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The Impact of Implementing the Common European Framework of Reference on Language Education: A Critical Review

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Abstract

Since its inception in 2001, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been employed worldwide as an international standard for teaching and learning languages. The framework was established to provide a mutual basis for language proficiency comprising language curriculum, reference materials, and assessments adopted globally. Despite gaining fame in the contemporary teaching and learning arena, the depth of the various dimensions of its impact on language classroom pedagogy at the school level is yet to be explored. Thus, this systematic review is aimed to investigate the implementation of CEFR in schools and its impact on language education. The review methodology involved the identification of the relevant literature, the filtering of articles, and the evaluation of the quality of the articles based on pre-determined criteria. The analysis revealed that teachers and students perceive the CEFR positively. The framework had positive impacts on the students' learning process but had more adverse effects on the teachers. The review identified major themes such as the dynamics of teaching and learning of the language, teachers' understanding and reception, students' achievements of learning outcomes, the efficacy of classroom assessments and teachers' professional development which are critically discussed.

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR, Language Education, Impact, Classroom Implementation.

Introduction

Since the twentieth century, scholars and language specialists have been striving to explain the importance of learning languages and how they could be invoked and synthesised into teaching, learning and assessment. The aftermath of the Second World War and the Korean War that led to the rise of global disputes enabled people to learn foreign languages to partake in human interactions such as financial activities and disseminating information (Figueras, 2012). In today's world, acquiring a new language has become a common trend that is increasingly significant due to the pervasive role that language education holds globally. Various approaches have been identified for people to learn foreign languages, either through formal education, a classroom environment or informal education. However, it is crucial to recognise a range of mastery levels along the learning spectrum for individuals

to be eligible for learning languages. Hence, to address a common and universal ground in language education, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), a language policy document initiated by the Council of Europe in the 1970s (Council of Europe, 2001), is utilised. It was established as a coherent and comprehensive reference tool for teachers, language testers, publishers and policymakers concerning language learning, teaching and assessment.

Since its introduction in 2001, there has been an exponential increase in the adoption of the framework in Europe, while also being prominently accepted in numerous countries worldwide (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). To date, the CEFR policy document has been translated into 40 languages, most of which are Indo-European, with the recent addition of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese versions (Nguyen & Hamid, 2020). The assimilation of the framework into many languages was due to its distinctive goal to stimulate reflection on current language practises worldwide by providing a common reference level to facilitate communication, compare courses and qualifications, and eventually improve personal mobility as a result (North, 2014). Ultimately, the framework was employed to achieve a mutual calibration of standards among all users that can be achieved through the use of its universal scale. The framework proposes six consecutive levels of language proficiency to mainly measure users' language ability: A1 and A2 (Basic), B1 and B2 (Independent), as well as C1 and C2 (Proficient). Further, the CEFR level descriptors, also known as 'Can Do' descriptors, define what learners can do in reading, listening, speaking, writing, and a wide range of language abilities at different proficiency levels (Council of Europe, 2001). This illustrative scale has become the most important feature of the CEFR (Little, 2007).

Although the CEFR does not prescribe specific pedagogical approaches with regards to teaching and learning (Council of Europe, 2001), a study by Moonen et al. (2013) revealed that it endorsed an action-oriented approach to foreign language education with precise attention on what learners 'Can Do' in the second language (L2). In this vein, teachers' classroom instruction in language teaching is aligned towards a communicative and competence-based approach. According to Little (2007), the process of embracing the framework into any educational context involves a transmission of pedagogic routine to transfer curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment elements into a dynamic interface with one another. Throughout this process, a substantial impact is produced in several domains such as assessment, teacher education, curriculum design and pedagogy (Little, 2006). Though the impacts of CEFR have been documented by Figueras (2012), her review, however, does not adequately address the use of CEFR by teachers and students and the implication of the framework in language classroom instruction, especially at the school-based level. Thus, this paper attempts to bridge this gap by critically reviewing the implementation of the CEFR in language education to gain an in-depth understanding of the real language instructional context. Additionally, it also investigates the potential and actual impacts of embracing CEFR in the foreign language curriculum at the school level.

Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the CEFR used for language education at the school level?
2. What are the impacts of adopting the CEFR at the school level?

