PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: LEARNING FROM THE BASIC TEACHING METHODOLOGY PROGRAMME

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Abstract

This preliminary study focuses on academic staff's perceptions and experiences on professional development opportunities in selected public universities in Malaysia. The research design involved the collection of semi-structured interview data from nine academic staff of three public universities. There are mixed reactions on academic staff's receptivity on Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC). The interview data revealed that academic participation in professional development brings encouraging changes in teacher knowledge, skills and ICT culture. Nevertheless, these changes are in substantial. The BTMC participants are still struggling to grasp the benefits of professional development. This situation is due to the heavy teaching workload among the lecturers. In addition, the academic staffs are expected to produce quality research and publication.

Keywords: change, higher education, professional development, quality, teaching and learning, transformation

INTRODUCTION

The concept of professionalism is related to professionalization or professional development which stresses on the improvement of status and practice (Hoyle, 1980). Staff professional development should be able to help a teacher or academic staff to become more 'professional'. In order to be more professional, he/she should understand the features and requirements of professionalism. According to Hoyle (1980), professionalism refers to the notions of status, practice, professional knowledge and shared autonomy. One of the important elements of professionalism for academic staff is professional knowledge. It is one of the core elements of professionalism (Hoyle, 1980). For instance, in order to be a professional academic staff, one should be knowledgeable about the contents or the area of specialisation as well as pedagogical knowledge. In this sense, Shulman (1986) stresses the notion of 'pedagogical knowledge' and 'subject knowledge' as the root of educator professional knowledge that enables educators to understand the conditions of teaching and learning in the classroom. In other words, the common sense practice such as "sink or swim"; assigning teaching duties for novice academic staff without proper training, is out dated.

Since high quality teaching and research are equally important in higher education (Shulman & Hutchings, 2004).

The complexity of change and intensification of the work of academic staff necessitates professional developers to adopt a paradigm shift in order to achieve the mission and vision of the universities, as well as the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP).In this National Higher Education Strategic Plan (2007-2010), the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education stressed three salient aspects: the Apex University concept, the audit and continuous evaluation process, and the idea of the autonomous university. Furthermore, in this NHESP, the Ministry has delineated seven strategic dimensions or thrusts as listed below:

1. Widening access and enhancing equity.
2. Improving the quality of teaching and learning.
3. Enhancing research and innovation.
4. Strengthening the institutions of higher education.
5. Intensifying internationalization.
6. Inculcation of continuous lifelong learning
7. Reinforcing the Ministry of Higher Education's delivery systems

(Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, 2007)

Malaysia's higher education policy on bringing the tertiary institutions into the 21st. century begins with the launch of the Phase two of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP or the Bahasa Malaysia acronym, PSPTN) at the second quarter of 2011. The Plan focuses on the 'new' competencies that lecturers must master. New technologies are embraced to enhance teaching and learning process (Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Malaysian Education Minister, 2011). Among the focused dimensions in Phase 2 of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (PSPTN) include;

1) Competent human resources.
2) Nurturing creativity and innovativeness.
3) Maximization of the higher education institutions' ecosystem.
4) Utilization of globalization concept.
5) Transformational leadership styles.
6) Sustainability of organizations and talents management.

In the pursuit of transforming higher education towards producing the said human capital, and as can be seen from the seven thrusts above, one of the thrusts in NHESP is the improvement of quality in teaching and learning at the Malaysian HEIs. This second thrust, generally aims to produce a more rounded and confident students with a sense of balance and proportion. To realize this national aspiration, HEIs need to review and enhance their teaching and learning curriculum and pedagogies so that they are more dynamic and relevant.

Moreover, the introduction and implementation of these strategic thrusts pose a formidable challenge for professional developers to develop high quality programmes for academic staff and educational leaders of the university particularly the second strategic thrust: 'improving the quality of teaching and learning," which requires effective strategies and continuous professional development. In-service professional development, in particular, is seen as the main tool for lecturers to facilitate change and improve the quality of teaching and learning in educational institutions (Fullan, 1993).

