CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the aspects regarding the background to the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions and hypotheses, significance of the study, scope of the study, definitions of terms and conclusion. Generally, the background to the study will touch on Contemporary Literature Year Six Curriculum that was implemented in the National Education System. Researcher will explain the difference that occurred in the primary school English Language from 1980s until 2011.

The focus is on the students’ concern in Contemporary Literature Programme. The issues on the importance and the need of education innovation will be brought forward and explain in the problem statement. A model based on concerns (Concerns-Based Adoption Model) is used in exploring the stages of concerns of the students. The model is used to study the Year Six Contemporary Literature Programme. Besides that, the problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions and hypotheses will be explained along with significance of the study and scope of the study. The definitions of terms will assist the researcher in the study mainly
definitions connected to curriculum, gender, assessment, concern, change, innovation, contemporary literature in Year Six Contemporary Literature Reading Programme.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Based on national education history, education system had undergone a few reformation. The reason for these changes and reformation is to fix and increase the quality of education in order to fulfill the current needs and preparation to face the future challenges and demands.

British was the one responsible for the secular schools in Malaysia. There were no Malay-language secondary schools so Malay students who studied in Malay during primary schools had to enroll in an English-language education. In 1950s, four initial propose were devised. The Razak Report came up with a national school system consists of Malay, Chinese and Tamil-medium schools at primary level. In 1970s, the government began to change English-medium primary and secondary national-type schools into Malay-medium national schools. The Education Ordinance of 1956 and the Education Act of 1961 were replaced with the Education Act of 1996 using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium (Phillips 2009).

Based on 1979 Cabinet Committee Report, there was an acknowledgement of the importance of English Language education and this has helped in the existence of National Education Philosophy officially in 1988 (Punitha Vathy Kalandavelu 1998).
In 1979, a report from the Special Cabinet Committee chaired by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (Mahathir’s Report) stated that the objectives were to achieve national unity in a multiethnic society besides increase the sense of patriotism, to produce skilled manpower for national development and to further extend the policy of democratization of education in order to strike a balance in all aspects of education between rural and urban areas (Azman Mohd Yusof 1998).

S. Thomas (2011) who wrote an article in New Sunday Times, said in his writing that the root of the problem for English is the curriculum. Review is needed for the Year One to Form Five. Most subjects are taught in Bahasa Melayu so one cannot expect students coming out of this system to be able to master English language. In the early 1950s, the medium of instruction in rural schools was the mother tongue. However there was an hour of English class daily. After Standard Six, students would continue their studies in remove classes and from there move to English-medium schools. This continued until 1957 when Bahasa Malaysia was introduced as a subject in English-medium and vernacular schools. Students were able to master both languages as teachers were well trained to teach in Bahasa Malaysia and English. S. Thomas said that it couldn’t be denied the fact that most of our doctors, engineers and top government officers were from the rural schools and they mastered the languages before going to secondary school, which were in the English-medium.
Nor Husni Mohd Tahkim (n.d.) stated that in 1982, the conversion programme from English to Malay as the medium of instruction in national-type (English) secondary schools was completed and by 1983 all university courses in arts, science, engineering, medicine and etc were conducted in Malay.

Dr Sharifah Maimunah Syed Zin (2003), who presented in the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) and English Teaching in Mathematics and Science (ETems) Conference stated that The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) came up with reading programmes to ensure that the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English is well grasped and comprehended by students and teachers. Level of difficulty of language, suitability of story line, morals and values were taken into account of. The programme constitutes prescribed text centering around fiction. The objectives of the programme are to improve pupils listening and speaking skills, widen vocabulary and strengthen their grammar. Dr Sharifah Maimunah also stated that students are expected to be exposed to other cultures and world views and build up their thinking and reasoning skills suitable to their age level. It is hoped that through constant reading pupils truly acquire a love for reading and learn how to appreciate good values and morals. Contemporary Literature Programme is also bridging the literature gap because pupils will not be put off when they graduate to secondary schools.

Ali Abdul Ghani and Jagdeesh Kaur Gill (2003) presented in the ELTC and ETems Conference about the literacy development in Malaysian Primary. They
mentioned that CDC has known that inculcating reading among youngsters is very important in nurturing the reading habit. CDC had introduced a number of reading programmes to support literacy development, especially in English. These programmes expose students to also books on science and technology, thus supporting the implementation of teaching of science and mathematics in English in primary schools. One of the programme is Contemporary Literature. It is tested in Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) but not in primary school. It was a success for the secondary level due to an increase in the percentage of passes since the implementation so Ministry of Education (MOE) decided to implement Contemporary Literature Programme in primary schools beginning with Year 4 pupils both in Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) and Sekolah jenis Kebangsaan (SJK) schools in 2004.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Problems in teaching and learning in English are common in urban and rural schools. Awareness in the importance of English and the need to acquire the language are still at the lowest level. Therefore, students need to have the initiatives to upgrade themselves by learning to converse in English in or out of school. Students should know the importance of English as a national language world wide. Mastering the language is not only have to but compulsory if they want to succeed in the world ahead. Ministry of Education has decided to take major steps to improve the oral problems in students and to insert the interest in speaking English.
According to S. Thomas (2011) who wrote an article in New Sunday Times, Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin’s concern for the English language in schools is laudable. MOE has taken actions in ensuring that English is taught well in schools but there appears to be lack of skills to teach it. MOE has carried out many efforts through trial and error. However, there is still hope that students will be able to excel in English.

