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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHINESE LANGUAGE CURRICULA FOR LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CHINA AND MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The research aimed to study and compare the educational philosophies, frameworks and structures required according to the Chinese curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia. The study had been carried out by using the inferential content analysis approach with Smith's Curriculum Theory as the theoretical framework. The motivation behind this research is to provide recommendations or suggestions on the similarities and differences found in both the Chinese language curricula. This research was conducted to explore the Chinese language curricula for secondary education from Malaysia and China only. The curricula involved were the DSKP Chinese for Form 1, Form 2, and Form 3 students in Malaysia, as well as the Standard Chinese Language Curriculum of Compulsory Education (SCLCCE) (义务教育语文课程标准) for students from 7th to 9th grade in China.

Keywords: Curriculum, Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP), Comparative Study, Curriculum in China, Chinese language curricula

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Introduction

The fundamental feature of an education system was the curriculum that established to be used in the schools. It was important as it served as an agreement between the government and society on the rationale and efficiency of the education system established in the country. Based on the Vision

2020 that proposed by Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Malaysia government intended to cultivate the leaders of the nation in order to ensure a better future of the country (Ibrahim, 2008)¹. Hence, the curriculum that written for national education system was intended to produce the future leaders that able to compete at the international level. Therefore, the curriculum written for Chinese education system had the similar intention for the cultivation of young elites among the nation. Malaysia had composed its own curriculum for Chinese subject that different from the curriculum used in China, which was the “Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP)” that specially established for the subject of Chinese that fall under the national education system. In China, the education for Chinese Language was conducted based on the curriculum named as “Standard Chinese Language Curriculum of Compulsory Education (SCLCCE) (义务教育语文课程标准)”.

According to the "Malaysia Educational Blueprint 2013–2025" report, the Malaysian government aimed to improve the prior curriculum by implementing the new Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) curriculum (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2013)². DSKP was the publication that laid out every standard curriculum and set of rules necessary to fulfil KSSM's goal. The effectiveness of the curriculum was questioned since there was a lack of data and student academic achievement that allowed for a conclusion to be drawn because the KSSM was only recently adopted beginning in the year 2017. In order to advance DSKP in the future, it is therefore necessary to study and evaluate DSKP for Chinese language in order to comprehend the similarities and differences between the curriculum itself and the curriculum from China. This study was aimed at comparing and contrast the curricula employed in China and the DSKP in Malaysia in order to discover the difference and similarities between the two. Additionally, recommendations based on the analysis would be made to help both curriculum developers make improvements in the future.

Therefore, the objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze and compare the Chinese language curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia across the components as suggested by International Bureau of Education
2. To evaluate the qualities possessed by the curricula of Chinese language curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia by using the criteria and descriptors under Category 2 as suggested by Stabback
3. To make inferences based on the analyzation made on both the Chinese language curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia

The research questions of the study are:

1. What are the similarities and differences in between the Chinese language curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia across the components as suggested by International Bureau of Education?
2. What are the qualities possessed by the curricula of Chinese language curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia by using the criteria and descriptors under Category 2 as suggested by Stabback?

3. What are the inferences can be made based on the analyzation made on both of the Chinese language curricula for lower secondary education in China and Malaysia?

Literature Review

The KSSM is a brand-new syllabus that has only been in use for six years, hence there is little available research on the curriculum. However, some earlier studies have been conducted to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of earlier curricula (KBSM). Additionally, it was discovered that the curriculum placed less emphasis on speaking and listening abilities and also lacking in the area dedicated to the pupils' development of critical thinking and creativity (Kong, 2011)³. According to Tan's (2012)⁴ research, the textbook's proposed class activities for the previous KBSM syllabus weren't appropriate or directly related to the chapters' contents. Since the suggested exercises were rarely carried out in class, students were unfamiliar with them. Additionally, it was discovered that the vocabulary from the prior syllabus was out of current (Lee, 2016)⁵. Several of the selected articles had been improperly extracted and put into the syllabus (Lee, 2016)⁵. In order to ensure that the curriculum is able to strike a balance between teaching the mechanical skills of the language and cultivating aesthetic values of the students, it was suggested that the contents and vocab that had been used in the syllabus under the previous curriculum be revised with literature works that related with humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, updated vocabularies, and focus more on the students' thinking skills and creativity (Chou, 2008; Fang & Li, 2012; Lee, 2016; Kong, 2011)⁶⁷⁵³. The recommendations made by earlier researchers were very helpful since it enable the curriculum designer to prevent the replication of previous flaws during the creation of new curriculum. Therefore, as a newly introduced curriculum, KSSM should be examined to see if a better version of the curriculum had been designed in order to prevent the creation of similar faults.

