Challenges in Implementing English for Communication (EFC) Subject in the Elementary Vocational Education (PAV)

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Abstract
This paper discusses the challenges relating to the implementation of English for Communication (EFC) subject that is being offered in the Elementary Vocational Education (PAV) program for selected secondary schools in Malaysia. Therefore, the issues analyzed in this study were regarding to the EFC curriculum structure, the selection of EFC teachers and the PAV pedagogical approach in the EFC. In order to achieve the objective of the study, this paper analyzed PAV Curriculum Implementation Guide and EFC Content Standard Document of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, specifically related to EFC and PAV. The findings showed a number of suggestions for improvement in the aspects of teacher's selection and the PAV curriculum and pedagogy enhancement course that need to be augmented by the KPM for a more effective implementation of the EFC subject
Keywords: Elementary Vocational Education, English for Communication

Introduction
Malaysia requires a comprehensive and systematic education transformation in providing a foundation for nation building to achieve high aspirations in the global environment that is increasingly competitive. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 outlines the main changes in the Ministry of Education (KPM) to meet new demands and one of the major focus in the development of quality human capital is the Vocational Education Transformation. Vocational Education Transformation is one of the effort towards fulfilling the national goals of economic development, becoming a high-income country and as well as a developed country by 2020 (KPM, 2015; Faridah, 2014; Najib, 2012; Dewan Rakyat, 2011).

Through the Vocational Education Transformation approved in 2010, the Elementary Vocational Education (PAV) has been offered since 2012 until the present, 2017. KPM carries out a full pilot PAV in 15 secondary schools to provide an opportunity for UPSR leavers who are gifted and gravitates towards vocational education. Not all students are drawn to academic learning and a small number of students drop out from schools immediately due to not being interested in learning. The main objective of the PAV program is to produce

workforce and entrepreneurs who have the qualifications, skills, professional and well received by the competitive job market (Faridah, 2014; Ahmad Tajuddin, 2012; Wee, 2011 and Nurul Nadya, 2011). Mr. Hoong (1989), the chairman of the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM), acknowledged that technical institutions graduates' skills do not commensurate with the requirements of an industry when said "there is a gap between skilled jobs and the supply of skilled manpower ...".

In order to achieve the education for all target, even though PAV is more concentrated on providing training skills to students from the outset of Form 1 to Form 3, students who follow this stream are also given the opportunity to master the knowledge of language, mathematics and science. This is to train students to be able to adapt and to live with the society in their daily lives and working environment (Ung Pee Chee, 1972; Siriwardene & Qureshi 2009; Zulkhairi, 2011).

Background of Elementary Vocational Education Background (PAV)
Elementary Vocational Education (PAV) replaces the Vocational Subjects (MPV) in secondary schools that were selected based on several criteria: schools, teachers, students, management and the number of students. In 2013, 50 new schools were selected to fully implement the PAV program, while 16 schools were selected in 2014 and up to the year of 2015 and 2016, all 81 secondary schools throughout Malaysia offer the PAV program and 4 more in the Model Comprehensive School 9 (K9) in 2013 and 2014. The addition of schools that offer PAV program will be done until 2020 and it is targeted to have a total of 82,800 PAV students that involves 2,760 classrooms and 920 schools. However, it is not an easy task as it involves many related factors, such as students, teachers, infrastructure facility, equipment, materials, financial provisions as well as management and others (Zainureen, 2016; KPM, 2015; Faridah, 2014).

Table 1
Projection of Schools that Offer PAV until 2020

School/Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
New Schools	15	50	195	110	110	110	110	110	110
Existing	0	15	65	260	370	480	590	700	810
No. of Schools	**15**	**65**	**260**	**370**	**480**	**590**	**700**	**810**	**920**

(Sources: KPM, 2015)

Findings and Discussion of Challenges
Many complaints from the employment sector from various disciplines such as science, technology and engineering mentioned that graduates do not have the skills that are really required by employers (Elsevier, 2004). Language skill is one of the skills required by employers and industry (Esa Abd Samad in Adibah Abdul Latiff, 2004). The mastery of English language has become one of the indicator so that human capital is fluent in language, able to communicate, emotionally intelligent and competent at solving problems due to the globalization and internationalization that have changed the structure of cosmopolitan education to become more challenging (KPM, 2015; Effyza, 2013; Mohd Hasril, 2016; Rodiah, 2009; Falk & Millar 2002; Hambur, Rowe & Luc, 2002, Lublin, 2003). The implementation of English language usage can bridge the gap between curriculum and work environment.

