INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AT THREE RELIGIOUS BOARDING SCHOOLS IN NEGERI SEMBILAN AND SELANGOR

BY

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A PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this research was to study whether professional development programs are able to give any impact on producing effective teachers. The study was also meant to identify the teaching skills of an effective teacher and also to discover the factors that teachers look for when evaluating professional development programs.

To achieve this purpose, structured questionnaires were used to gather data from 60 teachers of three religious fully residential schools in the states of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. Seven hypothesis statements were tested using various statistical methods.

The study revealed that teachers' effectiveness was influenced by the content of the professional development program and the relevance of the program to them. It also showed that the facilitators and the techniques the organizers used for professional development programs affect teachers' teaching effectiveness.

Another interesting finding that requires attention from school administrators is that teachers feel that their own school staff are the best professional development program organizers.

There is an alarming indication from the study that teachers from religious fully residential schools directly under the control of the Ministry of Education do not get sufficient training programs.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project paper is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

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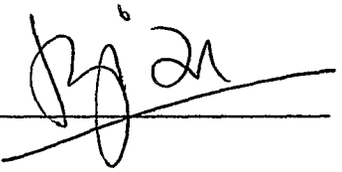
Signature: 

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Every effort to improve the quality of education has mostly focused on overcoming deficits in student knowledge or on rebuilding the structure and organization of school curriculum. Despite more than a decade since the introduction of *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM), Malaysian teachers mostly continue to teach as they have in the past. In the absence of quality professional development and training programs, many teachers revert to the familiar methods they remember from their own years as students (Sparks & Hirsh, n.d.).

The professional development program is rarely the teachers' agenda. The instructors of the program come and go but there is no support and follow-up system to help the teachers work through the problems arising during the implementation (Pierce & Hunsaker, 1996).

The lack of skills or knowledge with which to implement innovation has caused changes to become a "top-down" administrative mandate. Traditional in-services are usually single shot attempts at professional development. Without being based on the shared vision, and with little or no follow up, there is normally little or no substantive change in teachers' development program. This type of program appears to provide the least meaningful support for professional development.

There are many factors to consider when choosing a suitable program for professional development. To be cost effective, the trainers are brought to the school. The disruption of the school is minimized and the program is available to all the staff. But the question is how much benefit is passed on to the other staff and students in the school?

Any quality assurance program must include demonstrable teacher effectiveness (Schalock & Schalock, 1998). A demonstrably effective teacher is able to integrate and apply whatever knowledge and skills are needed to advance the learning of students towards a particular goal. An effective teacher must provide added value to the knowledge that their students currently possessed. The program must focus on teacher accomplishments as well as on what teachers know and are able to do.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of Education of Malaysia has allocated funds for training and education for the Malaysian teachers. A three-year training for the teachers is done at the teachers' college for those with *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) or *Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* (STPM) qualifications. University graduates with a first degree who aspire to be teachers need to enroll for the Diploma of Education or the Post-Graduate Course in Education.

Teachers attend in-service training or professional development programs organized by their own school, the district education office, the state education office or the Ministry of Education during their service. Teachers who attend these programs definitely would like to gain new experience and knowledge which they can make use of in their classrooms or schools. The Ministry also has launched the campaign of 'Effective School, Excellence Education'. This campaign will not achieve its objectives if teachers are not effective in carrying out their duties because they are the core operators of schools.

Traditional studies on teacher effectiveness most of the time focus on the performance of teachers in their classrooms. The approaches to highlight this concept also vary. Some researches focus on teachers' personalities, traits, behaviors, attitudes, values, abilities, competencies and other personal characteristics. Others are concerned with the teaching process or the teaching outcomes. Integrating these two concerns together, effective teachers may be assumed to be those who possess the relevant competence to achieve their set goals (Cheng, 1996).

Considering the efforts and financial assistance given by the education authority and the importance of effective teachers for the improvement of students and the school, this research attempts to study whether professional development programs are able to give some impact on producing effective teachers.