China had established the SCLCCE as the standard national Chinese language curriculum. However, diverse syllabuses have been used to meet the demands of pupils who came from a wide range of locations. As a result, studies were conducted to compare the various local curricula syllabuses that were being used across the nation. For instance, Wang (2018)⁸ contrasted the Chinese language syllabuses in between Su Jiao and Ren Jiao editions. The author observed that, in contrast to the Su Jiao edition, the People Education Press (Ren Jiao) syllabus lacked a coherent organisation of knowledge. In the meantime, the Ren Jiao edition and the Hebei edition had also been compared (Wang, 2015)⁹. Comparing the Hebei edition to the People Education Press (Ren Jiao) edition, it was discovered that the Hebei edition had a weaker organisation of the textbook's chosen articles. The literature articles in the Ren Jiao edition were grouped according to themes, making it simpler for the students to develop their reading abilities. However, there was a problem shared by both syllabuses in that few female authors were featured in the literature selections for the textbooks. Wang (2008)¹⁰ proposed that the China curriculum should take lessons from the curricula from Macau, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. This was due to the fact that the China curricula rarely offered teachers' suggestions for useful teaching techniques. To assist the instructors in the process of teaching and learning, the Macau curriculum has established a comprehensive set of teaching instructions. However, Wang (2008)¹⁰ also noted a few significant characteristics that the Chinese curriculum held and to which curricula from other countries may also allude. First off, according to the China curriculum, the purpose of evaluation should not be utilised to choose and choose pupils based on their academic achievements.

Huang and Bond (2016)¹¹, on the other hand, believed that the notion of "cultivating Chinese accomplishment" in China curriculum was a novel concept. Instead of limiting the teaching and learning of the pedagogy of the language itself, this philosophy aimed to bring behavioural modification of personalities and attributes through language education. This statement is further supported by the research conducted by Li et al. (2022)¹². According to Li et al. (2022)¹², the China curriculum emphasizes citizenship based on national identity, metacognitive strategies and aesthetics.

Beginning in September 2018, the Chinese government has chosen to standardise the Chinese language curriculum (Wu Han Zhuang Yuan Jiao Yu, 2018)¹³. The former Ren Jiao edition, currently known as New Ren Jiao edition or Bu Bian edition (部编版), was the consolidated syllabus that had been used. The objectives and emphasis that the syllabuses place a focus on are the main distinctions between the New Ren Jiao edition and Taiwan's curriculum (Han Lin edition), according to Chen (2018)¹⁴. The three key components that the Chinese curriculum placed the most emphasis on were "knowledge and aptitude," "process and techniques," and "attitude and emotions." The Taiwanese curriculum, however, only emphasises language proficiency. Content analysis has been mostly used in comparative research. These studies, however, did not offer a theoretical foundation to support the curriculum elements they had selected for comparison in their research. As a result, this comparative study did have considerable research value because it supported all the necessary study components in accordance with the curricular structure as suggested by UNESCO International Bureau of Education.

Theoretical Framework

According to UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2017)¹⁵, the framework of a curriculum is suggested to be designed with a series of components that includes the following components, which are (i) Introduction, (ii) Curriculum Vision, (iii) Aims and Objectives, (iv) Values and Principles, (v) Philosophy of Teaching and Learning, (vi) Curriculum Architecture, (vii) The importance of competency, (viii) Areas of Learning, (ix) Teaching Methodology and Strategies, (x) Assessment and (xi) Monitoring and evaluation. Hence, the study would employ the components as the criteria of analyzing the curricula from Malaysia and China.

The Tyler's model is a well-known curriculum building strategy that places an emphasis on three components: the concept of education, the teaching approaches and the involvement of teacher throughout the curriculum (Wraga, 2017)¹⁶. Stabback (2016)¹⁷ developed a set of criteria based on Tyler's model that can be used to assess a curriculum's strengths, which are (1) development of the curriculum, (2) the curriculum itself, (3) implementation of the curriculum, and (4) evaluation of the curriculum. Stabback (2016)¹⁷ had provided a series of descriptors for each of the criteria mentioned above. Since the research was conducted to study only the documents of the curricula, hence the research will employ the descriptors from Category (2) to evaluate both of the curricula. The descriptors that were used from Category (2) are

- values each child and holds that every child matters equally
- comprises high quality, relevant and appropriate 'content' and contributes to the development of competence
- is well organized and structured
- is underpinned by a set of assumptions about how children learn

Research Methodology

The objectives of this study are to compare and contrast the educational philosophies, frameworks, and structures, as well as the curriculum for Chinese language instruction in Malaysia and China. Both educational systems' curricula and syllabuses are written pieces of information that have been published as books or documents. All of the information contained in documents and textbooks will henceforth be the data that must be studied during the research process; this sort of research approach is known as content analysis. It is a research technique for making reproducible and valid inferences from texts (or other important matters) (Krippendorff, as cited in Drisko and Maschi, 2015)¹⁸. The study includes both of the educational systems' public curricula as its subjects. First, starting in 2017, DSKP for Chinese (Forms 1-3) was incorporated in the national curriculum utilised by Malaysian lower secondary schools to teach Chinese. The websites of the Malaysian Ministry of Education have every document available. On the other hand, the SCLCCE, which was issued in 2011 and was accessible for download on the websites of the Chinese Ministry of Education, is the national curriculum for Chinese language that is utilised throughout the country's nine-year compulsory education. The websites of the relevant institutions host all the books and materials mentioned in the previous sections. On the basis of the recommendations made by the UNESCO International Bureau of Education, the components of both curricula will be identified in this study initially. The researcher can categorise the material of both curricula using the data groups, which facilitates the subsequent comparison procedure. For both curricula, the grouping of the data would be categorised using Microsoft Word in table form. Following that, the elements from both curricula would be assessed using the Staback's suggested descriptors from Category 2. Since the research would be able to determine the features of the curriculum based on the existence or absence of these descriptors in both curricula. Following the examination of the curriculum, conclusions can be taken from the evaluations' findings that would enable them to address the earlier identified research topics. From this point forward, the research would be able to accomplish its goals.