Methodology

An extensive literature review was performed to determine the impact of language teaching and learning via the CEFR at the school level. This critical review focuses only on the employment of CEFR in language education at school, thus only published papers that provide original and empirical meta-analysis that focussed its implementation on school teachers and students were selected. The terms [CEFR and impacts], [CEFR and implementation], [CEFR and teaching practice], and [CEFR] were used to search in the title, abstracts or keywords. In addition, various search engines were utilised to search for the documents, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, JSTOR, SAGE Journal, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis Online, and Web of Science. The period selected for the literature search was from 2002 to 2021 so that the dynamics that influenced the innovations in CEFR adoption can be identified. The researchers chose papers produced in the indicated year as a result of the Council of Europe's creation of the CEFR document, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, in 2001. For the selection of the articles, the titles and the abstracts were carefully read, and articles that were linked to the research questions were eventually selected. The search revealed that the majority of the papers were classified under the execution of CEFR in different domains such as university entrance policies and tests, professional job demand, and citizenship requirements. Since this study's focus is to analyse the implementation of CEFR in the sphere of language education for schools, the initial output from the electronic search was further screened and filtered. Finally, thirty papers that matched the requirements of this study, which is to review the execution of CEFR in language teaching, learning, and assessment in the school curriculum, were chosen for a critical analysis.

Results and Discussion

The findings from the critical review and analysis are elaborated in detail hereafter. Table 1 demonstrates the results of the critical review conducted. Analysis from Table 1 exhibits that most studies show that teachers and students held positive views towards the use of CEFR, but the impacts were greater on the teachers. Further analysis indicates that teachers experienced more difficulties in embracing the framework since they are required to not only familiarise themselves with the characteristics of the CEFR, but are accountable to incorporate the framework into their everyday pedagogical routines. These reasons reflected teachers' need for continuous support and CEFR-related training to enhance their understanding, instructional approach, and classroom assessment. Table 1 below summarises the implementation of the CEFR at school level.

Table 1: The reviews on the implementation of the CEFR in schools

Author	Research Domain	Results
Jaakkola, Viita-Leskelä, Sävy & Komsu (2002)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Students had positive learning strategies and attitudes, were aware of learning vocabulary, and used self-directed lifelong learning.
Moe (2005)	CEFR standard setting	70% of students have a reading ability above B1 in English, and about 50% of them are expected to have B2 ability.
Oscarson & Oscarson (2010)	CEFR-related concepts and materials	Students developed an increased awareness of the curricular goals with enhanced learning motivation.
Mison & Jang (2011)	Classroom assessment	Teachers revealed the assessment format to the students ahead of time. Teachers avoided the use of L1 in the teaching of the target language.
Faez, Majhanovic, Taylor, Smith & Crowley (2011)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Enhanced students' autonomy, motivation, and self-confidence. Promoted real and authentic use of the language in the classroom and developed oral language ability.
Faez, Taylor Majhanovich & Brown (2011)	Task-based approach	Students abilities using task-based activities were much higher which brought positive results in FSL classrooms.
Celik (2013)	Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism	Teachers possessed little knowledge. Individual effort was noted as a key element in promoting intercultural competence.
Hasselgreen (2013)	Classroom assessment	A scale of descriptors adapted from the CEFR plays a central role in written assessment. The student understood the competency criteria/standard.
Moonen et al. (2013)	Teachers' education and assessment practise	Teachers have a neutral or positive attitude towards CEFR but cannot be readily put to use in the classroom due to limited teaching resources and teachers' vague ideas of the CEFR.
Kir & Sulu (2014)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Teachers had positive views on adopting and adapting the CEFR, but less attention was given to the cultural aspects.
Simon & Copaerts (2015)	Language testing	Teachers responded positively, but they viewed practicality and the degree of detail as less important.
Franz & Teo (2017)	Teacher Cognition	Teachers had limited English proficiency and viewed CEFR as a test. Instead of rejecting the CEFR, teachers showed resentment. CEFR had no impact on classroom teaching.

