

The Usage of Counselling Skills to Increase Motivation in Teaching Among Trainee Teachers in Malaysia

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Abstract. Motivation in teaching is a significant factor in improving teacher-students' relationship, students' academic performance and students' well-being. However, the use of counselling skills to increase motivation in teaching is still minimal. Therefore, a university course, Personality Development, which encompasses counselling skills is made compulsory for trainee teachers in Malaysia. This study discussed how counselling skills in the Personality Development course can be used to enhance motivation in teaching among trainee teachers. This study employed the ex-post facto survey design. A sample of 596 participants from a population of 1350 trainee teachers were selected randomly for the study. They consisted of 496 trainee teachers who had passed the course and another 100 trainee teachers who were never exposed to Personality Development course. The research instrument titled Motivation in Teaching was used to gather information from the sample. The instrument was developed based on Person Centred Theory (Rogers, 1998) and Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching (Wlodkowski, 2003). The instrument has been validated by experts and results show a high score of validity. The reliability of the instrument is also high. The results show a difference between trainee teachers who were exposed to Personality Development course and those who were not exposed to the course ($t=3.4$, $df=594$, $p<.05$). Trainee teachers who were exposed to Personality Development course exhibited higher motivation in teaching than those who were not exposed to the course. It was concluded that students who were exposed to the course were better disposed to resolving challenges in teaching.

Keywords: Counselling skills; personality development; trainee teachers; motivation in teaching.

Introduction

Studies on teachers' personalities, effectiveness and motivation in teaching, and their correlation with students' academic achievement have been conducted and published (Abu Bakar & Ikhsan, 2003; Che Norlia, Abdul Majeed, Zulkefli & Salina Noranee, 2005; Farirai Musika & Richard Bukaliya, 2015; Garcia, Kupczynski, & Holland, 2011; Mucella Uluga, Melis Seray Ozdenb, & Ahu Eryilmazc, 2011; Mohd Sofian, Aminuddin & Borhan, 2002; Nazri & Nashrudin, 2014; Tang Keow Ngang & Tan Chan Chan, 2015, Shazaitul Azreen & Maisarah, 2016). The impact of teachers' motivation in teaching is reflected on the development of the students and the schools. Students who do not have motivation to learn might be involved in disciplinary cases. Students with disciplinary cases are found to be lacking of social skills, have poor academic performance and may eventually drop out and end up being criminals in the future (Asmah & Zulekha, 2004; and Finn, Fish & Scott, 2008). To overcome this, teachers who are responsible in educating students are expected to develop good personality traits. Therefore, it is essential to produce trainee teachers with good personalities.

Trainee teachers spend about three to four years at the institutions, excluding semester breaks and holidays. Therefore, an ideal time to train teachers is during their training years. Recent studies conducted on trainee teachers focussed more on the factors of the teaching profession and the importance of personality traits and ethics among undergraduates (Nazri & Nashrudin, 2014; Tang Keow Ngang & Tan Chan Chan, 2015 and Shazaitul Azreen & Maisarah, 2016). There has been an increasing interest in searching for strategies in personality development especially motivation in teaching among teachers. Factors that influence career choice among trainee teachers are their intrinsic interest, motivation, and confidence. These factors are critical in producing successful students. To show the importance of motivation in teaching, Gameda and Tynjala (2015) posited that teachers must be committed and motivated in performing their roles in schools so that the huge investment could be benefited. There are several studies conducted in Malaysia that investigated personality development and motivation in teaching (Abu Bakar & Ikhsan, 2003; Ahmad & Akmal, 2014; Aripin, Hamzah & Norihan, 2011; Nurul Haerani, Ahmad Esa & Zalina Aishah, 2014). However, the samples used in these studies did not take samples from any compulsory course for trainee teachers in Malaysia.

The Personality Development course is a university course compulsory for students who will become teachers in a teacher training institutions in Malaysia. The course includes knowledge and skills pertaining to personality development of teachers. During the course, trainee teachers are given information regarding the philosophy, concepts, ethics and theories of teaching. They are expected to understand and compare the philosophy and concepts of education in Malaysia with those in other countries. Apart from knowledge regarding the national philosophy, trainee teachers are also expected to understand and apply the professional ethics regarding the teaching profession so that they are able to refer to the guidelines given by the Ministry of Education whenever they need to.

