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Teacher education: innovative, effectiveness and global

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Abstract

This study aimed to find out the perceptions of teacher educators and pre-service teachers towards the effectiveness of teacher training programme. It also examined their views on what extent to which the teacher training curriculum could prepare teachers towards innovative thinking and global perspectives. The findings have raised the implication that the current teacher training programme for pre-service teachers is not meeting the aspired objectives. The curriculum seems to have little emphasis on globalisation, less flexible and less relevant to current changes and developments. These shortcomings may stand as obstacles in the policy makers’ dreams of establishing quality education through teacher training programmes.

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1. Introduction

To date, Malaysia has 28 teaching institutions advocate in conducting some Bachelor’s degree level programme (PISMP) for pre-service teachers. Some institutions are also conducting collaboration degree programmes with local universities and/or foreign universities. The evolving teacher education curriculum is designed by Teacher Education Division to produce competent teachers for primary schools nationwide. The B.Ed programme is a integrated programme contains four main components; methodology, pedagogy, practice and curriculum areas. The presence of all four components is essential in achieving a balance between general teaching theory and the professionally oriented training. In order to improve the teacher education nationwide, Ministry of Education especially Teacher Education Division always ensure that teachers receive a good initial training to prepare them for their work as teacher. Teacher education is imperative to be in tune with the emerging social transformation and the fast changing canvas of education both nationally and globally.

The effectiveness of teacher education is a key guarantee of quality education to the pupils (Teacher Education Development Programme, 2001). Programme evaluation reports have pointed out several important factors that contributed to the programme effectiveness. In particular, aspects such as inadequate co-operation among educational partners, not addressing the contemporary needs of school; provide little scope for pre-teachers to reflect on their experiences; lack of researched–based practices, lack emphasis to globalization and so on (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, 2009). Besides, effectiveness of the training programme is also very much dependent on the innovative teaching strategies and teaching processes used by teachers (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, 2009).
Considering evaluation reports and concerns expressed over the low quality of teachers from training programme, for the benefit of many, the researchers believe that there is a need to embark on a study which will document the perception of stakeholders in teaching institution towards the effectiveness programme especially whether the programme is catering the current needs of innovation and globalisation aspects. Specifically, this study is aimed to find out the perception of teacher educators and pre-service teachers towards the effectiveness of teacher training programme. It also intended to examine their views on what extent the curriculum of teacher training in preparing teacher with innovative thinking and global view.

2. Method

In this study, the researcher conducted a survey to gather data. Cross-sectional survey was used because data were collected at just one point in time in order to describe what existed at that point of time. A questionnaire was utilized to collect data to provide adequate information about the effectiveness of training programme based on participants’ opinions. The participants were 32 teacher educators from various departments and 114 pre-service teachers who are pursuing TESL programme in IPG Ilmu Khas. The total sample was 146. Of these 38 (26.0%) were male and 108 (74.0%) were female. Sample was selected using random convenience sampling.

The questionnaire was administered in February 2010 and it took about 3 weeks to complete the data collection. The researchers conducted the survey personally. The purpose of the study and the method of answering were explained to the participants before the administration of the instruments. The data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 16). Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to sort the scores attained by the participants based on various sections in the questionnaire. Questionnaire was divided into four sections: (I) the demographic data included age, gender, academic qualification, programme undertaking, number of year in the institution and others. (II) the effectiveness of training programme which comprises 12 items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). (III) the innovative aspects of the training programme (IV) the global aspects of the training programme. Both section III and IV comprises 7 items respectively on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3. Results

Results were reported as per section in the questionnaire. Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation of each item.

3.1 Programme Effectiveness

Overall, participants felt that the curriculum of teacher training programme is effective in providing them the necessary content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (item 4 and 5). Specifically, they agreed (mean > 4) to the following statement: The Teacher Training Programme fosters smart partnership between teaching institute and schools (item 2) (mean = 4.09, SD = .89); The Teacher Training Programme contains reflective element (item 7) (mean = 4.06, SD = .88); The Teacher Training Programme reflects clearly elements of thinking skills (item 8) (mean = 4.06, SD = .67); The Teacher Training Programme emphasizes on ethnic and moral values (item 9) (mean = 4.19, SD = .74) and The Teacher Training Programme provides hand-on experience of teaching-learning in real classroom (item 11) (mean = 4.22, SD = .66). In contrast, participants were fairly agreed to the following aspects: The Teacher Training Programme integrates elements of research (item 1) (mean = 3.56, SD = 1.05); The Teacher Training Programme is sensitive towards the needs of the community (item 3) (mean = 3.84, SD = .85); The Teacher Training Programme reflects clear focus on research (item 6) (mean = 3.47, SD = .84); The Teacher Training Programme is conveyed through the use of ICT (item 10) (mean = 3.84, SD = .77); The Teacher Training Programme provides exposure on educational research (item 12) (mean = 3.41, SD = .88)

