



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS
ON IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT**

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**ENGLISH-AS-A-SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS
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By

SURAYA BT. SULYMAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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September 2005

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Teacher development (TD) is important in Malaysia. However, there is a lack of detailed study on teacher development specifically one that focuses on the self-development of individual teachers. The usual in-service training (INSET) evaluation questionnaire gave little indication as to the effectiveness of the teachers' development. Hence, this study is an attempt to show that reflection could be a more effective means to encourage teacher development. Reflection has been claimed to raise teachers' awareness of their own development and practice, but in general, rarely practiced. The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the ESL teachers' reflections on their reflective practice and experiences during the in-service training for smart school in promoting their self and professional development. Three research questions constructed to guide the study are: 1) How do ESL teachers describe themselves as being reflective teachers? 2) How do their reflections on the 12-week in-service training for smart school promote the teachers' self-development? 3) How do they relate their self-development to their professional development?



Five ESL teachers from secondary schools from the states of Selangor Darul Ehsan and Federal Territory had participated in the study. They were selected based on the number of years teaching English and their participation in a 12-week INSET for smart school. The primary research tools employed were interviews and journal writing. An interview protocol was constructed to guide the researcher. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed in verbatim. Observation of the training was carried out and recorded as field notes. A set of questionnaire to gather background and preliminary information was given to the respondents.

The findings discovered that the respondents were aware of the importance of reflection and how it affected them positively in their self and professional development. However, the practice was infrequent and unsystematic; the respondents' analytical capability was limited in which the scope and depth of their reflection appeared narrow and shallow respectively. The contents of their reflections were predominantly descriptive with a few instances demonstrating dialogic reflection.

The 12-week INSET for smart school activated teachers' reflective characteristics and enriched their personality making them more caring and open-minded; enabled them to reinforce the skills and knowledge and to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their practice; the respondents preferred formal to informal teacher development activities to internalise new input; to learn new skills and acquire relevant materials for teaching; to communicate and share experiences and emulating the strategies used by the trainers. In the course of

learning, they grew more self-confident, vocal, generous with their knowledge and skills and ready to lead. The teachers' desire to develop generally encouraged them to achieve better academic and professional positions.

The respondents were independent English language learners whose interests, resourcefulness and involvement in extracurricular activities had shaped their beliefs and behaviour. Self-development to some extent has led to professional development. Consequently, each teacher has developed his or her own teaching style, refined personality and consistently enhancing their professional responsibilities. Incidentally, the study also uncovered external factors such as school culture, which involves teachers' working relationships and attitude, can both facilitate and obstruct the teachers' professional development. Overall, the findings of the study points that ESL teachers need to develop reflective habit in order to reflect constructively, one that will result in a more lasting development. This can be done through systematic training by integrating reflection exercises in all INSET courses and encouraging reflective practice in the workplace by creating positive and supportive conditions in schools.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**REFLEKSI GURU-GURU BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA
KEDUA TERHADAP PENGEMBANGAN PROFESIONAL
DAN KENDIRI DALAM PERKHIDMATAN**

Oleh

SURAYA SULYMAN

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Pengembangan guru adalah penting di Malaysia. Namun begitu terdapat kekurangan kajian terperinci mengenai pengembangan guru yang berfokuskan pengembangan sendiri guru. Umumnya soalselidik penilai Kursus Dalam Perkhidmatan (KDP) tidak memberi gambaran jelas terhadap keberkesanan kursus dalam pengembangan guru. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah cubaan untuk menunjukkan bahawa refleksi mungkin boleh menjadi cara yang lebih efektif alternatif untuk menggalakkan pengembangan guru. Refleksi pernah didakwa dapat meningkatkan kesedaran guru terhadap pengembangan sendiri. Namun amalan ini kurang dilaksanakan. Tujuan kajian adalah untuk menyelidik dan menggambarkan refleksi guru-guru Bahasa terhadap amalan refleksi dan pengalaman mengikuti Kursus Dalam Perkhidmatan (KDP) 12-minggu untuk Sekolah Bestari. Tiga soalan yang telah digubal untuk kajian adalah:

1) Bagaimana guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris menggambarkan diri mereka sebagai guru-guru yang reflektif? 2) Bagaimana amalan refleksi semasa mengikuti

1) Bagaimana guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris menggambarkan diri mereka sebagai guru-guru yang reflektif? 2) Bagaimana amalan refleksi semasa mengikuti KDP 12-minggu Sekolah Bestari memajukan pengembangan sendiri guru-guru tersebut? 3) Bagaimana guru-guru menghubungkan pengembangan sendiri dengan pengembangan profesyenal mereka?