Author	Research Domain	Results
Rehner (2017)	Professional development	Drastic improvements in the preparation and use of action-oriented activities and authentic contexts following training sessions for teachers.
Ishak & Mohamad (2018)	Literacy skills in reading and writing	Despite the application of CEFR to improve students' language skills, the understanding of the value of the language was still low, leading to higher chances of failures.
Lo (2018)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Teachers were familiar with the CEFR innovation but focussed mainly on themselves and task-related issues. They were more geared towards planning instructions and their routine of teaching and learning.
Sidhu, Kaur & Lee (2018)	Classroom assessment	Teachers had a limited understanding of the CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum and showed a preference for using traditional assessment tools. There was little evidence of peer and self-assessment required for developing autonomous learners.
Uri & Abd Aziz (2018)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Teachers' poor understanding and inadequate exposure to CEFR could be the reason for their reluctance to embrace and integrate the framework.
Johar & Aziz (2019)	English language textbook	Pulse 2 has a good, catchy and attractive layout and appearance. Teachers could apply various methodologies in English language teaching when using Pulse 2 to vary the activities.
Krishnan & Yunus (2019)	Blended learning	Blended learning in learning CEFR English among low proficient students increased their knowledge of terminology, language components of understanding sentence structures while encouraging autonomous learning and empowering them to exploit their ICT skills as well.
Kok & Aziz (2019)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Teachers were familiar with the CEFR-aligned curriculum where it helped them to plan lessons and set objectives effectively. It created a positive, student-centred environment that had a positive implication towards their students' learning process.
Diez-Bedmar & Byram (2019)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Teachers had a poor understanding of the CEFR, driven by their own experience as students and their training as teachers.

Author	Research Domain	Results
Lee & Kassim (2019)	CEFR-aligned assessment tool	Teachers had an insufficient understanding of assessment standards and types of CEFR-aligned assessments that can be used (63.33%). They had ample knowledge of ICT use for CEFR-aligned assessments (73.33%). However, 80% of the respondents still heavily rely on a textbook when developing students' proficiency.
Uri & Abd Aziz (2019)	Assessment of reading and writing	The teachers proved that they were aware of the target level set by the ministry when they suggested that the CEFR level that matches the target CEFR level.
Yuci & Mirici (2019)	Proficiency descriptors and educational principles	During implementations, the EFL programme conforms to students' language levels and demands, while teachers face challenges due to course materials and insufficient class hours.
Alih, Md. Yusoff & Abdul Raof (2020)	Assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning	Teachers had a sufficient understanding of the CEFR level but did not comprehend its function completely. They needed more training and support in terms of implementing the CEFR for assessment and pedagogical approach.
Uri & Abd Aziz (2020)	Reading syllabus specifications	Teachers had a greater understanding of the CEFR-alignment process since they could suggest suitable CEFR level to reading syllabus specifications.
Alih, Abdul Raof & Md Yusof (2021)	CEFR in English language policy	Although teachers were emotionally prepared to accept change, the study found that their cognitive preparation for change is influenced by three key factors: time, collective effort, and adequate materials.
Rehner, Lasan, Popovich & Palta (2021)	Teachers' professional development	Their professional development prompted them to begin delivering language in speech acts and in response to students' demands, to emphasise not just linguistic but also sociolinguistics and pragmatic competence, and to place a greater emphasis on students' ability to interact in the foreign language.
Shin & Yunus (2021)	Speaking skills	Primary school students in a CEFR classroom were enthusiastic about using Flipgrid to improve their English-speaking skills.
Ng & Ahmad (2021)	Teachers' knowledge and Practice	There was a strong relationship between teachers' knowledge and practice of the CEFR-aligned English curriculum.

Author	Research Domain	Results
		Teachers' knowledge and practice were moderate.

The Dynamic of Language Teaching and Learning

Generally, the CEFR does not stipulate any specific teaching approaches, but it advocates communicative strategies in teaching and learning languages, specifically, an action-oriented approach (Piccardo & North, 2019). This approach views learners and users of a language as 'social agents', or i.e., members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment, and within a particular field of action (Council of Europe, 2001, p.9). Little (2006) claims that the action-oriented approach is comparable to a task-based approach where learners perform communicative language activities through any task-specific mechanisms to obtain a targetted objective or result. In this study, both teachers and students perceive the CEFR positively and acknowledge its implications for the language classroom. This finding agrees with a study conducted by Faez et al (2011) that explored secondary school teachers' perspectives on CEFR task-based approaches for improving learning in French as a Second Language (FSL) classroom in Canada. They revealed that the teachers were generally optimistic about the communicative teaching and learner-centred instruction stimulated by the task-based approach of the CEFR. Teachers also claimed that students' abilities were found to be significantly increased by using task-based activities, which offers positive reinforcement at their language proficiency level.

