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Teacher Quality: Malaysian Teacher Standard

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Abstract

Teacher quality is a pivotal educational issue that has been examined for years. According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) report, teacher quality can be categorised into excellent with 55.1 percent, high with 39.9 percent, moderate with 4.8 percent, low with 0.2 percent in comparison to the previous year. This phenomenon is worrying as the excellent teacher quality needs to exceed 70 percent to meet the challenges of 21st century education. This current study is a quantitative study involving 423 secondary school teachers throughout Malaysia. Data collection is carried out using the questionnaire method based on the Malaysian Teacher Standard (SGM). The findings showed that the quality of teachers in Malaysia is excellent. The highest level of teacher quality is the practice of professionalism value while the lowest level of teacher quality is knowledge and understanding.

Keywords: High School Teachers, Students' Well-Being, Teacher Quality, Malaysian Teacher Standard (SGM)

Introduction

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has been working to improve the quality of teachers through efforts such as improving the education system, reducing the number of students in the classroom, increasing the number of new classes and schools, raising teachers' salaries and increasing spending in the field of education (MOE, 2013). MOE has long strived to produce quality teachers. This effort was evident when the Ministry chose teacher quality as the theme of the teacher's day, with the theme of 'Towards Teacher Efficiency and Quality Education' in 1982, 'Teacher Quality, the Country's Aspiration' in 2002 and 2003, and 'Teacher Quality, the Catalyst of Glory' in 2004 and 2005. Next, the Ministry has targeted a 100 percent increase in teacher quality in 2010 as outlined in the Education Development Master Plan, 2006 – 2010.

On 2 December 2009, the Teacher Education Division, MOE issued a Malaysian Teacher Standard (SGM) document as a guide to the professional competency that teachers need to achieve and the requirements that should be provided by the college's training agencies or institutes to produce and preserve quality teachers (MOE, 2008). This quality assurance mechanism is also an important point in producing quality teachers in the college training received by prospective teachers. Thus, this standard has been used as a benchmark for college training in Malaysia to ensure that the Quality Assurance Code of Practice, Malaysian

Qualifications Agency (MQA) is complied with. SGM is implemented through close monitoring, detailed assessment and transparent reporting to ensure that the quality of teachers is always at its best. This standard includes three main principles, namely the practice of the value of teaching professionalism, knowledge and understanding as well as teaching and learning skills (MOE, 2008). In addition, the Malaysian Inspectorate of Schools and Quality Assurance, MOE has also established Excellent Teachers (GC) to recognize quality teachers in the teaching and learning process in schools.

The quality requirements of teachers in education are indeed very important and carry a huge role on the well-being of students. In fact, the quality of a school system in the aspect of education should not exceed the quality of its teachers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). The fact that students can be improved is not only through the improvement of quality management practiced by a school, but the quality of teachers is also an element that needs to be improved first in terms of commitment towards their career and self-competence as an educator (Rahim et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important to improve the quality of teachers first to improve students' well-being and create effective schools in the education system in Malaysia.

Literature Review

There are various definitions, concepts and theories according to the researcher and the topic of discussion in the study on the quality of teachers. The quality of teachers is a complex phenomenon and has been discussed frequently since the 1970s. However, to date, there is still no single definition that can fully define the quality of teachers (Blanton et al., 2006). The quality of teachers is still considered a vague concept because there is no consensus of researchers on the definition and dimensions that represent the concept of teacher quality (Blanton et al., 2006; Burnett & Meacham, 2002; Cochran & Smith, 2009; Fuller et al., 2007; Goe, 2007; Money & Fwu, 2007).