Data Analysis

(a) Comparison of Component 1 : Introduction

DSKP for Chinese subject in secondary education is a continuation of the primary Chinese curriculum. It emphasizes the integration of the instrumental and humanistic aspects of the Chinese language. On the other hand, in the introduction of SCLCCE, it had mentioned that language and writing are the most important communication tools and information carriers for human beings, they are an important part of human culture. DSKP was established based on the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025, the elements within the curriculum must be conform to the blueprint itself. It implies that the education offered by DSKP for Chinese in secondary level possess the similar properties as the Chinese education in China. Both were established as the first language education or mother tongue education for the students. Both curricula focus on the mastery of Chinese language skills by incorporating both the functional and humanistic aspects of the language.

(b) Comparison of Component 2 : Curriculum Vision

DSKP for secondary education is to equip students with language proficiency and to fully master listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This is to ensure that the students are able to use the Chinese language to think, learn, communicate, process information, write and appreciate literary works. At the same time, it also functions to promote the inheritance of culture, improve students' ideological and psychological quality, to cultivate aesthetic taste and good moral quality. On the other hand, the main function of SCLCCE is to determine its important position in nine-year compulsory education. The curriculum has irreplaceable advantages in inheriting and carrying forward the excellent cultural tradition and revolutionary tradition of the Chinese nation. This curriculum is devoted to cultivate students' ability to use language and characters, improving students' comprehensive quality and laying a foundation for other courses well. DSKP is aimed to prepare the students to fully master and apply all the Chinese Language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

For SCLSCCE, it had mentioned about the learning of how to listen and express themselves as well as how to read independently and write essays with usual expression. It had mentioned not only about the learning of how to listen and express themselves, but also the ability to read independently and to write essays with usual expression. DSKP had the vision to cultivate the aesthetic taste and good moral values among the students. SCLCCE would like to cultivate patriotism, collectivism, socialism moral values and healthy aesthetic taste as well. One major difference in between DSKP and SCLCCE from this point of view is that SCLCCE had highlighted the moral values that conform to the ideology of socialism. DSKP and SCLCCE had the same vision of cultivating the students that are able to appreciate Chinese literature. DSKP would like the students to have the ability to appreciate literature works, while SSLCCE hopes that the students can appreciate different materials. The appreciation of literature work is one of the common elements can be found in both curricula.

(c) Comparison of Component 3 : Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of both curricula were derived from the curriculum vision of these two schools. For DSKP, there were a total of eight general objectives which included the requirements of all the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) that should be mastered by students upon the completion of the study. SCLCCE is designed with a unified nine-year overall approach, and the principle of coherence is quite evident. The cultivation of high moral and aesthetic values and a positive attitude to life is an important part of the language curriculum, rather than an external task. Therefore, the ideological education in language teaching should certainly be in line with the characteristics of language education.

The objectives in SCLCCE are formulated in such a way that they reflect the fact that the main way to improve language skills is through language practice and that students are the main subjects of language learning. It aims to enable students to broaden their horizons in the intersection, penetration and integration of different contents and methods to acquire the practical language skills needed by modern society. SCLCCE sets out four stages of objectives based on the characteristics and requirements of children's psychological and linguistic development. The main objectives are expressed as "general objectives", i.e. the overall objectives of the language subject for the nine years from primary school to lower secondary school, with a total of ten objectives. From the objectives that established by SCLCCE, there were several outcomes had been

mentioned specifically. First, the total amount of extra-curricular reading throughout the nine years education should be over 4 million words. Students can use common expressions to write according to their needs and develop the ability to use written language. Next, students should be able to recite and memorize 240 pieces of excellent poetry. The sub-objectives of SCLCCE are the concrete implementation of the general educational objectives in the various learning stages. The subobjectives are divided vertically into four stages according to the year group, with the five areas of literacy and writing, reading, writing and integrated learning.

DSKP was established with 8 general objectives, while SCLCCE had 10 general objectives. Comparing the overall goals of the two curricula, it was discovered that they share a similar goal of creating students who are proficient in Chinese in all four language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additionally, as part of its overall goals, SCLCCE had also highlighted the improvement of scientific thinking abilities and inquiry-based learning. On the other hand, SCLCCE had included Hanyu Pinyin learning with the regulation of a set quantity of the number of characters that the students should memorise. Prior to these comparison, we should aware that the overall objectives of DSKP were only defined for Forms 1 to 3, but the general objectives of SCLCCE were established for Grades 1 through 9. As a result, it is determined that the DSKP's overall aims are less detail-oriented than those of the SCLCCE. More language proficiency and instructional strategies that are appropriate for children in Forms 1 through 3 were suggested to be added in DSKP.

