MALAYSIA’S TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM: OUTCOME AND ISSUES IN DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL THROUGH EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to find out the outcomes and issues of recent educational reform in Malaysia’s Teacher Education Curriculum. The pre-service teachers were asked to assess their own competencies across the three phases in the action research process. The three phases include identifying a research problem, implementing the action plan and analysing the data. Survey questionnaires that consist of close-ended and open-ended questions were administered to 95 pre-service teachers. Findings showed that on the average pre-service teachers achieved below satisfactory level of knowledge (mean = 3.75, SD= .62) about the action research process. The correlation analysis showed that the knowledge in these three phases are inter-related. This indicated that if participants have insufficient knowledge in phase one of the research process they may encounter difficulties in the subsequent phases. On the other hand, pre-service teachers felt that the research experience was very meaningful for their future role as a teacher. This indicated that pre-service teachers are likely to engage in action research to improve their teaching and learning process in future. This inclination is very encouraging and meeting the aspirations of the teacher education curriculum in developing human capital for sustainable development in the schools through research-driven activities. Hence the findings from this research provide important information for policy makers to continuously improve the implementation of the action research project so as to enhance or at least maintain the quality of teacher education in Malaysia.

Key terms: action research; pre-service; competency; teacher education curriculum.

INTRODUCTION
In order for Malaysia to move towards a knowledge-based economy and be a sustainable developed country, the development of human capital should be a priority. It is important that teacher education institutes through quality teacher education curriculum play their role effectively in shaping this human capital. In the training, engage in classroom research is an essential component for the preparation of the pre-service teachers (Alber & Nelson, 2002; Bondy, 2001; Falk & Blumenreich, 2006; Mills, 2003). Since 2007, Teacher Education Division has implemented the new Teacher Education Curriculum in all 26 teaching institutions nationwide. During the final and fourth year of training in teacher education institutes, pre-service teachers have to complete an action research project as part of the fulfillment to obtain the degree. The action research project aims to provide pre-service teachers with practical methods to develop understanding of students’ learning and to make a contribution to the shared knowledge of the profession. This implementation is imperative for teachers to be prepared for using action research to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process (Alber & Nelson, 2002; Bondy, 2001; Falk & Blumenreich, 2006; Mills, 2003). The research process may enhance the professionalism of the educators who can make meaningful contributions to the educational transformation (Altricher, Posch, & Somekh, 1993; Sagor, 1992). A pragmatic oriented action research may enhance the quality of human capabilities, and thus increase the value of human capital development through time (Cappelletti & Baker, 2010). Additionally, this research-driven project can supply pre-service teachers with evidence that research can empower them by giving them the tools to become effective practitioner-researchers and bridge the theory-practice divide (Kagan, 1992). In order to accomplish these objectives, it is necessary to develop the competencies required for conducting action research and create awareness about its crucial role in education settings among pre-service teachers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
This study aimed to find out the outcomes and issues of recent educational reform in Malaysia’s Teacher