Teaching Methodology Programmes at Malaysian Public Universities

As stated in the NHESP, the transformation of higher education highlights the development of holistic Malaysians who are intellectually creative, innovative, adaptable and capable of critical thinking. As such, academic staffs, who are employed at any

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), must have excellent knowledge, skills, and attitudes upon their appointments and must be imbued with the right teaching practices that are flexible, adaptable, creative and innovative.

At the same time, the academic staff must be given opportunities to heighten their professional development via training programs as continuous professional development (CPD) for teaching and learning is crucial for ensuring continuous quality improvement and professional competence of academia. The teaching skill enhancement will help improve students' learning at the HEIs. There have been an increasing number of research findings that reflects the importance of professional development in enhancing the academic staffs' knowledge and skill in the teaching and learning. However, according to Chew (2007), the impact of effective teaching practices in higher education is not significant as can be gleaned from a World Bank Report 2007 entitled *Malaysia and the Knowledge Economy: Building a World-Class Higher Education System*. The report also stressed that Malaysia's higher education system seems to lag behind that of neighbouring countries and in order to increase and sustain the academic performance to a higher level, it is necessary to have formal structures to support continuous professional development.

In view of this situation, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has urged educational institutions in particular, the Public Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) / Universities to introduce the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC or also known in Bahasa Malaysia as *Kursus Asas Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran*), as an induction course for all new academic staff who were appointed as of 2005. Some of the objectives of this requirement are to equip new academic staff with pertinent current pedagogical, and ragogical knowledge and skills, as well as the latest technology and innovations in teaching and learning. The general features of the BTMC consist of face-to-face instruction, a practicum, assignments and self-study components, with adequate time allocated for each module. However, in the process of improving the quality of teaching and learning in the HEIS, the respective university is given the freedom to tailor-made the BTMC courses in line with the university's aspiration in order to meet the demand of a globalised era.

In support of this implementation and as a basis of guidance to the Public HEIs, a module entitled *Modul Kursus Asas Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Pensyarah Baru IPTA*, is used as a reference (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi, 2005).This module was a product of collaborative efforts made by Public HEIs and the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. Although, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has urged educational institutions in particular the Malaysian Public HEIs or universities to introduce the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (or *Kursus Asas Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran*), as an induction for all new academic staff as of 2005, not all the 20 local public universities agreed to integrate the course into the university's system. In other words, the way the respective university implements the course or programme is left to the institution's discretion.

In the case of the International Islamic University Malaysia, The Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) is made compulsory for all new academic staff, both permanent and contract, that were appointed after July 2005. The course consists of a number of different modules, such as An Overview of Teaching and Learning Strategies, The Use of ICT in Teaching and Learning, Curriculum Design, Managing Effective Classroom Environments and Assessment. These components are offered in three packages. The first package includes six modules: academic accountability, curriculum design, the use of technology in teaching and learning, generic skills, teaching and learning management, and student supervision. In the second package, eight modules are presented. The modules are learning and teaching methods in Institutions of Higher Learning, motivation and counseling skills, the concepts of testing, measurement and

assessment, test planning, preparation of answer schemas, test item analysis, and exam analysis. In the third package, which is the teaching practicum, participants will be observed in their classrooms in order to ensure the mastery of every skill and knowledge taught in the BTMC course. In addition, the purpose of the teaching practicum is to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as to encourage diversified strategies for the teaching-learning process, and to develop self-confidence and efficacy.

Prior to the directives by MOHE for the implementation of the BTMC course for 2005 newly appointed academic staff, University Utara Malaysia, had already made it compulsory for all academic staff who were appointed as of January 2001, to attend a similar course (http://utlc.uum.edu.my/index.php/perkhidmatan/program-pensijilan-ipt). Staff who had successfully undergone the course entitled *"Program Pensijilan Pengajaran IPT"* would have fulfilled one of the requirements for confirmation. With the introduction of BTMC in the public HEIs, the existing course that started in 2001 was further strengthened. The contents were modified according to the 2005 module of *Kursus Asas Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran* in order to suit the needs of the university and MOHE. This new program was renamed *"Program Pensijilan Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran IPT"* or The Certificate of Teaching and Learning HEI Program.

