—such as report writing, digital correspondence, and presentation skills—are marginal or entirely absent. This imbalance poses a risk to student employability and undermines the transformative vision of NEP 2020.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Curriculum Redesign:

- Incorporate workplace-oriented modules (e.g., business communication, digital literacy, resume writing).
- Balance literary studies with functional English usage, emphasizing skill.

2. Assessment Reform:

- Replace purely theoretical exams with performance-based assessments (e.g., presentations, simulated interviews, and report writing tasks).
- Develop rubrics that evaluate real-world communicative competence.

3. Faculty Training and Capacity Building:

- Offer professional development workshops focused on communicative pedagogy and task-based language teaching.
- Facilitate industry-academic collaborations to inform content development.

4. Standardization Guidelines:

- Establish a state-level panel for English curriculum review, with representation from academia, industry, and NEP task forces.
- Create a repository of best practices and model syllabi accessible to all affiliated institutions.

5. Policy and Institutional Support:

- Encourage universities to pilot interdisciplinary and project-based courses aligned with NEP.
- Fund initiatives that integrate internships and experiential learning within English programs.



6.3 Future Research Directions

Further studies should expand the sample to include affiliated colleges and technical institutes across rural and urban regions in Gujarat. Longitudinal studies tracking student performance before and after curriculum reforms would offer deeper insights into the real-world impact of standardized syllabi.

Ultimately, the goal of standardizing English syllabi should not be conformity for its own sake but the creation of equitable, relevant, and empowering educational experiences. A curriculum that balances tradition with innovation can ensure that English instruction in Gujarat not only honors literary heritage but also equips learners for success in a globalized world.

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