(d) Comparison of Component 4 : Values and Principles

DSKP' is created based on the National Principles of Malaysia. In order to demonstrate the importance of the principles, schools are officially required to begin their weekly assemblies with a reading of the national principles. Therefore, based on the National Principles of Malaysia, the students that had been employed under every curriculum of Malaysia national education system shall obey with the key elements of National Principles, which includes the religion, royals, country, law and integrity. The National Philosophy of Education makes it clear that education in this nation is about helping children reach their full potential and give them the tools they need to develop in a balanced fashion on all fronts—intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical. This is comparable from the standpoint of language instruction to Deng Xiaoping's philosophy of the "Three Represents" theory, which was mentioned in the SCLCCE curriculum.

According to this “Three Represents” theory, education should be developed using a scientific methodology in order to produce a generation that adheres to the socialism ideology. Teachers are required to promote the communist core value system to the pupils in addition to teaching the content of Chinese courses. This is a crucial time for kids who are still enrolled in compulsory school because it is at this time that values should be developed among the pupils. Teachers in China are required to promote values to pupils due to the humanistic aspect of the curriculum. The socialist era's spirit must therefore be promoted in the classroom, along with students' patriotism, national solidarity, and inventiveness. All of the general objectives and sub-objectives had maintained a good consistency by deriving from the three important principles mentioned earlier. Therefore, we can see that both curricula were established with different sets of values and principles based on the political ideologies as proposed by its respective countries.

(e) Comparison of Component 5 : Philosophies of Teaching and Learning

DSKP is established based on the National Education Philosophy, which is the one and only philosophy that shall be followed by all the other subjects offered within the Malaysia national education system. SCLCCCE had amended the four basic concepts of philosophies that customized for Chinese language education in that particular country. Based on this philosophy, all the curricula, including DSKP for Chinese Language, were constructed to yield the individuals who are developed rationally, emotionally and physically balanced with faith and beliefs in their respective religions. Unlike DSKP, the basic teaching philosophy that followed by SCLCCE is not a general philosophy that applied to every curriculum within the education system. SCLCCE had amended the four basic concepts of philosophies that customized for Chinese language education in that particular country. The language curriculum should reflect the core values of socialism that is parallel to the political ideology of the country. It should be linked to the realities of life and other subjects such as enquiry and innovation in students. The SCLCCE emphasized that students are the main subject of learning, which changes the traditional teaching philosophy of teachers teaching and students learning, with teachers taking the lead, and advocates independent, cooperative and exploratory learning, rather than a single teaching mode of teachers teaching, and at the same time, to design an open and dynamic language curriculum as well. Both curricula adhered to the belief that curriculum should be accessible, reflect interdisciplinary learning and the use of contemporary scientific techniques, and foster the development of the linguistic literacy needed by society through collaboration across disciplines and through the use of information technology. While the SCLCCE places more emphasis on the curriculum's structure, the DSKP had a philosophy that placed more emphasis on the curriculum's results.

(f) Comparison of Component 6: Curriculum Architecture

There were two segments in DSKP can be considered as the architecture of the curriculum, which are the curriculum framework and curriculum structure. The curriculum framework of DSKP is organized based on six educational beneficial areas, which includes (a) communication, (b) spirituality, attitude and values, (c) humanities, (d) science and technology, (e) physical development and aesthetics and lastly (f) personal competence. On top of this, the content of the entire DSKP had been separated into three sections, which were the "Content Standards" , "Learning Standards" and "Performance Standards". The "Content Standards" had outlined a general Chinese language instruction that shall be implemented at secondary level, while the "Learning Standards" provided a more specific guidelines on different types of teaching approaches for the teachers. Next, the "Performance Standards" provide a set of indicators that guide the teachers to evaluate the students from different language skills. Based on these sections, the curriculum is further established with five detailed modules as shown in Figure 1.

