
Teaching Competencies in the Adoption of In-services Training Program among Malaysian Universities

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Abstract

Professional and developmental progresses in education usher in technological challenges and provide important shifts in upgrading the quality of services rendered by teachers to meet certain field-specific competencies. In-service training is an important component of high quality teaching services that provides effective and convenient means of improving lecturer's educational competence while performing their usual teaching activities and is regarded as an innovative key in raising the professional profile and competence of teachers by providing necessary skills and knowledge needed to effectively participate in the present information-driven educational system. Although in-services training program contributes to meeting individual and collective needs of teachers, inability of teachers to participate in in-service programs have resulted to low academic performance, inefficient functioning of the educational processes and shortage of competent lecturers in Malaysia. These inefficiencies are propelled by inexperience as most lecturers had not received any professional training before joining the educational teaching. Academic qualification is an essential requirement in teaching however; exposure to the learning communities and collaboration with other experts is needed to facilitate knowledge and experience-sharing which are vital in enhancing teacher's competencies in different academic field. Owing to the importance of in-services training to teacher's qualification and gaining of experiences required to effectiveness handle academic activities, the present study investigated competencies in planning, conduction and evaluating instruction in sports science among universities in Malaysia as a way to facilitate student growth. Findings show that in-service training program enables teaching activities to be carried with professional competencies needed to cope with teaching practices. In view of the foregoing transitional changes in university education, in-services training are central to the acquisition of professional qualification and plays essential role in coping with the technological development in teaching practices.

Keywords:

In-service training;
Competency; Teaching practices; University education; Sport science.

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1 Introduction

In-service training offer the opportunity for students to learn about the principles of safety as applied to themselves and other are important for the development of their entire well being [1]. However, there is need to integrate in-service training program in universities so

as to facilitate the transfers of knowledge to student through planned and instructional curriculum in high school and universities [2, 3]. Sport science lecturers have a duty of care for students during sport training as well as charge to plan and implement safety as an important element [4, 5]. Owing to the advances in the use of sophisticated information technology facilities in teaching, it becomes obvious that the teaching profession in Malaysia faces great challenges resulting from rapidly changing from conventional teaching to technological-driven teaching developments requiring field-specific competencies [6, 7]. It should be noted that education is dynamic and can be influenced by the constantly changing educational transition. The flow of this change influences academic activities, revolutionizes the daily life and affects the way we feel about the world around us is greatly impacted by these changes [8,9].

According to Veronica et al. [10], lecturers should be able to create good learning competency by providing environment that encourages inquiry activities, respects the learners, provides an atmosphere of freedom, stimulates content, and implements flexible teaching procedures to prepare students to cope with future changes in Malaysia [6, 11]. In the same hand, in-service training services serves as a tool in maintaining the continuation of academic program quality and to enhance competencies of lecturers to meet educational needs of student and presents the opportunity for lecturers to engage in self-examination and renewal as well as to provide a starting point for the initiation of program change [10, 12 and 13]. In view of these foregoing findings, it becomes important that high priority be accorded to in-service training among various educational components in innovative educational activities in Malaysia. In-service training is an important requirement for professional competence and growth [10]. It is an effective way to improve academic and professional qualification of teachers in an urgent situation where improved performance of lecturers to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes are needed to develop teacher's performance and professional development [10, 13]. Therefore positive changes can be realized through the integration of in-service training into higher education programs of Malaysia.

2 Educational developments in Malaysia

One of the strategic goals associated with the development of educational standard in Malaysia [7]. Improving the quality of high education could enhance creativity and innovation and fostering of multiethnic and cultural differences coupled with use of information technology based infrastructures. In order to nurture educational system in comparable standard to those of developed countries, there is need to establish a dynamic and flexible structure that allows mobility of students and teaching staff to adapt to changes occurring in their respective field of specialization. These changes could provide quality, efficient, recognition and competence among the lecturers [11]. Achieving learning concept in educational sector could provide quality educational process to realize professional competence among teachers [14].

The quality of education could be determined by the availability of resources, teacher quality, and student's character and are directly related to quality programs, quality of instruction and quality of teaching and academic qualification [10]. The concept of quality in education changes and means quality teaching knowledge with clear goals, appropriate teaching method, positive relationships and quality learning that facilitates student's growth as well as their ability to evaluate their own work and help each other in their learning process. The illustration shown in Fig. 1 depicted how competency acquired through in-service can enhance their qualification, impact how educational resources are handled and the quality of instruction delivered to student.