Another public HEI that has recently made it a requirement for new lecturers who were appointed in 2010, to attend, in order to be confirmed is University Malaya. At this university, the BTMC is known as Training Programme for New Lecturers or TPNL. This 30 hour programme is aligned with the module of *Kursus Asas Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran* and is offered twice per year during the semester break. (Majlis Kerjasama Ketua-Ketua, Pusat Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran,Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam (IPTA) Malaysia, 2012).

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to discuss the preliminary findings of the experiences of the academic staff on their participation in the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) at selected public Universities in Malaysia. The following are some of other objectives associated with this study:

- To explore the perception of professional development opportunities among academic staff in Malaysian Public Universities.
- To explore the perceptions and attitudes of the academic staff towards the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC).
- To examine the benefits of participating in the BTMC

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ 1: What is the perception of the academic staff regarding professional development opportunities in their respective Universities?

RQ 2: What are the perceptions and attitudes of the academic staff towards the Basic

Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC)?

RQ 3: What are the benefits of participating in the BTMC?

Literature Review

The approach to professional development is considered as an important issue because it is linked to the effectiveness of conducting a class. How an academic staff conducts a class varies from a lecture where the teacher would talk for hours and the learners would listen, to a teacher that encourages the learners to state their opinions and work in groups to discuss tasks given and it is more interactive. Whatever it is, what is important is the understanding of the learners and how perceptive they are in accepting the learning process.

One of the key elements of academic development is the improvement of teaching which is substantial in enhancing students' learning process. As such, the contents of BTMC course are helpful in improving the academic staff's understanding of the latest teaching concepts and methodologies. In other words, the integration of BTMC towards the enhancement of continuous professional development should allow the faculty members to be more knowledgeable, skillful, creative and innovative in their teaching and learning. Based on the literature of the academic development, a collection of studies showed how the academic staffs have been challenged because of their inappropriate use of conceptions of teaching and learning. In one study, Cranton and Carusetta (2002) highlighted the ways in which reflecting on changes in teaching contexts served to challenge. Consequently, this alters the already-formulated conceptions of and approaches to teaching of the faculty members. In addition, Ho et al. (2001) found that by assisting teachers to be more conscious of their current conceptions, the development, implementation and effectiveness of a conceptual change approach to faculty development will take place. The faculty members, will, then be further exposed to alternative conceptions of teaching via discussion. According to Quinn (2003), the participants of a professional development program reported that the vocabulary of the theoretical frameworks allowed them to understand better what their conceptions and approaches to teaching actually were. The study of Cassidy (2006), found that students expressed a positive attitude towards peer assessment but had concerns relating to their capabilities to assess peers and to the responsibilities associated with assessing peers. Students would accept peer assessment as an element of their course. Sherer and Eadie, (1987) described the skills learned by students during their academic career can be placed into the two broad skill categories of technical and non-technical. But the issue of teaching employability skills demonstrates the need to identify and implement specific educational practices which directly address the issue of employability skill development – which may not be entirely straightforward given the diversity of constraints governing many educational settings (Cotton, 2001).

Nevertheless, many are caught in this repetitive and mundane routine teaching and learning process. Lecturers are only concerned of assignments and exams in order to measure learners' degree of understanding. It is important to realize that this is mainly dependent upon the teachers' attitudes towards learning and teaching. Nicholls (2001) posits that the landscape of academia has changed in that the emphasis is put upon research due to its rewards and perks. Thus, less focus is put upon the methodology of teaching and learning. In contrast, a study by Abu Qudais et.al, (2011) indicates concerns on 'horizontal' development, which is academic competencies rather than 'vertical' development, which is career promotion. A survey of 365 university staff revealed that academic and research score very high while workplace, service, personal and social information score moderately. These findings contradicted Young's (2010) argument that workplace, service and personal factors play an important role in staff development.

