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## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND TEACHING PROFESSIONALISM: SUITABILITY ASPECTS

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the suitability of the important aspects of teachers' in-service training including planning, content, presenters, days and duration and the location. In addition, the study also evaluates the relationship between the development of professionalism in teaching with suitable aspects of in-service training. Quantitative method was used in the form of questionnaire to collect the data. This study was conducted in 6 secondary schools in the district of Petaling Utama in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A total of 174 teachers were selected purposively as respondents. The data were analyzed quantitatively using the SPSS version 21 software. Descriptive statistics were used (mean, frequency and percentage), as well as inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation test). The study indicated a significant correlation between the aspects of planning, content and course presenter with higher levels of professionalism in teaching. The findings suggest that school management should align in-service training with actual teacher needs. The Ministry of Education is also expected to manipulate the aspects of planning, content and course presenters within the in-service training to promote teacher professionalism. It is hoped that this study may be used as guidance in developing suitable in-service training to enhance teacher quality.

**Keywords:** In-Service Training, Teaching Professionalism, Suitability, Education, Malaysia



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

## INTRODUCTION

Education system improvements can only be achieved through teachers as they are responsible for implementing the curriculum in the classroom. Hence, the teachers are an important entity in the education system. According to Ferguson (1991), teacher expertise has a major influence on student achievement by as much as 40%. The teachers' expertise can be measured through their level of formal education, students' examination performance and the breadth and depth of teaching experience. In fact, according to Darling-Hammond (1993), knowledge on subjects, learning and development of students, and teaching methods are important elements in creating an effective teacher.

In uncertain and dynamic environments, teachers should constantly update their content-knowledge, teaching skills and competencies which can transform them into better teachers who remain relevant in changing times (Fullan & Mascal, 2000). The challenges teachers face such as changing interests among students, growing expectations of parents with increased needs of stakeholders and tremendous advancement in information technology are worsened by dramatically increased current social problems among students specifically. These raise the need for the teachers to undergo in-service training which will increase their capability in making their presence in the classroom more meaningful.

Training is needed when a gap exists between the competencies, skills, knowledge and attitudes held by teachers, relative to what is expected of them. This gap can be narrowed through in-service training (Circular 6, Ministry of Education, 2005). Training may help the teachers to improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours required to perform their duties (Sparks & Horsley, 1989). In Malaysia, teachers receive sufficient in-service training, whereby they are required to participate in such training at least seven times during the course of one year (Professional Meeting 7/2007, Ministry of Education, 2007).

However, evidence suggests there is considerable room for improving in-service training to enhance teacher professionalism. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE, 2012a, p. 28), highlights that teachers only managed to deliver 50% of their teaching effectively. This is attributed to their passive delivery in teaching and it indicates that the in-service training teachers receive in Malaysia is inadequate for improving their teaching ability. Immediate measures must be taken to resolve the problem, as more than 60% of the current crop of teachers will continue teaching for the next 20 years (MOE, 2012a).

Furthermore, according to Burnham and Sullivan (2010), challenges such as long periods of teaching time being allocated for training, as well as the high-cost of running the programs have been identified in their review of in-service training. The question is whether the given training is effectively contributing to enhancing the teaching profession. A study on in-service training effectiveness must be done immediately to solve this problem and to identify training impact on teacher professional development.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of teacher training from the aspect of planning, content, course presenter, duration and location of in-service training. This study will also examine the relationship between in-service training and its impact on teacher professionalism. Therefore, this article will address the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of in-service training in terms of the following aspects:
  - a) Planning the in-service training
  - b) Content of the in-service training
  - c) Course presenter
  - d) Duration of in-service training
  - e) Location of in-service training



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

2. To describe the relationship between the effectiveness of in-service training and the effect in the level of professionalism of teachers.

## ***The Concept of In-Service Training***

Many terms may be used to describe in-service training. Beach and Reinhartz (2000) included terms such as professional development, staff development, in-service training, and continuous education as interchangeable terms.

The argument is supported by a local researcher, Abdul Ghani Abdullah (2009) who stated that staff development is also known as in-service education, in-service training, professional development, continuous education and efforts in order to achieve a higher degree either in a formal or informal way.

