

Self-Initiated Professional Development among Malaysian TVET Teachers in Vocational Colleges

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Abstract--- *This concept paper will present discussion on Self-Initiated Professional Development (SI-PD) among Malaysian TVET teachers in vocational colleges. Self-initiated or self-directed professional development has gained much attention lately. Since there is an increasing concern that teachers' professional development that needs to be effective and meaningful. Furthermore, one of Ministry of Education (MOE) agenda in Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 is to transform Continuous Professional Development (CPD) practice by increasing self-led professional development and reducing Ministry-led professional development from 16 percent to 60 percent by the year of 2025. Self-initiated professional development practice provide teachers with the autonomy to direct their own learning. This paper presents a compilation of critical review of reports, journals and articles by previous authors and researchers on Self-Initiated Professional Development and to gain perspectives from TVET teachers in vocational colleges on the needs of self-initiated professional development framework.*

Keywords--- *Self-Initiated, Self-Directed, Professional Development, TVET Teachers, Vocational College.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Government Transformation Program (GTP) and New Economic Model aspire to produce human capital that capable to innovate and explore new fields in the effort to generate our country's wealth. In Budget 2013, government has allocated a substantial allocations to improve the quality of education especially to fulfill the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025. MEB has outlined the needs of education transformation during the first wave where the systems need to revamp to provide support to the teachers and focus on core skills. Looking at this scenario, TVET in Malaysia has undergone a major transformation in 2012 to uplift the standard of TVET to be at par with mainstream education. Not just transforming vocational schools to vocational colleges, MOE also transforms teachers' professional development practice because apparently the previous 'one size fits all' concept was ineffective.

The quality of the teachers has becoming one of the long top priority by the policymakers and researchers [3,45]. They recognized the fact that schools cannot be effective unless the ones who work in them are also effective [32]. In MEB 2013-2025, Ministry of Education (MOE) committed in improving the quality of teachers who will contribute towards national education system to be at par with international standards. They play a vital role to prepare students with skills and becoming 'high level knowledge workers' since the students will compete in work

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realm later [14,40]. However, it is difficult to improve student achievement if teaching quality from quality teachers not played as the key factor [15].

Hence, Pelan Pembangunan Profesionalisme Berterusan (PPPB) or CPD masterplan was formed to help teachers planning their career development and continuous professional development (CPD). This has been reconceptualized due to disappointments of the traditional approaches which seen as insufficient and not suitable in the context of current educational reform efforts [37]. The policy assumes that there are many CPD activities available so that teachers can plan their own CPD programme, picking and choosing according to their own career objectives and professional interests. One of the main objective in the PPPB policy is to escalate the capacity of self-initiated learning and lifelong learning to enable teachers to contribute continuously and effectively.

Unlike traditional professional development practice that treat teachers as passive learners, current professional development practice was designed to reflect principles of adult learning. Self-initiated is increasing in popularity for a variety of reasons such as critical attributes for lifelong learning in order to survive the environment that influenced by economic, technology and social changes [10]. Figure 1 below shows the transformation of continuous professional development (CPD) practice by MOE.

