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Professional Development Programme Effectiveness: Kota Belud Primary School English Teachers' Voice into Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research is conducted in order to identify teachers' perception on the effectiveness of the ongoing Professional Development Programme among the primary school English teachers in Kota Belud, Sabah. This non-experimental research applies survey method and a few sampling techniques in order to obtain the right size of the sample. The data is gathered using a set of questionnaires that has been adopted and are administered to 30 teachers in public primary schools. The data collected is then analysed using descriptive statistics using SPSS. The finding shows that there is no significant difference on the teachers' perception regarding professional development programme effectiveness based on their gender and teaching experience. The implication and suggestion for further research are also discussed.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes in the existing literature pertaining to language teachers' perception on professional development programmes effectiveness. In fact, constant evaluation on professional development programme is essential as a reference for policy makers as well as the ministry to create appropriate intervention to support teachers' in-service professional learning.

1. Introduction

In tandem with the nation's effort to achieve a high aspiration in the competitive global world, the government ought to do a major adjustment to its educational system to ensure that it stays relevant and is capable to propel the overall quality the nation (KPM, 2013). Hence, Malaysia National Education Blueprint has undergone series of reformation to achieve the ultimate mission in producing students who are well-balanced physically, emotionally, spiritually as well as intellectually. Undeniably, to fulfill that mission, teachers as the backbone of the education system have to always be

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ready to support, deliver and sustain the government's aspiration. Mitchell and Logue (2015) emphasize the vitality of teachers' teaching style and leadership culture of the school in determining the quality of education.

Since students' success heavily depends on teachers' style of teaching (Fullen & Miles, 2015; Spillane, 2009) continuous programme that supports the personal and professional development of teachers has to be taken into serious consideration. Furthermore, not only teachers in this millennial era are facing myriads of challenges, but their job scope has also expanded from merely delivering knowledge into becoming the icon that contributes in moulding the society (Hazri & Ooi, 2018). Hence, the Ministry of education has launched the Teacher Professional Development Blueprint that underlines the continuous effort to assist teachers' professional development aiming to support teachers in bringing the best out of themselves to excel in their service.

Essentially, in line with the industrial revolution 4.0, teachers are pressured to come up with a more creative teaching style and be accepting to changes. Additionally, the Covid-19 had irrefutably paved the way for massive educational revolution not only in Malaysia but also around the globe. Even though there has been ongoing initiative to empower digital capitalization and competency at schools such as frog VLE and the widening of internet service to suburban and rural areas, the current challenges in education cannot help but make us wonder, how far along has the education system in Malaysia thrive? Have all the programmes conducted at school, district or state levels focusing on teachers' development been effective in bringing out the best out of our fellow teachers?

1.1. Research Background

Acknowledging the importance of continuous professional development, the ministry has resorted to the Teachers Professional Development Blueprint or *Pelan Induk Pembangunan Professionalisme Keguruan* (PIPPK) that has underlined the Professional Development Model. This model highlights the process to obtain meaningful experience through the involvement of educational officer (PPP) formally and informally in hope that their knowledge and competency can be enhanced throughout their service (KPM, 2013).

Continuous Development Plan underlines three important facets namely, professional value practice, knowledge and competency that have to be mastered by the PPP (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2016). Based on the service circular 6/2015, it is compulsory for the head of the department to ensure that the school members join at least 7 days of course a year (Muhammad Faizal et al., 2016) in which the credit hours would then be automatically awarded to teachers in the SPLKPM. The Lessons attended could be online, face to face as well as mixed method (Asmari, 2016).

Among the objectives of the programmes are to ensure that the quality of PPP can be increased and sustained in a long run. Besides, PPPs are expected to master the required competency while sharing their experiences and effective lesson with their colleagues via a systematic learning system (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2013). In fact, these objectives are a vital indicator for the nation in order to achieve a better education system outcome and be on par with other developed nations. In a global context, country such as Finland has made it compulsory for its teachers to attend professional

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development programme while the approach vary depending on the school preferences (Sahlberg, 2010). Based on a national survey in Finland, teachers allocate seven days a year in general for the purpose of professional development (Sahlberg, 2010). In addition, teachers in Indonesia display a positive impact in terms of teachers' mastery on the content of syllabus and teaching style (Ekawati & Kohar, 2016). Figure 1 shows the professional learning journey that has to be undertaken by teachers starting from their pre-service formal education at teachers' collegue or university. In fact, teachers in-service learning is undeniably crucial to sustain teachers' quality.

