

**Research on In-service Training among Lecturers of General Studies Department,
Polytechnic of Malaysia**

Alias Mat Saad^{*a}, Nurul Balqis Ahmad Zakaria^b Nik Rahimi Nik Yusuf^c
^{ab}Polytechnic Port Dickson, Malaysia
^cNational University of Malaysia,
*Corresponding Author: alias@polipd.edu.my

ABSTRACT

In-service training is a crucial process that contributes towards enhancing the competency of lecturers in Malaysian polytechnics. This study intends to look into how in-service training is implemented in Malaysian polytechnics in order to increase the level of competency of the lecturers. The participants of this study comprise Islamic Studies lecturers at General Studies Department. The data obtained is analysed descriptively. The results show that the aspect of in-service training among Islamic Studies lecturers in Malaysian polytechnics is at a satisfactory level. The implication of this study, with regards to Malaysian polytechnics, points to the need of high competency lecturers that are capable of educating students and ensure that the graduates produced fulfil the standards outlined by the nation based on the National Education Philosophy.

Keywords: Competency, National Education Philosophy, Polytechnic Malaysia, in-service training

Introduction

Before a teacher can be recognized as a certified teacher, he or she needs to have knowledge about the various techniques and methods of teaching in addition to the teaching skills. Future teachers have to first undergo teaching training that is provided in universities or teacher training colleges. According to Cooper (2006), it may be difficult to determine exactly what are the knowledge and skills needed by a teacher in the teaching profession. Nevertheless, they must have some specialized skills and knowledge to understand the world of education, such as understanding students' development and their environment, understanding the developments that occur in and out of the classroom, being fully exposed to what is being taught, fully understand the education philosophy which will help them to prepare in the role of a teacher and they must possess the knowledge of how human beings learn and subsequently shape a conducive environment for learning. The objective of this study is to look at the implementation of in-service training for the teaching force in the polytechnic to prepare them to faces students throughout their service in the polytechnic.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to respond to the research question which is "How is in-service training implemented for the Islamic Studies lecturers in Polytechnic, KPTM?" To answer this research question, the type of design utilized in this study is the descriptive research design. The study is conducted using a questionnaire to collect quantitative data about the implementation of in-service training and courses for the Islamic Studies lecturers in the polytechnic. The study involves 11 polytechnics; 3 from the Northern zone, 4 from the Central zone, 2 from the Southern zone and 2 from the

Eastern zone. Sampling technique for each polytechnic is done by systematic random sampling by choosing a number based on the staff list verified by the polytechnic. The data is analyzed using the “*Statistical Package for Social Science*” (SPSS version 11.5) software. The descriptive analysis will be in the description of the mean and percentage. Meanwhile, to analyze the meaning of the mean value for the 5 likert scale, this study has divided the mean into three categories as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Category of the mean value

Mean Score	Intepretation
Mean=1.00- 2.33	Low
Mean=2.34-3.67	Moderate
Mean=3.68-5.00	High

Discussion

Based on the data obtained, the mean score for the items related to in-service training courses is at the moderate level. This shows that if this aspect is not given due attention and consideration, it may compromise the implementation of teaching and learning activities. The study found that the polytechnic is concerned about the Islamic Studies lecturers’ need for courses but the courses offered to them have no relation to their scope of duties as a lecturer. Findings also show that the courses attended are not enough in helping them to teach all the topics in Islamic Studies. Furthermore, the polytechnic is prioritizing more on the implementation of innovation-in-teaching courses. The polytechnic administration has also made it a policy for its staff to complete 7 days of courses.

The study found that even though the polytechnic management is concerned with the need for courses for the Islamic Studies lecturers, the courses that are offered have little or no relation to the lecturers’ job scope. When these courses are irrelevant, enhancement of knowledge and skills does not occur among the Islamic Studies lecturers. This situation is seen as detrimental for the students. Studies conducted by Ahmad (1997) and Alias (1999) regarding the need for training found that all respondents agree to participate in training programs if given the opportunity. Furthermore, a study by Nasiriah (2001) showed that the need for in-service training among senior teachers are high. Maimunah (1994) states that training is a positive practice. Therefore, the current situation faced by the Islamic Studies lecturers in polytechnic institutions where they are given training or courses that are irrelevant to their scope of duties should not occur. This situation can have an adverse effect to their work and consequently, to the students’ learning.

Other than that, the training provided for staff should fulfil the requirements of the scope of duties accordingly. The need for this is proven by Nasiriah’s (2000) study which found that training that is in accordance with the field or specialization is very much needed by senior teachers. They are in need of training in the area of curriculum development because this is an area that is core to a school’s excellence. Having the necessary skills in this area can ease the communication process with other teachers and create cooperation to facilitate the execution of tasks. The same can be said for the Islamic Studies lecturers teaching in polytechnic institutions. The highest priority should be given to courses that are in line with their field, those that are related and relevant to the teaching and learning process.

In relation to the finding which shows that the courses attended are inadequate in preparing the lecturers to teach all the topics in Islamic Studies, a study by Noor Akmar

(2006) found that the attitude of continuously wanting to enhance one's knowledge is one of the traits of an effective teacher. Teachers' readiness to attend in-service training and courses is one of the requirements that the teachers need to fulfil in order to achieve the objective of becoming an effective teacher. By attending in-service training and courses, they are able to develop their knowledge and skills in the teaching field. According to Mohd. Lazim and Zurida (1994), teachers have to undergo professional courses in order to enhance their skills and update their knowledge, consistent with the current needs. Therefore, if there is an effort to make self improvement, it can ensure that the Islamic Studies lecturers of polytechnics are always prepared to carry out their tasks.