Nicholls (2001) further adds that professional development is concerned with three dimensions: Professional knowledge-based, competence in professional action and the development of reflection. He further explains that there are three models of professional

development: apprenticeship, pre-technocratic and post technocratic. In the first and second model, education takes place at the workplace where training takes place in a form of workshops or courses conducted by peers or experts in the field. This usually happens in the initial stage of employment where new staffs are oriented on the ethos and competencies of the organizations. Technocratic model consists of three stages: the development and transmission of a systematic body of knowledge, the interpretation and application of knowledge to practice, and finally the supervision in selected placement. The fourth model is the sole acquisition of competencies. Gosling (2009) substantiated this by his study of 43 higher educational institutions (three colleges and 40 Universities) across United Kingdom. The survey instruments were collected using interviews. The findings show that besides organizational functions, strategic role and organizational volatility, there exists a recurrent mention of Hicks' (1999) dispersed model of educational development which means that discipline focused program is more effective than generic knowledge. Secondly, there is a better acceptance of the value of the academic development activity when it is located at the settings in which the academics spend most of their time (Gosling, 2009)

Hussein et. al., (2010) conducted a study on 116 university staff in Pakistan to measure the effectiveness of the National Academy of Higher Institution Development Program. A survey instrument for this study focuses on the competences of lecturers. Many items from this instrument measured the knowledge of respondents on teaching skills which incorporated how and what they taught in class. Skills like whether they are confident in teaching and knowledge of individual differences were measured. In addition, classroom management skills and communication skills were probed to gauge their interaction with the students. Furthermore, respondents were asked whether they had integrated innovation in their lessons, teaching materials or teaching methodologies.

This study showed that all the dimensions score high except for the use of teaching aids. It was apparent that support system including ICT equipment is the main issue in higher education in Pakistan. In addition, another important point to highlight is that the study found other issues related to in-service development programs for tertiary staff. These issues include: viewing teaching and training as separate and unconnected activities, viewing learning as book-learning to prepare for examination and not viewing their own practice as learning, lack of time to apply training, difficulties in transferring generic teaching skills to other subjects and officials seeing group work as lacking discipline (Hussein et.al., 2010:74). This is resonated again in Fernandez Diaz et.al. (2009) study whereas 257 professors were surveyed to explore their understanding of knowledge and attitude about changes in European higher education. (Fernandez Diaz et. al., 2009:101). The results of this study revealed a high rate of variability within the answers. Nevertheless, there is a significant indication that staffs were rather indignant towards changing their mind-set. There was also a clear indication that IT skills are most needed especially in Human Sciences Faculty. Thus, it became clear to the researchers that a need analysis must be carried out before the development program is conducted.