Figure 1: Teacher Professional Development Framework



Source: KPM (2013)

1.2. Problem Statement

Teachers and professionalism are inseparable. Undeniably, the never-ending demand and challenges in education made sustaining momentum and motivation in teaching a really tough task (Ahmad, 2015). Teachers are not only the subject but also the object of the education making them open to criticism (Muhammad Faizal et al., 2016). Teachers also face the hurdles in maintaining effective communication (Nurul Farehah, 2018), having to deal with school politics (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010), adapting with school and society culture (Sugimura, 2015) as well as dealing with the never-ending changes in curriculum (Gill, 2007). Due to these difficulties, all the teachers including those who perform well during pre-service face a hard time coping with the culture shock which brings negative implication to their professionalism (Zulkornain et al., 2020).

Research has shown the importance of effective teachers' education as an anchor to support teachers' development. Hallinger (2005) emphasizes the importance of prioritizing teachers' in-service education in order to increase the quality of education as a whole. Education around the globe takes up a lot from countries' yearly expenses, nevertheless, the aspect of programme effectiveness and output tend to be overlooked (Ball & Cohen, 2009). Besides, Timperley (2015) claimed that focus is given more into

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the descriptors compared to what exactly teachers can learn making the professional development programme to be less effective. Hence, ongoing research for teacher's empowerment programme has to be taken more seriously. Based on the discussion above, this research is conducted in order to view the current status of PPB among the English teachers in Sabah especially in Kota Belud district. This research focuses on the East Malaysia because of the differences in terms of culture, language as well as geographical factor experienced by the teachers in the state. It is hoped that the findings of this research would serve as a benchmark to help increase the quality of in-service education for teachers.

1.3. Research Objectives

In general, this research aims to unveil the status of Continuous Professional Development Programme in Sabah. In specific, this research aims to achieve these objectives

i. Identify teachers' level of perception on professional development programme PPB effectiveness.
ii. Identify significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of their perception on the PPB
iii. Identify significant difference among teachers' group in terms of their years of teaching experience.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teachers' In-Service Education Around the Globe

Continuous Professional Development Programme requires a systematic and ongoing effort and has to be conducted while giving autonomy to the teachers (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2016). The issue concerning professional competency should not be taken lightly since it determines the teacher's overall quality at school. In fact, the investment done on empowering teachers' professionalism could solve almost every problem in education (Timperley, 2015). This is further supported by most meta-analysis that claims teachers action produces a more everlasting impact on students' achievement compared to other factors (Piedrahita, 2018; Rizqi, 2017; Timperley, 2015). In a nutshell, the passion that teachers have in work hugely contributes to students' success.

There is a lot to learn from the amazing phenomena of the 'Finnish Miracle'. In fact, there was nothing really special about Finland in the early '80s, nevertheless, in a span of less than two decades, Finland surprises the world for being able to conquer the PISA rank and has been among the top since (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016; Sahlberg, 2010). Almost all of the research identifies one strong factor that contributes to this success, and it was the amazing teachers that Finland has invested in. Finland acknowledges teachers' professional evaluation at school and due to this autonomy, teachers is the most favorite profession among the young Finnish.

Based on Learning How to Learn programme in England that evaluates teachers in-service programme effectiveness among teachers, most of the teachers' educational programmes are prone to be superficial and unable to cater to teachers' real needs (Belas & Hopkins, 2019; Collinson et al., 2009). Hence, it is essential for the authority to ensure that programmes offered especially to teachers meet its initial requirement. In

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research conducted among the English primary school teachers in Kelantan, majority of the newly posted in-service teachers admit having struggled in maintaining their motivation to teach (Senom et al., 2013). Essentially, the professional development programmes offered to them seems to be seasonal, no continuation, and lack of focus (Senom et al., 2013).

On the same wavelength, Noom-Ura (2013) reveals that in-service training programme INSET in Singapore has brought about ambivalent feelings among teachers since they were forced to leave their students to attend the programme. The fact that the teachers have no choice over the status of their involvement and participation on the programme force teachers to sometimes abandon their students and lesson. On the other hand, INSET is proven to be the essential element to improve methodological knowledge and instructional skills among teachers in Turkey (Öztürk, 2019). In a nutshell, great impact can definitely be harnessed from professional development programme should teachers' needs, worries and concern are addressed.

2.2. Knowles Theory of Adult Learning

The theory of adult learning which is also known as andragogy is developed by Knowles in 1980 (Knowles, 1989). The term was originally coined by Alexander Kapp, a German grammar teacher in 1833 (Reishmann, 2020). Later, the theory was improved and refined with six main assumptions that serve as important tenets of the way adults learn in terms of need to know, self-concept, role of experience, learning readiness, learning orientation and motivation. Knowles claims that, adult learners' style of learning is uniquely different compared to children. Therefore, understanding these differences would be a beneficial reference to build an effective professional development programme for teachers. Firstly, adult learners engage better in learning when they understand or see the needs to know what they learn. Numerous research found that, adults' learners would invest considerable amount of time and energy to learn new things as an investment to obtain larger benefit in the future (Tough, 1979). As a result, a new emerging aphorism in adult education is for the facilitators to raise consciousness on the value of each lesson prior to learning it.