In the Malaysian context, the Ministry of Education outlines the meaning of in-service training as:

*“The process of knowledge being transferred in a disciplined manner to enhance knowledge and skills to meet the current needs and demands of the organization. This is achieved through any form of learning, such as courses, job training and mentoring /coaching program or anything that is similar to it that may contribute to the development of an individual and the excellence of an organization” (MOE, 2005, p.2).*

Based on the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE, 2012a) the concept of in-service training is a process of improving the level of knowledge, skills and competencies of teachers as the main thrust in improving the schooling experience and process. In fact, it sets guidelines that ensure only teachers of high quality and having excellent public examination results will be recruited into our national education system. The government promotes Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for the existing teachers in enhancing their quality and qualifications. This is seen as an effort to achieve a shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE, 2012a). The National Education Policy (MOE, 2012b) explains that in-service training is a part of government efforts to implement continuous professional development in schools. It is considered as a tool in improving teacher quality. Teachers were given training and new skills in order to enhance their ability to teach more effectively. The more competent the teacher, better the quality of learning for the student (MOE, 2012b).

Hussein Ahmad (1991) discussed the staff development program as an initiative that brings new vigor to teachers through refresher courses and in-service courses that introduce them to new curriculum and teaching strategies.

According to Ramaiah (1992), in-service training is a program or training course held to improve the professionalism, effectiveness, and efficiency of employees in an organization. He points out that the in-service training is a systematic effort to change practices, trust and professional understanding toward a clearer goal.

In-service training is also considered as a learning process by teachers about teaching practices, for them to improve their teaching and for the students to learn well. It is a process of improvement, a progress of teachers in a professional way (Lieberman, 1996). In-service training is an on-going effort to enhance the ability of teachers to teach within a classroom.

To summarize, in-service training is associated with promoting a higher level of professionalism on an on-going basis. In the Malaysian context, in-service training is a systematic effort to rejuvenate teachers through courses, workshops and more. This is to increase their professionalism and give them appropriate competencies to accomplish the national education system objectives.



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

## ***Concept of Professionalism in Teaching***

Professional development is implemented in most organizations for them to maintain or improve the quality of their existing staff. According to organizational development experts, organizations that fail to practice this are unlikely to be sustainable. One of the major factors that cause organizations to deteriorate is the obsolescence of skills (Lieberman, 1996). Such obsolescence is inevitable, and will occur regardless of age, but the pace would vary according to circumstances.

Professional development programs are necessary to improve work performance, to reproduce experience, develop professional knowledge, enhance the teacher's education and prepare teachers to deal with changes and challenges in education (Craft, 1996). This is supported by Shanti (1998) who states that professional development programs are able to meet teachers' needs in raising their professionalism. Professional development is applied within the in-service training program, with aims to develop new knowledge and skills among the school's staff that emphasizes preparedness, planning, training, implementation and evaluation (Putnam & Borko, 1997).

To sum up, in-service training helps to improve the professionalism of teachers in enhancing and maintaining skills, knowledge and their ability to carry out their duties as excellent educators.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research is guided by two main research questions:

1) Is the in-service training effective for teachers' professionalism in terms of:

- a) Planning the in-service training
- b) Content of the in-service training
- c) Course presenter
- d) Days and duration of the in-service training
- e) Location of in-service training

2) Is there any relationship between the effectiveness of in-service training and the level of professionalism in the teachers?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

In this research, quantitative method has been used for data collection and analysis. This research need objective responses to evaluate teachers' perceptions on in-service training provided in their school. According to the philosophy of objectivism, Ary (1996) says that the questionnaires have a high response rate and sometimes it reaches 100 percent.

### ***Population and Sampling***

The researchers have selected 6 schools from the district of Petaling Utama, Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan. The selection was made based on criteria where different types of schools are available in the area. The selected schools comprise a cluster school, a non-cluster school, a missionary school, a boys' secondary school, a girls' secondary school, and a mixed stream school. A total of 174 teachers participated in the study.



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

## ***Instrumentation***

Surveys and questionnaires were among the methods used to collect information for the study. The questionnaire used in this research was developed by the researchers themselves based on the literature review.

The questionnaire consists of two main parts. The first part (Section A) elicits basic demographic information from the respondents. The second part Section B contains 36 items designed to obtain information on the aspects of teachers' in-service training and professional development.

Section B consists of six major dimensions of suitable aspects of teachers' in-service training such as planning, content, course presenter, days and duration, location of in-service training and teaching professionalism.

