



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human
Development

**A SURVEY ON THE PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS IN BELAGA
TOWARDS LIFELONG LEARNING IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**A SURVERY ON THE PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS IN BELAGA
TOWADRS LIFELONG LEARNING IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

by

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This final year project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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The project entitled **A Survey on the Perceptions of Teachers in Belaga towards Lifelong Learning in Professional Development** was prepared by Sarai Got and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Education with Honours (English as a Second Language).

It is hereby confirmed that the students has done all the necessary amendments of the project for acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

A SURVEY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS IN BELAGA TOWARDS LIFELONG LEARNING IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sarai Got

This study attempts to find out the perceptions of teachers in Belaga district towards lifelong learning in professional development. The samples used in this study were 122 teachers from one secondary school and three primary schools within the district. This study focused on five aspects. The first aspect was the reasons for teachers participate in lifelong learning in professional development. The second was the perceptions of teachers towards lifelong learning and the third aspect was factors influencing the perceptions towards lifelong learning in professional development. The fourth aspect was the ways how teachers in the district participate in lifelong learning and the fifth aspect was to find out the relationship between teacher's gender and perception on lifelong learning in professional development. The research instruments used in this study were questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that majority of teachers have positive perceptions towards lifelong learning in professional development with 96.7% perceived that teachers should continuously upgrade their teaching and female teachers agreed that learning is a lifelong process while only 92.3% of male teachers agreed. The main reason for teachers in Belaga to participate in professional development is to gain more knowledge on the subject matter (subject content). The findings also revealed that lifelong learning is beneficial for their professional development especially with the inclusion of information technology (IT) in schools. Nonetheless, the teachers also faced some obstacles in making sure they are actively involved in professional development such as lack of distance learning centres, financial commitment, family commitment and lack of resources. The results from the interviews also revealed similar patterns from the data collected through questionnaire and thus further confirmed the five aspects studied. In general, teachers in Belaga respond positively to the concept of lifelong learning in professional development.

ABSTRAK

Satu Kaji Selidik Persepsi Guru-guru di Daerah Belaga terhadap Pembelajaran Sepanjang Hayat Menerusi Pembangunan Profesional

Sarai Got

Kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti persepsi guru di daerah Belaga terhadap konsep pembelajaran sepanjang hayat menerusi pembangunan profesional guru. Kajian ini melibatkan sejumlah 122 orang guru dari sebuah sekolah menengah dan tiga buah sekolah rendah kebangsaan di daerah Belaga. Terdapat lima aspek yang difokuskan dalam kajian ini. Aspek pertama, ialah sebab-sebab para guru mengambil bahagian dalam pembelajaran sepanjang hayat dalam bidang pembangunan profesional. Aspek kedua adalah untuk mengetahui persepsi para guru terhadap pembelajaran sepanjang hayat dan aspek ketiga ialah factor yang mempengaruhi persepsi para guru terhadap pembelajaran sepanjang hayat dalam bidang pembangunan profesional. Aspek keempat pula ialah bagaimana para guru di daerah tersebut mengambil bahagian dalam pembelajaran sepanjang hayat dan aspek kelima ialah untuk mengetahui hubungan di antara guru lelaki dan guru wanita dan persepsi mereka terhadap pembelajaran sepanjang hayat dalam bidang pembangunan profesional. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah boring soal-selidik dan temuduga. Hasil kajian mendapati majoriti guru mempunyai persepsi positif terhadap pembelajaran sepanjang hayat. Dalam kalangan guru wanita 96.7 % bersetuju mengenai usaha untuk meningkatkan pengajaran secara berterusan ini kerana pembelajaran adalah suatu proses sepanjang hayat. Sebanyak 92.3% daripada guru lelaki pula bersetuju dengan pendapat ini. Sebab utama para guru di Belaga mengambil bahagian dalam pembangunan profesional ialah untuk menambah ilmu pengetahuan mereka. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan pembelajaran sepanjang hayat memberi banyak faedah atau kebaikan kepada para guru khususnya dalam pembangunan profesional terutamanya dalam penggunaan teknologi maklumat(IT) di sekolah. Walaupun pembabitan para guru dalam pembangunan profesional sepanjang hayat adalah aktif namun terdapat banyak masalah yang dihadapi oleh mereka. Contohnya kekurangan pusat pembelajaran jarak jauh, masalah kewangan, tanggungjawab terhadap keluarga dan kekurangan bahan rujukan. Hasil daripada temuramah mendapati terdapat persamaan di antara data yang diperolehi dengan soalan yang diajukan dan ini mengesahkan 5 aspek yang dipelajari. Secara umumnya para guru di Belaga memberi respons yang positif terhadap konsep pembelajaran sepanjang hayat.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