3.2 Innovative Aspect of the Programme
The data indicated that the majority of the participants exhibit an average level of agreement to the statements. With regards to innovative aspect in the training programme, participants opined that the training programme reflected innovative element in the following aspects: The Teacher Training Programme emphasizes on current trends and practice (item 3) \( \text{mean} = 4.03, \text{SD} = .82 \); The Teacher Training Programme provides opportunity of learning experience from various teaching environment (item 4) \( \text{mean} = 4.03, \text{SD} = .86 \); The Teacher Training Programme provides opportunities to develop your creativity (item 5) \( \text{mean} = 4.09, \text{SD} = .68 \); The Teacher Training Programme uses innovative learning strategy (item 7) \( \text{mean} = 4.06, \text{SD} = .72 \); The Teacher Training Programme promotes innovative learning culture (item 8) \( \text{mean} = 4.09, \text{SD} = .74 \). Nevertheless, the participants are fairly agreed to these few aspects: The Teacher Training Programme makes changes to the curriculum to accommodate to current needs (item 1) \( \text{mean} = 3.94, \text{SD} = .88 \); The Teacher Training Programme emphasizes on new knowledge (item 2) \( \text{mean} = 3.88, \text{SD} = .71 \).

### 3.3 Global Aspect in the Programme

Participants are fairly agreed (mean < 4) to all the statement in this section. It means that the training programme is shortcoming in equipping the pre-service teacher with global knowledge and skills. These may decrease their competitive strength internationally. More detail, items related are: The Teacher Training Programme contains a variety of literacy elements (item 1) \( \text{mean} = 3.81, \text{SD} = .69 \); The Teacher Training Programme nurtures your ability in analyzing social and educational issues (item 2) \( \text{mean} = 3.59, \text{SD} = .80 \); The Teacher Training Programme focuses on elements of various culture (item 3) \( \text{mean} = 3.47, \text{SD} = .84 \); The Teacher Training Programme provides you with skills that can be used internationally (item 4) \( \text{mean} = 3.44, \text{SD} = .76 \); The Teacher Training Programme helps you to become teacher with a vision (item 5 \( \text{mean} = 3.66, \text{SD} = .79 \)); The Teacher Training Programme is flexible (item 6) \( \text{mean} = 3.69, \text{SD} = .82 \); The Teacher Training Programme always keeps abreast with current trends of needs (item 7) \( \text{mean} = 3.88, \text{SD} = .79 \).

### 3.4 Summary

Overall, participants agreed that the current teacher training programme reflected innovative aspect. This may due in part to the fact that ICT is integrated in the teaching-learning process. However, participants felt that the training programme lack of globally aspect \( \text{mean} = 3.65, \text{SD} = .78 \). Also, the effectiveness of the training programme was not in the satisfactory level \( \text{mean} = 3.94, \text{SD} = .81 \). There is a need to relook into the current teacher education curriculum and further action has to be taken to improve the quality of the teacher training programme.

### 4. Discussion

The results indicate that the participants perceived the effectiveness of teacher training programme is very much dependent to research-based practices. All the three items that reflected this aspect recorded lower degree of agreement (mean < 4). The participants felt that more efforts should be channel to integrate research-based practices in the curriculum. According to the curriculum PISMP, pre-service teachers are obliged to accomplish an action research report in their final semester of the training programme. On top of this research initiative, throughout the training programme, they are not involved directly to research methodology. In view of this, Teacher Education Division should aware about the deficiencies of the curriculum in developing research culture among pre-service teachers. It is crucial for teachers to have the ability to use research methods and engage in scientific literacy to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. It is also important for them to keep in touch with new findings in their subjects and to continuous support for improvement of their teaching methods (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). Teacher Education Division needs to agree to the principle that teacher education must equip teachers with research-based knowledge and skills for developing teaching professionalism, communicating educational issues with parents and other stakeholders. With this research oriented attitude, teachers learn to take an
analytical and open-minded approach to their work. Besides, they draw reliable conclusions based on their observations, and experiences and develop their teaching and learning environments in a systematic way.

Research has long been supported as the basis for decision-making in educational reforms (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, 2009). Therefore, research-based practices have become one of the criteria for quality teacher education in Europe (Memorandum, 2004). It is based on the notion that teachers need a profound knowledge of the most recent advances of research in the subjects they teach. In addition, they need to be familiar with the latest research on how something can be taught. Also, they need to learn interdisciplinary research on subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge that can provides them the foundation for developing teaching methods that can be adapted to suit different learners. On top of that, it is also because teacher education in itself should also be an object of study and research. These research findings can provide knowledge about the effectiveness and quality of teacher education implemented in different cultural contexts.

