

COMPARISON OF UK CURRICULUM WITH MALAYSIA CURRICULUM
ZOOMING INTO ENGLISH FOR LOWER SECONDARY
(YEAR 7 AND FORM 1)

VALERIE JAMES

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

COMPARISON OF UK CURRICULUM WITH MALAYSIA CURRICULUM
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(YEAR 7 AND FORM 1)

VALERIE JAMES

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Dedicated to:

Mum and Dad who always believe in me

Ronnie and Alexis who always cheering me on

My siblings and students who inspire me to do my best

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ABSTRACT

The issue of English competency among Malaysians especially the younger generation continues to haunt our education system. Recently, the government has abolished the 40 per cent cap for local students to enrol in international schools nationwide “with immediate effect”. This opens door for many parents who want an English medium education for their children. The reality is that there are already many foreign curriculums in the market. There are many private schools that run the UK Cambridge programme and American programme. The purpose of this study was to investigate the similarities and differences of the curriculums between UK and Malaysia for lower secondary by reviewing their overall curriculum aims and objectives specifically looking at a single English syllabus that caters for lower secondary learners. Since the UK Cambridge programme is implemented in Malaysia, the researcher also seeks to find out whether the curriculum matches our National Education Philosophy (NEP). This is a comparative document analysis research, which compares two documented English syllabus of two different countries. The researcher had also interviewed two teachers that are teaching the UK Cambridge Year 7 English and Malaysia Form One English. The principal conclusion was that both syllabuses have their own strength and limitation. While Year 7 English syllabus might be too hard for the general Malaysians Form One students but it provides a platform to challenge those with better English competency.

ABSTRAK

Isu penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan rakyat Malaysia terutamanya generasi muda terus menghantui system pendidikan kita. Baru-baru ini, kerajaan telah memansuhkan kuota 40 peratus untuk pelajar-pelajar tempatan berdaftar di sekolah-sekolah antarabangsa di seluruh negara yang berkuatkuasa serta-merta. Ini memberi peluang kepada ibubapa yang hendak anak-anak mereka belajar dengan menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa pengantar. Realitinya adalah terdapat banyak kurikulum asing di pasaran dan banyak sekolah swasta yang menjalankan program UK Cambridge dan program dari Amerika. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mencari persamaan dan perbezaan antara kurikulum UK dan Malaysia dengan mengkaji keseluruhan matlamat kurikulum dan objektif. Secara khusus kajian ini melihat satu sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris yang menampung pelajar menengah rendah. Memandangkan program UK Cambridge dilaksanakan di Malaysia, penyelidikan ini juga bertujuan untuk mengetahui sama ada kurikulum tersebut sesuai dengan Falsafah Pendidikan Negara. Penyelidikan ini adalah analisis perbandingan dokumen yang membandingkan dua dokumentasi sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Penyelidik juga telah menemubual dua orang guru yang mengajar Bahasa Inggeris di Tahun 7 UK Cambridge dan Tingkatan Satu. Kesimpulannya adalah bahawa kedua-dua sukatan pelajaran mempunyai kekuatan dan batasan tersendiri. Walaupun sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris Tahun 7 mungkin terlalu sukar untuk pelajar Malaysia amnya, tetapi ia menyediakan satu landasan untuk mencabar mereka untuk lebih lagi menguasai Bahasa Inggeris.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ICT</i>	-	Information and Communication Technology
<i>IGCSE</i>	-	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
<i>KBSM</i>	-	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah
<i>KLSM</i>	-	Kurikulum Lama Sekolah Menengah
<i>KSSM</i>	-	Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah
<i>NEP</i>	-	National Education Philosophy
<i>PPSMI</i>	-	Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Sains Dan Mathematics dalam Bahasa Inggeris
<i>SPM</i>	-	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
<i>STPM</i>	-	Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia
<i>UK</i>	-	United Kingdom

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Comparison of UK Curriculum with Malaysia Curriculum Zooming Into English for Lower Secondary (Year 7 and Form 1)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

"All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth." – Aristotle (Spaceandmotion, access on 9th of April 2012). The shaping and equipping of youths are indeed very important as they are the ones who are going to run the nation in the future. So, the future of a nation depends on the education of the youths. It is therefore very crucial that a nation prepares a perfect education system that will produce individuals that are responsible and capable of governing the country.

Malaysia will be celebrating its 55th anniversary of its independence day. As with age comes wisdom, Malaysia's education system has come a long way. Many changes and refinements are made in the hope that Malaysia's education system will be

perfect to produce individuals that are capable, knowledgeable and responsible citizens. Does that mean our education system is perfect? Is our education system able to accomplish all the desired outcomes of the purpose of education? If they do, then we would not need any foreign education system. But in reality, there are many outside curriculums implemented in Malaysia.