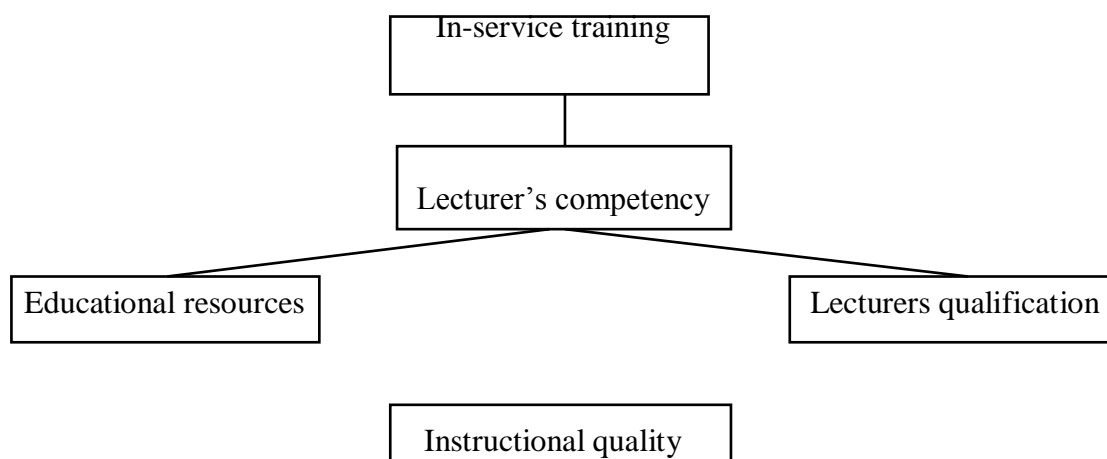


Fig. 1 Illustration on in-service training positive impact to educational development in Malaysia

3. In-Service Training

In-service training program in sport science process has similarity with other courses that are thought in universities and comprises learning process base on planned cultivation where a teacher or lecturer impart and trains staffs base on ideological and ethical standards [15- 17]. In-services training targets focuses on equipping sports science students with the skills that will enable them to develop healthy lifestyle and to strengthen innovation initiative [10, 18]. Sport science however; comprises teaching basic sport skill is the main content of sport education through training that perfectly guides body exercises [19]. Although the perceptions on in-service training program differs, previous literature study depicted that properly planned in-service training program and improves performance and competence that satisfies lecturing needs [10, 20-22]. This implies that the extended programs enhances professional qualification of lecturers and reflects the role that lecturers plays in academic environment in conformity with the commitment lecturers feel towards lecturing profession which prompts them to engaged in learning processes in other to improve their field of specialization and in turn, their students academic performance [21]. Importantly, the changing nature of lecturing activities requires lecturers to be professionally qualified and proactive to enable them respond adequately to the uncertainties and increasing complexities which characterize the educational settings in which they operate. However, lecturer's in-service experiences increase public scrutiny, bureaucracy as well as accountability which are related to their competence in planning, conduction and evaluation of instruction and as well facilitate student growth and general view of education [22, 23]. Sports science has professionally developed into a successful venture for revenues generation [10, 19]. Identifying the increased need for in-service training could maximize the opportunities to improve student competence and experiences.

4 Need for In-service Training in Malaysian Universities

Malaysian higher education have seen the need to gain competitive edge among academic professional as a way of increasing academic staff competitiveness and teaching competencies. This is imperative to many countries and Malaysia is no exception as the country aspires to become the regional education hub of Asia [7, 24 and 25]. The Malaysian is to play significant role in the development of the nation's university sectors and to provide more opportunities for Malaysians to pursue higher education within the

country. Although changes and innovation in educational sectors necessitates competent teaching to deliver quality education, in-service training and developmental activities for academic staff is expensive [6, 7 and 24]. To accommodate these changes in the academic sectors in Malaysia, lecturers need to foster willingness to participate in professional development oriented in-service training programs. Recently three Malaysian premier polytechnics fostered the internalization of knowledge, innovation and technology applications [6].

Malaysian lecturers are facing great challenges as the tertiary institutions were required to teach mathematics and science in English in English starting from 2008 academic session. Prior to that, school teachers were already required to teach [25, 26]. Academic staffs in Malaysia considered this directive as one of the biggest challenges faced by the Malaysian education sectors in recent years [24]. Previous literature studies questioned the ability of educators to teach in English, in view that they were taught in the Malay language [19, 25]. However, there is need to ascertain whether teacher possess appropriately competencies to instruct educational workforce in English language [27].

5 Progress in the Adoption of in-services Training Program

In Malaysia, most universities are fast adopting in-services training program to meet the developing trend in educational sector. Despite effort made by Malaysian in providing in-service program in universities, lecturers are not provided with the encouragement and full support especially in situation where lecturers are expected to travel for overseas [7]. Insufficient fund in higher institutions in Malaysia have been found to have influence academic performance and effective teaching practices over the years. Studies reported that associated influences of lack of in-service training program among educational sectors over the years affected teaching practices as well as student growth [6, 25]. They found also that lack of encouragement have affected lecturers participate in in-service training activities and ineffective training programs. It has been found that most in-service training programs in Malaysia are not sufficient to gain experiences required to boost their competencies. For instance, all lecturers in university some universities are often required to attend a one day or more in-service sessions [7].