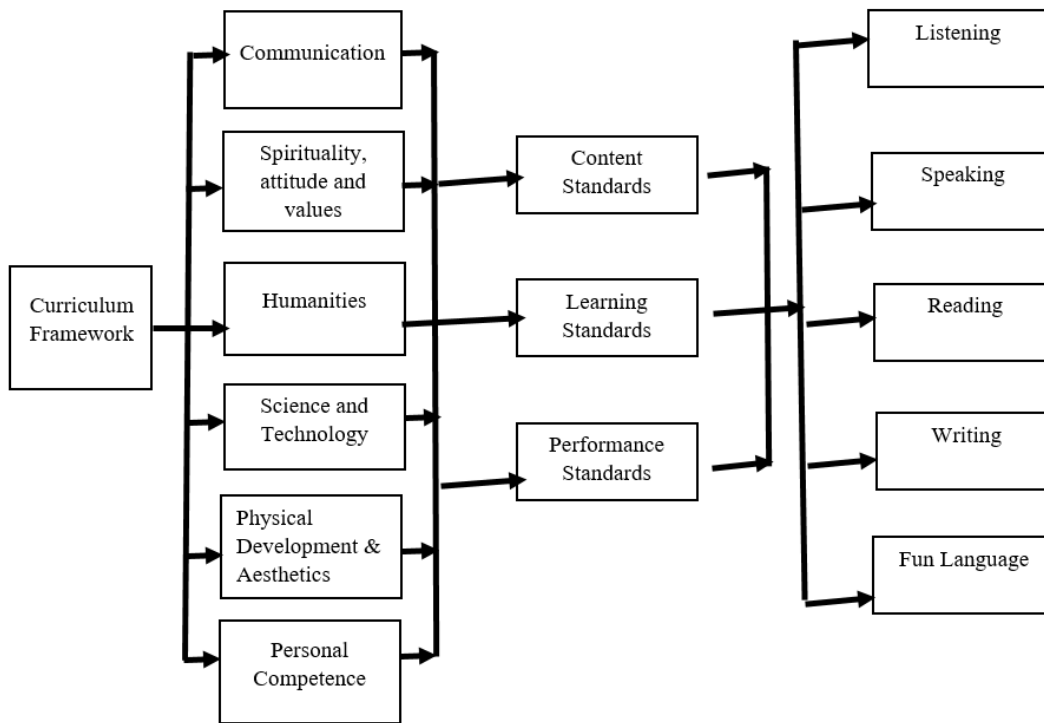


Figure 1. Curriculum Structure of DSKP

The SCLCCE, on the other hand, had simply provided a small paragraph to comment on its curriculum architecture; this study refers to this section as "Curriculum Design Ideas." Generally speaking, the SCLCCE framework may be broken down into three sections: the curricular objectives, suggestions for teaching instructions, and addendum (as shown in Figure 2). The modules and learning areas in this segment were supported by the framework theory that is used throughout the curriculum, giving the DSKP a stronger structure than the other curriculums' well-organized structure.

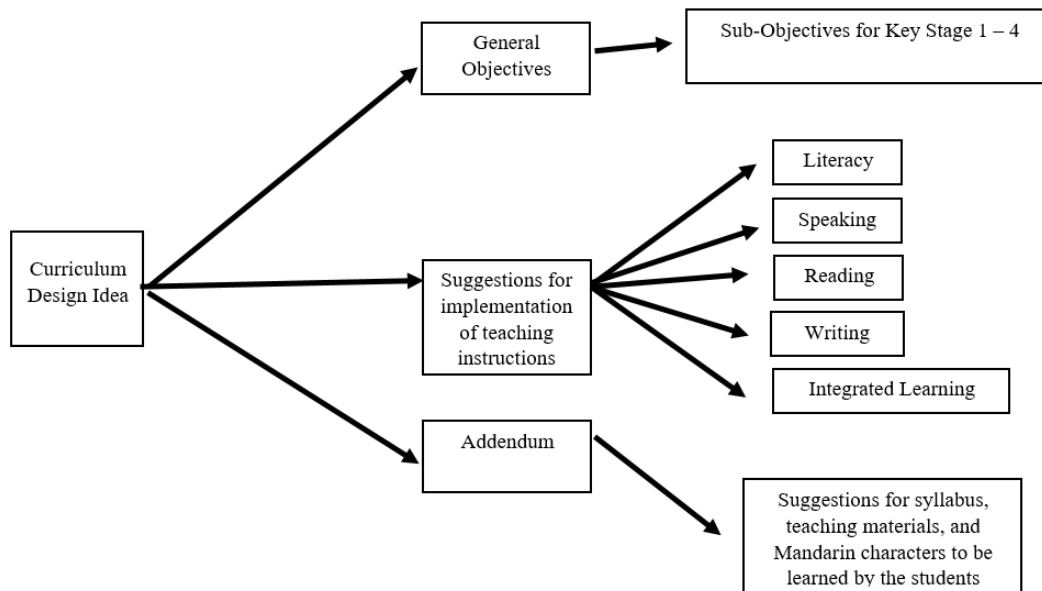


Figure 2. The curriculum structure of SCLCCE

(g) Comparison of Component 7: The Importance of Competency

The DSKP's explanation on the importance of competency is likely to place greater emphasis on abilities and attitudes than knowledge, which includes the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), Cross-Curricular Elements, and 21st Century Skills. These are a few of the crucial ideas and skills that the DSKP has mentioned. In contrast, SCLCCE places more emphasis on practical information, such as the kinds of textbooks, classic works, literature, and poetry that students should study. The emphasis placed on the topic of proficiency level varied between the two courses. There shouldn't be a right or wrong answer as to which kind of competency should be prioritised more in a curriculum. For DSKP, it might include a more thorough list of the practical knowledge that concentrates on the classic works, literature, and poetry that students in various year groups should learn. On the other hand, it is also advised that SCLCCE broaden the types of competencies with all the soft skills mentioned in DSKP in order to produce students who are strong in both practical knowledge and higher order thinking skills, allowing them to apply their knowledge in both the classroom and in real-world situations.

(h) Comparison of Component 8 : Areas of Learning

Both DSKP and SCLCCE are the curriculum of language education. DSKP is based on the fundamental attribute of the language subject, which is its instrumentality. This structure requires that all four competencies are given equal weight in order to train language skills in a comprehensive manner. The areas of learning will certainly include the required language skills that should be learned by the students. The learning areas included in the DSKP are the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the learning of classical Chinese literature, grammar knowledge and fun language. These areas are aimed to strengthen the students' identification with Chinese culture and cultivating their feelings towards their country and nation, as well as improving their moral awareness, consciousness and judgement. This encourages introspection,

cultivates moral feelings, cultivates temperament, cultivates a kind demeanour toward others, and enhances a sense of civic duty.