The Ministry of Education (KPM) has implemented the use of English as the language of instruction in technical subjects, but according to a study by Masita (2008) it is found that technical teachers are not ready to teach in English language as they are not confident to use the technical terms during teaching sessions. The English for Communication (EFC) subject has been introduced in the PAV program with the goal that students will be able to communicate in English. The findings of the study conducted Adibah (2004) and was reinforced by Davies and Pearce (2000) showed that many students claimed they understand presentations that are in English but cannot communicate because of lack of confidence. Does the problem stem from inefficient teachers in the teaching of English Language? The issues and challenges addressed here are related to the teaching of EFC in PAV classrooms:

Implementation of EFC Curriculum Structure among PAV Academic Teachers
From the observations of researchers and the results of PAV Pedagogy Enhancement Course organized by the Teacher Education Division (BPG) of the Ministry of Education (KPM), it is found that the key challenge in the implementation of the EFC curriculum structure among academic teachers in the PAV program is the teachers' understanding of the curriculum structure set by the Curriculum Development Center (BPK), KPM. After monitoring and coaching in several secondary schools around the years 2012-2014, it was found that there were still many teachers who were confused about the structure of the EFC curriculum to be implemented. When teachers do not understand its implementation, the class management process does not run as targeted by KPM (KPM, 2014).

This is evident when numbers of EFC academic teachers do not use the Standard Curriculum Document (DSK) as a guide. The DSK contains three elements that need to be measured and achieved which are the Content Standards (SK), Learning Standard (SP) and Performance Criteria (KP). These three elements are combined to become the bench mark in the academic and vocational instruction. The first challenge arises probably because teachers who went to courses organized by BPG were attended by different teachers at that time. The teachers are only substituting and the teachers who teach EFC are not given further explanation by the teachers who attended the course.

When teachers do not attend and were not given a briefing of the EFC curriculum structure, teachers will not be implementing student competency-based EFC teaching the right way. The challenge of implementing this curriculum becomes more complicated when by the start of 2016, assessments are carried out only at school level and there are no longer central assessments at the end of the year. Through interviews conducted by researchers with PAV program coordinator, it is found that throughout the offer of PAV program in the EFC subject and up until 2016. there has been no oral test carried out. Although the KPM has declared that oral tests should be carried out during central assessments, nevertheless these oral tests cannot be inserted into the slots of school-based assessments since they require the service of a lot of teachers at a time (Interview: Anuar, 2016). Thus, the oral test is not necessarily carried out by EFC teachers and the EFC subject aim to produce students who can communicate in English is only based on teachers' efforts alone without a real assessment at central level (PAV Curriculum Implementation Guide, 2015). The challenge here is when there is no oral tests conducted by either the school or center, then the students' communication cannot be assessed more accurately and the objective of the EFC subject will stray from its original purpose.

In the meantime, the EFC module is developed with flexibility and there are only samples within the first 3 months (Interview: Anuar, 2016). This resulted teachers' teachings to be less systematic and not anchored as there is no fixed guideline that should be followed. Besides that, the constant change of EFC teachers every year will cause the teachers to not be well-versed in using the current EFC curriculum structure during their years of teaching. EFC curriculum needs to be investigated and understood before teaching session since it is different than the English subject in the mainstream.

Clearly, the application of EFC curriculum structure of EFC in the PAV teaching program is a challenge that must be faced by teachers who teach EFC subjects. This is because, EFC curriculum structure is a new challenge that led to a culture shock for some teachers, especially in terms of how they think and understand the aspects which need to be studied. The beliefs and past experiences of teachers are very difficult to change (Saidi Samsudin, 2004). The challenge to the teachers in education today includes efforts to equip themselves with information and communication technology skills, the change in education policy, the addition of curriculum, mounting public expectations and much more. Therefore, teachers should consist of those with strong determination and who are ready to adapt to the rapid changes that occur nowadays (Saedah & Mohammed Sani, 2012). Regardless of whether EFC teachers are ready or not ready, they should equip themselves physically, mentally, intellectually and with vocational skills to ensure that the implementation of EFC subjects in the PAV program achieves the objectives set by KPM.

Selection of EFC Teachers in PAV program
The second challenge is to obtain enough instructors with qualifications and experiences in teaching EFC. This is because teachers play a key role in channeling knowledge and skills in formal education (Saedah & Mohammed Sani, 2012; Faridah, 2014).

The aspects of selecting EFC teachers is the second major challenge because EFC teachers should have a specialization minor in technical or engineering. However, based on researchers' observations, the recruitment of EFC teachers is only based on teachers who teach English in the mainstream. Most teachers who teach EFC are specialized in TESL, English Studies, or English Literature and other specialization according to the needs of the school and there is no specialization in engineering when they are absorbed into the PAV program to teach EFC.