Each dimension consists of six items in the questionnaire that is measured using a 5-point Likert scale, namely: (1) 'strongly disagree', (2) 'disagree', (3) 'uncertain', (4) 'agree' and (5) 'strongly agree' (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: *Likert Scale Scoring*

Degree of Agreement	Positive Statement	Negative Statement
Strongly Disagree ( <i>SD</i> )	1	5
Disagree ( <i>D</i> )	2	4
Uncertain ( <i>U</i> )	3	3
Agree ( <i>A</i> )	4	2
Strongly Agree ( <i>SA</i> )	5	1

## ***Reliability & Validity***

The Cronbach alpha coefficient test was done to obtain the reliability index (alpha), which was recorded between .811 and .934. Based on the responses to the research questions, increasing aspects of professionalism recorded .931. The data indicate that the instrument has high reliability for administration. Based on Mohd Majid Konting (1998), in general items that recorded an index of .60 are deemed as statistically reliable.

## ***Data Collection & Analysis***

This study used primary data collected through questionnaires. First, respondents were assured that all their responses in this study will be kept confidential. The study emphasizes 'close-ended' questionnaires which are answered based on the Likert scale (five point scales) to determine the level of interest and perception of each element available. Finally, researchers needed to collect the questionnaires personally so that any problems arising can be resolved immediately.

All questionnaire items were analyzed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 in order to obtain descriptive statistics data to assess the compatibility aspects of in-service training, while inferential statistical tests were used to evaluate the relationship between increasing professionalism and the suitability of in-service training.



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

## FINDINGS

### *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

The study was conducted by distributing 200 questionnaires to target respondents. A total of 174 completed questionnaires were returned (87% response rate). Basic information on respondents, including gender, age, race and teaching grade are presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Demographic Information of Respondents*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Male</b>	18	10.3
<b>Female</b>	156	89.7
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>21-30</b>	36	20.7
<b>31-40</b>	36	20.7
<b>41-50</b>	75	43.1
<b>51-60</b>	27	15.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Malays</b>	60	34.5
<b>Chinese</b>	66	37.9
<b>Indians</b>	39	22.4
<b>Others</b>	9	5.2
<b>Teaching Grade</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>DG 41</b>	48	27.6
<b>DG 44</b>	90	51.7
<b>DG 48</b>	36	20.7
<b>DG 52</b>	-	-

As shown in Table 2 above, a total of 174 respondents comprising 156 female (89.7%) and 18 male teachers (10.3%) participated in this research. In terms of age, the majority of respondents (75 teachers) are from 41 to 50 years old (43.1%). A total of 36 teachers (20.7%) were in the age group 21 to 30 years and 31 to 40 years old respectively. Only 27 teachers (15.5%) were in the age group of 51 to 60 years. In terms of ethnicity, the respondents were 66 Chinese teachers (37.9%), 66 Malay (34.5%), 39 Indian (22.4%) followed by 9 other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the demography has been analyzed according to the teachers' grade or position. Most teachers participating in the study were from grade DG44 around 90 teachers (51.7%), while DG 41 is second highest grade represented by 48 teachers (27.6%) and the least number of teachers are from grade DG 48 about 36 teachers (20.7%).

### *Suitability Aspects of In-Service Training*

In this section, the findings are discussed from the aspect of planning, content, presenter, days and duration, and the location of the in-service training. Each aspect then is discussed according to the ranking of mean value.



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

Table 3  
*Distribution of Mean for Frequency of Planning of In-Service Training*

No.	Statement	Mean
1.	In-service training should have hands-on session in order to give good learning experience	3.97
2.	Training Need Analysis should be done to identify the teachers need	3.41
3.	Teachers must be actively involved with the in-service training	3.34
4.	The principal is required to plan the in-service training based on the adult learning theory	3.19
5.	In-service training should be done frequently to enhance the teacher's ability of teaching	2.69
6.	Orders given by the superiors to be involved with the in-service training failed in enhancing commitment among the teachers	2.09
	Overall mean score	3.12

Based on Table 3, it was found that the mean score for all items was high except for item 6 (below 3). This shows that in-service training should be planned at school level to address the needs of teachers effectively. It also shows that planning of in-service training should be done according to adult learning theory where the principal treats the teachers as adults who have prior knowledge of their career. Besides that, teachers should be involved directly in planning their own training rather than accept it as an order.