Meanwhile, Azam and Zainurin (2011) examined the Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC) for 4 Universities in Malaysia and conducted several tests for Principal Component Analysis on the items: students' motivation, improved teaching techniques, classroom-based assessment, using contemporary pedagogical methods, incorporation of technology into lesson, knowledge of curriculum design, colleague involvement with skill improvement, and knowledge management. The analysis of the result indicates that opportunities to participate in such program are inadequate for new lecturers. Nevertheless, the results show that there exists a gap between the program objectives and the lecturers' perception. Again, this indicates that the program was not built around the lecturers' inadequacies but on years of repetitions and blind implementations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Guskey's (2000) Model of Teacher Change (Figure 1), suggest that academic staffs' participation in professional development program may take some time to show any changes in the way staffs apply the newly learnt skills. The application of the skills while lecturing or interactions with students will ensure effectiveness of the program. This also means that changes in the knowledge and skills will not determine the change in the attitudes and beliefs of the participants.
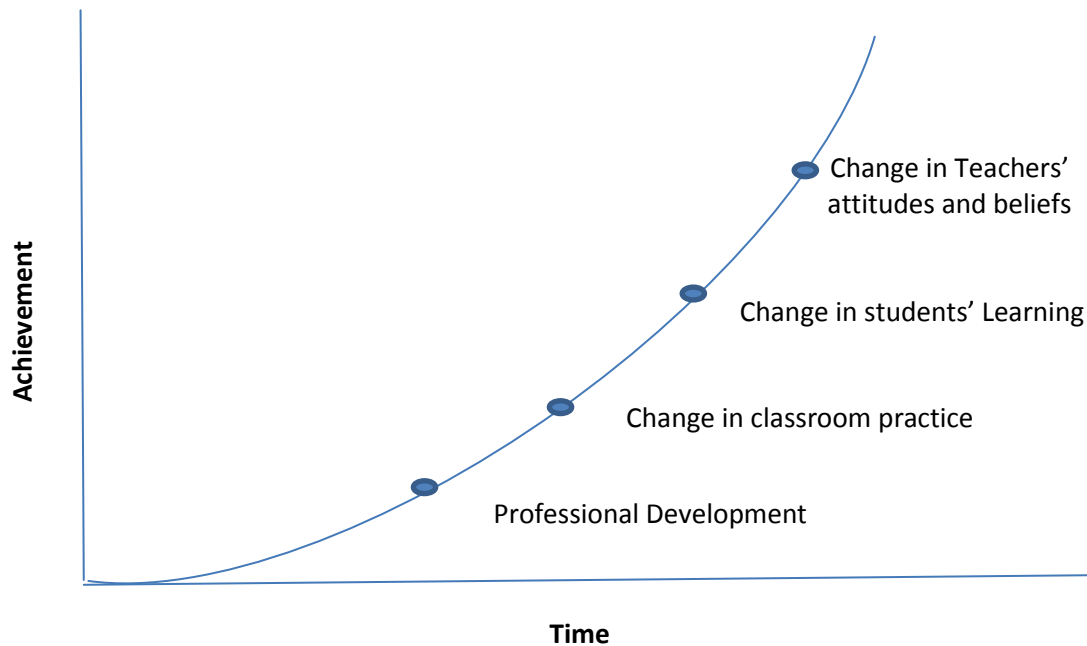

Figure 1 Guskey's (2000) Model of Teachers 'Change.

Therefore, it is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of a development programme until the staffs apply the skills learnt in a lecture setting. However, when this element is absent in the program, there would be insignificant impact on the participants. A well planned staff development programme would be able to provide staff with suitable skills and knowledge so that it can be applied in their teaching and learning environment.

Guskey (2000) further argues the importance of motivational factors to drive staff to complete their tasks. Resistance to change could be prevented if administration is aware of the grouses and perks that would keep the staffs interested. The systematic and high quality approach to staffs development might yield significant impact on the staff skills and knowledge. Professional development can also be viewed as a motivation by itself for staff who are looking for new knowledge and skills. A well planned specific program that caters for these inadequacies would be more beneficial to the staff than generic program.

METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured Interview

This preliminary qualitative study involved nine academic staff from three local public universities: four academic staff from university A, three academic staff from university B and two from university C. The respondents were chosen based on purposive sampling. Instead of selecting cases from a population in order to come to some general is able conclusions, purposive sampling seeks cases that represent characteristics that can

effectively provide the data needed to answer the research questions. The selection of cases or respondents is controlled for a particular characteristic while varying the others. For this study, the main category of respondents was novice lecturers from different disciplinary backgrounds and subject specialisations. Then, the public universities were chosen based on their commitments in offering teaching methodology courses for novice academic staff at respective universities.

The respondents were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. The main reason for using semi-structured is flexibility (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Semi-structured interviews are not dependent on in which order of the questions is posed or how the respondents respond to the questions. Respondents are also allowed to ramble on or go off tangent during the interviews (without going totally out of context) because such occurrences give the interviewer more insights into the phenomena as well as what the respondents might view as important or relevant. For studies conducted in the organizational setting, carrying out fully-unstructured interviews are not usually feasible because interview sessions normally involves meeting the respondents during their working hours and at their workplaces, even though fully-unstructured interviews would generate more naturally occurring data.

