

## CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: TEACHERS' FEEDBACK ON SUPPORT, RESOURCES, TRAINING AND TIME ALLOCATION

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### ABSTRACT

Support from the administrators, resources provided, training for the teachers and allocation of time for effective classroom learning are amongst the important components provided by schools. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of Contemporary Children's Literature Program based on the feedback by upper primary school teachers. Using survey questionnaire of four Likert scale as research instrument, this study seeks to identify the quality of support from administrators, availability and utilization of resources, scope of training, and appropriateness of time allocation in the implementation of the program. A total of 45 respondents were asked to complete the survey. Data were analyzed using SPSS 19. Results of the study indicated that 75.6% teachers agree that the administrators give opportunity to try out new ideas in their teaching, 53.3% strongly agree on the provision of appropriate textbook to be used as teaching materials in the classroom, 17.8% disagree that the training provided is sufficient as a preparation to teach literature in the classroom, and 62.2% agree that the allocation of time is sufficient for the teaching of literature in the classroom. This study proposed the importance of cascade training provided by the Ministry of Education to be conducted yearly to ensure the effectiveness of transfer of training, the availability of resources to ensure the success of the program, and consideration of time allocated in the timetable of teaching and learning.

**Key Words:** Contemporary, Literature, Children's Literature.

## INTRODUCTION

The literature component in English is aimed at enhancing students' language proficiency, and it is also geared for the purpose of generating the aesthetic part of the language that is personal response from students. The English language Curriculum Specifications stated that the aim of literature is not only meant to address the interpersonal, informational aesthetic value of learning but also the learning of the English language in general.

Outlined with six learning objectives for the literature components, Cheng (2008) stated that the study of literature aids in language acquisition by developing the children's awareness on how language works in communication and experiencing the form of narratives. It is also an attempt to curb the declining levels of achievement in standard assessment of English proficiency in recent years in primary schools (Basree, 2009). In line with the Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) Program's objectives and aims in the implementation, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has given good support in the implementation of children's literature into the schools systems. Without the belief and support of the MOE in the importance of literature as a component in the syllabus, the death of literature is a sure thing (Cheng, 2008) in the schools syllabus.

This study looks into the provision of support, resources, training, and time allocation in the implementation of Contemporary Children's Literature Program as previous study conducted by (Basree, 2009) indicated that the child-centered approaches and activities required by CCL were largely ignored as teachers continued in their usual teacher-centered patterns. The existence of limited opportunities for pupils to initiate talk due to the failure, on the part of teachers, creates pupils less contributions in the classroom. Teachers too, did not differentiate between more and less proficient students. In fact, the more proficient students complained about being bored by inappropriate activities. This finding is supported by recent study conducted by (Radzuwan Abdul Rashid & Vethamani, 2010) in their findings which stated that after ten years literature in the syllabus, teachers should be able to teach literature effectively, however, the incorporation of literature component is still argued and debated amongst teachers, students, researchers, parents as well as the policy makers. These findings lead to remarkable questions of the importance of support, resources, training, and time allocation that teachers received for the teaching and learning of literature in the classroom instruction.

In implementing the CCL Program into the school syllabus, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) has provided resources for the CCL Component. Materials provided include power point slides and a guide. The power point slides walk the teacher through the plot, setting, characters, lesson learnt and the emotions evoked by the story (Cheng, 2008). There is a specification in the writing guidelines for the English Language textbook, that books for the CCL Program must be utilized in the textbook.

In line with the implementation of the program, a wide support from administration is crucial to ensure the success of programs at school level. Bernam, P. and McLaughlin (1977) discover in the first major study of innovation involving over 300 US school districts, for instance, that projects which received the active support of the principal are likely to fair well. Hall, G. E. Hord, S. and Griffin (1980) argue that the degree of implementation of the innovation is different in different schools because of the actions and concern of the principal. Nevertheless, with regards to the implementation of CCL Program, it was noticeable that there was no attempt at detailed discussion regarding the suitability of the book, the content of the program and any of the related problems (Shireena Basree, 2007). Head teachers in three schools conducted by Shireena Basree showed broad general support for the program. Their grasp of what it was expected to entail was often limited. Many of the observations conducted in the previous study drew attention to poor levels of understanding of the expectations of the program.