Table 4  
*Distribution of Mean for Frequency of Content of In-Service Training*

No.	Statement	Mean
1.	The content of the in-service training should be appropriate according to the requirements of the current and future needs of education	3.93
2.	A parallel match on the content of the in-service training with the needs and level of development among the teachers is important	3.86
3.	The content of the in-service training should be based on their main task of curriculum and co-curricular activities	3.84
4.	With appropriate content, the in-service training may motivate the teachers	3.67
5.	Teachers are more committed if they are given training on the practice of appropriate behavior within the classroom	3.55
6.	The content of the in-service training may influence the teachers' willingness to participate in the in-service training	3.53
	Overall mean score	3.73



## MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

Based on Table 4, the average frequency distribution of content of in-service training was at high levels within range 3.93 to 3.53 mean score. A total of 87.9% of the teachers agreed ( $n = 174$ , mean = 3.93) that the in-service training content should be appropriate according to the requirements of the current and future needs of education. In conclusion, the content of in-service training should be aligned with current and future needs of education in order to enhance teacher quality.

Table 5  
*Distribution of Mean for Frequency of Content of In-Service Training*

No.	Statement	Mean
1.	Presenters must attend courses to increase the capacity to train others	4.24
2.	The presenter should be able to deliver the content of training through easy and interesting measures	4.23
3.	The presenter should have solid understanding of the purpose and objectives of the in-service training	4.10
4.	It is important for the presenter to understand the culture of the school	3.95
5.	Presenter of the course should make sure the teachers' are able to practice what they have learned in class	3.69
6.	Course presenter appropriate from internal source of school	2.93
	Overall mean score	3.86

Based on the following analysis (Table 5), it was found that the average frequency distribution of course presenter at high levels except for number 6. A total of 87.9% of teachers' agreed ( $n = 174$ , mean = 4.24) that presenters must attend courses to increase their capacity to train others. This findings also show that it is not appropriate to choose course presenters from internal source of the school.

Table 6  
*Distribution of Mean for Frequency of Days and Duration of In-Service Training*

No.	Statement	Mean
1.	Training conducted over a long period of time may cause difficulties by interfering with the teachers' daily routine in school	4.52
2.	The day and time taken for the in-service training should not be detrimental in terms of preventing teachers' from completing their syllabus	4.38
3.	Long duration taken on courses contributes to lower commitment and motivation among the teachers	4.23



## MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

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4.	Time excluding the teachers on teaching and learning is appropriate for them to be less burdened by their daily routines in school	3.29
5.	The Ministry should require the teachers to attend the courses for 7 days in a year	1.86
6.	Saturday is the most suitable day for the in-service training to take place	1.29
	Overall mean score	3.73

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Based on Table 6, it was found that the average frequency of days and duration of in-service training scores high level mean score for the first 4 statements while this domain shows that teachers (81.9%) disagree with the ministry's mandate to attend seven days of courses in a year and also having in-service training on Saturdays (79.7%).

Table 7  
*Distribution of Mean for Frequency of Location for In-Service Training*

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No.	Statement	Mean
1.	The efforts of increasing the teaching professionalism should be done without interrupting the students' learning process	4.00
2.	The in-service training should be held at a location close to their home for them to be near with their family	3.91
3.	School based training may prevent teachers to be absent from school	3.67
4.	Location of the in-service training should be determined by the teachers	3.60
5.	The in-service training that are held outside the school may result in more expenses	3.54
6.	In-service training is more suitable to be held within the school phase	3.53
	Overall mean score	3.71

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Based on Table 7, it was found that the average frequency of location of in-service training scores at high levels within the range 4.00 to 3.71 mean score. This analysis shows that the location of in-service training did influence in-service training effectiveness. It found that respondents preferred the location of in-service training to be nearer to their homes.



***Relationship between the Aspects of In-Service Training and Teacher Professionalism***

This section will focus on the suitability aspects of the in-service training discussed previously in the first research question. These aspects consist of planning, content, presenter, days and duration, and location of the training. The Pearson correlation test was used to predict the accuracy of answers to the research questions.

Table 8  
*Relationship Between Suitability Aspects of In-Service Training with Teacher's Professionalism*

Aspects	Sig.	Pearson	Correlation, <i>r</i>
Planning of in-service training	.001		.572
Content of in-service training	.001		.680
Course presenter for the in-service training	.001		.464
Days and period of time	.158		.108
Location	.949		.005

*\*level of significance at 0.05*

Based on Table 8, there are 3 suitability aspects of in-service training that were found to be significantly correlated with increased teachers' professionalism. These aspects consist of planning the in-service training, content of in-service training, and the course presenter for the in-service training. The remaining two aspects were not found to be significantly related to the increasing of teachers' professionalism. These aspects are days and period of time taken for the in-service training and the location of the in-service training.