Data Analysis

The average duration for each interview was 30 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded with prior consent obtained from the respondents. Audio recordings are not only useful for producing transcripts; they assist data analysis by preserving the sequence of talk and allowing the researcher to replay the recording in order to increase the fidelity of the transcripts (Silverman, 2006). The transcripts were analyzed for themes using the basic principle of thematic analysis proposed by King and Horrocks (2010). Searching for theme requires the researchers' judgment in choosing which of the respondents' words contain the meaning related to research questions. Themes also suggest something that is repetitive and distinctive. In the initial stage of analysis, the transcripts were read through and sections of the transcripts that were considered relevant were identified and descriptive codes of these sections were written down. The next stage was to cluster the descriptive codes into meaningful ordering. The codes could also be arranged to show relationships or shared meanings. Finally, overarching themes that described the entire set of themes were produced. Theoretical and practical stances were then drawn from the developed overarching themes. Investigator' triangulation (Denzin, 1978) was conducted in order to address the issue of data quality, where members of the research team discussed the themes and relate to the findings based on their perspectives, which also enriched the team's understanding of the problem.

Research Findings

The scope of this study is to examine the participation of academic staff in formal professional development activities (The Basic Teaching Methodology Courses) in selected Malaysian Public Universities. The data analysis from the interview transcripts from nine academic staffs indicated interesting findings. Generally, participants believed that the BTMC programme was beneficial and useful for their work. Nevertheless, several additions needed to be implemented to ensure that the program is relevant and appropriate. The use of technology came up several times as recurring theme.

RQ 1: What is the perception of the academic staff regarding professional development opportunities in their respective Universities?

To answer research question 1, respondents' perceptions of the program were mostly positive and encouraging:

> " I think that the training agencies of my university organized a lot of courses and I think the courses offered are very beneficial, so I have a lot of opportunities to participate in various programmes organized by University. However, the training programmes offered by AKEPT is inadequate for new lecturers. Regarding BTMC, I think the programme provides new information and theory related to teaching and learning. "
> DUF 5-7

This new academic staff believed that his participation in BTMC program was very beneficial towards his career and work. Most of the respondents believed that their respective universities provide adequate professional development opportunities for academic staff.

> "For the compulsory training, I think it is sufficient. I attended orientation programme (TIDE), basic teaching methodology (BTMC), CLA and so on. I am looking forward to know what the next training programmes are. So, this is good, we have opportunity to attend at least once a year or twice a year to refresh and update our knowledge and skills."

Interestingly, the theme of self-development of lecturer was mentioned by one of the participants. A lecturer must be prepared for the lessons and be well-equipped with suitable and updated skills to teach:

> "As lecturer we need to learn the skills, maybe recommended to learn to the highest level like Ph.D. From there we are qualified [to teach] in our field, professional development will help academic staff to prepare lessons and learned related skills." DUY 7-8

RQ 2: What are the perceptions and attitudes of the academic staff towards the

Basic Teaching Methodology Course (BTMC)?

For research question 2, many strengths and weaknesses were highlighted by the participants. They were aware of the professional development programmes that were being organized by the University, and they believed that many aspects of the programmes need be improved. Among others aspects of the program that needed to be included are technology and competency based knowledge.

Several participants felt that professional program should focus on the 'hands-on' or teaching practices skills rather than the theoretical perspectives. They needed to know the 'how-to' aspects of teaching and learning and students' learning effectiveness. They also wanted to be able to be involved more in the learning process using the virtual Learning Management System (LMS). By using the LMS, the lecturers felt that it would increase communication with the students and increase the lesson effectiveness.