Knowledge regarding theories of personality is useful for trainee teachers as it will help them to understand themselves and others. In this topic, self-reflection is used. Reflective activities are proven empirically as effective in developing professional identity among trainee teachers (Ivanova & Skara-Mincane, 2016). By understanding about themselves, trainee teachers are able to empathise and understand others.

Trainee teachers are also trained in interviewing or basic counselling skills in the Personality Development course. They have to apply the basic counselling skills in classes and when doing their assignments and participating in programmes. Guidance is given to apply the skills in a conducive environment and the lecturer acts as a role model in applying the basic counselling skills. Among the counselling skills are interviewing skills such as responding, questioning, reflecting, summarizing, paraphrasing and asking for clarification.

Audio, visual, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects are used as proposed in Gardner's Intelligence Theories (Gardner, 2006). Activities that cover these aspects include music, role playing and discussions to enhance thinking skills. Freedom is given to the trainee teachers to act and show emotions in any of the activities. One major advantage in this course is that it is safe, convenient, and provides opportunities for trainee teachers to realise their potentials as proposed in the Person Centred Theory (Rogers, 1998). Empathy and non judgemental are also emphasized in classes.

Research showed that appropriate intervention in programmes, classes and activities will increase the level of personality development positively (Che Norlia Abdul Majeed Ahmad, Zulkefli Abdul Rahman & Salina Noranee, 2005, and Galini, & Efthymia, 2009). Counselling skills play an important role in creating conducive environment and in helping students and teachers at school. Teachers who practise and apply counselling skills in a programme, classes and activities are found to motivate students (Zuria & Salleh, 2002; Farirai Musika & Richard Bukaliya, 2015). Shepard, Salina, Girtz, Cox, Davenport and Hillard (2012) also identified how relationships can transform troubled lives. Therefore, counselling skills are found to be effective in creating conducive environment, especially for trainee teachers during the beginning years in the training institutions. Experience in the training can enhance knowledge and skills of trainee teachers especially if the training is conducted in a healthy environment where social interactions are ensured.

Based on the significance of personality development in motivating teaching, there is a need to investigate its impact on motivating teaching. Hence the study aims to investigate the effect of counseling skills, in the Personality Development course, on motivation in teaching among trainee teachers in one of the teachers' training institutions in Malaysia. The remaining section of this paper will discuss on the methodology, results and discussion.

2. Methodology

This study utilized an ex post facto survey design. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of counselling skills in Personality Development course, on motivation in teaching among trainee teachers in one of the teachers' training

institutions in Malaysia. This design has been used by other researchers (Borhannudin, Jacklyn, & Maisarah, 2016). This is due to the fact that the cause and effect can also be measured by utilizing ex post facto design as the right of participants in receiving treatment is not deniable.

The study was carried out in a teacher training institution in Perak. The institution was purposely selected. The sample for the study consisted of 596 voluntarily participants comprising of 496 students who had passed the compulsory Personality Development Course (experimental group) and 100 students who were not exposed to the compulsory course (control group). These students were first stratified into two before they were later selected using random sampling technique.. They were also randomly assigned to two groups - the experimental and the control.

The participants consisted of university students of the age of 22 to 25 years old. Most of them were Semester 1 students (427 or 71.6%), while the rest were from Semester 2 (108 or 18.1%) and Semester 3 (61 or 10.3%). Table 1 shows the faculty of the participants. Most of them were from Faculty of Language (46.1%), Faculty of Technical and Vocational (16.1%) and Faculty of Social Science (10.1%).