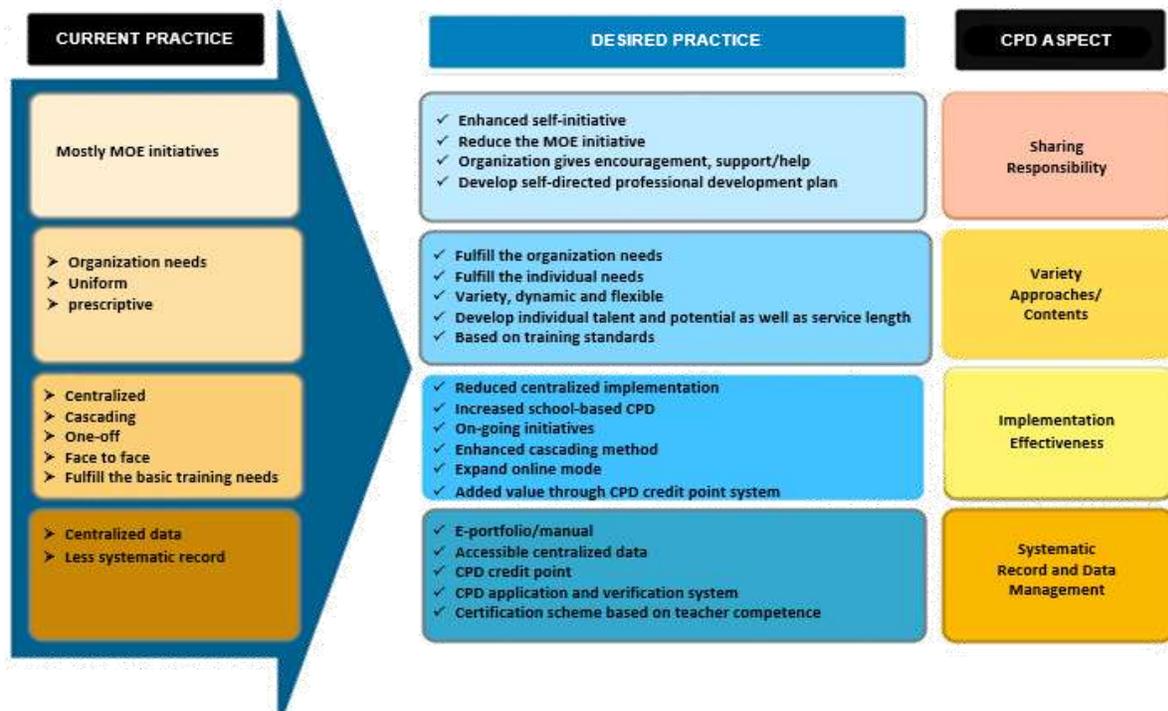


Figure 1: Transformation of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Practice

MOE desires to increase Self-Initiated Professional Development (SI-PD) from 16 percent to 60 percent by 2025 and reducing Ministry-led professional development as mentioned in CPD masterplan policy. Figure 2 shows the desired continuous professional development practice.



Figure 2: Desired Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Practice, MEB 2013-2025

TVET teachers in vocational colleges come from various field and expertise. They require professional development practice that relevant to industry demand for them to develop professionally with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes which should begin by considering the teachers' needs and their work atmospheres [6,34]. This is aligned with [1], the delivery of quality TVET is influenced by teachers' competency, pedagogical skills and familiar with latest technologies in the industry. SI-PD allows teachers to acquire a wide variety of skills and gain access to training outside the classroom at their own pace. It is also very suitable during this information age because there are various ways and networks.

II. SELF-INITIATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SI-PD)

Terms self-initiated, self-directed, self-development and self-regulated are interchangeable and have been defined in the literature from several different point of view. SI-PD was interrelated to self-initiated learning and adult learning [7]. [16] defined SI-PD as teachers' own development of intellect, experience and attitudes, which is initiated by themselves. Individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in identifying their learning needs, formulating learning goals, determine resources for learning, choosing and applying appropriate learning strategies and assessing learning outcomes. On the other hand, [7] uses the following typology for SI-PD: can be planned, reinforced, approved, supported by school, or it can be carried out autonomously by teachers. The rationale of encouraging SI-PD are depicted in the following:

2.1 *Reduce ineffective and costly professional development*

Self-initiated learning can reduce the ineffective and costly professional development. The current budgetary constraints led to the need to find new channel of transmitting knowledge [44]. TVET teachers' professional development programs require large provision and it is challenging to cater the needs of each individual. In 2012, MOE estimated expenditure for teachers' INSET exceeds RM 900 million. According to [8], to build more responsive and economical learning atmospheres, flexible approaches to professional development that integrate technology

and reduce the provision of traditional professional development have emerged that require teachers to be more self-initiated. It also may reduce the mismatch between the needed professional development and the practice professional development [31].

2.2 Encourage active learning experiences

Effective professional development provides teachers with meaningful and important training related to their job. Teachers can develop the quality of classroom instruction, grow professionally and strengthen their practice. Since 2014, vocational colleges' teachers had to apply OBE which encouraged students to actively participate in learning experiences, TVET teachers also need to actively participate in their professional learning. Furthermore, teachers are expected to master lifelong learning skills in order to direct their own learning in their fields of expertise. Exploring SI-PD not only teachers develop themselves, but also others [11]. [3] suggested that collaboration between teachers is significant form of learning for professionals. It is great to see teachers work collaboratively with their colleagues to enhance their development efforts [16]. Via informal interactions, teachers can share their knowledge, experiences and strategies with others [18]. Therefore, teachers able to reflect on their practice, build professional knowledge with their peers and develop more collaborative interactions with their fellow teachers [12].