Ysesiah (2011) mentioned in his article in New Sunday Times that MOE has never neglected the teaching of English. The subject has been a vital part of the curriculum for all types of schools, be they primary or secondary. English is taught daily by qualified teachers in all schools. MOE also instructed the English Language Teaching Centre to develop courses, curriculum and training to improve English Language teachers’ proficiency. This shows the commitment of MOE towards the teaching of English. MOE also is urged to put more pressure on the government to make English a compulsory subject in the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR), Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) and Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examinations. Students, especially in the rural areas, do not see the need to learn English because they hardly use the language in their daily lives. Yesuiah suggested that making English a must-pass subject in public examinations will make them learn the language seriously. MOE also has to push for the English-medium schools, which is a sure way to improve the students’ mastery in English. MOE should look into
these options seriously to take English language teaching and learning to a higher level.

Nurjehan Mohamed (2011) mentioned in her writings in New Sunday Times regarding the importance of English in setting foundations. Her interviewed with Neuroscientist Professor Ishwar Parhar, who heads the Brain Research Institute at Monash Sunway, came to conclusion that if Malaysia is to produce scientists who are global thinkers and innovators, then students have to be taught Science in English. Professor Ishwar Parhar said that learning Science in the mother tongue may allow us to become a scientist who does experiments in the lab but if students do not have a good command of the English Language, they will not be able to publish in good journals and be cited. He stated that children who learn Science in Bahasa Malaysia may find it confusing to use the Net as a research tool because the terms may not necessarily be the same. In the end, the students may end up not enjoying the learning process. This shows how important it is to master English Language which may affect the youngsters’ futures.

Singh (2011) gave his proposal in New Sunday Times that by having “Speak English Day”, students can learn to speak English with their friends with the help from teacher. MOE has instructed Education District Office for each district to campaign the implementation of “Tuesday Is an English Day”. Every Tuesday all school’s citizens have to converse in English including all teachers and the administrators. Students must speak in English either mixed English or fully English.
But the success of this campaign depends on the school, administrators, teachers and the students themselves. Ministry of Education came up with the incorporation of literature into the English language curriculum to assist in the communicative approach in spite of some obstacles that occurred.

Koon (2003:140) in Tina Abdullah et al. (2007) argued that, “When the literature component for English language teaching and learning was introduced into the Malaysian schools, a few years ago, many were caught unawareness.”

When MOE announced that Contemporary Literature Programme will be inserted in the syllabus, it received reactions from all representations walks of life who consists of administrators, principals, teachers, students, parents, society, scholars or academicians. Some supported and some predicted failure without giving Contemporary Literature a chance to proceed.

State Department of Education is totally responsible to design special comprehensive and yet compact training sessions that would help the English Language teachers to teach literature in their English language classrooms. The State of Department must also insert the confidence in the teachers to use literature as apart of their strategies in enhancing students’ communicative skills. Teachers should explore the potentials of literature as apart of their teaching strategies to catch students’ interests and attention in English subject. Training centers have to revise
their curriculum to devise materials and courses that will help the teachers in teaching literature.

After the reading programme was introduced, it was another headache for the teachers. Students show no interest in Contemporary Literature Programme. They feel that it is a waste of time because it is not apart of UPSR examination compared to secondary schools syllabus that combined Contemporary Literature in the examinations. Indramalar, S (2005) wrote in The Star Online that Federal Territory Education Director, Noor Rezan Bapoo Hashim mentioned that many students shy away from literature even though they are linguistically competent because they feel it is inaccessible and remote. Many of the texts were irrelevant to teenagers and that is why it was not appealing to students.

Administrators and principals were worried of the performance of the students due to having to learn an extra component of English. Students themselves are having full hands with their comprehension, essay, grammar, vocabularies and etc. They felt burden to be ordered to read and discuss works or writers that are difficult and foreign to them. Parents play important role in siding with their kids’ perception having to cope to the new change or innovation in curriculum.
Local media reported on the different reactions of this new English Language component. Based on an article published in the Mind Our English Column in The Star, school teachers mentioned that they were worried of not knowing the suitable methodologies to be used when teaching the literature component (Kee 2002 in Tina Abdullah et al. 2007).