Table 1: Participants according to faculty

| Faculty | Students who passed the Personality Development course | | Students who have never been exposed to the Personality Development course | | Total | |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------------|--|----------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| | Language | 235 | 47.4 | 44 | 44 | 279 |
| Music and Performance | 10 | 2.0 | 3 | 3 | 13 | 2.1 |
| Administration and Economy | 44 | 8.9 | 8 | 8 | 54 | 9.0 |
| Education and Human Development | 7 | 1.4 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 2.0 |
| Technical and Vocational | 81 | 16.3 | 15 | 15 | 96 | 16.1 |
| Social Science | 51 | 10.3 | 10 | 10 | 61 | 10.1 |
| Computer Science and Industrial | 43 | 8.7 | 10 | 10 | 53 | 8.9 |
| Creative Sports Science and Coaching | 25 | 5.0 | 5 | 5 | 30 | 5.0 |
| Total | 496 | 100.0 | 100 | 100.0 | 596 | 100.0 |

An instrument titled Motivation in Teaching was developed by the researchers. This was adopted from Motivational Framework for Culturally Response Teaching by Wlodkowski (2003) and Person Centred Theory by Carl Rogers (1961). There are 11 positive items of awareness and confidence of being a teacher. Among the items on awareness listed are "The Personality Development course utilizing Counselling Skills has made me : (1) realise my personality, (2) aware of my potential of becoming a teacher, (3) aware of the

importance of helping my peers at school, and (4) aware of the way to communicate effectively with others.

The items on confidence consists of “After taking the Personality Development course utilizing Counselling Skills, I am confident to: (1) be a good teacher in the future, (2) guide my students effectively, (3) help others, (4) give cooperation in group work, (5) become creative teacher in the future, (6) make good decisions, (7) have potential of becoming a good person.

Response to the instrument are given 4 likert scales; (1) Strongly Disagreed, (2) Disagreed, (3) Agreed, and (4) Strongly Agreed. Response 1 is given 1 mark, 2 is given 2 marks, 3 is given 3 marks and response4 is given 4 marks. The minimum score for the response is 11 and maximum score is 44. The distribution of levels of motivation in teaching are as below:

Table 2: Levels of motivation in teaching

| Levels of motivation in teaching | Scores |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| High | 33-44 |
| Average | 22-32 |
| Low | 11-21 |

The instrument was validated by 5 experts. They are lecturers and teachers from the education, counselling and measurement field. Most of them have been in the education service for more than 10 years. The instrument has been found to have a high score of validity and reliability value of 0.7 to 0.8.

The data was collected at the end of the semester in 2015. The data was analysed using t-test, percentage and frequency. Prior to the beginning of the study, a month was spent to get the permission from the authorities to carry out this study. The university course was carried out as usual to the students. The classes were conducted for 14 weeks at the institution. A set of questionnaire was given to the treatment group at the end of the semester, and to the control group at the beginning of the subsequent semester. The treatment group are also asked to give reflection regarding the Personality Development course utilising Counselling Skills. Reflections were given voluntarily as there is no coercion used in collecting the data.

Results and Discussions

Results are discussed in two parts. The first part is the data for motivation in teaching, and second part is the supporting data based on the reflection given by trainee teachers at the end of the semester.

Motivation in teaching

The data is analysed using t-test. The results show that there is a difference between the treatment and control group ($t=3.4$, $df=594$, $p<.05$). There is a difference in the mean score of motivation in teaching in the treatment group (min=3.76) compared to the control group (3.37). This shows that the treatment group comprises of more trainee teachers of high level of motivation in teaching. This indicates that the university course, Personality Development is able to help in increasing the level of motivation in teaching among trainee teachers in one of the teachers' training institutions in Malaysia.

There is a difference in motivation in teaching between the control and the treatment groups. The treatment group had passed the course and the control group had never been exposed to Personality Development course. Treatment was given in 14 weeks where counselling skills were demonstrated and applied. Facts and examples were given and role play and presentation were carried out in classes. To enhance their communication skills by using basic counselling skills, trainee teachers were also required to carry out an outreach programme and attend a two-day experiential programme where they were asked to apply the basic counselling skills with their peers and with the community. The importance of educating students was one of the aspects that had been discussed in the course where case study and discussions were carried out.

Reflection

Through a survey, 313 (63%) of the trainee teachers who had passed the course totally agreed, 178 (36%) agreed, 4(0.8%) disagreed and 1(0.2) totally disagreed that the Personality Development course has given them motivation in teaching. Reflections collected from trainee teachers show that the emerging themes include the enjoyment and benefits of taking the course and hopes regarding teaching. Trainee teachers expressed their enjoyment in taking the Personality Development course. They enjoyed the activities conducted in the course. Students were required to participate in role play as teachers and students. Acting as students has helped them to understand students' feelings when teachers used certain ways of communication. Trainee teachers were also required to participate in the experiential programmes where they were given certain tasks in groups such as puzzle, problem solving, personality test and reflection.

