

Teachers' Evaluation of Chinese Language Syllabus at Secondary Schools: A Study at Selangor

Chew Fong Peng¹, Yong Chooi Hoon²

University of Malaya

Abstract

The study was conducted based on the conceptual framework of CIPP to evaluate teachers' views on the Chinese Language Syllabus at lower secondary schools in Selangor state, Malaysia. The study involved 111 teachers from Chinese schools from different backgrounds. All sample subjects were randomly selected from ten districts of Selangor. Questionnaires were used as the research instruments and the Likert scale was used for measurement of research questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS. The results showed the continuation of syllabus from Form I to Form III, as well as consistency with the textbook contents. The findings also showed that teachers did not know clearly the three main domains in the syllabus and were unclear about the objectives of the syllabus. Results of *t*-test, ANOVA and Chi-Square test showed no significant differences in the evaluation of teachers in general despite the teachers' different backgrounds. Comparison of mean scores showed that National Type

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- 1 Chew Fong Peng (Dr.) is senior lecturer at Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, and specification in language education. She has published various articles in national and international journals, chapters in books, books and proceeding in conferences. Completed 8 research projects which 4 of them were lead by Chew.
 - 2 Yong Chooi Hoon, Master in Language Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. She is currently a Chinese language teacher in *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Ehsan, Kepong*. She has been teaching in schools for 17 years.

Secondary Schools' students appreciated aesthetic value better in the implementation of the syllabus. School students from National Secondary Schools were found to show more active participation in class, but they could not finish the exercises in the textbook. Teachers recommended that they should be given more opportunities in curriculum planning and that the syllabus objectives should be summarized.

Keywords: Chinese language, syllabus, secondary schools, Selangor, Malaysia

Introduction

Current world developments show the trend of increasing importance of Chinese language education in our country. The rise of economic power of China has raised the importance of learning and mastering of the Chinese language. As such, increased enrolment has been seen in SJK (C) and Chinese private secondary schools (*Sin Chew Daily*, January 15, 2011), but the Education Development Master Plan (PIPP) (2008) also stressed that Chinese classes will be conducted in national primary schools by strengthening the national schools to attract more students to study in a multi-ethnic primary school.

To achieve the teaching and learning aims, the curriculum and syllabus prescribed by the Curriculum Development Division is the determinant. Curriculum planning and delineation of the scope of syllabus determine the quality of teaching and learning of a subject. Because the school curriculum espoused a noble intention in providing global education to the next generation, so, revision of the curriculum was conducted. Following the revision of the curriculum and syllabus, the last Chinese Language syllabus was implemented from 2003 till now (Curriculum Development Division, MOE, 2000).

Revision of the Chinese Language Curriculum

According to information recorded in the Orientation Course of Chinese Language under the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM) in 1987, the Chinese language curriculum has experienced three revisions after the formulation of our country since independence in 1957 until 2009. In parallel with that, three times the Chinese language textbooks have been formulated to suit the Chinese curriculum changes. The three changes in the curriculum were the curriculum used before the time of independence, the New Curriculum for Secondary Schools (ICSS or KBSM) implemented since 1987 and the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School from 2000 until now.

The major differences between the KBSM curriculum in 1987 with the present curriculum is that the curriculum in 1987 has increased teaching of the basic listening skills in Chinese language and way of teaching listening in the 1987 syllabus was more diversified and revealed elements of the broader scope of the syllabus. In addition, the 1987 KBSM listed contents for the teaching of reading skills more rigorously. In the

teaching of writing skills, the 1987 KBSM has added four new divisions, namely the Training Transformation (改写练习), complete Form (填写表格), record the contents of the passage (摘录要点) and collect, compile and analyze information, and finally concluded the information provided (收集、整理和分析资料后作结论).

The difference between the KBSM Syllabus 1987 and that of 2000 is in terms of content. The old syllabus (1987 KBSM) disclosed the contents of Chinese teaching and learning in secondary schools that emphasize listening and speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills, grammar and *Mingju Jinghua* 名句精华 (Syllabus in Chinese High School, 1987). While the latest syllabus in addition to emphasizing language skills that include listening, speaking, reading skills, writing skills, a significant reform is the latest syllabus emphasizes the use of language skills in three main domains, the domain of interpersonal relationships (人际关系领域), maintenance of domain information (信息领域) and the domain of aesthetics (美学领域) (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2000).