A thorough read of the aims and objectives of the CCL Program, however, leaves no room for doubt that it is a standardized intensive reading program whereby all schools across all states are required to use a designated set of three storybooks. The Ministry Official provided confirmation that it is compulsory for all the students to complete the three titles specified by the Ministry first; it is only at this point that teachers may provide other

forms of extended reading, especially for the more proficient classes. However, a study conducted by (Basree, 2009) states that schools received ‘a lot of books’ when actually; at the most, they received only a total of one hundred and twenty books, forty books per title. In overcoming the shortage of book provided to schools, teachers were able to use stories of any kinds in the classroom instruction. According to Maley (2001) cited by Saraceni (2003), the text may also be used as an example of certain types of pattern and structure. Using any kind of stories could lead to the same objective of learning.

In the early year of its implementation, cascade training was provided by the MOE for teachers who are teaching upper primary school students. In the year 2008, a group of 24 ESL teachers from three states in Malaysia were sent to a one month project-based course in RELC Singapore about how to teach English through literature (Sarala A/P Subramanyam, 2012). These teachers were then required to conduct the same course to other teachers in their particular states, districts and schools. However, the course held was inadequate and insufficient and sometimes held even just for one day. The cascade training is important for the teachers to adapt with the teaching using modules provided by the MOE and at the same time, to ensure the classroom instruction fits with the needs and expectation of the time scheduled in the timetable allocated by the administrator. Shireena Basree, (2007) states that there exist various problems with the cascade model of training used to prepare teachers responsible for the implementation of CCL. The shortage of specialist English teachers available for training, the in-house training is not common in Malaysian schools, the heavy workload placed upon the teachers, and the very limited nature of monitoring the program and assistance beyond state level training are just some of them.

Another consideration is the allocation of time for the teaching and learning of CCL Program is one period per week (Malaysia Ministry of Education., 2006). Teachers and students are required to teach and to learn three books in a year which consists of stories and poems. At any one time, students will have one book to read for every three months. The CDC has allocated “books on rotation basis” to be taught by teachers and learnt by students in the classroom. They are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Books on Rotation Basis in CCL Program

	5A	5B	5C
January – April	Title 1	Title 2	Title 3
May – July	Title 3	Title 1	Title 2
August – September	Title 2	Title 3	Title 1

With the implementation of one period per week, teachers are required to fulfil the requirement of the aims to (1) improve pupils’ English reading, (2) provide a continuum for the literature component introduced in secondary school, and (3) create and enjoyable learning environment. They are also required to fulfil the objectives to (1) instil and inculcate the reading habit among pupils, (2) enrich pupils’ vocabulary and language content, (3) enhance pupils’ thinking skills, (4) promote cultural understanding in the Malaysian context, (5) improve English language proficiency, and (6) provide lively, enjoyable and high-interest readings (Malaysia Ministry of Education., 2006).

It is essential to receive good support, available resources, training, and adequate time allocation in the implementation of CCL Program to ensure the success of CCL Program’s effectiveness in the schools syllabus. In order to determine these, this study evaluates the provision of support, resources, training, and time allocation for the teaching and learning of literature component in CCL Program.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the implementation of Contemporary Children’s Literature Program (CCL) in primary schools via the four components involved; 1) support, (2) resources, (3) training and (4) time allocation from the feedback of upper primary school teachers. A survey method is used in this study. Survey research is the most widely used research method in educational research, commonly used to measure

attitudes, opinion or achievements, feelings and any number of variables in natural setting (Leary, 2001; Wiersma, 1991).

Forty-five respondents from the upper primary schools teachers in the state of Selangor, Malaysia were selected for this study. In each school, five ESL teachers were selected to answer the questionnaire. The research objectives of this study are:

1. to determine the provision of support by the schools' management in the context of role and assistance in the implementation of CCL Program?
2. to determine the provision of teaching and learning resources by the schools' management in the context of language room, teaching aids and financial support in the implementation of CCL Program?
3. to determine the provision of training by the schools' management pertaining to the implementation of CCL Program?
4. to determine the provision of time allocated by the schools' management for the implementation of CCL Program?

### Research Instruments

A survey questionnaire adapted and adopted from Nordin (2011) is employed. The questionnaire was validated by five experts from the field of Curriculum and Instruction. The items consists of two main parts covering the general background information from a respondent, including the provision of support, resources, training and time allocation in the implementation of CCL Program. Table 2 below illustrates the items evaluated in the questionnaire:

Table 2: Items in the Questionnaire

Item	Description	References
<b>Part A:</b>		
1-10	Respondent's general information	Nordin (2011)
<b>Part B :</b>		
11-18	Provision of support by school management (role and assistance)	Salina 2013
19-26	Provision of resources by school management (language room, teaching aids, and financial support)	Salina 2013
27-34	Provision of training by State / District / School Department respondents' have attended	Salina 2013
35-42	Provision of time allocation by school management	Nordin, 2011 & Salina 2013