The study on the quality of teachers has previously been discussed with various understandings and views. Although there are various studies and discussions conducted by researchers on teacher quality, not a single theory of teacher quality can be used as a basis in the study. However, some researchers have worked to come up with theories and models on teacher quality to ensure that studies on teacher quality are properly organised. Among the well-known individuals in the field of teacher quality is Laura Goe who has developed a study on teacher quality through the National Comprehensive Center, USA. She has put forward a dimension of teacher quality to be looked at to ensure that the teacher's quality measurement really measures the quality aspect of the teacher as a whole. Goe (2007) in her study entitled *The Link between Teacher Quality and Student Outcomes: A Research Synthesis* has built a framework on teacher quality. There are three important parts of the quality of the teacher (Goe, 2007) which are input (qualification and character of the teacher), process (teacher practice) and results (teacher effectiveness).

A quality teacher can be expressed as someone who teaches and maximizes learning for all student (Stroot et al., 1998). A preliminary study conducted by Coleman et al (1966) in the Equality of Educational Opportunity, identified seven characteristics of a teacher, namely the year of experience, the highest level achieved, the performance of vocabulary tests, ethnic groups, the educational achievements of parents; whether teachers grew up where they are taught and the teacher's behavior towards students. However, through past studies, the term of a quality teacher can be defined from two main perspectives, namely effective teacher and good teacher (Berliner, 2005; Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005).

Effective teachers are said to be quality teachers because these teachers can impact students' achievement through uniform test results (Wayne & Young, 2003). Next, a good teacher is a quality teacher because he has the ingenuity, practice, emotions and interaction of the teacher with a good student in shaping the well-being of the students (Cochran & Smith, 2009). These two aspects focus on the results of the teaching and teaching practice of the teacher.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1994) defined teacher quality through five main dimensions, namely knowledge in the field and content, pedagogical skills, reflection and ability, empathy and commitment, and management competencies. These five dimensions often depend on each other in producing quality teachers.

However, MOE has outlined three main dimensions of teacher quality as stated in the Malaysian Teacher Standard (SGM) which are the practice of the value of professionalism of the teacher, the knowledge and understanding of teachers as well as teaching and learning skills. These dimensions are seen as more holistic and in line with the culture of education in Malaysia which practices the values of professionalism among teachers, as well as having to master the knowledge to be conveyed and possessing skills in teaching and learning.

Teacher quality in this study refers to teachers' self-esteem and work quality. These aspects will be measured based on the teachers' professionalism practice, knowledge and understanding, as well as teaching and learning skills in improving students' achievement and performance.

Problem Statement

In line with the development of developed education, Malaysia through PPPM 2013 – 2025 has also emphasized High Level Thinking Skills (HOTS) in teaching and learning sessions. Teachers also need to have a higher level of knowledge and skills to produce students who can cope with high order thinking (MOE, 2015). According to the 2015 PPPM report, teacher quality can be categorised into excellent with 55.1 percent, high with 39.9 percent, moderate with 4.8 percent, low with 0.2 percent in comparison to the previous year (KPM, 2015). This phenomenon is still worrying as the quality of excellent teachers needs to exceed 70 percent to meet the challenges of 21st century education which emphasises high order thinking skills (HOTS), (MOE, 2015). Teachers can no longer remain in a comfort zone and rely solely on textbooks in imparting knowledge and skills to students (MOE, 2015). The failure of a learner to apply learning and problem-solving skills is the responsibility of a teacher who has not managed to educate students effectively (MOE, 2015). Therefore, this study should be conducted to investigate the current level of teacher quality especially for teachers in the national secondary schools in Malaysia.

The quality of teachers is an important element in determining the success of a school and the success of the students. The concept of teacher qualities that can influence the achievement of students has been in the spotlight since the 1970s and is still being discussed to this day (Blanton et al., 2006). The quality of the teacher is an important factor that determines the well-being of students at the school level. A preliminary study conducted by Sanders & Rivers (1996) proved that two students of the same age with moderate performance were able to perform differently over a three-year period when taught by two teachers who also had different performance. Quality teachers play an important role in addition to the background factors of the students' education, including demographics and

socio-economic status (Arifin et al., 2014; Goe 2007). Although many studies had shown that the quality of teachers has a significant relationship with the achievement and development of students, there is still little study on teacher quality especially in Malaysia. Therefore, this study is crucial to improve the quality of teachers and, thus improving the achievement and development of students in secondary schools in Malaysia.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