The benefits that were listed in the reflections include understanding oneself and others, communicating effectively with others especially students, future benefits such as when having their own family and career achievement. Trainee teachers also expressed their hope that they will be able to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the course. They also suggested that the Personality Development course be opened to teachers and students at schools. Among the expression given were:

"It is fun taking the course. Lots of activities".

"I love the programme in this course. It is great. We have time to apply whatever we learn - help friends, give supports to each other, communicate well, understand others. It was great".

"Being in the course was thrilling. We were asked to role play. Sometimes we had to act as good teachers and also as bad ones. Being students and audience at that time, we can know and understand how students feel if teachers act in certain ways".

"I can understand myself when we were asked to reflect ourselves - during discussion on theories of personality.. interesting".

"Communication... that's the best part.. learn, practise, apply".

"I will use the skills for the future - having family, in the workplace".

"The best.. this should be given to teachers and students at school".

However, there are trainee teachers who are unsure of the impact of the course such as:

“Not sure of what I get from the course”.

“No, I don’t really like to act as students – childish”.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that nearly all trainee teachers have high level of motivation in teaching after taking the Personality Development course compared to trainee teachers who have not taken the course. To conclude, the university course, Personality Development has proven to help trainee teachers to be motivated in teaching. Trainee teachers feel confident and are aware of the responsibilities of being a teacher in the future. The result was also supported by data collected in the reflections given by trainee teachers who have taken the Personality Development course.

The course comprises of knowledge and skills in teaching. The knowledge regarding philosophy, concept and ethics in the teaching profession and the skills acquired in the course are found to be helpful in increasing motivation in teaching among trainee teachers in a teacher training institution in Malaysia. The findings in recent research found that motivation and ethics are important aspects in teachers training. (Gemedda, & Tynjala, 2015; Galini & Efthymia, 2009; Shazaitul Azreen & Maisarah, 2016; Tang Keow Ngang & Tan Chan Chan, 2015; and Wlodkowski, 2003).

In this study, it has proven that conducive environment is essential for teachers’ development. It has also been claimed by Driscoll, Lambirth, and Roden (2012) and Farirai Musika and Richard Bukaliya (2015) that along with a good knowledge of the subjects to be taught, teachers are also fair and empathetic and know the demands of teaching a single national curriculum to children in a culturally rich and diverse community. The trainee teachers’ reflections also show that the counselling skills taught in the Personality Development course have helped the trainee teachers to gain confidence of their self-potential. This is supported by Zuria and Salleh (2002), Baker and Gerler (2004), who stated that proper and suitable ways of conducting classes or programmes increase students and teachers well-being and future undertakings. Therefore, teachers should have counselling skills and apply them in classrooms and during interactions with students, teachers, staffs, and parents.

Conclusion

The results show that the university course, Personality Development can be a part of the programme that contribute to increasing motivation in teaching among trainee teachers. The Personality Development course can also be used as a medium for students and parents to gain motivation in teaching their peers and children. Therefore, it is believed that this course can be used by all education institutions and other organizations to give confidence to trainee teachers, educators, parents and students as well as develop their potentials to be integrated human resources for the nation.

Basic counselling skills should also be the most important aspect in training as it may give ways and guidelines to teachers, educators, parents and students on effective communication. With the right way of communication,

relationship can be developed, maintained and strengthened, thus creating a conducive environment where positive impact will be achieved tremendously.

This study, however, did not investigate the effect of the course using pretest posttest experimental design. Other variables such as emotional quotient, competencies and self efficacy that may affect teachers' performance are not included in this study. The process of gaining motivation in teaching to understand its factors and barriers is not explored in this study. The sustained motivation in teaching among trainee teachers who have taken the course to measure whether the course has long time effect is also not investigated. Thus, further studies should be taken to determine the effectiveness of this course by utilizing prepost experimental control group design, longitudinal study and also inquiry naturalistic study.

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