Lima orang guru Bahasa Inggeris dari sekolah menengah di negeri Selangor Darul Ehsan dan Wilayah Persekutuan terlibat dalam kajian ini. Pemilihan mereka berdasarkan kepada bilangan tahun mengajar Bahasa Inggeris dan penyertaan dalam KDP 12-minggu Sekolah Bestari. Teknik-teknik utama pengumpulan data adalah temubual dan penulisan jurnal. Satu protocol temubual dibentuk untuk memandu temubual. Semua temubual dirakam dan disalin dalam bentuk transkripsi secara 'verbatim'. Pemerhatian kelas untuk kursus tersebut telah dibuat dan direkod. Satu soalselidik bertujuan mengumpul maklumat awal dan latarbelakang informan telah diberikan diawal kajian.

Hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris menyedari kepentingan refleksi dan pengaruh positifnya terhadap pengembangan diri dan profession mereka namun amalan ini jarang berlaku dan tidak sistematik. Kebolehan analitik mereka terhad dimana skop dan kedalaman refleksi adalah sempit dan cetek. Kebanyakan refleksi mereka berbentuk deskriptif dengan sejumlah kecil berbentuk dialogik.

Kursus 12-minggu Sekolah Bestari dapat mengaktifkan ciri-ciri guru refleksi pada diri responden serta meningkatkan personaliti: membentuk responden menjadi lebih mengambil berat, berfikiran terbuka, memberi peluang untuk mengukuhkan kemahiran dan pengetahuan dan menilai keberkesanan amalan pengajaran mereka. Dapatan menunjukkan pemilihan terhadap aktiviti-aktiviti pengembangan guru yang terancang dan formal untuk faedah-faedah berikut: memperolehi dan menguasai input dan kemahiran baru; mendapatkan bahan-bahan dan strategi pengajaran yang relevan; berkomunikasi dan berkongsi pengalaman.

Semua responden merupakan pelajar Bahasa Inggeris yang berdikari. Minat, panjang akal dan penglibatan dalam aktiviti-aktiviti kurikulum tambahan telah membentuk karektor dan kepercayaan. Pengembangan sendiri, pada tahap yang tertentu, berjaya membawa kepada pengembangan profesyen. Kesannya, setiap responden telah membentuk cara pengajaran tersendiri, mempunyai personaliti lebih halus dan memperkembangkan tanggungjawab profesyen. Keinginan untuk maju telah mendorong responden mencapai tahap akademik dan profesyen yang lebih baik. Dalam proses pembelajaran itu, mereka menjadi lebih berkeyakinan, dapat meluahkan fikiran, faham dan sensitif serta bersedia untuk berkongsi pengetahuan dan kemahiran serta memimpin. Kajian juga mendapati budaya sekolah seperti budaya kerja dan sahsiah guru boleh melancarkan dan menghalang pengembangan profesyen guru Bahasa Inggeris.

Secara am hasil dapatan merumuskan perlunya guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris menanam sifat refleksi supaya dapat melakukan refleksi konstruktif yang menghasilkan pengembangan yang lebih kekal. Ini boleh dilakukan melalui latihan sistematik dan berkesan dengan mengintegrasikan latihan refleksi di dalam semua kursus dalam perkhidmatan serta menggalakkan amalan refleksi di tempat kerja dengan mewujudkan persekitaran yang positif di sekolah.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 9 September 2005 to conduct the final examination of Suraya bt. Sulyman on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "English-as-a-second language teachers' reflections on in-service professional and self-development" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1981. The Committee recommends that the Candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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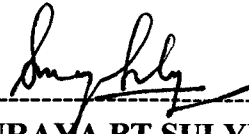


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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



SURAYA BT SULYMAN

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| CE | Continuing Education |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ICSS | Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools |
| INSET | In-service training |
| KBSM | Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah |
| NEP | National Education Policy |
| PD | Professional Development |
| PMR | Peperiksaan Menengah Rendah (Lower Secondary Examination) |
| SPM | Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysian (Malaysian Certificate of Education) |
| TD | Teacher development |
| TESL | Teaching English as a Second Language |
| TL | Target language |
| TPD | Teacher Professional Development |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, which encompasses a brief background information on educational changes and teacher development (TD), research on TD and the current practice of TD in Malaysia, the problem statement, purpose, research questions and the significance of the study. Brief information on education in Malaysia, the model commonly used for in-service training (INSET) implementation in the education system and the evolution of the 12-week INSET for smart school is also included.

Background of the study

The rapid changes taking place in today's world economy, international relations, and information and communication technology have resulted in teacher development being seriously considered as an international issue in the teaching profession (Collins, 1991). The move towards globalisation combined with the technological revolution present new demands on education especially on schools and teachers to produce competent workforce capable of meeting these changes. Pupils need to learn and think for themselves, need to be resourceful and competent in their area of learning and be able to adapt to a flexible working environment. Teachers too are required to equip themselves with skills that will enable them to inculcate elements or qualities of cooperative

learning, emphasising on initiative building and adaptability since interdependence is the core feature of any service industry. Hence, teachers need to be resilient to change or they “will not be able to cope constructively with those changes either in relation to themselves, their pupils or the wider society” (Collins, 1991: p. 13).