According to the listing in MALAYSIA CENTRAL, The Leading Malaysia-Centric Info Portal & The Most Comprehensive Malaysian Search Directory (assess on 1st of November, 2011), there are about 35 private schools in Malaysia. The list only takes into account those who actually registered their schools or centres with the webpage master. According to the researcher's observation, in Johor Bahru alone, there are about 13 private schools offering various education programmes from locality to all over the world. Bear in mind that not all private schools are registered, thus the researcher did a little investigation based on word of mouths and observation. In the wake of more and more private schools blooming like mushrooms in Malaysia, there is a need to see and study whether or not their curriculum is relevant to our society by looking from the aspect of Malaysia educational philosophy.

Studies also need to be conducted to see whether the curriculum is equivalent to our local curriculum. So that there will not be any redundancy. This is a study conducted to look into details of the UK Cambridge curriculum in comparison to our local curriculum. After considering the vast expanse of material available in the market for UK Cambridge curriculum, the researcher will only look at one programme that caters for Year 7 or lower secondary students.

Deputy Works Minister, Datuk Yong Khoo Seng said that for Malaysia to achieve Vision 2020, the country's workforce must be fluent in English (The Star, May 1st, 2010). The University World News (April 10th, 2011) reported that countries such as

Britain and Australia are tightening the level of English language skills for international student visas. The article also compared 44 countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America where English is not its official language, and ranked them as having 'very high' proficiency in English, 'high', 'moderate', 'low' and 'very low' proficiency. This is described by the language training company Education First (EF) as the first English Proficiency Index (EPI) providing a standardised measurement of adult English language performance, comparable between countries. Malaysia is the only country in Asia to be ranked as having 'very high' English language proficiency. But the list excludes Singapore, where English is an official language. It is indeed very encouraging news as Malaysia gears up for Vision 2020.

However, recently The Star (16th of May, 2012) reported that employers in Malaysia consider fresh graduates as liabilities as many require additional training before they can perform. This is because employers felt many fresh graduates lacked communication skills and had poor English which needed to improve before they could add value to the business. This is the reality. The older generation has better command of English compared to the younger generation. English used to be regarded as an important language that everyone must master, but now has taken a back seat. What can be done to bring English back to its glorious days? That is why more parents are taking the education of their children seriously.

1.1 Background Of The Study

Urban cities like Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru have quite a number of private schools. Usually, city folks are more educated thus taking education, especially for their children, more seriously. Parents in the cities are willing to spend more in making sure

that their children are getting the best in everything. This includes education. So, it is not surprising to see many learning centres and education centres are established in the cities.

Most of these learning centres and education centres or private schools (this is what we are going to refer them to from this point onwards), offer not only our local curriculum but some of them also offering American Home Schooling Curriculum and British or Cambridge or UK Curriculum (what they are usually called in Malaysia). The delivery language for American and UK curriculum is English.

The demand for private schools, especially those running the UK curriculum, is high in Johor Bahru. This can be concluded based on the steadily increasing number of students enrolling in one of the private schools in Johor Bahru. One of the reasons is more and more parents are able to afford to send their children to prestigious colleges and universities around the world. Parents who can afford are not compromising the quality of education of their children. The nearest top colleges and universities are in Singapore. Topuniversities.com (2011) listed National University of Singapore (NUS) as the 3rd top universities in Asia.

The command of English is an important element in accepting students into prestigious colleges and universities. Candidates, with O Level, are assumed to have better command of English because they have received their secondary education in schools using fully English as a medium of delivery. The O Level certificate also strengthen the claim, as the O Level that they are sitting comes from UK itself. For a local student to be able to sit for international examinations and pass, it can only mean that he is good student with potentials.

Having said that, some parents prefer the UK Cambridge curriculum because they felt that English is important for their children's future. The Star (10th April 2011) highlighted that *"It does not matter if you are top of your class or have a string of degrees, that dream job will not be yours unless you can speak and write well in English."* This is the reality of life. Furthermore, the government's move to stop teaching Mathematics and Science in English (NST, 3rd November 2011) makes private schools even more desirable. Parents who can afford are willing to spend more for the future of their children.

As more and more parents are keen on sending their children to schools that run the UK Cambridge curriculum, there is a need to see whether the UK Cambridge curriculum is suitable for us (Malaysians) or otherwise.

