

Impact of Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course as an Academic Confirmation Practice in Public University

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Received: August 5, 2022

Accepted: October 21, 2022

Online Published: November 14, 2022

doi:10.5430/wjel.v12n7p222

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n7p222>

Abstract

The expansion and transformation of Malaysian universities have generated major changes in higher education institutions. These changes have considerable implications on the policy and the practice of academic confirmation in public universities. For new academic staff in one of the higher education institutions in Malaysia, they are required to successfully complete the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course as one of the requirements for confirmation in the post. It is a good effort on the part of the university to provide knowledge and guidance to new academic staff and at the same time to support their academic development by providing continuous learning on teaching and learning activities. However, there were some concerns regarding the implementation of this course. Some academic staff faces problem due to stress and increased workload. Therefore, the objectives of this research are (i) to explore students' understanding of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course objectives, (ii) to identify the benefits and difficulties faced by the students during the course, (iii) to explore the impact of the course on new academic staff's teaching and learning activities, and finally (iv) to suggest recommendations to improve the delivery of the course for the benefit of all academic staff. Engaging in pure qualitative research (phenomenology and case study approach), this study methodology procedure was divided into three main stages, (i) library-based research for the collection of secondary data and reviewing them, (ii) fieldwork data collection in the form of an open-ended questionnaire with 18 respondents, and (iii) analysis of the open-ended questionnaire and documents for the purpose of reporting by using thematic analysis. The study found that the students believed that the purpose of the course is to enhance their teaching and learning skills as well as to produce a dynamic and holistic academician. It is undeniable that these students have benefited from this course in terms of knowledge transfer, teaching and learning a soft skill, and building a network which have left a positive impact on their teaching and learning activities. However, there were some difficulties with the heavy workloads during the course which has led to some students feeling demotivated and affecting their mental health. Finally, the study proposes revising the structure of the course by considering reducing the workload, revising the duration of the course, and review of some components in the staffs' yearly performance appraisal (key performance index (KPI)). The study also found that there is a need for effective communication between the management and academic staff regarding the policy for this higher education teaching and learning course.

Keywords: academic confirmation practice, stress, teaching and learning

1. Introduction

Over the last twenty years, the Malaysian government has made a massive investment in strengthening and expanding its public higher education system and encouraged the development of private higher education (Chapman et. al., 2017). The expansion and transformation of Malaysian universities have generated major changes in the nature of academic employment and the structure of academic confirmation in higher education institutions. These changes have considerable implications, in particular for the policy and practice of academic confirmation in public universities. New academic staff is required to fulfill certain requirements before confirmation in the post. Academic staff has come under considerable pressure to fulfill all the requirements. This includes research and publication as well. Some universities require new academic staff to undergo professional/academic development programmes as a requirement

for confirmation of their post. These shifting job expectations have the potential to lower the career satisfaction of academic staff, potentially creating more tension in the academic workplace and possibly affecting the institutional commitment and loyalty of those staff (Chapman et. al., 2017).

Accordingly, for new academic staff in one of higher education institution in Malaysia, they are required to successfully complete the Higher Education Learning and Teaching course as one of the requirements for confirmation in post. The course is a 30 credit hour programme that is compulsory for new academic staff. The purpose of this course is to enhance the academic staffs' career development through different courses which are designed to assist them in teaching and learning.

It is a good effort on the part of the university to provide knowledge and guidance to new academic staff and at the same time to support their academic development by providing continuous learning on teaching and learning activities. However, there were some concerns regarding the implementation of this course. Some academic staff face problems due to stress and increased workload which indirectly affect their job performance and mental wellbeing. Therefore, research is needed to investigate the problems faced by new academic staff who are former students or those who are currently taking the course. This research also evaluates the effectiveness of the course, particularly its impact on teaching and learning so that suggestions can be made to improve the programme. As a result, this will benefit to students in the sense that it might resolve their difficulties and improve their health and mental wellbeing. Thus, this research embarks on the following questions:

- (i) Whether the students understand the objectives of the course?
- (ii) Whether students obtain benefits or face any difficulties during their period of study?
- (iii) What is the impact of the course on new academic staff's teaching and learning activities?
- (iv) What are the recommendations to improve the delivery of the course for the benefit of all academic staff?

2. Literature Review

Professional development programmes for academic staff have been widely recognized as the initiatives and events that seek to improve academic staffs' expert knowledge, competencies, and behaviors which is necessary for ensuring the enhancement of enhanced students' learning. Almost every proposal for enhancing education aims to include high-quality academic staff development as a key component of such research. However, the implementation of development programmes has enhanced the workloads of academic staff, resulting in a poor work life balance, lack of management support and other factors. This has caused academic staff to suffer workplace anxiety and stress which affect their mental well-being. In order to ensure the effectiveness of academic staff's professional development, it is critical to identify the mechanisms by which teachers can develop and improve, as well as the environments that facilitate and foster that growth.