Cross-sectional survey method was used in this study to obtain relevant data. The data were collected only at one point in time. This study's respondents consist of secondary school teachers from across Malaysia. This study involved numerical data which were then analysed using statistical method. The data obtained from the instrument, which is in the form of a questionnaire, is analysed in this study to describe the phenomenon. The data was categorised and quantitatively interpreted according to the specified aspect. The reliability and validity of the instrument, as well as the construction of facts, were all part of the data analysis.

Sample

This study's population consists of teachers teaching in national secondary schools. In general, these teachers have different roles and responsibilities than teachers teaching in other types of schools. In this regard, the characteristics of students in the national secondary schools will influence the quality of teachers as these students are relatively heterogeneous and come from different socio-cultural backgrounds. This study involved 423 teachers. The number of samples was determined based on the appropriate sample size as noted in the literature, as well as the study's design, procedure and statistical analyses.

This study used simple random sampling procedure and proportional random sampling. The simple random sampling was used to ensure that each person in the population has the same opportunity to be selected as the study's respondent. Simple random sampling was also used to select the states and teachers involved in this study, whereas random sampling was used to calculate the number of schools involved in this study based on the actual number of schools in the selected state and the number of samples required.

Table 1

Teachers' demographic profile

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	118	27.9
	Female	305	72.1
	Total	423	100
Level of Education	Graduate	322	76.1
	Post-Graduate	101	23.9
	Total	423	100
Locality of School	Urban	318	75.2
	Rural	105	24.8
	Total	423	100

Research Instrument

The data were collected using questionnaires adapted from Malaysian Teacher Standards Instrument (MOE, 2008). Construct validity and content validity were used to measure the validity of the constructs and to ensure that the content can measure the true value of the concepts being studied. Moreover, the items' correlational scale and internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) were used to measure the reliability of the constructs.

Table 2

Items in the survey questionnaire

Section	Dimension	Dimension	Total
A	Demographic Profile	Gender	1
		Level of Education	1
		Locality of School	1
B	Teacher Quality	Teacher Professionalism Practice	26
		Knowledge and Understanding	21
		Teaching and Learning Skill	24

Data Analysis

The statistical analysis used in this study includes descriptive statistics. The data collected were then analysed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, which was designed to analyse data and information collected statistically. Prior to the detailed data analysis, Exploratory Data Analysis was conducted for data identification.

Research Finding

This section looks at the results of the study for question 3, which is the quality level of secondary school teachers. There are five levels of teacher quality specified in this question which are excellent, very good, good, medium and weak. Teacher quality is divided into the practice of the values of professionalism, knowledge and understanding as well as teaching and learning skills.

Table 4.14

Descriptive Analysis of Teacher Quality in National Secondary Schools in Malaysia

Teacher Quality	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level Definition
Practice of the Values of Professionalism	3.96	0.419	Very Good
Knowledge and Understanding	3.89	0.327	Very Good
Teaching and Learning Skills	3.95	0.339	Very Good
Overall	3.93	0.323	Very Good

Based on Table 4.14, it is found that the practice of the value of professionalism is at a very good level. The mean value of the practice of the value of professionalism is (mean = 3.96; sd = 0.419) which is higher than the mean value of teaching and learning skills, as well as knowledge and understanding. The mean value of teaching and learning skills (mean = 3.95; sd = 0.339) is at a very good level. As for knowledge and understanding, the mean value was also found to be at a very good level (mean = 3.89; sd = 0.327). Overall, the quality of teachers in Malaysian National Secondary schools is at a very good level (mean = 3.93; sd = .0323

Discussion

As a result of descriptive analysis, the findings showed that the teacher quality was very good. The components inherent in the quality of the teacher are the practice of the value of the professionalism of the teacher, the teacher's knowledge and understanding of the educational context and the teacher's teaching and learning skills. Overall, the findings indicate that the level of teacher quality was very good. This illustrates that the teachers have shown the best level of quality and have effectively carried out their responsibilities. The aspect of practice of values of professionalism which involves self-domain, domain of the profession and social domain was found to have the highest level among the 3 aspects of teacher quality.