Nevertheless, teachers needed continuous support from all parties, such as colleagues and educational authorities (Alih et al., 2020), and a coherent pedagogical standard for implementing task-based approaches to improve their instructional practice. This is because they often encounter challenges in understanding and applying the abstract principles of CEFR without a concrete and lucid exemplar (Mison & Jang, 2011). The inclusion of specific examples of teaching approaches and the actual use of teaching and learning materials should be included as part of the CEFR-related training module for teachers to obtain greater insight into the assimilation of the framework. Furthermore, it is advocated that teachers who consistently attend umpteen continuous training will effectively enact the CEFR in their language classroom instructions.

However, the enactment of the framework in foreign language education raises a huge concern, particularly when it was reported to show no impact on classroom teaching (Franz & Teo, 2017). As such, there is immense distress that the adoption of CEFR in language policy will eventually disappear due to its ineffectiveness. This could possibly be prevented if teachers' coherent use of the CEFR in classroom pedagogy was accomplished with a sufficient amount of training and appropriate teaching and learning materials. In relation to the teaching and learning materials, a study by Johar and Aziz (2019) in the Malaysian secondary education scene highlighted that the imported textbook that learners use in their English as a second language (ESL) classroom was captivating and motivating due to its catchy and interactive appearance. The textbook, Pulse 2, published by Cambridge University Press, inspired teachers to be more resourceful in teaching language with various interactive activities that engaged learners and encouraged their participation in classrooms. The

textbook was also noted to be aligned to the CEFR principles with careful consideration of the writing, speaking, reading and listening activities.

Nevertheless, although employing the textbook prescribed by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia is the safest way for teachers to comply with the CEFR-aligned curriculum (Alih et al., 2020), the textbook's foreign elements have become the utmost concern in learners' language acquisition, especially among the low achievers. While researchers agree that the substance of the textbook should yield positive outcomes from learners, they also claim that it incorporates unwarranted foreign culture and environment, the lexical items are perplexed and the content arrangement of the textbook is mismatched with the applied curriculum and scheme of work (Ishak & Mohamad, 2018). For instance, topics such as 'Halloween', the idea of 'going to the bar after work' and other subjects that showcase the 'grandeur' of western culture were considered inappropriate in the Asian context and not reflecting their national identity (Star, 2018). Hence, the major concern posed by the teachers about the textbook prescribed by the ministry is primarily about the contextualization (Nawawi et al., 2021). It is imperative to state that the issue of contextualization in the CEFR teaching and learning resources contributes to complexity between learners' understanding of the content and foreign language, which eventually generates more difficulties for them in the process of acquiring the target language.

Teachers' Understanding and Receptions

Undoubtedly, teachers play a significant role in any curriculum implementation effort as they carry huge responsibilities to ensure a programme's efficacy. At the infancy stage of new curriculum implementation, teachers are required to understand and become familiar with the anticipated ideas, goals, and objectives to ensure that the expected result is achieved. Ideally, teachers' perspectives on the CEFR adoption may help shed light on the actual scenario that fosters or hinders the implementation of the CEFR in a language classroom. Their receptive response may also help to elucidate the hurdles, deficiencies or affirmative implications associated with the enactment of CEFR. Since its introduction, teachers' reception, knowledge and understanding of the nature of CEFR have substantially diverged. The majority of them hold positive views on the employment of the framework (Kir & Sulu, 2014; Simon & Copaerts, 2015) because they are familiar with the CEFR innovation (Kok & Aziz, 2019; Lo, 2018) and possess adequate knowledge of the CEFR levels (Alih et al., 2020). On the other hand, some of them reported having indistinct ideas of the CEFR (Diez-Bedmar & Byram, 2019; Moonen, 2013) that might lead to unfavourable situations such as resistance and hesitation to incorporate CEFR into classroom pedagogy (Foley, 2021). In reality, teachers also perceive CEFR as a type of 'test' and they strongly believe it will soon be eliminated from the education system (Franz & Teo, 2017). However, in order to prevent refutations among teachers and to avoid the rapid removal of the CEFR from the national curriculum, they should receive constant support from educational authorities.