The educational innovations that took place since Malaysia’s Independence were always to fulfil the national goal and aspiration and as reaction to external forces. During the early years, the goal of education was to realise the country’s vision for development and social integration among the various ethnic groups. In the 1980s the aim of education has slightly shifted to produce competent and knowledgeable workforce, able to face future challenges. More recently, in response to the international changes, Malaysia launched Vision 2020 in 1991 comprising nine challenges that are viewed to pave the way towards a developed country. Two of those challenges that appear to have immediate implication to education are “establishing a scientific and progressive society which is forward looking” and “establishing a prosperous society with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient” (Mahathir Mohamad, 1991).

Since education is the backbone to social change, the smart school programme was conceptualised and launched in 1999. Several innovations in teaching and learning were introduced in this programme to cope with the new demands. Firstly, the programme aimed at pupils’ self-directed, individually-paced, continuous and reflective learning which is made possible through the provision

of multimedia technology and worldwide networking (*The Malaysian Smart School: The Conceptual Blueprint, 1997*) to produce autonomous and constructive learners. Secondly, it aimed at fostering closer ties among major stakeholders, which include the private sector, the community and the school.

In fulfilling these aims the role of teachers has moved from classroom teaching to include other outside classroom responsibilities. Teachers are now becoming more of “guides on the side”, facilitating and encouraging students to take charge of their own learning (*The Malaysian Smart School: The Conceptual Blueprint, 1997* p. 92). They are instrumentally essential in creating conditions that facilitate and encourage students to take responsibility of their own learning. Providing psychological support is also becoming increasingly important. Simultaneously, the smart school programme emphasises on teachers as being reflective and collaborative in their teaching. They are urged to acquire new skills ‘in listening, in explaining and justifying practice and negotiating’ (Collins, 1991) since they will regularly come into contact with the community in the decision-making process regarding their children’s education. In order to play their role effectively, they need to actively participate in teacher development (TD) activities so as to acquire new input and enhance their professional skills. The on-going reforms require teachers to continuously develop professionally.

English language teachers in particular need continuous professional development in order to cope with the innovations made in the English language

curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning to satisfy the demands of the nation.

Why do English language teachers in Malaysia need continuous professional development? In order to answer this question one needs to understand the goals of education in Malaysia and the recent English language policy innovations in the education system.

The Goals of Education in Malaysia

Planned and systematic educational innovations began in Malaysia as soon as it was granted independence. The goal of education has always been to fulfill the country's vision for development and social integration among the various ethnic groups.

Hence, the dynamism in education. In the early years of independence, the aim of education was

to establish a national system of education acceptable to the people of the Federation as a whole which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the country while preserving and sustaining the growth and the language, and the culture of the communities living in the country.

(Source:Report of the Education Committee,
1956: p. 1)

'Education was used as a means of correcting inter-ethnic economic

imbalances' (Awang Had Saleh, 1992: p. 103) in the 1970s as a larger strategy towards creating national unity.

By the 1980s the education system had somewhat consolidated and was firmly rooted with the release of the philosophical statements of Malaysian education goals in 1989, entitled 'Falsafah Pendidikan Negara Malaysia'. This document now reads:

Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion in God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and the betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.

(Source: The Malaysian Smart School: The Conceptual Blueprint. 1997: p. 19)

With the recent introduction of Smart Schools, the philosophical statement was amended to include the "... *harmony and betterment of the family*," The inclusion indicates a re-emphasis on the role of education in sustaining the existing harmonious condition and its importance in strengthening the family institution.

As the nation is forged, the country now looks towards economic progress and social improvement. The aim of education has slightly shifted to produce competent and knowledgeable workforce able to face future challenges (Noor

Azmi Ibrahim, 1999). And to achieve this goal, education is used as the platform.

Education and The Language Policy

In the Malaysian multi-cultural context, “education is an instrument to realize national aspirations of socio-cultural integration, unity, identity and development through a common language and curriculum whilst accommodating individual needs and societal demands.” (Dato’ Haji Ahmad b. Hj. Saleh, 1981: p. 2). It is based on these goals that educational innovations are shaped. Consequently, in relation to the language policy, the move towards nation-building had the English Language replaced by Bahasa Melayu (Malay language) as the official language and the medium of instruction in all national primary and secondary schools. “National-typed” schools retained their vernacular language as the medium of instruction. By the late 1980s, the Malay language gradually became the medium of instruction for all subjects except those linked to science and technology at undergraduate level and some graduate level in all tertiary institutions. Presently, English language remains the second important language since it is used internationally and viewed as a tool to access world knowledge. International relations, commercial transactions and political negotiations are still conducted in English.

In schools, English language is a subject to be learnt for only 200 minutes a week allotted in the school timetable. It is not compulsory for learners to pass the subject at Form 3 external examination (PMR or Lower Secondary