Statement of Problem

Li (2004), our country's former Federal Inspectorate, Ministry of Education Malaysia, said many Chinese language teachers still use traditional ways of teaching, the only explanation of the method and the method of teaching the language is clearly not a great benefit in the learning process. His opinion is the same as Ren (2002) from China who stated that even after the new syllabus was implemented in China and curriculum planners have set the goals, scope and content of the new syllabus, and provided new and different textbooks, teachers are still using the old methods to teach new material.

Both of these statements reveal similarities in the implementation of new curriculum; although the new syllabus was introduced, teachers are still using the old methods of teaching to teach Chinese. Teachers are unaware of the differences in the scope, objectives and content between the old and the latest syllabus. Such a situation may lead to failure in achieving goals of the new syllabus implementation.

According to Zhou and Jiang (2007), if a teacher is able to understand and master the new curriculum reform, henceforth the teacher will turn to the new syllabus. On the other hand, when the teachers do not know the goal of the syllabus to be implemented, then they cannot achieve the desired goals requested by the curriculum planners. As a consequence, contradictions in the planning and implementation will occur.

Additionally, Seman Salleh (2005) found that Malay language teachers face problems in selecting skills and appropriate teaching content bound to all students. The problem arises from the different abilities of students in a class. This shows that textbooks used are not according to the ability of the students. If the used textbook is not practical, renewal or modification of textbooks should be conducted. Following this study, we are also interested to know whether the textbooks used at the lower secondary school level was written based on the ability of the students.

According to Li (2004), the teaching and learning environment in National-type Secondary Schools (SMJK) were found satisfactory at present, but it is difficult to predict the teaching and learning in the National Secondary School (SMK) in the near future while their teaching and learning environment is still at the non-conducive levels. Non-conducive conditions arise because students are not given more opportunities to use the language, for example, the situation that exists in secondary schools include the total collection of the Chinese books in the school library which is still less, relevant competitions with the use of Chinese language is also rare and online Chinese magazines are still inadequate. This raises the researchers' concerns because one of the important contents of the latest Chinese Language Syllabus is related with the use of language skills in three main domains. If the teaching and learning environment in schools is still the same, as pointed out by Li (2004), can the objectives of syllabus ever be achieved?

In addition, Brown's (2004) study assesses 525 primary school teachers and managers' conception on curriculum. On average, participants agreed with the improvement conceptions and the school accountability conception, while rejecting the view that assessment was irrelevant. Surprisingly, no statistically significant differences were found in mean scale scores for each conception regardless of teacher (age, gender, role, assessment training, or assessment practices) or school (size, location, or socio-economic status) variables.

Ren (2002) noted that conflict between implementation and planning is a consequence of the majority of teachers not ever following a course on the new syllabus. Teachers who have the opportunity to attend in-service courses were limited to the courses related to teaching methods, but not associated with the concepts and ideas in the syllabus.

In addition, some schools do not provide enough copies of the syllabus and curriculum for distribution to each Chinese Language teacher. These deficiencies meant

that the teachers could not understand the syllabus and thus were unable to perform their duties as curriculum planners to achieve the goals. Ren (2002) also showed that teachers rarely prepare teaching aids. The common teaching aids are available only in the form of cards or small boards for writing.

According to the report of a study on Chinese teachers in China (Shen & Li, 2006), teaching the language in this new curriculum caused too much learning troubles to students, while teachers were facing problems regarding the constraint of time in teaching. So, one element to be considered in curriculum planning is that teaching materials should be appropriate to the provision of teaching and learning time in the class.

Although the study sample in Ren (2002), as well as Shen and Li (2006) were Chinese teachers who taught in China after the implementation of new curriculum, because the research on Chinese language curriculum in Malaysia is less, the researchers want to know whether the same situation or the same problems exist in Malaysia; the findings of this study can guide the relevant authorities in amending the curriculum in the near future. Therefore, this study explores the implementation of the recent Chinese syllabus in national schools in Malaysia with the focus on the lower secondary Chinese syllabus only, namely from Form I until Form III. Furthermore, social background of the teachers will be investigated to determine whether their background will affect their views of the latest syllabus.

Research Questions

This study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the Chinese Language teachers' opinions on the latest syllabus?
2. Is there any significant difference in terms of social background of the teachers to view the latest syllabus?

In answering the second research question, the null hypothesis has been made that there is no significant difference in terms of teachers' views on the latest syllabus according to their different background.

3. What are the Chinese Language teachers' expectations on the syllabus?

Conceptual Framework of the Study

According to Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2004), the curriculum

development process is a relatively complicated process because too many factors need to be considered. So, this curriculum assessment that is going to be done is aimed at ascertaining the effectiveness of the curriculum being developed. This evaluation can indicate the advantages and disadvantages of the curriculum. Once the evaluation is carried out, the weaknesses discovered can be rectified. So, before starting the curriculum reform, curriculum evaluation should be conducted to provide significant information for curriculum planning.