On the other hand, SCLCCE had specified its boundary of learning area in listening, oral communication, reading, writing, and integrated learning. In contrast to the DSKP, which lacks quantitative indications, the SCLCCE contains explicit quantitative ideas for reading and recitation. The amount of reading that DSKP students complete in language classes is plainly lower than that of SCLCCE students, and the language curriculum's top priority should be to raise this number. Sadly, there is no minimum quantity requirement for DSKP reading instruction or learning. Additionally, the appendix of more than 500 book titles in SCLCCE, which serves as a foundation for curriculum, is a useful resource that could be adapted by DSKP. Based on the learning areas specified by both curricula, SCLCCE has more precisely drawn out its perimeter, giving teachers a firm foundation on which to monitor the progress of their students. Moreover, this curriculum had included one additional language skill, known as integrated learning. According to SCLCCE, the inclusion of this integrated learning is intended to reinforce the connections between the several components of SCLCCE's various Chinese curriculum. When compared to the cross-curricular components in DSKP, it is seen that these aims are identical. However, DSKP had gone into detail regarding what are the aspects that can be found in the syllabuses that truly making connection with other curricula in secondary school, but SCLCCE had only discussed this kind of connection in between other curricula in a generic way. In order to show how the curriculum itself can be associated with other subject curricula in China, it is advised that SCLCCE refer to DSKP and provide a more detailed explanation. In comparison to SCLCCE, the learning areas for the majority of language skills are less detailed for DSKP. The amount of Chinese characters, poetry, essays, and reading materials that students are required to master within the DSKP itself is not restricted depending on various stage groups. This gives teachers more latitude to create their own boundaries that are tailored to particular pupils, but the rules governing all of the aforementioned factors could serve as a useful benchmark for the DSKP as it revises or learns from the SCLCCE.

(i) Comparison of Component 9 : Teaching Methodology and Strategies

DSKP had a brief about the reaching recommendations from several aspects, which includes listening and speaking instructions, reading instructions, and classical Chinese instructions. Reading instruction focuses on the experience of emotions, the accumulation of language materials, and the development of language sense. The teaching of classical languages should be approached differently according to the difficulty of the text and the degree of the students. According to DSKP, the teaching of classical languages should be treated differently depending on the level of the students and the complexity of the material. In addition to learning information from books, students also learn how to use the method and develop their own understanding on worldview. DSKP suggested that the teaching of writing must focus on developing students' ability and habit of accumulating language materials from reading and life. Teachers must stimulate students' thinking through various activities, establish the central idea of the essay, let students collect and organize their own writing materials, draft an outline and encourage free expression of personal opinions. Moreover, based on DSKP, the teaching activities for fun languages must emphasize their entertaining aspects, a laid-back and energetic environment is required. The teaching materials for an engaging language class should be both instructive and relevant to the students' experiences. Instead of preaching and using crude, low-interest methods, teachers should impart education through games. DSKP had suggested that teachers should not create separate

materials to teach language knowledge, nor should they spend time beating around the bush on individual. Examinations should also avoid including grammar knowledge as a test item that require students to memorize idioms and terminology related to language knowledge. Therefore, we could see that DSKP is actually placing a high priority on enrichment education.

SCLCCE had listed five recommendations in teaching strategies, with six specific sub-recommendations for different language skills instructions. Language education should be self-directed, collaborative and exploratory, rather than focused on what the teacher teaches, they said. The curriculum is designed to promote the improvement of students' language skills. Teachers should pay attention to encouraging students' interest and thirst for information, fostering their capacity for thought and imagination, and enhancing their ability to solve problems. It is a part of the process of helping someone become more fluent in another language and shouldn't be seen as a separate assignment; Moreover, it should be taught in accordance with the features of the language topic. The next recommendation from SCLCCE is to pay priority on developing students' creativity and practical skills. The SCLCCE had recommended that the integrated learning should be close to real life. The curriculum depicted that the teaching of writing should be based on the process of taking material, conceptualizing, drafting and processing. It mentioned that the curriculum should cover a wide range of knowledge of phonetics, writing, vocabulary, grammar, rhetoric, style and literature.

By comparison on the recommendation of teaching strategies and methodologies from both curricula, there were several recommendations could be made for both of the curricula. First, teachers are suggested to provide favourable conditions and wide space for students' independent writing, reduce the restraints on students' writing, and encourage free and creative expression. Writing instructions in both curricula should be established in a very detailed manner, including examination of topics and ideas, layout and planning, and guidance on writing strategies. Teachers should adopt a two-way interactive teaching approach to create flexible and varied learning activities, according to SCLCCE. The purpose of this idea is to develop students' ability to learn, investigate and solve problems on their own. Teaching instructions should include more substantive oral communication topics, and teaching should be organised through a variety of communicative situations. Activities from different perspectives can be set up to improve the quality of reading, such as book sales and lectures on recommended reading subjects, and enriching students' reading perceptions.