1.2 Significance of the Study

From the findings of this study, it is hoped that policy makers and school administrators will design quality professional development programs to suit the different needs of the teachers so as to avoid ineffective and inconsequential programs.

Professional development programs must be able to produce effective teachers. Thus, the designing and offering of quality professional development programs should be reflected in the teachers' effectiveness, covering their teaching process and also their other activities.

It is hoped that this study will add knowledge to the present research and studies to benchmark effective teachers and also to design professional development programs that will help to produce effective teachers in the country.

1.3 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to identify the teaching skills of an effective teacher and to strengthen the links between professional development programs and teachers' teaching effectiveness.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of the research objective, this study will answer to what extent the following matters or issues affect teachers' teaching effectiveness:

1. the content of a professional development program.
2. the effectiveness of the instructor of a professional development program.
3. the techniques used during a professional development program.
4. the quality of a professional development program.
5. the relevance of a professional development program.
6. the number of professional development programs attended.
7. the duration of professional development programs attended.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

Table 1.1 summarizes the null hypothesis and the previous research study done on this subject.

Table 1.1

Summary of Hypothesis and Related Studies

No	Hypothesis Statement	Previous Studies
H_1	There is no significant evidence that the content of a professional development program affect teachers' teaching effectiveness.	None

H_2	There is no significant evidence that the instructors' effectiveness during a professional development program affect teachers' teaching effectiveness.	None
H_3	There is no significant evidence that the techniques used during a professional development program affect teachers' teaching effectiveness.	None
H_4	There is no significant evidence that the quality of a professional development program affect teachers' teaching effectiveness.	None
H_5	There is no significant evidence that the relevance of a professional development program affect teachers' teaching effectiveness.	None
H_6	There is no significant relationship between teachers' teaching effectiveness with the number of programs attended.	Soriahidayat (1998)
H_7	There is no significant relationship between teachers' teaching effectiveness with the duration of programs attended.	Soriahidayat (1998)

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Professional development programs

Professional development programs, staff development programs and INSET (in-service education and training) are terms to be used interchangeably. They include activities designed to contribute to the learning of teachers, who have completed their

initial training (Craft, 1996). They include all courses organized by the education authority or any other organizations to facilitate teachers in performing their duties and responsibilities.

1.6.2 Teachers and Staff

This term refers to all trained and qualified (regardless of education level) full time teachers in the government schools. The principals, senior assistants and teachers on extended service are also included.

1.6.3 Effective teachers

Effective teachers are those who have an impact on their students' performance and also those teachers who are able to accomplish their non-teaching duties and responsibilities (Cullingford, 1995).

1.7 Organization of the Project Paper

This project paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the research questions and hypothesis, and the definition of several important terms pertinent to this study.

Chapter two is the review of the literature. It contains issues related to the importance of planned and quality professional development programs and studies done on effective teachers of past researchers. It also gives some empirical evidence

regarding the effectiveness and impact of professional development programs from the Malaysian teachers' perspective.

Chapter three examines the sample, rationale of the sample selection, data collection procedure, research instrument, data analysis, the research model and the reliability testing.

Chapter four outlines the outcome of the data analysis by reporting the respondents' demographic characteristics, the breakdown of the hypothesis test and discussion of the research model.

Chapter five discusses the major findings of the study, the limitations of the study, the implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Professional development, teacher development, staff development, in service education and training are used interchangeably in this chapter in line with common practices elsewhere (Fullan, 1992). Although there has been many debates over definitions of the various terms, up to date no single and agreed definition exists. No doubt, the rapid change of development practice and process has influenced both the meaning and the use of these terms.

Zuber-Skerritt (1992) used professional development synonymously with development, self-development and institutional management of academic staff at all levels. Thus professional development is understood in its wider meaning of academic development.

There has been a great expansion of professional development opportunities over the past years as well as growing awareness that schools are potential grounds for encouraging knowledge growth, command of skills, or a change in attitudes amongst staff and students.