Historically, organised professional development initiatives have been directly related to teaching (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 1994). During the postwar period, professional development had become a main educational effort (Howey & Vaughan, 1983). It was founded on programmes that offer a notion that reflected a lack of teachers' abilities and understanding at that point of time (Guskey, 1986). Initiatives to promote professional growth towards such deficit models have really been widely critiqued in academia (Guskey, 1986; Howey & Joyce, 1978; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Wood & Thompson, 1980). The literature has proven that professional development programmes that place too much stress on this deficit method were widely criticised (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Johnson, 1989; Lovitt & Clarke, 1989). The obvious lack of effective efforts to reform teachers through professional development programmes founded on the deficit-training-mastery approach has spurred a great deal of studies in the past few years on the process of transition and professional growth. The most important change can be seen from programmes that reform teachers as lifelong learners who shape their professional progress through introspective involvement in professional development programmes and practice. As a result, academic staffs' continuous development has been the subject of multiple studies for the purpose of identifying various features of effective academic staff development programmes, as well as ramifications of such training programmes.

2.1 Purpose of Academic Development Programmes

Professional development relates to the initiatives and events that aim to improve academic staffs' expert knowledge, competencies, and behaviors to ensure that they can enhance students' learning (Guskey, 2000, p. 16). Amie-Ogan and Nda (2020) agreed that an important part of an education institution's administration that improves teaching effectiveness is the staff development programme. Othman & Dahari (2011) introduced three key features of professional development. To begin with, it is a deliberate procedure guided by a clear vision of objectives and aims. It

must start with a clear description of worthy objectives and goals that can be measured and monitored. Second, due to the complex essence of education and the progressive development of information, it is an active process. As a result, academic staff must participate in ongoing professional development programmes throughout their careers. Finally, it is a structural process that involves transformation over a long period of time whilst involving all levels of an organisation.

According to Mukherjee & Singh, (1993), academic staff are expected to participate in programmes that promote professional development which allow them to stay on the forefront of advancements in their fields of expertise. Academic staff development and relevant training programmes are viewed in certain nations as part of a larger framework of human resource development, with staff being given access to training programmes considered as both a right and an obligation. (Mukherjee & Singh, 1993).

Sulaiman and Malik (2020) confirmed that academic staff competency and skills to lead serve as a set instrument for propelling organisational operations and services to a greater degree of performance in order to provide a skilled and productive workforce. Almost every strategy for enhancing education includes high-quality academic staff development as a key component. The suggested staff development programmes are diverse in terms of context and approach, but they all have the same goal in mind. Staff development programmes, in particular, are intended to change academic staff's professional practices, ideas, and understanding in order to achieve a certain goal (Griffin, 1983). In the majority of situations, the objective is to enhance student learning. Othman & Dahari (2011) agreed that professional development is critical for the reason that different sorts of teaching skills are required at all levels.

2.2 The Impact of Academic Development Programmes

A number of studies have investigated the impact of teacher development programmes on academics' thinking and their teaching. These include: the impact of programmes on conceptions of teaching (Eley, 2006; Ginns, Kitay, & Prosser, 2008; Hanbury et al., 2008; Knight, 2006; McAlpine & Weston, 2000; Postareff, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Nevgi, 2007), on teacher skills and practice (Breda, Clement, & Waeytens, 2003; Cilliers & Herman, 2010; Devlin, 2008; Donnelly, 2008; Stes, Clement, & Van Petegem, 2007; Weurlander & Stenfors-Hayes, 2008), on reflective teaching practices (Ramsden, 2003) and on the scholarship of teaching and learning (Healey, 2000). Other studies have investigated the effects of teacher development programmes on student learning (Eggin & Macdonald, 2003; Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Hanbury et al., 2008) and student approaches to their learning (Hanbury et al., 2008; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2003). The landmark work of Gibbs and Coffey (2004) concludes that participation by academics in teacher development programmes leads to the increased adoption of student focused approaches to teaching, which in turn leads to the adoption of deep learning approaches by the students. These findings were confirmed in a subsequent study (Hanbury et al., 2008). Over this time, there has been limited evidence of their effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and learning (Devlin, 2008).

Fahara and Tobias (2019) concluded that professional development programmes for higher education academicians must consider their temporal and dynamical context, and the effectiveness of such programmes should be measured by how well they meet the needs and expectations of each academician, which may differ in factors such as amount of experience, area of expertise, styles of learning, and educational sense of direction. Cognitive training could be integrated into teaching methods by training several staff members. However, those who lacked collegial support struggled to maintain their passion and enhance their skills. Sutherland & Hall (2018) emphasised that the goal is to increase the education quality especially in higher education institutions around the world, and it is critical that scholars as well as practitioners of academic development, keep asking themselves whether they are succeeding in reaching the aim. There are several ways to enhance the effectiveness of the programmes which include allocating appropriate time for the teachings to be implemented in the practise in the workplace, ensuring a formal follow-up with the original instructor, and ensuring that most if not every member from a company attends the training (Beltman, 2009). Academic staff are more likely to influence changes in the organization as a result of their newfound knowledge, which will deepen their comprehension and effectively enhance organisational performance (Sulaiman & Malik, 2020). In a research conducted by Gibbs and Coffey (2004), it was found that much of the training is dedicated to improving academic staffs' teaching abilities, particularly in the classroom. The correlation between numerous parameters of teaching behaviour and various indicators of learning outcome has been shown. Some academic staff are more concerned with enhancing student learning than with improving style of teaching, therefore their training focuses on transforming teachers to ensure teachers are more concerned with student learning than with the performance of teaching.