(j) Comparison of Component 10: Assessment

DSKP used student performance at the school to evaluate the students. "Criteria-referenced assessment" is the term used to describe this type of evaluation. Criterion-referenced assessment solely examines a student's individual learning performance to indicate the student's development; it does not advocate comparing a student's performance to that of other students. The test-led teaching method, in which exam scores are used as the primary indicator of students' achievement, was discouraged by DSKP. Additionally, in order to evaluate students' performance, the Ministry of Education of Malaysia used the "Classroom Assessment" approach (Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah, PTD) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2019)¹⁹. This is described on the website of the Malaysian Ministry of Education but not in the DSKP paper. PTD is implemented with summative and formative assessment, and its goal is to track students' learning development while assisting teachers in bettering their instruction, not to compare one student's performance to that of another. The criterion-referenced assessment is created to evaluate the student from the perspective of

hearing, speaking, reading, reading classical texts, reading classical poetry, calligraphy writing and essay writing, enjoyable language and grammatical understanding, in order to avoid the dominance of exam marks. Each of the aforementioned components has a set of descriptors to assess the students' success, except for fun language and grammatical understanding,. The performance standards are categorized into six different levels, which include (i) Not mastered (尚未掌握), (ii) Improvement needed (有待改进), (iii) Basic Understanding (基本掌握), (iv) Satisfactory (满意) and (v) Good (良好) and (vi) Excellent (优良). The descriptors for all these levels were well established within the curriculum.

On the other hand, a number of recommendations for literacy, reading, writing, oral communication skills, and integrated learning evaluations were offered by SCLCCE. However, the curriculum itself does not have a standard assessment that is comparable to PTD. First, the examination of literacy focuses on how well students can recognise and spell Chinese characters as well as Hanyu Pinyin. Students' writing posture and habits should be examined during the evaluation of writing at all levels that are required. Students are expected to "know how to write," with an emphasis on accuracy and presentation. This recommendation, however, is only appropriate for use at the primary school level because by the time elementary school was over, the secondary students had already mastered the fundamentals of literacy. Next, the reading evaluation for Key Stage 4 pupils examines their comprehension through visuals, emotions, and language, as well as their own experiences, to learn more about their appreciation of Chinese literature. Lexis and syntax concepts are excluded from the examination. The evaluation of pupils' reading outside of the classroom needs to be emphasised. This makes it possible to assess the reading interests, routines, preferences, strategies, and skills of the kids. The evaluation of writing should then concentrate on students' interests and writing habits, support the expression of genuine emotions and creativity, and inspire students to love life, be in tune with nature, and be concerned about society. Additionally, depending on the target audience and content, Key Stage 4 pupils should be evaluated in a variety of ways for oral communication assessments in order to foster respectful interpersonal communication and social engagement. The evaluation should be conducted in certain communicative contexts. Students should engage in practical communication tasks that are related to their success in class and in their daily lives. Last but not least, SCLCCE advises teachers to concentrate on encouraging students' effectiveness in enhancing their language abilities for the assessment on integrated learning. Students' independence and initiative in learning should be respected and safeguarded during assessment. Students' suggestions and methods for tackling problems should receive complete consideration.

The major difference between SCLCCE and DSKP is the uniformity in providing a same standard for all the students. Both curricula are very different from the aspect of standardization of assessments and evaluation method that could be applied to all the learners under these curricula. The concepts that cannot be specified in the text can be illustrated by cases, and teachers can avoid some misunderstandings according to the cases.

(k) Comparison of Component 11: Monitoring and evaluation

Neither SCLCCE nor DSKP offered a self-checking benchmark to keep an eye on the calibre of their own within the paper itself. All of the KSSR subjects in the Malaysian curriculum have been changed and are now known as KSSR Semakan 2017. (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2021)²⁰. Based on these changes, it was assumed that the Ministry of Education Malaysia's

curriculum development division does in fact have an evaluation standard to keep track of the curricula for all the topics given under KSSR. As a result, it is likely that KSSM and DSKP for Chinese in secondary school will be evaluated in accordance with a set of standards and by the department itself. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education of China had released the most recent curricula for every topic it offered, including the SCLCCE. The most recent curriculum, which were changed based on the original curricula, will be adopted in September 2022 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China ,2022)²¹. As a result, this demonstrates that both curricula are periodically updated and publicised, and that the authorities would use a set of norms and values to update the curriculum's content. However, since these evaluation standards had not been published by the Ministry of Education in both countries, thus this component will not be able to be explored in this research study.

Conclusion

By adopting the criterion-referenced assessment, DSKP was discovered to have a clearer vision to evaluate the student's potential. This was done in order to avoid the tedious exam-based assessment that failed to recognise children who were not academically bright. Meanwhile SCLCCE emphasised the fact that learners are in charge of their own language acquisition. Additionally, it showed how language instruction should arouse students' interest in learning, put an emphasis on helping them become aware of and develop the habits of independent learning, create effective master learning environments for students, respect each student's unique learning preferences, and encourage them to select a learning style that works for them. To support each student's healthy growth, assessments should take into account the unique characteristics of each student. However, SCLCCE had only made general reference of it without offering any recommendations for how teachers may account for the variances between their students' learning styles.