Glatthorn et al. (2004) and Taylor (1989) similarly stated that the process of collecting useful information as a reference is important in syllabus reform. They pointed out that before determining a new syllabus, important information such as teacher feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the old measurement, students' feedback on the old curriculum, performance feedback from the students who followed the old syllabus, and so forth, should be collected in advance. With this information, curriculum planning in the future will be more realistic and easy to implement.

The CIPP model is chosen as a basis for this research because this model is more comprehensive in terms of curriculum evaluation in that it includes an assessment in terms of Context, Input, Process, Product approach developed by Stufflebeam (1983). This provides a systematic way of looking at many different aspects of the curriculum development process.

Based on the explanation given by Stevens, Butler, and Wellington (2010), at the level of content assessment, the focus of this study is given to the matters related to the rationale and objectives of the Chinese Language program or curriculum. This means that researchers who wish to deepen this area should examine the scope, goals, objectives and rationale when the curriculum was introduced. This content assessment is aimed at identifying the gaps between the curriculum objectives and goals achieved in the implementation.

Researchers evaluate the implementation of the lower secondary (Form I, II and III) Chinese language syllabus that has been implemented in terms of teachers' views about planning the curriculum being implemented. The evaluation focusing on the assessment of input consists of two main sections: the first section evaluates the overall syllabus and textbook, the second part examines teachers' views and how these relate with their social background.

Design of the Study

We have chosen a quantitative design for this study, with a set of questionnaires based on the CIPP model. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, namely Part A for collecting Personal Details of the participants; Part B was the evaluation of the teachers towards up to date curriculum, namely the evaluation of teachers on Chinese Language Syllabus in general and textbooks in particular. Pilot test carried out showed that the items had a Cronbach alpha coefficient (1951) of .80. This means that the questionnaire was very consistent and can be used for the actual study.

A total of 111 teachers who teach Chinese language at lower secondary level in Selangor state were selected for this study to complete the questionnaires. Selangor was chosen because the state was declared as the Modern State on August 27, 2006 (the official website of the State Government of Selangor Darul Ehsan, 2009), and it is the state that experienced the most rapid development in various fields in Malaysia (Asia Web Direct, 2011). In addition, Selangor always hosts the Chinese language courses, meetings on Chinese education and curriculum courses. Selangor teachers are considered the pioneers and leaders in terms of Chinese language program evaluation; hence their opinions and views on the curriculum implementation are relevant.

The questionnaire was adapted from the CIPP model to suit to the context of Chinese language education in Malaysia. The questionnaire was distributed by e-mail to all the Chinese language teachers who teach in Selangor. Only 111 teachers returned the questionnaire. These samples represented all the districts in Selangor although the return rate was 75%. The data were collected and analyzed using SPSS to describe the evaluation of teachers on the new syllabus.

Participants of the Study

The background of the participants in this study is shown in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1

Teachers' Profile

| Samples profile | Category | frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|--|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 20 | 18.0 |
| | Female | 91 | 82.0 |
| Age group | 21-30 | 7 | 6.3 |
| | 31-40 | 58 | 52.3 |
| | 41-50 | 43 | 38.7 |
| | 51-60 | 3 | 2.7 |
| Specialization in university | Chinese Studies | 41 | 36.9 |
| | Foreign Languages | 10 | 9.0 |
| | Linguistic | 28 | 25.2 |
| | Others | 32 | 28.8 |
| Type of schools | SMK | 65 | 58.6 |
| | SMJK | 46 | 41.4 |
| Districts in Selangor | Petaling Perdana | 25 | 22.5 |
| | Petaling Utama | 14 | 12.6 |
| | Hulu Langat | 6 | 5.4 |
| | Gombak | 8 | 7.2 |
| | Hulu Selangor | 7 | 6.3 |
| | Sabak Bernam | 10 | 9.0 |
| | Kuala Selangor | 2 | 1.8 |
| | Klang | 32 | 28.8 |
| | Kuala Langat | 5 | 4.5 |
| | Sepang | 2 | 1.8 |
| Frequency of attending teaching course | Never | 35 | 31.5 |
| | 1-5 times | 73 | 65.8 |
| | 6-10 times | 3 | 2.7 |

Of the total 111 participants, a total of 91 were female (82.0%) and 20 were males (18.0%). A total of 58 teachers (52.3%) in this study were in the age group of 31-40

years old, and a total of 43 teachers (38.7%) were in the age group 41-50 years old.