In the Malaysia English language education scene, Uri and Abd Aziz (2018) reported that although at the introduction stage of CEFR, secondary school teachers generally had limited understanding and minimum exposure to the framework, they eventually showed positive progress. Within a short time, they proved to have gained a greater understanding of the CEFR-alignment process as they were able to suggest suitable CEFR levels to reading and writing syllabus specifications (Uri & Abd Aziz, 2020). It should be noted that eliciting voices from language teachers may offer possible dogma and variables that lead to the resentment,

rejection or approval of the CEFR. Thus, this provides an increased understanding of the outstanding impacts of the CEFR in classrooms.

Encouraging Student Learning Outcome

Based on the review, the students were found to have a positive impact on their attitudes towards learning English via the CEFR. Despite the huge impact it has on the processes, it has also influenced students' language performance. The establishment of CEFR was aimed at students' having the ability to learn the diverse components of a particular language, such as 'language and communication awareness, general phonetic skills, study skills, and heuristic skills' (Council of Europe, 2001, pp.106-107). These components enable them to assimilate more effectively with new language learning challenges and maximise their opportunities. In regards to the learning outcomes, Waluyo (2020) conducted a study among Thai students with English language proficiency below A1, B1, A2 and B2 level. The author discovered that the incorporation of information and communications technology (ICT), an integrated-skills approach, and formative assessment in English courses enhanced students' academic achievement. He concluded that teachers should be equipped with detailed guidelines and instructions for their classroom practise to benefit the students' language performance. In this case, students would achieve encouraging results if they were exposed to an effective language learning experience.

Past literature suggests that students' learning outcomes can be influenced by multiple factors. For instance, Don (2020) suggested that for students to speak English efficiently, they have to listen to authentically spoken English all the time. Exposure to 'real' English language communication and consistent listening allows learners to acquire the language quickly. She adds that students can achieve a positive outcome in speaking English if teachers create a classroom environment that is conducive to learn spoken English based on the indispensable guidance of the CEFR. Similarly, Lee and Park (2020) asserted that it is highly recommended to incorporate listening and speaking skills as much as possible in the classroom because listening ability has proven to be an excellent indicator of verbal competence. Therefore, students achieve impressive results in their speaking proficiency and genuine listening practise through an encouraging classroom atmosphere.

Furthermore, this study also showed that students had better experiences in learning foreign languages using CEFR-aligned syllabus as it fosters students' autonomy, enhances their vocabulary, creates awareness to language learning and most importantly, students develop positive learning strategies, attitudes and motivation (Faez et al., 2011; Jaakkola et al., 2002; Kok & Aziz, 2019; Krishnan & Yunus, 2019; Moe, 2005; Oscarson & Oscarson, 2010). For example, teachers reported that the use of 'Can Do' statements in learning French promotes students' confidence and motivation and increases their awareness of their abilities (Faez et al., 2011). Students are eager to try using the language more frequently and eventually, it gives them an awareness of their language proficiency. In the case of aligning the CEFR into the English language curriculum, teachers in Malaysian secondary schools mentioned that it effectively creates a constructive, student-centred environment that positively impacts their learning process (Kok & Aziz, 2019). Furthermore, Krishnan and Yunus (2019) observed that learning English through CEFR with diverse learning methods may broaden students' academic outcomes. They stated that the use of blended learning among students with low language proficiency not only increases their knowledge but also enables them to explore their ICT skills. Therefore, students obtain positive effects from the amalgamation of the CEFR

in the diverse sphere of language education such as grading system, teaching and learning methods and resources, and classroom pedagogy.

It can be summarised that the CEFR inculcates many positive aspects into students' learning skills which are essential for developing language proficiency. However, studies on students' reception of the CEFR-aligned curriculum are scarce and require intense consideration from educational researchers. Thus, more attention should be given to the perspectives of students as they should be explored concurrently with their roles to gain absolute evidence from their learning experiences.

Paradigm Shift in Classroom Assessment

It is worth noting that since the existence of the CEFR, one of the crucial contributions of the framework has been on language assessment. Despite the CEFR's explicit emphasis on planning and development of curriculum, its major impact in second language education has been on assessment (Coste, 2007; Council of Europe, 2006; Fulcher, 2008; Little, 2007). Based on the CEFR, many developing countries transformed educational assessment from a traditional summative assessment culture towards formative assessment that permits teachers to monitor students' learning progress and accomplishment continuously. Formative assessments are carried out based on the CEFR descriptors and scales that reflect students' language proficiency, primarily in writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills. Thus, such an assessment method provides students with more scope to demonstrate their abilities and competencies.