> "For me, I think it has so much of theories, not so much on practical, because what I can remember now, the course I attended about two years back were basically the practical session in which was taught on how to use the Power Point and access the LMS, assessment, and I hope that this course will provide more practical sessions, assessment". DUR 9-10

Another drawback of the BTMC is the lack of supporting infrastructure. To be able to exercise creativity, the supporting equipment must be functioning in order to make

successful lessons. Most of the time, participants were faced with resources malfunctioned or were simply non-existence. Lecturers are faced with computers or overhead projectors which do not work or faulty. The program should explore these problems that the staff faces and try to find solutions.

> "Sometimes the computer is not working, so the student needs to share, and then the arrangement inside the lab is also not very comfortable for me to work around, they put three of the students on the left side, three on the right side and then, the space between the first row and the second row is too narrow, so, I cannot, because I am teaching engineering students, so all are actually male students, so, it hard for me to walk around the class to see what they are doing. DUR 19-20

There was also the question of implementation of the program in relation to the lecturers who did not attend. There seemed to be a lack of emphasis on the management to monitor every lecturer after the program:

> "With regard to the course, as for monitoring, we [the university authority] did not monitor, do lecturers implement or practice the skills that they have learned in training session? Secondly, some lecturers have their own teaching styles, so even though we teach them new things, it is not effective, I see the monitoring, we assess how they teach afterwards. We also want to see whether the program has impacted them or not; thus, we have assessment forms after the course" DUK 44-45

Finally, senior staff was more resistance to new ideas and approaches. Since they have been teaching for longer years, they find new ways of solving old problems unreliable. Meanwhile the younger staff was found to be more opened for new ideas and approaches.

> "In this case, I think receptivity of lecturers towards change is related to age or seniority. For young lecturers like me, I love ICT and innovation in teaching and learning. But for senior lecturers, they might be skeptical trying new innovation and strategies. This might be related to pressure from authority to produce quality research and publication. So time constraint" DUK 46-50

RQ 3: What are the benefits of participating in the BTMC?

To answer research question 3, the participants could see many benefits that they could gain from the programme. In one instance, the participants felt that the program brought positive changes towards their knowledge, skills and ICT cultures.

> "Yes, because it very detailed, we could not be able to do it, in terms of time constraint. Yes I am…I think I more to the practical side, so that's why, I can remember the practical sessions on the LMS and Power Point. However for the Power Point session, we submitted the assignment to a trainer, but I don't remember getting any feedbacks. LMS session was very useful as this session has enhanced knowledge and skills on learning management system. I think LMS session was a good start." DUF 11-12

Few participants said that the programme had helped them in to improve inseveral skills especially the ones that were related with assessment:

"Alright, I do think that somehow the BTMC have changed how I taught, my Teaching Efficiency Rating (TER) score has improved. I guess this may be related to BTMC. Then I also shared my experiences with my friends and my colleagues. With regard to the implementation of student-centered learning (SCL), I think sometimes, it is not fully implemented due to other commitments. For me SCL is not only about student presentation. I mean lack of preparation will influence the effectiveness of teaching". DUF 36-37.

Basically, the participants believed that they benefitted this course in terms of being able to acquire certain knowledge in solving issues raised by students. The gap between not knowing and exposed is mentioned several times by the participants:

"I also remembered when I have to develop the exam questions, I referred to the notes that "hot"[assessment notes]and I also remember that Dr S taught us on how to approach students when they have problems so he said that we should not put the students in front of us. Put the students beside of us so that the students a more comfortable to talk to us. We were also given a chance to watch a video on good conversation by using your body language and using your words how to enhance communication with students. I remember all and apply what I learnt from this course when students come and talk to me" DUR 11-12

DISCUSSION

Respondents were aware that professional development opportunities existed in their organizations. They were conscious of the efforts by the administration to upgrade the competencies of the academic staff and found the steps as adequate. Most of the participants felt that they have benefitted from the program. Many were satisfied with the programme and said that they would use what they had learned in their lectures.