For personal domains, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are the items that recorded the highest values. These findings support the results of the study obtained by Conger where the teachers' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are vital because these skills are the strength in the teacher to become a quality educator (Conger, 2004). Interpersonal skills are the ability of a teacher to communicate and connect with the environment. The absence of interpersonal skills will leave a teacher unable to communicate well and effectively control the environment. This situation will cause the relationship between teachers and students, schools and outsiders to be strained and may lead to the outbreak of more serious conflicts. Meanwhile, intrapersonal skills are the teacher's skills to know themselves deeply and the self-confidence found in the teacher. If a teacher does not have these intrapersonal skills, then the teacher will have low self-confidence, is unsure of self-will, prefers to be alone, which will eventually lead to depression. Therefore, the school needs to be concerned about the teacher's interpersonal and intrapersonal skills as these two elements are important to ensure that the quality of teachers can be improved. Among the measures that can be done by the parties involved are providing counselling services, engaging teachers in various community-based programmes and activities as well as encouraging teachers to solve problems and make decisions. These measures will form a more dynamic character of the teacher and improve their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Next, for the domain of profession, the item that recorded the highest value is the love for the profession. Love for the profession is an aspect that is indispensable in measuring the level of professionalism of employees. An employee who has feelings of affection and love towards the career he or she does is indispensable to the employer. Since there are many challenges and constraints in a career as an educator, a teacher should show affection towards the career as an educator. In the absence of such feelings, the teacher will quickly get bored and subsequently will neglect the responsibility of being an educator. This situation, in turn, will have negative consequences for the quality of the teacher and the students' outcome. Therefore, schools need to ensure that every teacher shows affection and love towards their career as an educator. This feeling can be nurtured in various ways such as through continuous rewarding, recognition, support and encouragement so that this feeling is instilled and can be maintained among teachers.

In addition, the item about the love of the environment also recorded a high value for social domain. Social domain is a domain related to the state of the environment and the relationship between the teacher and the society. The love of the environment is the feeling of an individual towards their surrounding in ensuring that the environment can be taken care of and well preserved. Despite their heavy workloads, teachers must prioritise environmentalism by ensuring a clean environment, preserving and conserving the environment, and working toward a sustainable environment. As a result, it is critical that this

aspect of environmental love be enhanced in the teacher, as a teacher should value a clean and safe environment. This feeling can then be transferred to students to sustain the environment for future generations.

Teaching and learning skills are a moderate level of teacher quality. The item that recorded the highest mean value is the last item concerning the management of discipline in the classroom. These findings coincide with the findings of a study conducted by (Cadima et al., 2010). Discipline management in the classroom is the skill of the teacher to manage the discipline of the students in the classroom throughout the teaching and learning sessions. The management of discipline in the classroom is an aspect that needs to be emphasized in teaching and learning skills. If the discipline of the students is not well managed, various problems will occur such as the students being disrespectful towards the teacher and the learning time, the emotions of the students will be disturbed and there will be students who interfere with the classroom environment. As a result of this situation, teaching and learning sessions will be ineffective, negatively impacting students achievement. Hence, a teacher should strive to maintain effective control and management of students' discipline in the classroom throughout the teaching and learning sessions, which should be conducted in a variety of ways to accommodate the diversity of students in the classroom.