In comparison to DSKP, SCLCCE is less clear in conveying the idea of how each kid can be treated equally. However, this does not provide a clearer picture to oversee the actual implementation of how this curriculum could be able to support every child regardless of their differences in socio-economic and academic backgrounds. SCLCCE did give teachers the freedom to apply their own types of assessments and evaluation standards. However, it didn't make it clear on how teachers should account for student variances during the instructional process. In this regard, it is recommended that SCLCCE not only need to advance the practical principle of accommodating learning differences but also pay attention to the corresponding curriculum and highly effective teaching strategies that are highly instructive to teachers as it serves as a strong guideline for teachers in practise. Additionally, it is advised that SCLCCE broaden the scope of learning, assessment criteria, and instructional strategies with a student-centered approach that values each learner in order to create a curriculum that is more inclusive and differentiated.

The SCLCCE's material is mainly focused on practical knowledge, which includes the many syllabuses, classical works, literatures, and poems that are essential for students to learn. The SCLCCE has determined that the students' level of competency in the aforementioned areas (such as communication, problem-solving, etc.) is not as high as it should be. In order to assist the frontline teachers in evaluating students' performance and to inspire each student to work toward their own goals, SCLCCE could also be reinforced by detailed instructions on the assessment of students' learning, with varying degrees of performance in school. On the other hand, DSKP had emphasised on the core language skills (hearing, speaking, reading, and writing, while pointing

out that students should master the practical knowledge and facts that they need to learn as well. Additionally, DSKP included a whole section to the curriculum to highlight the critical abilities, including 21st Century Skills, HOTS, and Cross-Curricular Elements, that need to be integrated with the conventional learning categories in Mandarin. It is similar to the positive trait indicated by Stabback, which is to increase children's capacity through encouraging higher-order and critical thinking abilities.

Both curricula included propositional knowledge, which is essential for learning a language, but the DSKP appears to be better balanced because it encourages student competency in a wide range of soft skills. Therefore, it is advised that SCLCCE incorporate increasingly more soft skills into the curriculum to help students reach a better level of competency. This will allow the curriculum to better balance the teaching of hard skills and soft skills, and moving forward, it will focus on the positive traits that people should have, as indicated by Stabback (2016)¹⁷.

The design of the curricular framework in both DSKP and SCLCCE still has gaps, and there is still potential for advancement in terms of concepts and methods. In general, DSKP was unable to provide a complete inventory of its teaching resources, teaching materials, and grammatical knowledge, while the SCLCCE was still locked in a somewhat constrictive model of disciplinary language curriculum. Therefore, in order to improve students' language skills and comprehensive language literacy, both curricula must also overcome their own weaknesses while strengthening their own curriculum structures, foster collaboration between teachers of different disciplines, and actively research effective methods for integrating language subjects with other academic subjects. The relevance of the curriculum's content to societal realities and the utility of language learning should also be a major focus of both curricula. For instance, students are encouraged to share their opinions and interact with others through group discussions and debates at school. Additionally, in order to foster varied communication skills, kids are required to take on various roles during group activities. These activities' growth ought to be intimately tied to social life. As a result, it is advised that the objectives of both curricula need to be revised so that they could reflect the practical usefulness of the curriculum objectives in real life, rather than just emphasising the growth of students' individual spirit of inquiry.

In addition, it is crucial that the curriculum's objectives should be guided by its guiding philosophy and to be applied to all elements of learning. They should work hand in hand with the selection of textbooks, teaching methods, and learning assessment principles to ensure that language instruction is consistent and coherent, making it worthwhile to study. Both curricula's reading choices were strongly influenced by political ideologies. The syllabus placed a strong emphasis on the need for the textbooks to be politically motivated in order to strengthen the respective political ideology. It is fine to include thinking in reading instructions, but it's crucial to strike a balance between thoughtfulness and reading proficiency. Comparing DSKP with SCLCCE, it can be seen that the former has a stronger quality in "values each child and holds that every child matters equally".

Next, in terms of "highly organised and structured," DSKP had structured its content such that each of its parts was created in accordance with its curriculum framework. This made for a stronger structure than SCLCCE because the latter's core ideologies were difficult to discern among its parts. The fact that both curricula are "underpinned by a set of beliefs about how children learn" is another positive trait of both curricula. Both of the curricula featured a unique set of beliefs and ideas that made assumptions about how and what the kids may learn under each

curriculum. There were various inferences, and recommendations for the curricula can be made. Another component of SCLCCE that could be learned by DSKP is the organisation of reading resources and the requirements for the various sets of language abilities that students in various age groups should learn. The DSKP pupils could be able to amass information in a manner comparable to that of students in China due to the curriculum's reading list and other teaching resources. This recommendation is expected to raise the DSKP students' level of proficiency and, as a result, improve the international recognition of SPM holders' Chinese language proficiency.

On the other hand, SCLCCE was able to make a number of references from DSKP's positive traits. In order for SCLCCE to be recognised as an inclusive and differentiated curriculum, it is first advised that the learning domain, assessment standards, and teaching approaches should be developed using a student-centered approach. The SCLCCE is then advised to add more soft skills that might be taught to the students in order to strike a balance between practical knowledge and the growth of competence. It is advised that SCLCCE include the components of its essential curricular framework into all of its other components in order to strengthen the curriculum's structure and organisation. By using the framework created as the curriculum's foundation, the structure of the curriculum will appear stronger and more substantial. In conclusion, both curricula were found to have some positive characteristics that might be used to motivate future curriculum improvements and revisions.

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