Faridah (2002) explained that teacher development occurs in several ways and one of the ways is related to the teacher's self development. Teachers have to learn to practice the concept of life-long learning. This practice can broaden the teachers' experience, knowledge and view about various fields. It can also improve the teachers' efficiency and consequently lead them to become more creative and innovative in their teaching practices. For the Islamic Studies lecturers in polytechnics, if they take life-long learning as a challenge, an increase in their performance will occur.

A Model of Teacher Education by McGettrick (2002) outlines the three main categories in teachers' professional education. They are professional values and personal commitment, professional knowledge and understanding of these knowledge as well as professional skills and abilities to perform these skills. All three categories are positioned in a triangle as they have direct relation to one another in teacher development. Each category is closely related with the other and they mutually correspond. This model clearly demonstrates that a teacher has to possess professional values and traits in their career as the foundation for success in imparting knowledge to the students. As stated by Ann Lewis (2007), a teacher's knowledge and expertise in his or her field is seen as an important aspect and it becomes a motivating factor for the students to take part in the learning process. Hence, in terms of the inadequacy of courses to cater to the Islamic Studies lecturers' needs, this situation can be overcome if the lecturers themselves can take the initiative to enhance their skills by practicing life-long learning.

Findings also show that the polytechnic management has made it a requirement for the its staff to complete 7 days of courses. In-service training is a type of course organized for officers of Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education and its associated institutions. The duration of these courses are either short-term or moderate-term. They can be conducted internally or outside of the institution. According to the yearly report produced by the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education (2006), 82.3% staff have completed 7 days of courses or more.

Other than that, the public sector's human resource training policy has prescribed that each civil service officer has to equip themselves or be equipped with the necessary attitude, skills and knowledge through the well-planned human resource development programs that are driven by competency development and continuous learning. Every officer must attend at least 7 days of courses or training every year. Thus, participating in at least 7 days of courses in a year is seen to have a big impact on the professional development of the Islamic Studies lecturers in the polytechnic.

Furthermore, the study found that the polytechnic management has place a high importance on innovation-in-teaching courses. According to Sufean (2002), innovation means renewal, modification or improving ideas, things, knowledge and cultural arts creation with the objective to fulfil specific functions or preferences, or to fulfil a certain market demand. This finding is consistent with the statement by Juriah (1998) which asserts that education methods have to change according to the current needs. Learning activities have to be geared towards creating a conducive learning environment aside from

reducing the students' emotional stress. Teachers have to bring and create renewals in their teaching practices and procedures. Every subject needs to undergo modifications in an effort to ease students' mastery of that particular subject. Abdul Rahim (2002) explains that a professional and expert teacher is one who is able to diversify his teaching methods and approaches. Expert teachers are able to introduce a variety of innovations whether they are in the form of learning activities, mind development, creating interest and developing students' abilities. One of the weaknesses in the quality of teaching is the lack of creativity to utilize various effective teaching methods and strategies. This proves that the polytechnic management's action in emphasizing on courses that are related to innovation in teaching is the right move in order to improve the quality of teaching among the Islamic Studies lecturers in the polytechnic.

According to Ishak (2005), innovation in education involves reformatations and changes in the teaching and learning activities in order to increase the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. The changes made have to demonstrate new and unique characteristics in the execution of a particular teaching and learning activity in order to support curriculum implementation.

Meanwhile, Mohd. Arif (2005) asserts that through innovation, a lecturer's delivery techniques can be enhanced in several ways. One of the ways is the use of Powerpoint slides that are jointly prepared by lecturers. Lecturers can discuss on the best methods to deliver lecture content using Powerpoint; by including interesting diagrams and pictures that are related to the topic. Other than that is by utilizing electronic learning, or better known as e-learning. The use of this method can increase the interaction between students and the lecturer.

Moreover, Abdullah and Shah Rul Anuar (2005) state that computer-based teaching and learning or e-learning is an educational innovation that has to be integrated in the teaching and learning process so that lecturers and students do not miss out on the trends that result from the development of the nation as well as globalization. Lecturers have to be given training on and exposure about computer-aided teaching and learning methods. Abdul Rahim (2002) explains that innovation in curriculum, teaching, learning, school and technology is a must so as to shape an educational development that is creative and innovative. This reform measure is needed so that educational development is continuously taking into consideration the changes and growth in innovation that occur in this century. Therefore, the Islamic Studies lecturers' involvement in integrating the element of innovation in their delivery of lessons can be seen to increase students' interest and willingness to interact during the lesson.

Conclusion

The findings related to the aspect of in-service training and courses point to a moderate level. The study found that the polytechnic management offers courses which are unrelated and irrelevant to the Islamic Studies lecturers' job scope. In addition to that, the courses that they attend are not enough in preparing them to teach all the topics in Islamic Studies subjects. The findings have led to the discovery of an implication which is the failure to increase the lecturers' competency level will hamper their professional development process. Thus, this study proposes that the polytechnic management design suitable in-service training and courses that fulfill the Islamic Studies lecturers' needs. An ideal curriculum can be designed and formulated, but it is the teacher that will determine whether or not the curriculum is successfully implemented. Providing training or re-skilling courses is a solution that can be taken in order to address the problem of teacher incompetency.

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