EFC teachers ought to have at least the basics of engineering to teach vocational stream students (Interview: Anuar, 2016). Anuar (2016) also stressed that teachers who are not an option in both concerned should be given intensive training especially with regard to the knowledge in EFC and vocational skills. The challenge here is the training provided by the KPM is insufficient and does not meet the needs of the PAV implementation today. The challenges in teaching EFC are quite considerable. This is because the teachers carry the high hopes of the parents, students and the KPM. Hence, the teachers should be consisted of those who are strong-spirited and ready to adapt to changes that occur. (Saedah & Mohammed Sani, 2012). The dilemma here is that the teachers that are selected to teach EFC have to address these challenges even when they are not from the options, which is in line with the views of Derek Cheung, 2001; Zohar, Degani and Vaaknin (2001) whereby they noted that many attempts in educational changes have failed because the mastery of subject content taught, teaching

strategies in classroom and the skills in mastering technology among teachers that do not reach the required level.

Student-Centered Pedagogical Approach in EFC Subject
The next challenge is when the student-centered pedagogical approach has to be applied in EFC subject. In PAV Pedagogy Enhancement Course, it is found that most academic teachers are lacking the skills in the implementation of this pedagogy (KPM, 2014). The student-centered pedagogical approach is an approach in which curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment give more focus on the students and the teacher's role is changed to a facilitator and from the 'sage on the stage' to 'guide on the side' (Noriati, 2012; Noor Hisham, 2011; Rosenberg, 2001). This is also supported by Yasar (2008) who stated that the teacher is the facilitator and students' involvement will increase with the implementation of an active pedagogy as well as enhancing their abilities and skills positively. Nevertheless, the extent to which an educator will take the implementation of the teaching strategies designed seriously is what remains the question (Dr. Abdullah Ibrahim, 2004).

When teachers do not apply student-centered pedagogy and the teaching process is solely teacher-centered, then it will become quite a boring lecture and students will easily succumb to drowsiness (Alizah, 2016). According to the official reports from the World Bank and UNESCO-UNEVOV it is found that vocational teachers in developing countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, often do not perform the pedagogy demanded by the Technical and Vocational Education and the working world when during the process of learning, most students become passive and this does not help in improving the efficiency of the students' professionalism (Dadang Kurnia & Ilhamdaniah, 2013). Derek Cheung (2001) and Zohar (2001) stated that many attempts on educational change have failed due to the aspects of teaching strategies and the low level of classroom skills among teachers. The same concern applies to the challenge of implementing EFC subjects in the PAV program.

From another aspect, the teachers also expressed the opinion that using student-centered approach leads to the difficulty in finishing the syllabus (Elsevier, 2004). This is because teachers are more focused on the students' activities and it takes a long time for each class when performing activities involving teachers as mentors and students as the main driver. Teachers are found to be somewhat less eager to pursue this activity, reasoning that the process of imparting knowledge will decrease. Felder's survey showed that teachers complained and stated that "If I spend time in class on active learning exercises, I'll never get through the syllabus". From the researcher's' observation, student-centered pedagogy in the implementation of EFC subject for PAV program uses the Constructivism theory which views students as builders of knowledge, rather than as recipients of knowledge. However, EFC teachers are seen to mainly use only a one-way method, which means students only receive knowledge by just sitting, listening and writing while the teachers act as the provider of knowledge. In order to implement the pedagogy set forth in PAV, teachers have to change their approach by placing an emphasis on Vygotsky's concept (Lee, 2012).

There are several proposals relating to the implementation of PAV teaching plans in KPM. Among them is, teachers are given courses to attend regarding the implementation of pedagogy in EFC teaching plans for PAV (KPM, 2014). However, the challenge here is the problem in implementing the teaching itself. This is because the information that needs to be

shared is not circulated among all teachers since the representative is only one individual teacher.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a few challenges in the implementation of the EFC subject in the PAV program. Therefore, it is hoped that the necessary parties/authorities to help in addressing the challenges presented. In order to enhance the effectiveness of its implementation, some improvement suggestions are put forward in terms of the selection of teachers and teacher training that should be enhanced by the KPM in a more effective implementation. Teachers play the role as conductors who contribute energy, creativity and commitment to the success of producing human capital development that are vocationally and generically skilled. This will result the production of skilled and semi-skilled workers in order to achieve the national goal of becoming a high income nation by the year 2020.

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