Part A of the questionnaire contains 10 statements with regards the demographic background of the participants. It was designed to obtain information related to their individual background and prior experience of similar courses. Individual background in this study included race, gender, age, teaching experience, years of teaching, educational attainment and attendance of the related course. Name and present position of the participants were not mentioned in the report. Data collection was referring to ethical consideration by (Mertiler, C. A. & Charles, 2005) on principle of beneficence, principle of honesty, and principle of accurate disclosure. Part B of the questionnaire consist four likert scale of obtaining information related to four variables of 1) support, 2) resources, 3) training, and 4) time allocation of the program implemented in their schools. An explanation session was held to help the participants to clearly understand the questions. Quick check of the returned questionnaires is done to make sure that every question is answered. Otherwise, the participants were requested to do so with the guidance of the researcher. The main intention is to increase the validity of the instruments. As suggested by Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen (1990), a return rate of any research must be well above 75% for external high relative validity. In this study, the researcher obtained 100% return rate from the participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results are presented in accordance to the research objectives of the study. Results and discussion of this study contains the following heading: 1) Demographic Profile of Teachers, 2) Teachers' Feedback on Support, 3) Teachers' Feedback on Resources, 4) Teachers' Feedback on Training, and 5) Teachers' Feedback on Time Allocation in the implementation of CCL Program in primary schools.

### Demographic Profile of Teachers

Malay was the majority respondent in the study. The number of female respondent is 88.8% and male 11.1%. Out of 45 respondents, 15.5% were 50 years and above, 42.2% were in age group of 40 to 49 years old. The other 33.3% and 8.88% were in age group of below 39 years old. Teaching experience of the respondents showed that the highest teaching experience was teachers in age group 20 to 29 years old (33.3%) and the lowest teaching experience were teachers in age group 30 years and above (8.88%). 22.2% were belonged to age group of 10 to 19 years old teaching experience. The other 20.0% and 15.5% were belonged to age group of below 9 years of teaching experience. Education attainments of the respondents were categorized according to Malaysia Certificate Examination (MCE), Higher Certificate Secondary Examination (HSCE), Diploma, Bachelor, Bachelor of Education, and Master level. Results showed that Diploma had the highest percentage of respondents (35.5%) while STPM had the lowest percentage of respondents with only 24.2%. 24.2% of them are Bachelor Degree holders, and 25.5% of them are Bachelor of Education holders. Teachers' specialization in Malaysian Education of Institution (MEI) or University showed 62.2% majoring at English as Second Language (ESL) teaching and the other were at various field of teaching. With regards to levels of courses attended in the implementation of CCL Program, 37.7% of the respondents attended courses only at school level and 28.8% of the respondents never attended any courses related to CCL Program. Only 1 respondent (2.2%) attended Professionalism Course at State level, and another 1 respondent (2.2%) attended Primary Literature Training Workshop. The other 60.0% of the respondents never attended any course related to CCL Program.

### Teachers' Feedback on Support

Table 3 below provides further information related to provision of support by school management via the role and assistance of the administrators. It was found that in item 2, majority of the respondents strongly agreed (80%) that the administrators paid attention and sensitive to provide the necessary equipment and facilities in the implementation of the program. 57.8% of the respondents agreed that the administrators observe and supervise their teaching in the implementation of the program. However, item 1 stated that only 37.8% disagree that their administrators understand the objectives and goal of CCL Program implemented in their schools. Only 6.7% of the respondents agree that they are given opportunity to try out new ideas in the teaching of literature, and 13.3% disagree that the administrators are concerned with all matters and problems associated with CCL Program. 22.2% of the respondents disagree that the administrators provide guidance and assistance in carrying out the implementation of the program, and observe as well as supervise their teaching in the implementation of the program. Only 13.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the administrators provide adequate training before the implementation of the program. Details findings related to respondents' feedback on Support is described in Table 3:

Table 3: Respondents' Feedback on Support (N=45)