In terms of academic qualifications, the majority or 97 teachers (87.4%) have undergraduate qualifications. In the area of specialization, most of the participants or 79 teachers (71.2%) qualified in the field associated with Chinese, including Chinese Studies program at Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University Putra Malaysia and the field of Linguistics at the University of Malaya, while a minority (28.8%) specialized in Mathematics, Geography, Psychology and others. Sample selection covered all ten districts in Selangor state.

The respondents were selected from the two different types of school, a total of 65 teachers (58.6%) are teaching at SMJK and 46 (41.4%) were from the SMK. In terms of professional development, most of the sample or 73 teachers (65.8%) have attended courses related to teaching skill improvement.

Table 2

Normality Test for Respondents' Social Background

| Social Background of Respondents | | Statistic | Std Error |
|--|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Gender | Skewness | -1.687 | 0.229 |
| | Kurtosis | 0.862 | 0.455 |
| Age group | Skewness | 0.056 | 0.229 |
| | Kurtosis | -0.154 | 0.455 |
| Specialization in university | Skewness | -0.033 | 0.229 |
| | Kurtosis | -1.66 | 0.455 |
| Type of schools | Skewness | 0.352 | 0.229 |
| | Kurtosis | -1.911 | 0.455 |
| Districts in Selangor State | Skewness | 0.005 | 0.229 |
| | Kurtosis | -1.591 | 0.455 |
| Attending courses related to teaching and learning | Skewness | -0.308 | 0.229 |
| | Kurtosis | -0.594 | 0.455 |

Table 2 shows the results of normality tests on the social background of participants. Based on the results of normality tests, six aspects of participants' social background, namely gender, age, specialization in universities, type of schools, districts in Selangor state and frequency of attending courses related to teaching and learning indicate that they are all normal data. Therefore, the study will be conducted to analyze the parametric data for the above six aspects of participants' social background which showed no bias in the data analysis.

Findings

Question 1: What is the Chinese teachers' opinion on the latest syllabus?

Findings on teachers' views of the syllabus in the teaching of Chinese language are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers' Opinion on the Chinese Language Syllabus in Teaching

| Teachers' opinion | Scale | | | | | Mean | SD |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|------|-----|
| | ED | D | U | A | EA | | |
| Know clearly about the three main domains in syllabus | 1 (0.9) | 16 (14.4) | 38 (34.2) | 52 (46.8) | 4 (3.6) | 3.38 | .81 |
| Know clearly about the objectives in syllabus | 0 (0.0) | 11 (9.9) | 47 (42.3) | 46 (41.4) | 7 (6.3) | 3.44 | .76 |
| Always refer to syllabus | 2 (1.8) | 22 (19.8) | 33 (29.7) | 29 (44.1) | 4 (3.6) | 3.28 | .89 |
| Always refer to the description of syllabus | 1 (0.9) | 26 (23.4) | 28 (25.2) | 52 (46.8) | 4 (3.6) | 3.29 | .90 |
| Syllabus is very useful in teaching | 1 (0.9) | 7 (6.3) | 19 (17.1) | 73 (65.8) | 11 (9.9) | 3.77 | .75 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------|-----|
| Syllabus is suitable with the students' cognitive development | 0 (0.0) | 12 (10.8) | 40 (36.0) | 56 (50.5) | 2 (1.8) | 3.44 | .71 |
| Syllabus improve students' skills in language proficiency | 0 (0.0) | 12 (10.8) | 38 (34.2) | 58 (52.3) | 3 (2.7) | 3.47 | .72 |
| Syllabus showed a continuation in the lower secondary form | 0 (0.0) | 9 (8.1) | 31 (27.9) | 65 (58.6) | 6 (5.4) | 3.61 | .72 |
| Syllabus is in line with the content of textbook | 1 (0.9) | 11 (9.9) | 33 (29.7) | 62 (55.9) | 4 (3.6) | 3.51 | .76 |
| Syllabus is in line with the format of PMR examination | 8 (7.2) | 17 (15.3) | 29 (26.1) | 56 (50.5) | 1 (0.9) | 3.23 | .97 |

Note: ED = Strongly disagree; D = Disagree; U = Uncertain; A = Agree;
EA = Strongly agree SD = Standard deviation