Talif (1995) in Tina Abdullah et al. (2007) claimed that it is important to study some of the issues in relation to literature in the Malaysian context. By doing so, information on how teachers and students are carrying out the literature will be gained. More research on literature issues will help in finding perceptions problems and solution surfaced along the implementation of literature. Chandapillai-Llod (2000) in Tina Abdullah et al. (2007) claimed that it would take a while for learners to be able to accept literature as a part of learning the English Language.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the extent of Year 6 students’ concern in Contemporary Literature Programme.
2. To explore the extent of Year 6 students’ concern based gender and attending private English tuition.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1.4.1 Research Questions

1. What is the extent of Year 6 students’ concern in Contemporary Literature Programme?

2. What is the difference in the extent of Year 6 students’ concern based on gender and attending private English tuition

1.4.2 Research Hypotheses

It is based on all the research questions that will look at the differences in the stages of concern of the reading programme and the differences extent of concern in gender and attending private English tuition.

Ho 1 There is no significant difference among Year 6 students’ concern based on gender in Contemporary Literature Programme.

Ho 2 There is no significant difference among Year Six students’ concern based on attending private English tuition in Contemporary Literature Programme.
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will show the stages of concern of the Year 6 students in Contemporary Literature Programme using CBAM. The evaluation study on the Year Six Contemporary Literature Programme using CBAM will increase the collection of curriculum evaluation models in our country.

The researcher feels that this study is carried out when the students are learning Year Six Contemporary Literature Programme by using the reading initiatives programmes launched by CDC. Texts are given by Ministry of Education (MOE). Every finding from the study can be used as input to upgrade or improve the programme. Using CBAM as the conceptual framework and the findings can be shared with the CDC.

The drastic changes that have happened in the education system have motivated the researcher to carry out this study. This study gives new dimensions and clearer approach especially to the principle legislature, curriculum planner, curriculum management and curriculum implementer. CBAM that is used in the study is able to prepare feedback results indicator from the new curriculum or new programme that is prepared in the education system. This feedback will motivate or encourage the principle legislature, curriculum planner, curriculum management and
curriculum implementer to carry out the next accurate actions. This will increase the quality and will give positive impact in the education system.

Besides that, this study assists to plan and prepare suitable strategies in order to increase stages of concern. The gap between the training and students’ needs based on gender and attending private English tuition are able to be identified. The findings are suitable as basic to prepare next following programmes or remedial in teaching and learning Year Six Contemporary Literature. As a whole, the study is the best recipe to evaluate the changes or difference in the curriculum by looking directly to the curriculum implementer input to upgrade the literature reading programme by giving suggestions.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research is to explore the stages of concern of Year 6 students in Contemporary Literature Programme and the differences in the extent of the stages of concern based on gender and attending private English tuition. It will focus to the concern that will be evaluated based on CBAM. It is divided into seven stages of concern that students experience as they adopt a new practice:

- Awareness - Students have little concern or involvement with the innovation.
- Informational - Students have a general interest in the innovation and would
like to know more about it.

- Personal - Students want to learn more about the personal ramifications of the innovation. They question how the innovation will affect them.

- Management - Students learn the processes and tasks of the innovation. They focus on information and resources.

- Consequence - Students focus on the innovation’s impact.

- Collaboration - Students cooperate with others in implementing the innovation.

- Refocusing - Students consider the benefits of the innovation and think of additional alternatives that might work even better.

These Seven Stages of Concern will be referred to as the study looks at their concern in the Contemporary Literature Programme and concern based on gender and attending private English tuition. A survey questionnaire named SoCQ is used to find out the Year Six pupils concern. The 35-item questionnaire will be answered by pupils with the guidance of the researcher and analyzed using SPSS version 16. Then it will be analyzed using T-test.

Contemporary Literature Programme is one of the literacy programme that was introduced by MOE to help pupils in their reading. The study will show the effectiveness of the programme and this will assist in upgrading the programme. The programme was established in 2004 starting with Standard Four pupils. This literature programme is carried out once a week in a half an hour lesson.
1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1.7.1 Change

‘Change’ as a process and not an event. It is made by individuals first and then institutions. It is a highly personal experience that entails the development growth in feelings and skills.

Successful effort towards change can be undone in short order when there is a lack of infrastructure support. Successful change requires support all levels-teacher/classroom, school, district, state and so one (Brown 2000).

Newmann, King & Youngs (2000) identified five components of change capacity within the school, including developing new knowledge and skills, establishing professional learning communities, building programme coherence, accessing new resources and developing principal school leadership.

1.7.2 Innovation

For Rogers (1983, p.11) “an innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.”
Owen (1973) synthesized that innovation is an idea or new items. They do not modify any existing idea or items to a new phase or situation because innovation needs initiative.