2.3 Fulfill individual needs

SI-PD is giving TVET teachers more 'voice' and autonomy to plan, do, monitor, evaluate and self-improvement compared to traditional professional development [7]. [48] revealed that teachers prefer SI-PD because it suit their needs and institutionally. This can enhance their self-efficacy which could contribute for them to operate effectively because they become more confident in teaching and have higher self-esteem [31]. According to [4], a meaningful professional development involves teachers as whole persons – their values, beliefs and assumptions about teaching. In traditional professional development approach, experienced teachers were not given the opportunity to share their knowledge or expertise. They were only required to sit and participate when asked because both novice and experienced teachers are going through the same professional development activities. Professional development should allow experienced teachers as they will retire, to share their knowledge and expertise with novice teachers to ensure against loss of expertise in TVET [3].

2.4 Opens to all learning possibilities

SI-PD allows teachers to acquire a wide variety of skills and gain access to training outside classroom at their own pace. With the integration of technology, transmitting information and sharing materials in education is just one click away. The emergence of online professional development, Massive Online Open Courses, professional learning networks, wikis, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and other Web 2.0 applications provide an atmosphere that makes the possibility a potential reality for all districts [29]. It is easier for teachers to engage their professional development at anywhere and anytime. MOE also provide options for teachers to perform their professional development through webinar or web seminar. Several benefits of online professional development such as flexible and versatile, potential to build community among teachers, improve teachers' retention where teachers become more directly involved in their own learning and professional growth. Furthermore, increasingly 21st century skills such as creativity, collaboration, multi-modal, communication, information, communication and technology (ICT)

literacy are being integrated into education system across the globe. MOE in the CPD masterplan has list out 13 professional development activities such as mentoring, peer coaching, discussions, benchmarking that teachers could engage.

2.5 To be at par with developed countries

SI-PD approach becomes a growing trend and widely popular concept nowadays to upskill TVET teachers. Developed countries like Finland, Australia, United States of America, United Kingdom, South Korea and Japan more emphasis on SI-PD to fulfill individual and organization needs [35]. OECD countries are the main player in education of the world. Therefore, to be on par with developed countries, firstly we need to develop teachers to have first class mentality and skills to be proactive in initiating in their own training without depending on school or MOE. They do not view SI-PD as burden even though they have to bear the cost and manage it themselves. The most important part to them is as long as it benefits the students.

III. SELF-INITIATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Knowles's theory of adult learning is used to explain the implementation of SI-PD of TVET teachers in vocational colleges. Andragogy is the term given by many concept of teaching adults. The number of andragogical principles has grown from 4 to 6 over years as Knowles refined his thinking. Originally, he presented with 4 assumptions, number 2 to 5 [22,23,24]. The first four assumptions are quite similar to [25] four assumptions about adult education. Assumption number 6, motivation to learn, was added in 1984 [21] and assumption number 1, the need to know, was added in more recent years [20]. Thus, today there are six core assumptions or principles of andragogy [19] as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Core Assumptions of Andragogy [19]

No.	Assumptions	Explanation
1.	Learner's need to know	Adults need to know why they need to learn something before learning it.
2.	Self-concept of the learner	The self-concept of adults is heavily dependent upon a move towards self-direction.
3.	Prior experience of the learner	Prior experiences of the learners provide a rich resource for learning.
4.	Readiness to learn	Adult typically become ready to learn when they experience a need to cope with life situation or perform a task.
5.	Orientation to learning	Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered and they see education as a process of developing increased competency levels to achieve their full potential.
6.	Motivation to learn	The motivation for adults' learners is internal rather than external.

Previously, vast research and attention had been given to the concept of pedagogy. Knowles believes that teachers as adult should have different approach of professional learning not like school students which promotes SI-PD. His views surrounding andragogy required to take advantage on the unique learning styles and strengths of adult learners. Here are some of the main differences between pedagogy and andragogy as shows in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Differences between pedagogy and andragogy [46]

	Pedagogy	Andragogy
Learners need to know	Learners need to know what the teacher tell them	Leaner need to know why something is important prior to learn it
Learner's self-concept	Learner has a dependent personality	Learners are responsible for their own decisions
Role of learner's experience	The learner's experience is of little worth	The learner's experience has great importance
Readiness to learn	Learners become ready to learn what the teacher required	Learners become ready to learn when they see content as relevant to their lives
Orientation to learning	Learners expect subject centered content	Learners expect life centered content (Task or problem-centered)
Motivation	Motivation is by external pressure, and there is lot of competition for grades	It is driven by internal motivation. Includes self-actualization, self-confidence etc.