8MP	=	Eighth Malaysia Plan
AARP	=	American Association of Retired Persons
CC-HER	=	Higher Education and Research Committee of the Council of Europe
K-economy	=	Knowledge-based economy
LNPT	=	Laporan Nilai Prestasi Tahunan
MCA	=	Malaysian Chinese Association
OCECD	=	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPP3	=	Third Outline Perspective Plan
PD	=	Professional Development
PJJ	=	Pendidikan Jarak Jauh
PKPG	=	Program Khas Pensiswazahan Guru
PTK	=	Penilaian Tahap Kecekapan
UIE	=	Institute for Education within UNESCO
UNESCO	=	United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study on lifelong learning, the contexts of lifelong learning among international organizations, the context of lifelong learning in Malaysia, statement of problem, research objectives, and significance of the study, definitions of terms and the limitations of the study on the lifelong learning among teachers in Belaga.

1.0 Background of the study

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1996), stated that the learning process begins from the first day and continues throughout one's journey in life-from the cradle to the grave. Learning is thus continuing and unhindered by age. It is a lifelong process and continues even after formal learning especially after teachers training college. This chapter provides the contexts of lifelong learning according to four international lifelong learning organizations; The European Union, The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe. These international organizations have been

doing studies and research work on lifelong learning. It also seeks to give a brief account of lifelong learning in Malaysia.

1.1 The contexts of lifelong learning

1.1.1 The International Lifelong Learning Organization

The European Commission under the European Union (2001) defined lifelong learning as “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (p. 4). Lifelong learning encompasses all learning from cradle to grave and it covers various kinds of settings including formal, non-formal and informal learning one undertakes throughout one’s life (The Scottish Parliament, 2001). OECD (2001) further described lifelong learning as all purposeful learning activity that aims to improve knowledge and competencies for all individuals who wish to participate in learning activities. Learning is continuous and occurs throughout a person’s life. The Institute for Education, which is one of the six educational institutes within UNESCO, had held five international conferences on adult education in Scotland which led to publication of the documents of ‘The Hamburg Declaration’ and ‘The Agenda for Further’. Both highlighted the importance of adults’ continuous learning. Lifelong learning in these previous reports was taken to mean the acquisition of knowledge for academic purposes, the preparation for job demands, as well as the personal aspects of learning throughout one’s life.

In addition, the Higher Education and Research Committee of the Council of Europe (CC-HER) as cited in The Scottish Parliament (2001), adopted a major project on ‘Lifelong learning for social cohesion: a new challenge to higher education’ in March 1998. It aimed to build up models of excellent practice, policy recommendations to governments and institutions and analytical reports to help encourage lifelong learning (ibid). Among the issues discussed under the project are: ‘The specific role of higher education in lifelong learning’, ‘What lifelong learning can offer to the public’ and ‘Meeting the needs of all students in a changing society’ (p. 12). These issues draw attention to a gradual shift from the system of learning to the learners themselves in educational development globally. Learners have become the central issue in the international lifelong learning contexts and learning becomes increasingly self-directed and learner-centred.

1.1.2 Lifelong Learning in Malaysia

In Malaysia, lifelong learning is gradually gaining additional attention in recent years. Rapid changes in the global scene in terms of working conditions, organization and management, together with focus on the market economy, consumption and lifestyle have resulted in leaders and policy makers taking a new stance at lifelong learning.