However, the operating strategy of in-services training programs in Malaysia can not enhance effective and systematic training practices in sports sciences which requires high accuracy, guidance over new and sophisticated equipment by proficient lecturers who are conversant with the facilities [7]. Therefore, in-service training program as regard to program of activity, number of training days should be a life-long learning and continuing learning program [28]. Among the major problems to in-services training resulted from insufficient fund, lack motivation, improper training program and shortage or lack of technological-based learning. However, it is important that in-service training need in sport science is met in Malaysia

6 Education in Malaysia and In-service Program

Malaysia is one of the most beautiful countries of the tropics, located at 7 degrees north of the equator in the middle of South-East Asia. And covers a total area of 329.758 square kilometers, which consists of Peninsular Malaysia which is located at the tip of the main land of South-East Asia, and all of the islands of Sabah and Sarawak are located on the island of Borneo. The weather is hot and humid throughout the year at average temperature of 30 degrees Celsius in the daytime to 22 degrees Celsius at night, Malaysia's multi-ethnic state with a population of about 23 million, which consists of three major Malay customs, and Chinese, and Indians with some other minorities. There are also foreigners who came for the purpose of study or work or investment. The official language of this country's

language is Malay and English widely spoken strongly in Malaysian society. The official religion is Islam with other religions the freedom to practice their beliefs [19].

Education in Malaysia is overseen by two government ministries. The Ministry of Education (Kementerian Pelajaran -- literally 'Ministry of Education) handles matters pertaining to pre-school, primary school, secondary school and post-secondary school. Matters regarding tertiary education are dealt with by the Ministry of Higher Education [7]. Although education is the responsibility of the federal government, each state has an Education Department to coordinate educational matters in its territory. The main legislation governing education is the Education Act of 1996. Education may be obtained from public schools (Sekolah Kebangsaan), which provide free education for all Malaysians, government-aided schools, or private schools, or through homeschooling, primary education is compulsory. As in many Asia-Pacific countries such as the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Japan, standardized tests are a common feature (extracted from Wikipedia on March 12, 2012).

7 Teaching in Sports Science

Teaching as a profession requires significant perceptual and thinking capabilities for intensive development with pre-service teacher education and continuing professional activities to enhance teaching competencies [10]. In spite of the teacher's perceptual capability and knowledge as underlying to their professional decision making have been extensively studied yet have not produced reliable and easily applicable indicators of teacher's expertise which can be useful for teacher education planning purposes as well as for a detailed reliable assessment of student teachers level of professional development which could allow a better adjustment of theoretical and practical studies for developmental needs [19, 28]. Teachers should identify their profession as subject to specialist in the beginning of their career and their roles as educators. Many other studies have focused on different aspects of teaching professional development and its attributes to organizations, psychological theories and a number of different perspectives on professional identities [10, 29]. The studies reveal new dimensions that characterize teaching professional development which are not important motivators to self perfection.

The characterization of teachers' professional skills is important step towards specifying teacher's professional development although these dimensions have a significant explanatory value are defined in general terms for practical measurement of teacher professionalism and competencies [29]. However, teacher's professional development is challenging research as multiple factors limited to differences in professional experience. From the view of in-service training teachers program, student teachers use different methods to present learning and to provide suitable learning process starting from guidelines for independent work and to the capability of getting involving in lecturing.

8 Teaching Competencies in Sports Science

Competency as applies to this study refers to the knowledge and skills necessary required in meeting academic demands [30]. In most studies academic demands for proficiency are combined with specific professional requirements [27]. The perspective that the present study focuses comprises competencies in planning instruction, conducting instruction, evaluating instruction and competencies in facilitating student growth. However, competent performance plays motivational role in equipping student with the required learning outcome and are vital for successful demonstration of sports science implementation strategies [29].

Developing competences is a positive goal in educational training with focus on transforming students into competent learners in order to orient and select students [29]. Base on the context of teacher education in this study, competency implies; the demystification of teacher education for training process leading to greater confidence to improve students learning outcome. Teaching competences entail the acquisition of knowledge and skill needed for specific field of academic learning with the aim to enhance student learning outcome [10]. Competence based education emerged from goal oriented learning activities and can develop performance competencies that facilitates students growth [30]. The ability to demonstrate knowledge is importance as it creates opportunities for students to experience meaningful learning environment and professional practices and capabilities to solve the problems practically. The development of competency among teaching staff in various educational sectors in Malaysia will enable the establishment of capabilities required to meet field specific need of deferent sets of predefined demands in education [29-31]. In the present study, competency among teaching staffs in various universities in Malaysia is perceived to be closely related to specific set of need in different field of specialization which is defined by individual societal environment and enables them to perform specific role in the educational community.

9 Conclusions

Growing need for sport science necessitated the adoption of in-service training program in Malaysian universities. In order to facilitate the transfers of knowledge to student through planned and instructional curriculum in universities in Malaysia, advances in the use of sophisticated information technology need to incorporated to teaching practices and in daily teacher-student interaction. Positive changes achieved through the integration of in-service training in very important in improving lectures competencies and in meeting student's academic needs in Malaysia universities. Illustration on the positive impact of in-service training program in Malaysian education shows that transition in university education and complexities in response to uncertainties can be enhanced through the adoption of in-service program.

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