Materials development and syllabus design are theoretically treated as pivotal concerns in English language teaching (ELT). Graduate courses, theses, conference presentations, and journal papers on designing courses and developing materials are, therefore, integral parts of theoretical debates on ELT in Iran. In practical educational contexts, these theoretical considerations are normally realized in two major configurations: official syllabi and materials at schools and universities, usually treated as failed endeavors; and imported course books in private language teaching institutes, generally known as success stories. In this paper I will argue that such a frozen practical context crucially overshadows all the theoretical discussions over syllabus design and materials development and renders them almost contextually irrelevant. Broadly reviewing a number of course books popularly adopted by Iranian language teaching institutes, I will illustrate the major themes of the contents presented in these course books. Based on this, I will discuss the underlying ideological orientations of the books and their covert ELT policy directions. Moreover, it will be argued that such course books seem to be driving the entire ELT enterprise in Iran and even more importantly they are acting as de facto agents of foreign language education policy making in the country.