Malaysia is catching up with the global changes and has adopted concept of lifelong learning to meet the challenges of developing the nation into a knowledge-

based economy and learning society. Ruslan (2005) pointed out that there is rising evidence that the public and private sectors, helped by financial aids of individuals and corporation, appear to have taken on the culture of lifelong learning. He stated that the three main reasons why lifelong learning is significant in Malaysia, namely the pressure as a result of globalization, rapid technological changes and Malaysia's changing demography. The population of Malaysia is predictable "to increase to 28.9 million in 2010 and the working age group of 15 to 64 is likely to increase to 65.7 percent" (Malaysia, 2001b). Such rapid growth called for the need to offer more employment and training opportunities for the working group which further emphasise the significance of lifelong learning.

As a fast developing nation and one which is closely linked economically to other nations of the world, Malaysia experiences different changes that the international world is going through. These global changes have given rise to the vital demand for lifelong learning. Moreover, these global developments have made lifelong learning a central issue to the country's education and training developments. The appearance of global knowledge economy has resulted in sudden thrust for learning all over the world and thus lifelong learning has become a necessity element for countries to remain competitive in global knowledge economy. At present, Malaysia's Prime Minister, Datuk Sri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2002) defined lifelong learning "[...] as a paradigm, a principle, a process, an attitude, a platitude,

and a form of capital and means of status maintenance.” He emphasized the importance of lifelong learning in Malaysia by saying,

“The Malaysian Government, in our Third Outline Perspective Plan [...] recognized the importance of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning will and is becoming increasingly important in the knowledge-based economy where knowledge and skills need to be continuously updated and upgraded.”

(Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, 2002, p. 2)

The vision of Malaysia to develop into an industrialized nation requires the production of high-quality products and excellence services. Both of these call for substantial knowledge inputs closely associated to lifelong learning. Since productivity and skill intensity and consequently results in the sudden awareness of a need for knowledge economy in a country (World Bank report, 1996). This creates a new viewpoint towards the concept of lifelong learning where new attitudes, perceptions and values are needed to materialize the aim of lifelong learning.

Looking into the situations faced by Malaysia today, lifelong learning seems to be propelled by the focus on employability and economic concern, but a closer look into the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3) 2001 – 2010 and the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001 – 2005) reveal an equally important emphasis on creating a learning society apart from knowledge-based economy.

“During the Plan period, the principal thrust to Human Resource Development will be the creation of a strong human resource base to support the development of a knowledge-based economy and enhance productivity and competitiveness”.

(8MP, Malaysia, 2001a)

The above description led to the understanding that lifelong learning is an on-going learning process of an individual and it encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning, which will eventually generate human capitals capable of contributing to nation's growth. This, thus, increases the awareness on the need for lifelong learning especially on informal and non-formal learning by adults. The tendency of learning now is moving towards learning as a part of daily life, a permanent national necessity and an inseparable aspect of citizenship (Gan, 2005). Apart from that, lifelong learning also indirectly influences the social, economical as well as the educational development of a nation.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The contexts of lifelong learning both locally and internationally reveal a close relationship between lifelong learning of teachers and education in general and lifelong learning among teachers and educators in particular. The world-wide changes in the system of education and new contexts of learning have brought about radical changes and new demands on the teaching profession. The pressing issue at this moment is how prepared the teachers in Malaysia are, in facing these extremely large

tasks at hand. There is a need to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable and always find ways to improve their skills and competence. Thus, through professional course and lifelong learning make them equip to be good and skilful teachers.

This study attempts to find out the perceptions of teachers in Belaga towards lifelong learning and to identify the factors influencing the differences in perception towards lifelong especially based on gender and to find out the ways teachers involve in Lifelong Learning through their professional development programme. At present, little is known as to how teachers themselves view the significance of lifelong learning- what they think is essential for them to know and to learn and how the teachers in Belaga district would like to participate in lifelong learning especially in professional development, the extent to which they are already involved in both formal or informal lifelong learning. All these issues contribute to the main purpose of this study.

1.3 Research objectives

This study aims to find out the perceptions of teachers in Belaga District towards lifelong learning. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. find out the main reasons why teachers joint the professional development
2. identify their perceptions toward lifelong learning
3. find out how teachers in Belaga involve in Lifelong Learning through the professional development

4. identify the factors influencing the differences in perception towards lifelong learning.
5. find out how factors and reasons influence their perception toward lifelong learning based on gender.