Among the 10 items, the item having the highest mean is "Syllabus is very useful in teaching" ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .75$). This means that most teachers (75.7%) in Selangor state agree with the latest Chinese syllabus found useful in teaching. These results provide positive feedback on the syllabus implemented from 2003. This was followed by item that reveal the continuity of the syllabus from Form I to Form III ($M = 3.61$ $SD = .72$), teachers also agreed that the recent syllabus is in line with the content of the textbook ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .76$). However, the results show that teachers are not so sure whether the syllabus is in line with the PMR examination format ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .97$), which recorded the lowest agreement out of the ten items. Teachers are also unsure whether they are always making reference to the syllabus ($M = 3.28$, $SD = .89$) and whether they always make reference to the syllabus description ($M = 3.29$, $SD =$

.90). Both of these items also recorded the second and third lowest mean value of the ten items. The findings also showed that the teachers shown uncertain attitude of the item "I have a clear idea about the three main domains in the syllabus" (M = 3:38, SD = .81), followed by the item "know clearly about the objectives of the syllabus "(M = 3:44, SD = .76). This situation is very frustrating because teachers are still unsure about the syllabus content and objectives; at the same time they do not take the initiative to make more frequent reference to the syllabus and the syllabus description. In fact it is the responsibility of all the teachers to constantly make references to the syllabus and the syllabus description as both documents serving as guides to professional teaching. Subsequently, data were analyzed to show teachers' views about the latest Chinese textbook. The findings are shown in the following Table 4.

Table 4

Teachers' Views on Chinese Text Book

| Teachers' view | Scale | | | | | Mean | SD |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------|-----|
| | SD | D | U | A | SA | | |
| The language used in the textbook in accordance with the level of students | 2 (1.8) | 17 (15.3) | 16 (14.4) | 74 (66.7) | 2 (1.8) | 3.51 | .84 |
| Content of the textbook is arranged in order based on the syllabus | 2 (1.8) | 20 (18.0) | 33 (29.7) | 55 (49.5) | 1 (0.9) | 3.30 | .84 |
| Content of the textbook show the elements of local culture | 4 (3.6) | 22 (19.8) | 30 (27.0) | 53 (47.7) | 2 (1.8) | 3.24 | .92 |
| The literature work of the modern language may attract students | 6 (5.4) | 29 (26.1) | 29 (26.1) | 45 (40.5) | 2 (1.8) | 3.07 | .98 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------|-----|
| Classic prose may attract the interest of students | 6 (5.4) | 40 (36.0) | 44 (39.6) | 21 (18.9) | 0 (0.0) | 2.72 | .83 |
| Activities in the textbook increase the interpersonal skills effectively | 5 (4.5) | 31 (27.9) | 52 (46.8) | 22 (19.8) | 1 (0.9) | 2.85 | .82 |
| Activities in the textbook increase the maintenance information skills effectively | 3 (2.7) | 23 (20.7) | 47 (42.3) | 38 (34.2) | 0 (0.0) | 3.08 | .81 |
| Activities in the textbook increase the aesthetic skills of students effectively | 3 (2.7) | 25 (22.5) | 56 (50.5) | 27 (24.3) | 0 (0.0) | 2.96 | .76 |

The highest mean score was gained by the item "the language used in the textbook in accordance the cognitive level of student" ($M = 3.51, SD = .84$). The second high mean score went to "the content of the textbook is arranged according to the objectives of syllabus" ($M = 3.30, SD = .84$). This item is a useful guide to assess the usefulness and effectiveness of the textbook. The lowest mean was for the item "classic prose in the textbook may attract students" ($M = 2.72, SD = .83$), and the designed literature work in modern language may attract the interest of students ($M = 3.07, SD = .98$). Overall, the teachers take the stand that they are uncertain about these two items. Possible factors caused uncertainty in terms of teacher assessment of students not showing interest in the classic prose or literature work in modern language literature when they taught is the classic prose or literature work did not suit with the students' academic level. On the other hand, students may not be interested because the selected passages in the textbooks either in classical or modern prose are too difficult, the theme of the passages are uninteresting or students are not interested in the teachers' teaching

method.

In terms of the textbook content, the study showed that the contents of the textbook show the local cultural elements ($M = 3.24$ and $SD = .92$). Local cultural elements in the textbooks actually make the student understand the passage easily in the process of learning, but may not be able to attract the students. This occurs as a result of the globalization process that bridges the gap between countries; students even now are more exposed to information from around the world, then in the opinion of researchers, apart from local cultural elements, the textbook content should contain more universal elements so that it comes out as a dynamic text. If the world cultural elements can be put in the textbook, then the Chinese language will no longer be regarded as a subject of the past.