From the review, the alignment of CEFR into classroom assessment varied substantially across the specific realm of its employment. In the FSL context, Mison and Jang (2011) identified that CEFR-aligned assessment promotes transparency throughout the assessment process whereby Canadian teachers revealed the assessment structure to the students beforehand to be aware of the expectations placed on them. This approach allows students to experience the feasibility of CEFR assessment and the early exposure to the format was intended for them to be completely prepared. Besides, the application of such an assessment method offers all teachers and schools a common and consistent practice, understanding and approach which certainly facilitate the evaluation of students' knowledge and understanding. In assessing writing skills, the adoption of CEFR in primary schools seems to play a significant role in classroom assessment (Hasselgreen, 2013). Students achieve a detailed understanding of their written assessments' standard because the focus is on the task itself rather than the students. The objective is not to pay much attention to the errors as a whole by highlighting every mistake but rather to motivate students to improve their writing skills.

Additionally, Sidhu, Kaur and Lee (2018) carried out a study that investigated the implementation of the CEFR-aligned school-based assessment in primary ESL classrooms. The findings discovered that the process was considered less successful because the teachers lacked full apprehension of the method. Besides, teachers admitted to having very restricted knowledge and familiarity with the revised CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum and had a high preference to utilise traditional assessment tools. Similarly, ESL teachers in secondary schools also demonstrated an insufficient understanding of CEFR-aligned assessment types and standards (Lee & Kassim, 2019) but possessed sufficient knowledge of ICT use for classroom assessments. As such, many teachers are still relying on the conventional textbook exercises as their standard practise and guide in developing students' ESL proficiency although they argued on its contextual suitability. Sadly, teachers are still stuck with the conventional assessment tool that may harm students' academic performance. This practise is

incongruence with the principles of CEFR which promotes formative assessment that allows teachers to consistently monitor students' progress.

Aspiration for Teachers' Professional Development

As a global language and assessment policy tool, the CEFR has been adopted in many countries such as Poland, China, Taiwan, New Zealand and others. Hence, the way it is employed in the language education industry also differs across Europe and beyond. For instance, some Asian countries adapted and designed CEFR-aligned curriculum policy into local context such as CEFR-J in Japan and CEFR-V in Vietnam. Albeit a careful consideration of language policy planning, teachers should get a sufficient amount of training and support on how to deliver a CEFR-aligned curriculum into a language classroom to ensure the effectiveness of the language policy (Alih et al., 2020).

From this review, it can be highlighted that teachers require more training as they realise the importance of having adequate training may facilitate them to incorporate the CEFR into instructional practices. Rehner (2017) researched how Canadian teachers' professional learning has developed their understanding of the CEFR and impacted their FSL instructional planning. The results demonstrated that following professional training, the most drastic effect noted involved the teachers' planning for the use of action-oriented tasks, authentic situations and self-assessment. They also utilised online resources, authentic documents and action-oriented tasks, specific CEFR resources, and a wider array of reading materials and other types of resources for this purpose. In terms of assessment practices, teachers focussed more on students' use of the language in purposeful and meaningful ways.

In contrast, Moonen et al (2013) reported that teachers at Dutch secondary education want a more robust professional development programme to obtain additional examples of good practises of CEFR usage in schools. The soaring demand also aims to educate teachers on the accurate use of the level descriptors, specifically concerning the grading system, and using CEFR in curriculum development. Teachers, after all, definitely agree that CEFR-related training helps them in efficient language teaching, but the amount of training they gain is minimal. Therefore, education authorities should establish effective training that exposes teachers to the features of CEFR as a language framework and displays concise examples of a classroom approach that applies to them.