Questions below are related to <b>support</b> given by the school management towards the implementation of Contemporary Children's Literature Program in school. To what extent do you agree with the role and assistance given by the administrator at your school in the following areas?					
Items	Questions	Percentage			
		SDA	D	A	SA
1.	Understand the objectives and goals of CCL Program implementation in school.	-	37.8	26.7	35.6
2.	Pay attention and are sensitive to provide the necessary equipment and facilities.	-	8.9	11.1	80.0
3.	Give opportunity to try out new ideas in teaching.	-	15.6	6.7	77.8
4.	Provide guidance and assistance to me in carrying out the implementation of CCL Program	-	22.2	31.1	46.7
5.	Provide time to listen to teacher's problem in implementing the CCL Program.	-	22.2	35.6	42.2
6.	Observe and supervise my teaching in the implementation of CCL Program.	-	15.6	57.8	26.7
7.	Are concerned with all matters and problems associated with CCL Program.	-	13.3	37.8	48.9
8.	Provide adequate training before the implementation of CCL Program.	-	33.3	53.3	13.3

SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; FA – Fairly Agree; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree

#### Teachers' Feedback on Resources

Results in Table 4 are related to respondents' feedback on resources by school management via the provision of language room, teaching aids, and financial support. Only 13.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the administrators allowed teachers to carry out activities in the language room, and the opportunity for teacher to be involved with the planning of expenditure of CCL Program. 75% of the respondents agree that the administrator provide appropriate textbook to be used as teaching materials in the classroom. However, 42.2% of the respondents disagree that the school management provide sufficient textbook. 11.1% of the respondents disagree that the administrator provide materials to perform activities in the learning process, the usage of CCL Program module as a guide to teacher, and opportunity to be involved in the purchase of goods pertaining to the implementation of CCL Program. Details result related to respondents' feedback on resources is described in Table 4:

Table 4: Respondents' Feedback on Resources (N=45)

Questions below are related to teaching and learning **resources** provided by the school management (Language room, teaching aids and financial support) towards the implementation of Contemporary Children's Literature Program in school. The resources provided by the school management at my school fulfil the following aspects:

Items	Questions	Percentage			
		SDA	D	A	SA
1.	Provision for students to carry out activities in the language room.	-	24.4	62.2	13.3
2.	Provision of materials to perform activities in the learning process.	-	11.1	71.1	17.8
3.	Usage of CCL Program module as a guide to teacher.	-	11.1	82.2	6.7
4.	Provision of sufficient textbook.	-	42.2	51.1	6.7
5.	Provision of appropriate textbook to be used as teaching materials in the classroom.	-	24.4	75.6	0.0
6.	Opportunity for teacher to be involved with the planning of expenditure of CCL Program.	-	20.0	66.7	13.3
7.	Opportunity to be involved in the purchase of goods pertaining to the implementation of CCL Program.	-	11.1	88.9	0.0
8.	Permitting the English Language panel to be responsible to manage the expenses for the CCL Program.	-	20.0	8.9	71.1

SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; FA – Fairly Agree; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree

### Teachers' Feedback on Training

Table 5 provides information related to respondents' feedback on training provided by the state / district / school department that the respondents' have attended. 71.1% of the respondents agree that the training and courses provided assists them in the teaching of CCL Program. 55.6% of the respondents agree that the training provided is sufficient as a preparation to teach literature in their schools. Respondents are strongly agree in Item 2 (42.2%) stated that the instructor for the training is a capable and knowledgeable person, Item 3 (46.7%) stated that the time for training is sufficient form preparation to teach literature in their schools, Item 4 (75.6%) stated that the handouts and other related materials provided during the training are sufficient and adequate, and Item 5 (60%) stated that they received full benefit each of the course they attended. However, Item 6 and 8 stated that only 33.3% of the respondents always attended training and course provided by the state / district / school management, and 33.3% feel confident to teach after attended the training and courses provided.

Table 5: Respondents' Feedback on Training (N=45)

Questions below are related to **training** pertaining the implementation of Contemporary Children's Literature Program in school. To what extent do you agree with statements provided below related to trainings provided by the State / District / School Department that you have attended?

Items	Questions	Percentage			
		SDA	D	A	SA
1.	The training provided is sufficient as a preparation to teach CCL Program in my school.	-	31.1	55.6	13.3
2.	The instructor for the training is a capable and knowledgeable person.	-	26.7	31.1	42.2
3.	The time for training is sufficient for preparation to teach CCL Program in my school.	-	20.0	33.3	46.7
4.	Handouts and other related materials provided during the training are sufficient and adequate.	-	24.4	0.0	75.6

5.	I received full benefit each of the program that I attended.	-	20.0	20.0	60.0
6.	I always attended training and courses provided.	-	33.3	35.6	31.1
7.	The training and courses provided assist me in the teaching of CCL Program in my school.	-	6.7	71.1	22.2
8.	I feel confident to teach after attended the training and courses provided.	-	33.3	26.7	40.0

SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; FA – Fairly Agree; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree

### Teachers' Feedback on Time Allocation

Table 6 below provides results related to respondents' feedback on time allocation in the implementation of CCL Program. Respondents were strongly agreed in Item 1 that 75.6% the allocation of time is sufficient for the teaching and learning of CCL Program. 77.8% of the respondents were strongly agreed that the time allocated is adequate for the While and Post-Reading activities. 71.1% of the respondents were also strongly agreed that the time provide sufficient time for teachers to fulfill their requirement of teaching two textbook in a year. 31.1% of the respondents disagree that in setting the timetable for the implementation of CCL Program, priority is given to CCL Program before the other program takes place. Only 8.9% of the respondents agree that the combination of teaching schedule is appropriate for the teaching and learning of CCL Program. 60.0% were strongly agreed that the time allocated in the implementation of CCL Program, there is no overlap with any other use of the Language Room when the CCL Program is implemented. 48.9% of the respondents disagree that the time allocated gives consideration for teachers to adjust the teaching elements of literature teaching. Details result of respondents' feedback on time allocation is described in Table 6:

Table 6: Respondents' Feedback on Time Allocation Content (N=45)

Questions below are related to the <b>allocation of time</b> by the school management for the implementation of Contemporary Children's Literature Program in school. I found that the allocation of time:					
Items	Questions	Percentage			
		SDA	D	A	SA
1.	is sufficient for the teaching and learning of CCL Program.	-	6.7	17.8	75.6
2.	for the combination of teaching schedule is appropriate for the teaching and learning of CCL Program.	-	24.4	8.9	66.7
3.	by the administrators for the implementation of CCL Program in setting the timetable give priority to the implementation of CCL Program.	-	31.1	31.1	37.8
4.	gives consideration to the views of English teachers.	-	17.8	20.0	62.2
5.	ensures that there is no overlap with any other use of the Language room when the CCL Program is implemented.	-	24.4	15.6	60.0
6.	is adequate for the While and Post-Reading activities.	-	4.4	17.8	77.8
7.	provide sufficient time for teachers to fulfil the requirement of teaching two textbook in a year.	-	20.0	8.9	71.1
8.	gives consideration for teachers to adjust the teaching elements (plot, setting, characters, etc) of literature teaching.	-	48.9	28.9	22.2

SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; FA – Fairly Agree; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree

### CONCLUSION

Respondents' feedback concerning the support, resources, training, and time allocation in the implementation of CCL Program is generally positive. Of the 45 respondents who answered the survey questionnaire, 75% of their feedback on support agreed that the administrators pay attention and sensitive to provide the necessary equipment and facilities in the implementation of CCL Program, and provide opportunity for teachers to try out new ideas in the teaching of literature. However, only 40% of the feedback stated that the administrator understand the objectives and goals of CCL Program implementation in school. However, it is evident that the



training provided does not successfully helping respondents to teach literature in the implementation of the program. Feedback from respondents' stated that only 55.6% agree that the training is sufficient as a preparation to teach the program and only 33.3% stated that they attended the training and course provided. The lack of training provided lead to teacher's lack of confident to teach the program.

Obviously, it is proven that the resource provided by the administrator is generally positive too. Majority of the respondents agree that their administrator provide enough resources in the implementation of the program. Nevertheless, one consideration is highlighted in the findings of resources whereby 42.2% of the responded disagree that the administrators provide sufficient text book. This is due to each school has an enrolment of at least a hundred over students, whereby, in the early implementation of the program with standard four students, schools were only provided with four sets of 35 books. The following year that is for standard five students the schools were provided with four sets of 15 books. And, the standard six students were provided with only four sets of 14 books per schools.

The provision of time allocation by the school management revealed that more than 70% of the respondents strongly agree that the time allocated is adequate for the While and Post-Reading activities, sufficient for the teaching and learning of CCL Program, and sufficient time for teachers to fulfill the requirement of teaching two text book in a year. However, the setting of timetable is given priority to the implementation of CCL Program, and it does not given consideration for teachers to adjust the teaching elements of literature teaching.

In conclusion, it is important for the authority to conduct cascade training similar to the early year of CCL Program implementation to ensure the effectiveness of transfer of training among teachers or even educational leaders, to provide sufficient resources, and consideration of time allocation in the timetable of teaching and learning. It would also be great if the training is provided among administrators for them to have better understanding of the aims and objectives of the program. These would lead to the effectiveness of the program, thus, to add the limit of understanding of the CCL Program.

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