Regarding the proposed activities in the textbook, teachers found that the activities may enhance interpersonal skills ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .82$), maintain information skills ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .81$) and aesthetic skills of the students effectively ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .76$). All three of these skills are the three main objectives in the syllabus; however the rate of agreement of the teachers towards the Chinese language is relatively low. For instance teachers are not sure with the ability of the students of Lower Secondary schools to use multimedia facilities to carry out the textbook activities. For example, for passage 21 in the Form II textbook titled "Some People" ("有些人"), one of the proposed activities is an extension of reading activities (延伸阅读). If teachers encourage students to find additional reading materials from the internet related to the author or the same theme of the work but written by other authors, then they can ask the students to share their experience of reading in class or write a reading report. With the minimum encouragement and guidance from teachers, students can upgrade their information maintenance skills. However, the study showed that teachers are not sure with this statement. This condition can be associated with teachers still rarely using electronic teaching aids in teaching Chinese.

Question 2: Are there any significant difference in terms of social background of the teachers in viewing the latest syllabus?

To find the differences, a hypothesis was developed as follows:

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in terms of teachers' views on the latest syllabus according to their different background.

Component of "gender" and "type of schools" which are two-levels independent

variables, so the researchers use *t*-test to determine the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis. While the component that has three or more levels of independent variables will require one way ANOVA for analysis, including age, specialization at the university, districts in the state and the frequency of attending courses related to teaching.

The *t*-test results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

T-test of the Teachers' View towards the Current Chinese Language Syllabus Based on the Respondents' Social Background

| Social Background | | M | SD | N | t | p | η |
|-------------------|--------|------|------|----|--------|-----|--------|
| Gender | Male | 3.05 | 0.41 | 19 | -.05 | .96 | .00 |
| | Female | 3.06 | 0.44 | 89 | df=106 | | |
| Types of schools | SMK | 3.05 | 0.44 | 62 | -.23 | .82 | .02 |
| | SMJK | 3.07 | 0.42 | 46 | df=106 | | |

Note: Significant $\alpha < .05$; η^2 eta-squared; η eta value

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference of opinion between groups of male ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.41$) with female ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.44$) teachers in their views of the Chinese Language Syllabus with $t(106) = -.05$, $p = .96$, $\eta = 0$. In terms of comparison between the teachers from SMK and SMJK, the *t*-test results also showed no significant differences between the two groups in giving their assessment of the syllabus. Teachers from SMK ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.44$) and teachers from SMJK ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.42$) are said to hold a similar view in their assessment of the Chinese Language Syllabus with $t(106) = -.23$, $p = .82$, $\eta = .02$.

Table 6

*Teachers' View towards Current Syllabus according to the Social Background
of the Respondents*

| Social Background | | df | F | η | p |
|--|----------------|-----|------|--------|-----|
| Age | Between groups | 3 | 1.24 | .19 | .30 |
| | Within groups | 104 | | | |
| Specification in university | Between groups | 3 | 1.31 | .19 | .27 |
| | Within groups | 104 | | | |
| Districts in Selangor | Between groups | 9 | 1.06 | .30 | .40 |
| | Within groups | 98 | | | |
| Frequency of attending the teaching course | Between groups | 2 | 0.99 | .14 | .38 |
| | Within groups | 105 | | | |

Significant $\alpha < .05$; η^2 eta-squared; η eta value

Analysis of results showed no significant differences between the four aspects of the social background of respondents with their views on Chinese language syllabus.

In terms of age, the four levels of age groups at 21-30 years old, 31-40 years old, 41-50 years old and 51-60 years old showed no significant differences in their views on the syllabus with $F(3,104) = 1.24$, $p = .30$, $\eta = .19$. This means that teachers' view on the syllabus is consistent at all four levels of age.

Four groups of different specialization at university among the Chinese teachers consisted of Chinese Studies, Foreign Language Studies, Linguistics and other than those with F value $(3,104) = 1.31$, $p = .27$, $\eta = .19$. This means that the above four groups had no significant difference in their views on the syllabus.

Although they came from different districts, the Chinese language teachers' view on the syllabus did not show significant differences. All the teachers came from the district of Petaling Perdana, Petaling Utama, Hulu Langat, Gombak, Hulu Selangor,

Sabak Bernam, Kuala Selangor, Klang, Kuala Langat and Sepang scored $F(9.98) = 1.06, p = .40, \eta = .30$

The frequency of the Chinese language teachers to attend courses related to teaching also did not reveal any significant differences; either they did not attend the course, have attended at least once a year or have attended the course 6 to 10 times a year. The value of $F(2,105) = 0.99, p = .38$ and $\eta = .14$ indicated the three different groups did not show any differences in their assessment of the syllabus.