Secondly, Knowles (1989) emphasizes the needs to recognize adults' self-concept that is more dependent, capable, and responsible for their own choices. To elaborate, adult learners want to be seen as capable of searching for learning resources and developing ideas given a sufficient stimulus. Consequently, in a situation where adults self-concept is denied, they tend to reject learning. Thirdly, valuing adult learners' experience is key to engage them with learning. In other words, since adults have been involved in a job force and are mature members of the society, they also have background knowledge that can be a good resource for their learning. Therefore, effective techniques used in adult learnings are the ones that tap into the learners' experience such as discussion, simulation, case method, problem solving and laboratory method.

Fourthly, adults are ready to learn things that help them to participate appropriately in real-life situation. In other words, adults are keen to learn new knowledge that has immediate effect or can be applied immediately in their job or life (Ayvaz-tuncel, 2018). Fifthly, in contrast to the subject centered learning of pedagogy, andragogy is more life-centered. Solving problems in life and making daily tasks easier are the key points that interest adult learners. Last but not least, although adult learners are undeniably inclined towards extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation is the stronger drive that

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keeps adults engaged in learning. Tough (1979) claimed that all normal adults own the desire to keep developing and growing. Nonetheless, such positive motivation would sometimes be weakened by negative self-concept, constraint in time, financial resources and programmes that violate the principles of andragogy (Ayvaz-tuncel, 2018).

In conclusion, Knowles (1989) principles of adult learning can be embedded in professional development for teachers. Fundamentally, such programmes have to be crafted while valuing the experience, ideas, and concept of the adult learners. Beside that, the right timing of learning or introducing new ideas is vital in order to ensure that adult learners gain as much impact from the new lessons or courses attended as possible. Furthermore, moving from mass lecture style into smaller group where teachers are able to share ideas and experience as well as argue or seek clarification is key in effective andragogy classroom (Ayvaz-tuncel, 2018).

3. Methodology

This is a quantitative research that involves the descriptive statistical analysis. The population in this research is limited to only primary school English teachers who teach in fully government supported public schools in Kota Belud, Sabah. The instrument used in this research is a questionnaire that has been adopted. It consists of 35 items and 7 main dimensions adapted from IC Maps created by Learning Forward. In order to gain the respondents' perception, five score Likert Scale is used. Table 1 below presents the score for each scale that is used in the research.

Table 1: Five Score Likert Scale

Statement	Score
Very Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Very Agree	5

3.1. Data Collection and Procedure Analysis

After getting the approval by the Educational Planning and Research Unit, Putrajaya and Sabah State Education Department, the questionnaires which has been transformed into a google form were distributed personally via WhatsApp application to the targeted respondents. They were given briefing on how to answer the questionnaire. Each respondent was given ample time to respond to the questionnaire considering that teachers have to perform online classes and reports. Statistical Package Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was utilized to calculate the data from the questionnaire survey. The procedures involve descriptive analysis and frequency count.

4. Result

4.1. Research Respondent

The sample selected in this study was collected through random sampling based on 57 primary schools' English teachers in Kota Belud. The Table 2 presents profile and the information of the respondents.

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Table 2: Profile of The Respondent

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A1. Gender		
Male	12	40.0
Female	18	60.0
A2. Teaching Experience		
Below 10 years	8	26.7
11 - 10 years	10	33.3
21 - 30 years	10	33.3
31 years and above	2	6.7

Overall, there were 30 respondents in the research comprised of 12 males (40%) and 18 females (60%). The bigger number of females in the research is expected since female teachers constitute a vast majority in the teaching profession with the ratio of female to male is 70:30 (Azman, 2016). In terms of teaching experience, the respondents are divided into four main groups which are below ten years with 8 respondents (26.7%), 11 to 20 years with 10 respondents (33.3) and 21-30 years and more than 30 years with 10 (33.3%) and 2 (6.7%) respondents respectively. In regards of school location, majority of the respondents (93.3%) are teaching in rural schools.