The literature on professional development has increased enormously in the last two decades, but Elton's (1977) on this issue is still valid today: "One is left with

the impression that professional development in higher education is many faceted and that it is still looking for a sense of direction".

Professional development should be voluntary but it can be observed that the better teachers are normally actively involved in professional development and self-development, while the poorer teachers are not. The worst situation is that some teachers are very hostile to the idea of improving themselves.

The skills and knowledge required for effective teaching are always changing in relation to the development of new technologies to assist with the learning process. It is therefore important for all members of the teaching profession to be up to date to ensure that they continue to improve their effectiveness (Donnelly, 1992).

2.1 The Idea of a Profession and Development

Dean (1991) states that the term 'profession' can imply, among other things, an occupation which requires intensive training, involves theory as a background to practice, has its own code of conduct, and has a high degree of autonomy. An extended definition of profession is a group that is in charge of the admission of new members. By going through a professional development program, teachers should become more professional.

Henry, Knight, Lingard and Taylor (1992) give almost similar meaning about profession. They say that a profession requires specialized knowledge, skill and

expertise not generally available in the larger society. Hence it demands specialized and advanced training and acceptance of a high degree of autonomy.

This definition differs slightly with the one given by Holmes (1993) who suggests that indicators of 'true' professionals included access to specialized and discrete areas of knowledge and expertise, a degree of control over entry to and discipline within the profession and a one-to-one client relationship.

To develop means to learn and to change for the better, to move from one stage to the next; it also means to change one's personal construct (both in thoughts and feelings), attitudes and the values underlying one's strategies and actions (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992).

As the world moves into a Learning Age, it is clearly seen that the true value of development is that individuals are given more choices to improve their performance for the benefit of their organization and community (Hammond, 1999).

2.2 Explanation of Professional Development

Harding, Kaewsonthi and Stevens (1981) give a wide definition of professional development by saying that professional development may be viewed either as an outcome – the growth of the individual, or as a process – the conditions offered or imposed by an institution to affect the growth.

Their definition is supported by Bel and Day (1991) which stress that professional development calls for the involvement of the whole staff in the operation and management of the school. The teacher, the school, and the pupils should benefit from this.

Someone who is approachable, understands the problem teachers are facing and someone who is a delegated leader should monitor professional development programs. However, the need for professional support, training and development for these trainers remains a major issue (Law, 1999).

Black and Armstrong (1995) did a survey and concluded that there are many responses as to the most effective method of staff development approaches. An important suggestion is to consider local school network (LSN). LSN may prove to be an efficient, economical and effective path for staff development.

Some companies have employee development schemes that aim to increase the learning capacity of its employees. The employees have access to personal development budgets and are involved in planning their own development within the organizational limit. This process has been successful in developing the organization (Hammond, 1999).

Browell (2000) states that it is essential for all employees to engage in training, education and development for a continuous improvement both for themselves and the organization. A co-operative approach to staff development requires some organization to change perception and culture and a willingness to break with

tradition. For the education employees, Dorit (1999) stresses that teachers preferred working co-operatively to overcome technical problems and they needed further support to attend to their students' need.

An article by Howells (1998) notes that continuing professional development (CPD) is an important lifelong learning. Currently, most professional bodies have formal CPD policies. The things that matters are:

- how much you develop as a result,
- how much new knowledge you gain,
- what new skills you acquire, and
- (the most crucial test) how much more effective you are in your job.

Lowe (1992) points out that an effective training will be accomplished only through precise planning. Plans should focus on innovation, current needs, continuous and orderly implementation and increasing effectiveness and efficiency of teachers' professionalism. This implies that inservice training as seen from the perspective of adult education should be programmed to suit the individual's career and also to increase work performance.

2.3 Characteristics of Effective Professional Development Programs

Glover and Law (1996) conducted a research by questionnaire and interviewed three schools in the United Kingdom. The experience of these schools suggests that if