IV. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF SI-PD

Several issues in relation to the implementation of SI-PD among TVET teachers in vocational colleges have been brought into discussions by some researchers in this area and have become the gap that encourage researcher to develop a framework. These issues and challenges are hindering the implementation of SI-PD. There are several issues that been highlighted;

4.1 Ineffective role of Training and Staff Development Unit (ULKS) coordinator

Professional development programs at each vocational college are being managed by an appointed coordinator who is attached to Training and Staff Development Unit (ULKS). ULKS has to plan and manage financial allocation wisely to ensure all academic and non-academic staffs get the benefit from it besides responsible to disseminate the professional development policy. However, the ULKS coordinator did not perform the responsibilities satisfactorily. ULKS coordinator claimed that they usually received instructions via email or Whatsapp group. There was lack of explanation on the documents and they have to make their own interpretation.

4.2 Lack of understanding of SI-PD

Before the introduction of the current educational reform, teachers attended professional development activities which were planned and fully funded by the Ministry. Due to teachers' long history of traditional or workshop formats of professional development, they have difficulty conceiving of professional development opportunities in alternative formats [17]. They still believe that it is MOE responsibility to manage and regulate them with professional development activities. On the contrary, some teachers view this as an excuse for MOE from funding their professional development. Problem of spoon feeding the factors with the interest in the self-directed professional development stems out [33]. SI-PD is not seen as an empowerment to teachers' professional learning but is seen as a burden which resulted in teachers' low motivation and dissatisfaction in their work [9].

4.3 Negative perceptions on SI-PD

There is a general perception in education that teachers are unwilling to change [3]. Perceptions are strongly influenced by workplace environment [26,28,47]. It is influenced in terms of values, beliefs and assumptions. Most teachers have no prior experience with this form of learning [33]. SI-PD is entirely a new phenomenon in the Malaysian education system. From the view of the policymakers, they saw this as a window of opportunity for teachers to begin taking control of their individual professional development needs, a sense of 'empowerment' which is rarely present in highly-centralized systems [9]. This perception is also influenced by the readiness level of the teachers. [38] revealed that there is a difference in terms of readiness level when compared with novice and experienced teachers to carry out SI-PD. Some teachers with lack of SI-PD skills felt uncomfortable and would prefer to be assigned in more formal professional development modes such as attending workshops, seminars and conferences.

4.4 Lack of self-motivation

Professional development that adopted self-initiated bases is likely to achieve its goals and leaving teachers with enthusiasm and motivation to enhance their knowledge and skills. In order to practice effective SI-PD, [27] revealed that it is difficult to find an individual who remains committed to their professional development over a lengthy period. Majority of professional development programs failed because they do not consider two critical factors: what motivates teachers to engage in staff development and the process by which change in teachers typically takes place [13]. Motivation can affect teachers' work values and job satisfaction [5]. Some teachers engage with professional development due to their own willingness to learn new knowledge, reflecting the theory of adult learning [39].

4.5 Lack of support from school administrators

[41] pointed out that lack of resources and lack of encouragement from school management hindered teachers from exercising SI-PD. TVET teachers in vocational college do not have the 'voice' to plan their professional development because mostly it has been decided by school administrator. Besides that, lack of understanding and knowledge of SI-PD among school administrators hindering the implementation of SI-PD. [3] mentioned that without leadership from the top, the structural and cultural changes to transform professional development in TVET sector will be failed. Sometimes teachers become confused by mixed message that was sent by the leaders because they do not provide support and resources for professional development but still expects that teachers should learn and implement new strategies to improve student achievement [42]. Supportive working environment from school administrators will create professional learning climate [36,43].

4.6 No proper framework

[28] mentioned even teachers do set their own learning goals and initiate their own professional development, however they still need some guidance in the process. The unclear articulation of how teachers should fulfill these needs as part of the implementation of PPPB have further contributed to the disagreement between policy intention and translation [9]. TVET teachers claimed that they need proper framework as guidelines for them to carry out SI-PD since it is a new form of professional development practice for them.

4.7 Inadequate time

As TVET teachers in vocational colleges, their job scope are bigger compared to teachers in mainstream schools system. Remarkably, they taught on average 18 to 28 hours per week and coupled with administrative work, their motivation to take part in professional development activities is seen at best, unwilling or reluctant. They cannot be expected to squeeze their professional development around all of their other duties. [9] agreed that teachers do not have the same amount of time as the policymakers to integrate the proposed change into their philosophy and work.

V. CONCLUSION

This concept paper presents discussion on Self-Initiated Professional Development (SI-PD) among Malaysian TVET teachers in vocational colleges. The new CPD policy demands teachers to redefine their professionalism thus, TVET teachers need to be understood, motivated, proactive and ready to make positive difference to their own learning.

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