Whereas Knowledge and understanding are the lowest levels of teacher quality. The content of the subjects with the highest mean values is the item of the aspect of the teacher's knowledge and understanding. It is expected that a good teacher will have a high level of knowledge and understanding of the content of the subjects. A teacher who understands the content of well-taught subjects can effectively communicate knowledge to students. The teacher's weakness in mastering and understanding the content of the subjects he wants to convey will cause the knowledge and skills of a subject to not be effectively communicated. The students will then struggle to understand the subjects they are studying, which will have an impact on their grades. A good teacher should strive to gain a thorough understanding of the content of the subjects he or she is teaching. Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities, In-Service Training (LADAP), and participation in out-of-school programmes related to the content of the subjects are all effective methods. Therefore, a teacher should prepare to teach a subject with a high level of knowledge and understanding so that all knowledge can be effectively conveyed to students and problems in learning can be indirectly solved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is critical to pay attention to the quality of teachers to ensure that students achievement, development, and school effectiveness can be achieved. In schools, especially at the secondary school level, effective quality management practises should be practised. Teachers, principals, and ministries should all be concerned about the quality of teacher development to remain consistent with the current educational system's development. This teacher quality should be considered, as the educational system is becoming increasingly challenging, and the teaching profession is becoming increasingly burdened with significant responsibility. A teacher's level of quality can vary depending on his or her personality, background, environment, and knowledge. Therefore, a teacher needs to identify his or her own strengths and weaknesses and align them according to the standards set by the ministry in the Malaysian Teacher Standard. In turn, the strength should be enhanced, while the weaknesses should be minimised to improve the quality of teachers in the future. Teachers should seek for continuous growth and avoid feeling comfortable with the effort that has been made. Moreover, teachers should enhance their efforts and develop the quality of

teachers, especially in the aspect of the value of the teaching profession, knowledge and understanding, as well as teaching and learning skills.

Contribution

Among the aspects that need to be considered in the development of teacher quality is to improve the teacher professionalism practice. This encompasses personal domain, professional domain and social domain. Pertaining personal domain aspect, this study is seen to increase teachers' trust in God, nature of trust, sincerity, knowledge, love, patience, courtesy, fair, strengthen resilience, fit, active, healthy, possess interpersonal skills and intrapersonal, has a high voluntary spirit and act efficiently. Meanwhile, the professional domain can be enhanced through nurturing love for the profession, skilful, integrity, set a good example, practise teamwork, act proactively and produce creative and innovative ideas. In addition, social domain includes harmony, social skill, social spirit, patriotism and love of environment.

In addition, this study also contributes in improving the knowledge and understanding of teachers through the items in the questionnaire. Teachers will be able to increase their knowledge and understanding of the philosophies, goals and objectives in education. In addition, teachers' knowledge and understanding of philosophy, goals, curriculum and co-curriculum objectives, learning outcomes can also be enhanced and explained in detail. In fact, teachers' knowledge and understanding of subjects, educational knowledge, use of information and communication technology as well as educational resources will also be enhanced. Moreover, teachers' knowledge and understanding of strategies to create learning environment, assessment and evaluation and action research as well as the development of student potential can be enhanced through teacher quality understanding and improving.

The description of items in the questionnaire is also expected to contribute to the development of teachers' teaching and learning skills. Teachers can also improve the skills through effective approaches, methods and techniques in the classroom. Furthermore, the skills of monitoring, assessing and evaluating are further strengthened through the quality assurance mechanisms that have been discussed in this study. In fact, classroom management skills can also be improved through the implementation of rules, environment, layout and resource planning as well as effective time by the teacher.

Recommendation

Teachers and administrators from other types of schools, such as boarding schools, religious schools, and high-performing schools, could be included in future studies to further elaborate and expand the study. This study can also be extended to private schools and all educational institutions to improve the quality of their management and education services.

Furthermore, future studies are recommended to use longitudinal studies that collect data repeatedly from samples over a long period of time as longitudinal studies can provide consistent and more transparent data. Besides, as a longer study period could lead to more reliable findings, the number of respondents can also be increased, and a wider area could be covered.

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