4.2. Teachers Level of Perception on Professional Development Programme Effectiveness

Fundamentally, mean value is often a vastly used method employed to describe the respondents' level of response to the items in particular instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In order to measure the level of variable, Pallant (2011) mean score level is used. There are three mean scores in Pallant (2011) and they are labelled as high, medium, and low. The detailed mean score is presented in the Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Score Interpretation

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 - 2.33	Low
2.34 - 3.66	Medium
3.67 - 5.00	High

The findings on the level of teachers' perception on professional development programme is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean Score Level for Each Dimension

	Mean	Standard Deviatio	Interpretation
Learning Community	3.84	.692	High
Leadership	3.99	.774	High
Resources	3.79	.638	High
Data	3.79	.672	High
Learning Design	3.81	.669	High
Implementation	3.87	.574	High
Outcome	3.95	.563	High
Total	3.86	.394	High

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Based on the result analysis presented in Table 4, the mean score of teachers' perception was high (M=3.86, Sd= .391). Beside that, the analysis also reveals that the dimension of leadership is at the highest level (M=3.99, Sd=*.774).* Meanwhile, the dimension of outcome, learning community and implementation followed closely by (M=3.95, Sd .563), (M=3.84, Sd=.692) and (M=3.87, Sd=.574) respectively. The analysis also demonstrates that two dimensions share the same mean and score the lowest compared to the other dimensions and they are resource, (M=3.74, Sd=.638) and data (M=3.79, Sd=.672). Overall, this analysis confirms that the respondents hold a high perception on the professional development programme that they have experienced and attended along their service.

4.3. Comparison of mean score based on gender

The mean score for both male and female has been analysed to compare the level of perception towards professional development programme effectiveness based on gender and presented in Table 5. According to the independent sample T-Test analysis in Table 5, the mean value for male group is 3.702 (Sd 0.47) while the mean value for the female group is 3.97 (Sd 0.29). The result of the analysis has shown that the p>0.05 value is (p=0.066). This means that, there is no significant difference on these gender groups' perception towards professional development programmes effectiveness.

Table 5: T-Test Perception Based on Gender

Variable	M	SD	F	T-value	df	Sig (2-tail)
Male	3.702	.473	4.424	-1.915	28	0.066
Female	3.971	.298				

4.4. Comparison of mean score based on years of teaching experience

The teachers have also been grouped according to their teaching experience and their perception on professional development programme effectiveness. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 6. Based on the One-Way ANOVA analysis in Table 6, the p>0.05 is (p=0.066). This shows that, there is also no significant difference on the teachers' perception regardless of their teaching experience.

Table 6: One Way ANOVA Based on Teaching Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.520	2	.520	3.655	.066
Within Groups	3.980	28	.142		
Total	4.499	30			

5. Discussion

The statistical significance of mean scores among primary school English teachers in Kota Belud evaluation on their Professional Development Programme effectiveness implies affirmative perception on continuous professional development experienced by the respondents. This also denotes that the teachers have an optimistic acceptance and attitude towards the professional development programmes that they have attended. This finding concurs with (Muhammad Faizal et al., 2016) that shows a high level of PDP effectiveness among teachers in high performing schools in the southern zone of

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Malaysia. Undeniably, professional development for teachers allows them to share knowledge, while elevating and reflecting on their teaching method (Keong et al., 2018). This finding also shows that, most teachers acknowledge the benefit that they gain from professional development programmes and the chances to increase their competency to a higher level. In fact, through the autonomy given to teachers and school leader in performing Professional Learning Community, PLC at school, the MOE has targeted that by 2025, the practice of continuous professionalism would continue to increase to 60% (Zaini & Mansor, 2021).

Although the difference was minimal, the higher mean score among female teachers compared to their male counterparts confirms the finding of Hustler et al. (2003) and Islam et al. (2017) that male teachers were less likely to have positive perception on PDP. In fact, in a Taiwan based research conducted by (Chang et al., 2017), it was uncovered that teachers' perception on professional development programmes effectiveness is influenced by gender, the school size, and teaching experience. However, the fact that there is no significant difference on the teachers' perception based on teaching experience contradict the findings of (Chang et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the findings of this research could as well be influenced by factors such as the sample tendency to provide a culturally appropriate answer while denying their actual feelings and perception (Podasakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, to avoid such bias, respondents have to be briefed and reminded that there is no right or wrong answers to the items and hence there is no pressure to give any answer. The findings of this research are true on the said sample and the population it resembles. Future research could focus on other districts or larger population to enable the findings to be generalized. Besides, more detailed research focusing on both quantitative and qualitative data is beneficial to provide optimum data and reference as a benchmark to evaluate the current stand of teachers' professional development.

6. Conclusion

Essentially, teachers' learning should not stop at the threshold of their service, but it has to go beyond (Schwarz & Ray, 2018). Hence, a lot of effort has been done by the Ministry of Education towards empowering teachers' professionalism through continuous development programmes that promote positivism and expand teachers' skills and competency. Apart from developing a country-based programme that is suitable with the schools' situation and geographical location, it is indeed of paramount importance to learn and adopt programmes or measures that have been proven to be successful from other countries such as Finland (Sahlberg, 2010) and China (Lu, 2019). In fact, the investment made on accelerating the quality of teachers is shown to have immediate impact on increasing the quality of education as a whole (Borko, 2004; Islam et al., 2017; Othman et al., 2020; Timperley, 2015). Therefore, constant evaluation and improvement is deemed necessary.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of Interest.

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