Nevertheless, although a large amount of money spent on teachers' professional development, the reality is that they have to face unremitting barriers such as large class size (Sidhu et al., 2018), time constraints (Faez, Majhanovic et al., 2011; Franz & Teo, 2017; Mison & Jang, 2011), heavy workload (Alih et al., 2020), inadequate support (Celik, 2013; Moonen et al., 2013; Uri & Aziz, 2018) and students poor learning abilities (Faez et al., 2011; Ishak & Mohamad, 2018) which has hindered effective implementation of CEFR in language classroom practice. As a result, teachers are persistently asking for more CEFR-related training (Alih et al., 2020); Diez-Bedmar & Byram (2019); Faez, Taylor, et al (2011); Kir & Sulu (2014) to enhance their knowledge and teaching skill. In this case, the pertinent education authorities should revise the dissemination strategies and take the necessary steps to overcome these obstacles. Additionally, they also encouraged distributing additional support in funding, materials, and infrastructure throughout the stages of the teachers' training programme (Aziz et al., 2018). It is hoped that by executing this, there will be in-depth and not superficial training for the teachers to successfully implement the CEFR accordingly.

Conclusions

CEFR has been widely implemented with on-going research in areas such as foreign language pedagogy, classroom assessment, and teachers' professional development. The final analysis from this review demonstrates considerable impacts of the CEFR-aligned curriculum in schools. On pedagogical practices, CEFR advocates for an action-oriented approach in which learners' language abilities of a targetted language are developed by the act of doing that is achieved through action-based communicative activities. Teachers and students were positive towards the communicative strategies used in the language classroom because it gives positive reinforcements to student's language proficiency levels. Teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of CEFR were encouraging that they did not reject the ideas of CEFR, but in return, they required additional support and training. It is critical that teachers need continuous training to get an in-depth understanding of the CEFR due to the fact that the framework provided a complex feature which constitutes of the work of many decades (Figueras, 2012). Moreover, professional development should be conducted to cater to the teachers' specific need to enhance the possibilities for changes in teachers' classroom practise (Hayes, 2004) especially in teaching a target language using the CEFR. A constant communication created through continuous professional development will hinder any barriers to a successful implementation of the CEFR.

In addition, teachers also believe that CEFR encourages students' achievement of learning outcomes essential for their language proficiency level. This positive outcome resulted from the incorporation of CEFR in multiple fields of language education such as curriculum design, grading system, teaching and learning resources and pedagogical approaches. However, it is imperative to highlight that CEFR-related studies from students' perceptions are relatively limited and scarce addressing the need for more studies to be conducted among students to examine their voices on the framework's usefulness and effectiveness. It is worth mentioning that most of the CEFR-related studies had focussed extensively on language classroom assessment (Coste, 2007; Council of Europe, 2006; Fulcher, 2008; Little, 2007). This could be attributed to the enormous use of reference level labels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2) in the context of testing language proficiency (Figueras, 2012).

However, the practical implications of the framework are considerably limited by the fact that most of the research on the CEFR does not involve teachers' instructional strategies. Similarly, a study by Moonen et al (2013) of the impact of the CEFR on teachers' classroom practises cites inadequate previous empirical work. Thus, studies on real classroom instructional strategies and practises to understand how teachers employ CEFR in language classroom context is a recommended area of future research. With this in mind, educational stakeholders such as test designers, textbook developers, curriculum policymakers and teachers would be able to address any potential strengths and weaknesses throughout the teaching and learning process. Consequently, the results of such studies may facilitate the further improvement of the curriculum. It is also worth noting that teachers are urged to use the CEFR in the teaching of a foreign language to the paramount stage. In order to successfully implement the framework at classroom level, teachers should be sending over for a continuous CEFR-related training to get them familiar with the CEFR principles, goals and associated teaching procedures. As a front liner in any curriculum implementation, teachers should receive adequate support to move towards more purposeful teaching of the target language.

In summary, it can be deduced that the halo effects of the CEFR are larger on the active users of the framework which can be seen from the issues addressed in this study which focussed

more on the teachers and students. Therefore, based on the findings of this review paper, it is recommended that research on the enactment of CEFR is undertaken for understanding the extent of its implication at language classroom level. With the projection that the CEFR will still exist and be of relevance in the next few decades, it is hoped that curriculum designers and programme developers will take necessary actions to improvise the adoption of CEFR in language education.

This study attempted to demonstrate that the usage of the CEFR as a framework in language education had a far more diverse and nuanced impact on its users, particularly teachers and students at the school level. Hence, from the present study, education stakeholder's understanding of the CEFR and what is entailed in teaching a language using the framework has increased. Additionally, this broadens research perspectives of how teachers and students interpreted the CEFR, which is critical for determining its efficacy in language instruction.

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