1.2 Statement of Problem

As many parents are considering UK Cambridge curriculum to enrol their children in, there is a need to conduct a research or study on what this curriculum is all about. This study will focus on comparative document analysis qualitative research, to look into the differences and similarities of the UK curriculum with our local curriculum. Taking into account the duration of the research, the researcher will only look into one syllabus which is the Year 7 English syllabus compared to Form 1 English syllabus.

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study is to find out the similarities and differences of the curriculum between UK and Malaysia for lower secondary, by reviewing:

- 1) overall curriculum aims and objectives
- 2) whether the curriculum matches our National Education Philosophy (NEP)
- 3) content of the English syllabus for Year 7 and Form 1 of both curriculum

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are as follow:

- 1) What are the UK curriculum aims and objectives?
- 2) What is Malaysia National Educational Philosophy?
- 3) What are the similarities of the UK curriculum aims and objectives with Malaysia National Educational Philosophy?
- 4) What are the differences of the UK curriculum aims and objectives with Malaysia National Educational Philosophy?
- 5) Do the UK curriculum match our National Education Philosophy?
- 6) What are the similarities between the syllabus of UK curriculum and our local syllabus for lower secondary English subject? Especially on language elements: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
- 7) What are the differences between the syllabus of UK curriculum and our local syllabus for lower secondary English subject? Especially on language elements: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

1.5 The Importance of the Research

This is an important study because we are to examine the differences in the structures of the syllabus, the aims and objectives of the curriculum of two countries, the contents and what is more important in one country than in the other country. Finally what is expected from the teachers teaching UK curriculum in Malaysia. As far as the researcher's knowledge, there is no known study comparing both curriculums.

1.5.1 Students

By studying the result of the research, students will be able to:

- identify the similarities and differences of the local curriculum and UK curriculum.
- consider which curriculum suits their needs in the future when they further their studies.

1.5.2 Parents

By studying the result of the research, parents will be able to:

- identify the similarities and differences of the local curriculum and UK curriculum.
- consider which curriculum suits their children's needs in the future when they further their studies.

1.5.3 Teachers Teaching the UK Curriculum

By studying the result of the research, teachers teaching in the UK Curriculum will be able to:

- identify the similarities and differences of the local curriculum and UK curriculum.
- find suitable materials from the local curriculum as extra or supplement to the UK curriculum.
- prepare students accordingly to sit for O Level.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

This research is carried out to look into only the first level of lower secondary syllabus, Form 1 of Malaysia curriculum and Year 7 of the UK curriculum. As there are abundant resources for teaching the UK English subject, the researcher is going to look into a single documented curriculum provided by one of the learning centre in UK. The aims and objectives of both curriculums will be studied broadly or at macro level.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Aims	: To satisfy the objectives of the curriculum.
Curriculum	: Kerr defines curriculum as, 'All the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school.' (quoted in Kelly 1983: 10; see also, Kelly 1999)
ETeMs	: English for Teaching Science and Mathematics
ICT	: Information and Communication Technology
KBSM	: The Malaysian National syllabus for Secondary school (KBSM) covers the following subjects: Bahasa Malaysia, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Art, PE, Living Skills, Moral and English. All the subjects except English are taught in Bahasa Malaysia. English is taught under the English Language Enrichment Programme.
Key Stage 3	: (commonly abbreviated as KS3) is the legal term for the three years of schooling in schools in England and Wales normally known as Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9, when pupils are aged between 11 and 14. (Wikipedia, access on 9th of October 2011)
KLSM	: Kurikulum Lama Sekolah Menengah – old curriculum replaced by KBSM.
KSSM	: Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah – a new curriculum that will replace KBSM.
Language components	: Language components are reading, listening, speaking and writing.
NEP	: National Education Philosophy – Malaysia's education philosophy.

- O Level** : The O-level (Ordinary Level) is a subject-based qualification conferred to as part of the General Certificate of Education (GCE). It was introduced as part of British educational reform in the 1950s alongside the more in-depth and academically rigorous Advanced Level in England.
- Objectives** : A set of characteristics that are set as standard for evaluation purpose.
- PPSMI** : Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English (Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran Sains Dan Mathematics dalam Bahasa Inggeris)
- SPM** : The Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), or the Malaysian Certificate of Education, is a national examination taken by all fifth-year secondary school students in Malaysia. It is set and examined by the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia). SPM is equivalent to the O-Level
- Syllabus** : A syllabus is an outline and summary of topics to be covered in an education or training course.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter states clearly the background of the problem, the problem statement, the objectives of the research, research questions and limitations of the study. It also gives a list of terms and their definition that will be used in the research. Chapter two will give an overview of the background history of Malaysia's education system and its relationship with British or UK curriculum.

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