Research question 3. What are the Chinese Language teachers' expectations on the syllabus?

Table 7

Chinese Language Teachers' Expectation towards Syllabus

| Item | Teachers' Expectation | Scale | | | | |
|------|---|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 1 | Syllabus should be maintained according to three domains | 2 (1.8) | 10 (9.0) | 29 (26.1) | 61 (55.0) | 7 (6.3) |
| 2 | The old syllabus is more practical | 0 (0.0) | 12 (10.8) | 51 (45.9) | 42 (37.8) | 6 (5.4) |
| 3 | Objectives in the syllabus need to be simplified | 0 (0.0) | 1 (0.9) | 13 (11.7) | 79 (71.2) | 18 (16.2) |
| 4 | Teachers should be given more opportunity in engaging curriculum planning | 0 (0.0) | 1 (0.9) | 18 (16.2) | 79 (71.2) | 13 (11.7) |
| 5 | Ministry needs to organize courses on syllabus | 1 (0.9) | 1 (0.9) | 18 (16.2) | 72 (64.9) | 19 (17.1) |
| 6 | Messages in the text book should be local colored | 3 (2.7) | 29 (26.1) | 19 (17.1) | 52 (46.8) | 8 (7.2) |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 7 | Classical prose in the text book should be reduced | 6 (5.4) | 42 (37.8) | 30 (27.0) | 27 (24.3) | 4 (3.6) |
| 8 | Teachers given chance in preparing textbook | 0 (0.0) | 1 (0.9) | 26 (23.4) | 76 (68.5) | 8 (7.2) |
| 9 | Add more time on the existing three period of teaching | 2 (1.8) | 1 (0.9) | 7 (6.3) | 47 (42.2) | 54 (48.6) |
| 10 | Chinese language in a week teaching technique should stress on self-learning | 0 (0.0) | 2 (1.8) | 16 (14.4) | 71 (64.0) | 22 (19.8) |
| 11 | Chinese language evaluation | 7 | 18 | 38 | 12 | 5 |
| 12 | should be school-based Make the teaching resources school-based | (6.3) 0 (0.0) | (16.2) 8 (7.2) | (34.2) 35 (31.5) | (37.8) 58 (52.3) | (4.5) 9 (8.1) |
| 13 | Add more modern prose in the textbook | 17 (15.3) | 36 (32.4) | 22 (19.8) | 30 (27.0) | 3 (2.7) |

Table 7 shown that most of the teachers agreed with the item number 3 and 4 compared with other twelve items. Item 3 is "The objective of the syllabus should be simplified" and item 4 is "teachers should be given more opportunities to engage in curriculum planning". Similarly strong expectations came from the teachers that the objectives of the syllabus should be summarized.

From all twelve items in the table, the teachers agreed with most of the items, except item 7, item 9 and item 13 that showed a unique response. Item 7 is "classic prose in textbooks should be reduced". From this study, most of the teachers or 48 people (43.2% of N = 111) did not agree with this item. This means that although teachers stated the students are not interested in classical prose, they do not expect to reduce the classic prose passages; in their view reducing the number of classic prose

passages in textbooks is not the best way to solve this problem.

Compared to item 13, teachers also disagreed (53 people equal to 47.7%) to add more modern prose in the textbook. This statement can be explained with the findings in item 9 that the Selangor teachers have constrained to spend all the time in teaching and learning activities in a limited time.

For item 9, many teachers choose a stand that “strongly agree” with the hope that the teaching of Chinese language for three periods in a week time should be added. These findings indicate that the allocation problem of teaching and learning of Chinese language in the National Secondary Schools is very critical and need to gain the attention of the authorities so that changes can be made immediately.

Interpretation and Discussion

The findings showed that although the teachers gave moderate response on the current Chinese Language syllabus, they still agreed that the three domains of language syllabus should be maintained (61.3% agreement) and the objectives of the syllabus should be summarized (87.4% agreement). With this, we hope the syllabus objectives can be summarized to be more realistic and easy to be applied as noted by Taylor (1989), Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2004).

In addition, according to Mohd. Daud Hamzah (1995), assessment should be made to ensure that the textbooks used in schools function as a source of learning and will benefit the students. Teachers’ perceptions of the textbook show the currently used textbook is in line with the syllabus requirements ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .76$). The findings of this study are to convince the teachers of the suitability of the textbook; according to the Textbook Division, Ministry of Education, textbooks should be written based on the needs of the curriculum, syllabus and syllabus description. Our findings suggest there should be no complaints about the suitability of the content of textbooks in accordance with the syllabus.