The benefits gained in this course were considered by the participant as insubstantial due to the fact that teaching practices and the integration of student centered teaching and learning is not fully addressed. We see many professional programs are not suited with the organization as it is being adapted from another country or culture. There must be a realization that an effective professional program is the one that addressed the organizational issues and problems.

Most of the participants found the course beneficial and useful in facilitating their everyday tasks. They were satisfied with the experienced instructors, but recognized that the program content lacks practicality. The course was filled with theories and less emphasis given on the 'how' factor.

Thus, there is a need for pre-assessment to be conducted prior to the commencement of a staff development program. Participants were conscious that they required more training as more new skills emerged in a competitive globalized environment. It is essential that a need analysis is done before any professional development program is conducted to survey the skills gap among the staff. This will ensure that the participants will benefit from the professional development program. It is necessary to assess development programs amongst universities in order to find answers to the new challenges society faces. In conjunction with that, Faculty professional development programs must be designed within an adequate frame of reference. They should also consider the following fundamental elements:

1. These new approaches to teaching and learning. Education teaching and learning requires the formation of skills focused on the professional profiles based on new approaches.
2. Training needs of the university teaching staff. If faculty members are to adapt to the new landscape of academia and its new underlying pedagogical model, it is important that professional development begins with real knowledge about habits, worries, needs and attitudes.
3. It is also important professional development efforts assess staffs' knowledge and characteristics, work habits, and attitudes towards new working methods etc.

Several studies show that differences in teaching correspond to faculty centered variables (Prosser et al., 2003). Dimensions concern include age, prior teaching experience, academic title, relationship to the university, and prior professional development all play a role in determining how faculty teach. In this sense, the study of Gibbs and Coffey (2004) found a relationship between professional development and teaching methods. This simply means that professional development can affect change if it is based on an appropriate model. Therefore, it is considered as relevant to conduct assess if we are to assess the professional development needs of faculty.

All considered, it is important to point out that teaching is a professional activity which requires appropriate training for efficacy. Up until a few decades ago, it was thought that university professors only needed training and experience within their field in order to be good teachers. Nevertheless, there was a significant change and an increase in the importance of professional development for faculty (Gaff & Simpson. 1999). This is indeed a sign for university administrator to perk up and take noticed of the changes that are happening around the academia and avoid being struck in a static model clinging attitude. As the world is turning into globalized environments, new skills and knowledge are being utilized in the market and economy.

CONCLUSION

The preliminary findings of this study indicate that academic staff participation in professional development activities does not automatically bring positive impacts on teachers and quality of education. The interview data revealed that staff participation in professional development brings insubstantial change to teaching practices and the implementation of student centred approaches. The findings of this study also indicate that staff participation in professional development (BTMC) have increased teachers' knowledge skills and enhanced ICT culture among academic staff.

Taking into account this situation, professional developers or university authority must also cater to the needs of the organizations as well as the needs of academic staff. A comprehensive need analysis of the organizational must be conducted beforehand to probe the issues and challenges the staffs are facing. This way, the program will be more meaningful and beneficial to the staffs because what they think and need really matters. When the satisfaction levels of the participants are high, then it will lead to the success of the program.

Finally, these results seem to reflect two clearly different positions related to the notions of higher education professional development. As it has already been pointed out in theoretic contextualization, it is evident that the professional development is important and staffs acknowledge that they are beneficial. However, it is also essential that professional program is well planned and suited with the organizational aims and objectives. This is not only evident because of the findings but also because of the impact studies done on

several programs mentioned. Confronted with this reality, the need to create a program model which includes organizational as well as design aspects seems quite daunting for organizational administration. The model must incorporate skills that deal with the new approaches, together with technical-pedagogical competencies which may satisfy the faculty needs. This model must be created based on a detailed analysis of an organizational need which will steer the program to be geared in the right direction.

This preliminary study is not aimed to suggest concrete recommendations to improve the quality of teaching methodology programmes. It has triggered several questions in need for further investigation. Therefore, it is recommended that further research to be undertaken in the area of teaching and professional development in higher education.

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