## DISCUSSION

The study found that the teachers agreed that planning for in-service training is important for successful training. Teachers involved with the in-service training expressed their opinion on adding the "hands on" training where this will help them in sharing experiences on ways of learning. This element should be added to the planning of in-service training. Adult learning theory suggests that adults learn more effectively through experience (Knowles, 1990). Kwakman (2003) observed that "hands-on" training will give teachers greater capacity to adapt to changes in the education system.

Findings of the study are similar that stated by Guskey (2000). He found that most of the teachers were not involved in planning their training. The report from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009) supports this view that management did not fulfil demands of the teachers involved in the in-service training. Therefore, the findings from this study may serve as a guide to improve the planning of in-service training in order to meet teacher self-development needs. A more inclusive planning process will lead to more effective transfer of knowledge and skills.

This study also found that the in-service training content met the needs of the teachers. In a previous study Borko (2004) stated that content of in-service training should be emphasized because the content itself is the main reason for the success of any in-service training program. Content must match the development level of teachers'



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

professionalism; the “one size fits all” concept should be avoided in designing and delivering in-service training (Hustler, McNamara, Jarvis, Londra, & Campbell, 2003).

The study discovered that the teachers agreed on the aspects where the course presenter plays an important role in determining suitability of the in-service training. The in-service training suitability depends on the content presenter. In this study, the teachers said that for more effective training, the course presenters should attend specific courses in order for them to improve their ability to train. While the main aim of the course presenter is to deliver the in-service training content in a fun and easy manner, it will make the training more appropriate and comfortable for the teachers.

Also, a long duration of training may reduce the motivation level and commitment of teachers to complete their training. This finding is consistent with findings by Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, and Garet (2008) that any in-service training consuming much time and requiring teachers to stay out of the classroom would disrupt student learning.

Based on the findings of this study, the teachers prefer in-service training to be held close to their home. This would be more convenient as they do not have to leave or be separated from their families. Ideally the training is conducted on site so that teachers would not need to leave the school at all. According to Kwakman (2003), the school is the most convenient place for enhancing teachers’ professionalism as most suitable teaching competencies are gained through active practice in school.

The aspect of planning the in-service training has a significant relationship with increasing teachers’ professionalism. It is proven that the in-service training contributes to enhancing teachers’ professionalism by improving the teachers’ knowledge, skills and their daily routines within the classroom (Dean, 1991). The training given is effective in giving teachers opportunity to obtain lifelong learning thus enhancing their professionalism in teaching.

Next, the course presenter is also believed to have a significant relationship with the increase in the teachers’ professionalism. However, the correlation is quite low. The course presenter is believed to have solid understanding on the content of the training and have the expertise in transferring knowledge, skills and ability to the teachers (Ong, 1992). These characteristics will help to enhance the teachers’ professionalism.

Finally, the study also discovered that the location of the in-service training has no relationship with increasing teachers’ professionalism. Through his study, Sukumaran (1984) showed that in-service training is most appropriate when the training venue is determined by the teachers themselves. The selected location of in-service training by the teachers met with their needs and eventually contributed to increasing their professionalism.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study suggests that a collaborative effort is needed between the Ministry of Education and the private sector that poses expertise in training. The shared experience and expertise would improve the in-service training quality. These efforts may support government initiatives in creating a Professional Learning Community (PLC).

The school management may provide a specific space or room to assist the teachers’ in planning the in-service training. This meeting facility should be well equipped with relevant reading materials, references and ICT facilities to meet the concept of the in-service training, which is to learn at all times.

In-service training is an approach of transforming the teachers according to the guidelines promulgated by the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE, 2012a). The in-service training is an approach believed to generate positive changes in teaching, and to increase teacher professionalism. The Ministry of Education, Department of



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

Education, District Education Office and school management should optimize the use of in-service training to enhance the quality of our education system to make it at least on par with comparable systems overseas.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, this study analyzes the suitability aspects of in-service training and its relationship to enhanced teachers' professionalism. The purpose of the in-service training is to improve teachers' ability in coping with challenges facing the teaching profession and enable teachers to improve their knowledge, skills and teaching ability. The study concludes that in-service training can contribute significantly to raise the quality of teaching and the quality of education in Malaysia. Teacher participants in this study hope that the in-service training will be conducted appropriately as part of the efforts to enhance the teaching profession.

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