Miles (1964) mentioned that innovation is a deliberate, novel, specific change which is thought to be more efficacious in accomplishing the goals of a system. Innovation is considered as being planned for rather than as occurring haphazardly. It is seen in qualitative difference from existing forms.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) claimed that innovation does not have to be a new idea but it can be a method or idea that is perceived by individual as something new. As long as the individual thinks of any ideas as new, it is accepted as innovation. In this research, innovation is all about the Contemporary Literature Programme that was introduced in 2004 and the impact it has given to the primary school pupils.

1.7.3 Gender

Gender is a social category system based upon biological difference (Fagot et al. 1997). Gender is whatever a culture defines and prescribes as feminine and masculine (Canetto 1997). Gaskel, Hepburn, and Robeck (1998) explicitly related gender to other factors that distinguish students: “Gender intersects with ethnicity, race, class, sexuality and biography in the construction of identity” (p. 873). McGinnis and Pearsall (1998) restated Keller’s (1986, p.172) general view that “gender is what a
culture makes of sex” (p. 941). Howard and Hollander (1997) defined gender as “the culturally determined behaviours and personality characteristics that are associated with, but not determined by, biological sex” (p. 11). In this research, gender is about boys and girls differences in their stages of concern.

1.7.4 Contemporary Literature Programme

Ali Abdul Ghani and Jagdeesh Kaur Gill (2003) indicated that ‘children’s literature is defined as “the material created for and widely read, viewed and heard by children, who have imaginative element.” They can be divided into five main categories namely:

- Fiction
- Non-fiction
- Folktales
- Biography
- Poems

It is an intensive reading programme based on three prescribed texts per year. The objectives of the programme are firstly to instill and inculcate the reading habit among students, secondly to enrich the students’ vocabulary and language content, thirdly to enhance students’ thinking skills and lastly to enhance the four language skills. Its genres consist of short stories and poems. Every student needs to complete
one book in three months. Different texts are prepared for National and National Type schools. It consists of interesting storyline with embedded moral values. It has colourful and suitable illustrations.

1.7.5 Concern

Hall & Hord (1987) defined concern as “The composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular issue/task”. Year Six students learn Contemporary Literature since they were in Year Four. They have two years of experiences in reading poems and story books. Their concerns are regarding the experiences of having changes. These changes are awareness, informational, personal, management, consequence, collaboration and refocusing.

Berg and Vandenbergh (1995) stated that concerns as a kind of emotional undertone that signals insecurity and resistance against new situations and changes which may have to be solved by the teachers. Concerns are directed to the expectations of tackling novel problems, to use new materials, new methods and which therefore involve the lack of competence.
1.7.6 **Curriculum**

Tanner (1980) defined curriculum as “the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school, for the learners’ continuous and willful growth in personal social competence” (p.13).

Schubert (1987) in John Arul Phillip (2009) defines curriculum as the contents of a subject, concepts and tasks to be acquired, planned activities, the desired learning outcomes and experiences, product of culture and an agenda to reform society.

Pratt (1980) in John Arul Phillip (2009) defines curriculum as a written document that systematically describes goals planned, objectives, content, learning activities, evaluation procedures and so forth.

Goodlad and Su (1992) define curriculum as a plan that consists of learning opportunities for a specific time frame and place, a tool that aims to bring about behaviour changes in students as a result of planned activities and includes all learning experiences received by students with the guidance of the school. Cornbleth (1992) defines curriculum as answering three questions: what knowledge, skills and values are most worthwhile? Why are they most worthwhile? How should the young acquire them?
Grundy (1987) defines curriculum as a programme of activities (by teachers and pupils) designed so that pupils will attain so far as possible certain educational and other schooling ends or objectives.

Hass (1987) in John Arul Phillip (2009) provides a broader definition, stating that a curriculum includes ‘all of the experiences that individual learners have in a programme of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives, which is planned in terms of a framework of theory and research or past and present professional practice” (p.5).

1.7.7 Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM)

CBAM is divided into three systems such as resource system, change facilitator and user system. The resource systems are the curriculum planners and policy makers. Our curriculum planner is Curriculum Development Centre. The policy makers will come up with certain programmes to fulfill the latest needs and issues in the country. An innovation will be introduced to schools. Next, the duty is passed to the change facilitator who is the second main system in CBAM. Hord, Rutherford, Austin and Hall (1987) clarified that facilitators are among principals, vice principals, assistant principals, department chairs, mentor teachers, master teachers, grade-level chairs and plain normal teachers. These facilitators will help and support the students in implementing or carrying out the innovation. The innovation here in the
Contemporary Literature Reading Programme that was introduced in 2003. The third system is the user system who is the students. The students are given the innovation and they are responsible for the success or failure of it.