1.4 Research questions:

From the specific objectives mentioned, the following research questions are to be addressed:

1. What are the types of teacher's professional development in the district?
2. What contribute the teachers to join or not joining the courses?
3. Are there any differences in their perception toward the lifelong learning?
4. What causes the differences in their perception?
5. How gender affect the participants' rating of professional development among their reasons to join the lifelong learning?
6. Are there any relationships between the factors and reasons that affect their perception toward lifelong learning in professional based on gender?

1.5 Significance of the study

As widely accepted, teachers need to continuously equip themselves through teacher development programmes. This would enable them to constantly upgrade themselves so that can effectively address the many issues related to their profession. Thus, teachers should take personal responsibility for their personal and professional

development. They should be lifelong learners in order for them to be better prepared for the various challenges in educating their students and positively influencing the students thought, behaviours and lifestyles.

Ibrahim (2000) pointed out that:

“Teachers should cultivate a passion for lifelong learning both formal learning to promote higher powers of the mind; to achieve the goal of advancing learning and developing knowledge; to acquire skills and competencies for their profession and informal learning to improve the quality of life and self development.”

(Ibrahim Ahmad Bajunid, 2000, p. 2)

Therefore, this study can help to give an overall view of how to prepare the teachers in Malaysia are as potential or existing lifelong learners by giving them opportunity to involve in any type of in-service courses in order to improve the quality of teaching The findings can also provide the information on what causes the differences of perception among the teachers toward lifelong learning and this will give an overall views to the policy makers to consider certain circumstances that suit the distance of the places when giving courses . Furthermore, it provides useful feedback to help policy makers to design effective strategies to promote lifelong learning among teachers since teachers are key personals in realizing the national goal of a knowledgeable society especially in the rural setting such as Belaga district. They are the invaluable human resources that can bring transformation of mindsets to

bring forth a critical and creative thinking society. As such, there is an urgent need for teachers to be lifelong learners so that they are more equipped to shoulder the heavy responsibilities entrusted to them.

1.6 Operational Definitions of Terms

1.6.1 Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning as defined in the Commission's memorandum (2001) refers to "all purposeful learning activity undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences". The main aims are to fulfil employment targets and to promote the knowledge economy and personal development. It often referring to the learning over the entire life span of an individual both formal and informally. Gan (2005) mentions that lifelong learning is a process throughout one's life and transformed their experience into knowledge, skills and attitudes. It happens unconsciously and usually with certain degrees of success. In Malaysia, formal lifelong learning usually refers to the extension programmes, distance education and technology-based online learning programmes (ibid). In this study, lifelong learning activities carried out by teachers both formally, like pursuing a graduate degree or masters degree and informally, like learning for something that interest them for their own self enrichment and for better oneself to face life challenges.

1.6.2 Perceptions

Smith, as cited in Woolfolk (2004), stated that the meaning from the information and received through the senses is called perception. This meaning is formed from objective reality and the organization of information is based on the existing knowledge. Kersaint et al. (2001) mentioned that teachers' perceptions and beliefs would affect how they learn through Professional Development experiences. In the context of this study, the perceptions of lifelong learning include the like and dislike; opinions and feelings that reveal the differences towards the concepts of lifelong learning among the teachers. This is reflected in the reasons why one opts for learning or the reverse. Other aspects like comments about learning also portray one's perception towards lifelong learning

1.6.3 Professional development

Hassel as cited in Kent (2004) defined PD as 'the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding results for students'. Teachers are becoming reorganized as the centrepiece of education change, active and powerful change agents who have the power to make a difference, both individually and collectively.' Helen et. al. (NCES, 2005) viewed it as a dynamic process that spans one's entire career in a profession. Some of the purposes for PD include helping teachers to learn new teaching methods and broaden their subject matter or content knowledge. Castellano and Datnow (2002) stated that 'reform effort is an important process in teaching and learning. Teachers must explore implementation of