The content of textbooks is also arranged according to syllabus objectives and highlights the local cultural elements, as well as the appropriateness of language used in textbooks. The language is easy to understand and style is also congruent with the students’ cognitive levels ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .84$).

However, the study also showed excerpts of classical and modern prose in the lower secondary level textbooks are unable to attract the students to appreciate the

language. This condition may be due to the selected passage although characterized by the local culture, but the attention and interest of the students in the era of technology are not only confined within the narrow world only; they are more interested in issues and ideas that are more sophisticated and modern. So, in addition to the local cultural elements being inserted in the Chinese textbooks, we hope that global elements should be included in the selection of passages in the textbooks in the future.

In addition, the study also showed that activities proposed in the textbooks have little to do with the public Lower Secondary Examinations (PMR). Such a situation might occur because the teachers in schools are too exam-oriented. In fact, if the teachers comply with the requirements of curriculum and syllabus, the Chinese language subject after three years learning at the lower secondary schools level, students must be able to present their views orally and in writing. So, Partial Essay Writing in public examinations should not be a major problem to the student.

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in terms of teachers' views on the latest syllabus according to their different backgrounds. The findings showed the truth of the null hypothesis, thus it is accepted. This finding is similar with Brown's (2004) study that also shows no statistically significant differences were found in mean scale scores for each conception regardless of teacher (age, gender, role, assessment training, or assessment practices) or school (size, location, or socio-economic status) variables.

In this study, although all the respondent teachers were chosen from ten different districts in Selangor state and had different social backgrounds, they responded more or less the same on the Chinese Language Syllabus in general. These could be because implementation of this syllabus faced the same situation as a result of the examination orientation and the teaching constraint in the limited period. The same problems and teaching environment form the same opinions of all the respondents regardless their different social backgrounds.

Resulting from that, the two important expectations from the teachers were "the objective of the syllabus should be simplified" to make it easier to implement in the classroom and "teachers should be given more opportunities to engage in curriculum planning." This finding indicated the initiative of teachers in the Selangor state who are ready to contribute in the Chinese language curriculum planning in the future.

Recommendation

As proposed by Zuraka Mohd Yusof and Sharida Mohd. Sharif (2002), the curriculum must be reviewed at least every three to five years, training and internal courses should be conducted before conducting classes for students and a review committee must be created to ensure quality in curriculum production.

In terms of teaching, we agree with suggestions by Shahril (2004) who said effective teaching means that teachers are able to diversify teaching methods. With this, Chinese language teachers need to diversify their method of teaching and use more teaching aids to explain the concepts and make the activities fun in the process of teaching and learning.

Besides that, the main theme in classical prose or prose quotations should be associated with the development of modern world events. For example, when teaching "Ma Shuo" (Chapter 16 in Form III textbook), beside helping students understand the contents of this classic prose, the most important thing is that teachers need to relate the main themes of this classic prose to the era of e-commerce now, use the main idea of this passage in the present, and with time students are more interested when they come across the passage. With this way of teaching, there will be no feedback from teachers saying that students are not interested in the passages in the textbooks.

Yu Yi (2001) in his study said that the teaching and learning process must be compatible with local culture and the implementation must be practical. We agree with his view that the local cultural elements should be included in the textbook; beside that, the elements of globalization can be inserted in the textbook and also in the teaching and learning process.

In the implementation aspect, curriculum and syllabus should be practical, clear and simplified so that it is easy to be implemented to achieve the objectives and goals as planned by the curriculum planners. Teachers as the main curriculum implementers must be creative and positive in their teaching. Teachers also suggested that they should be given more involvement chances such as attending in-house courses, involving themselves in curriculum planning and also in textbook planning.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) recommended six criteria in culturally responsive teachers, namely: (a) are sociocultural conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct

knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar. With the cooperation of the teachers who have positive attitude, the curriculum and syllabus objectives can be achieved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers evaluated the Chinese Language Syllabus as average. Teachers should be given the chance to participate in curriculum planning, textbook selection, construction of teaching aids and also be willing to attend courses to enhance their professional skills. In addition, studies conducted based on the CIPP model shown that the Chinese language syllabus is appropriate and the three main domains of interpersonal domain, information domain and maintenance of aesthetics domain should be maintained, but should be simplified to be more practical. Good and dynamic curriculum and syllabus may produce a creative thinking young generation bold enough to express their ideas with the appropriate style, with the natural and beautiful use of language.

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