Inevitably, an important aim of teacher education is to educate teachers who are able to study and develop their own researched-based practices. For this, Finnish Teacher Education can be our benchmark. For decades, the Finnish Teacher Education has committed itself to the development of a research-based professional culture. Accordingly, Finland’s teacher education programmes require pre-service teachers to study both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The aim of these studies is to train students to find and analyse problems they may expect to face in their future work. Research studies provide students with an opportunity to complete an authentic project, in which students must formulate problem in an educational field, be able to search independently for information and data related to the problem, elaborate on them in the context of recent research in the area, and synthesise the results in the form of a written thesis. The benefits of this curriculum are students learn to study actively and to internalise the attitude of researchers as they do their work. In this aspect, the processes of active working and thinking are integrated in their learning (Nummenmaa, 2004).

The link between classroom teaching and research is extremely important (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). Teachers have to be familiar with the most recent knowledge and research about the subject matters. They also have to know how subject matters can be transformed in relevant ways to benefit different learners and how it can help learners create foundations on which they can build their lifelong learning. This means that teachers need the latest research results and knowledge in pedagogy. They should have a thorough understanding of human growth and development and they need knowledge of the methods and strategies that can be used to teach different learners. Therefore, to guarantee a high standard of teacher education, educational research must be strengthened as an instrument for improving educational quality. In other aspect, the participants also perceived that the curriculum has to review in terms of its adaptability to current community needs and always keep abreast to new knowledge. In all educational systems at all levels, today’s teachers and teacher educators are required to act as responsible educators in a multicultural society. The need to understand different subcultures, religions and values is causing new and difficult demands to teacher education. Intercultural learning is important for every individual in every culture in a world that we now call ‘global’ (Kaikkonen, 1996; Räsänen, 1999; Watts & Smolicz, 1977). Teachers also must have a good knowledge of history and cultural roots for promoting intercultural understanding.

In addition, teachers have to be familiar with the curricula and learning environments on educational institutions. They also have to know about learning in non-formal educational settings, such as in open learning and labour market contexts. Teachers should have the latest knowledge of educational technology and they need to be able to apply ICT in their work. In view of that, there is a need for Teacher Education Division to review its teacher training curriculum to better equipping our pre-service teachers the new knowledge in order to perform effectively in this ever changing society. The curriculum should be able to preparing new teachers to work effectively in response to changing community needs.

The results in this study also highlight the issue on whether the training programme in tune with global needs. More detail, the participants perceived that the teacher training Programme seems unable to train them the skills that can be used internationally and thus refrain them to become envisionary teacher. In a world where international
relations and connections are getting more and more important and complex, it is importance to make possible for teachers to broaden their outlook and learn more about other countries through study visits and exchange programmes (Hubbard & Levy, 2006). Teacher education is obliged to better equip the pre-services to be multi skilled to face globalization and effectively promote life-long learning in a globally oriented, pluralistic society. Pre-service teachers need to understand global interactions and to be prepared for global competition and realities in order to keep abreast with the educational development. For this, it is suggested that pre-service teachers are giving opportunities to do internships abroad.

5. Conclusion

The implications of this study were drawn from the findings discussed. There is a need to increase research that documents practices reflectively and analytically—whether it is of programmes or of individual classrooms, so that it can be included in the body of knowledge available for study to pre-service teachers. Teacher education as a prescriptive endeavour should be flexible. Teacher education is best to function under a global canvas created by the master concepts of learning society. The concern is to make teacher education liberal, humanistic and responsive to the demands of globalization. On the other hand, the programme should engage teachers with children in real contexts than teach them about children through theories.

The study has provided some preliminary evidence for the importance of continuous evaluation to the training programme. As a whole, participants perceived that the curriculum of the training programme should be knowledge-based whereby it always keeps abreast to latest innovation and information in order to cater to community needs. In particular, there is an urgent need to revamp on the coursework to research-oriented project. This will develops research culture and attitudes among the pre-service teachers which may stimulate them to reflect on their quality of teaching in future. On the other hand, the findings have raised the implication that the current teacher training programme for pre-service teachers is not meeting the aspired objectives. The curriculum seems to have little emphasis on globalisation, less flexible and less relevant to current changes and developments. These shortcomings may stand as obstacles in the policy makers’ dreams of establishing quality education through teacher training programmes. Hence the feedback from stakeholders would provide important information for policy makers to continuously impove the quality of teacher training programmes.

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