2.3 Academic Staff Well-Being

Academics are commonly regarded as 'self-motivated', working within a highly favourable environment which enables

them to pursue their aims in teaching, research, service and consultancy. Studies have shown that academics' work satisfaction seems to be highly related to their perception of how much control they have over their work environment (Moses, 1986). Abdulmumini (2021) agreed that when academic staff are inspired, their morale is raised, which leads to increased work performance and productivity, which in turn boosts overall organisational performance. Most academic staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) have increasing workloads, poor work life balance, lack of management support and other factors results in workplace anxiety and stress which affect their mental well-being (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Ablanedo-Rosas et al., 2011; Dhanya and Kinslin, 2016; Schelvis et al., 2016). They have to adapt to the new pressures for productivity and some discontent around increasing workload and their ability to adjust work arrangements in ways that maximize their contributions to their institutions and to the meaningfulness of their work and personal lives.

Academics have been reported to be subjected to increased levels of overcommitment in a workplace culture where they are made to work long hours to meet their various responsibilities and as a result, causing them to have a poor work-life balance (Hogan, Hogan, Hodgins, Kinman, & Bunting, 2014). While work satisfaction and commitment can positively improve wellness and professional performance (Kelloway et al., 2010), overcommitment to work has indeed been linked to an increased risk of mental anguish (Kelloway et al., 2010). (Avanzi, van Dick, Fraccaroli, & Sarchielli, 2012; Kinman & Wray, 2016). Moreover, according to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), obligations arising from work and personal life settings can be completely contradictory to a considerable degree, as employees recognize they have almost no sufficient time for both career and family commitments. As such, this may lead to anxiety, burnout, and fatigue, all of which negatively affect staffs' psychological and physical health (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985). Academic staff who are granted work-life balance are more likely to be more committed to an academic career, thereby possibly lowering costs particularly ones associated with staff turnover. There is considerable evidence that shows that unsatisfactory staff health and wellbeing can result in not just individual misery and suffering, but also a wasteful turnover of competent and experienced employees to the sector (Morrish 2019, 45). Additionally, poor academic staff well-being has a detrimental impact on their productivity, limiting the amount of service they can provide to students. Staff health and wellbeing was linked to being better psychologically, physically, and emotionally to react to student wellbeing goals. Poor staff health and wellbeing, on the other hand, was found to have a detrimental influence on the ability to give effective psychological support. Academic staff and student health and wellbeing are not staunchly opposed; rather, they are intertwined. If the wellbeing of one group is jeopardised, there will be apparent and serious ramifications for the well-being of the other group. Since all policies have the potential to affect employee well-being, it is recommended that staff well-being be addressed everytime policies are reviewed or enacted (Brewster, Jones, Priestley, Wilbraham, Spanner & Hughes (2021).

2.4 The Need to Evaluate Academic Development Programmes

Academic development programmes and activities to enhance teaching and learning have been a feature of the academic culture of many higher education institutions throughout the world (Chalmers and Gardiner, 2015). There is a considerable body of literature relevant to the evaluation of academic development activities. It can be seen that there have been significant changes in the teaching environment in universities. Gaff (1975) argued for the need to evaluate programmes and demonstrate that they produce results in terms of better courses or better educated students, more knowledgeable, sensitive, effective, or satisfied faculty members, or more effectively managed organisations. Kreber and Brook (2001) contend that serious evaluation of development programmes was long overdue as it is difficult to develop a framework when most academic development outcomes were part of the process of becoming teachers, rather than being end points in themselves. Sword (2011) agreed that evaluation is a challenge because changes which might occur as a result of participation in teacher development programmes are designed to unfold slowly over time rather than be observable at a point in time.

Academic staff will not be contented or dedicated to the programme until they are able participate actively as adult learners in the staff development programme by sharing their needs and issues and applying what they have learned in class. When the aims and objectives of the programmes are job-related and thus regarded as instantly practical, academic staff being adults will be devoted to learning. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) argued that adults study what they believe is important to their individual and career aspirations, and they like to be the creators of their very own learning by taking an active role in the activities. For most academic staff development programmes, the participants had very little say in determining which programme they would engage in. They would want to be able to steer their learning by selecting courses from a variety of options and determining on their evaluation of the programme, enough so that learning modules would be of significant value to them.

Randi and Zeichner (2004) in their papers, stated that this growing paradigm of academic staff professional training is supported by a number of academic staff development practices. Academic staff networks, academic staff study groups, academician-university collaborations, and academic research are part of these. Academic staff take charge of their own learning in all of these types of professional development, whereby their learning is based on their own practices. As a result, future academic staff may have to build a skill for learning from experience as self-directed learners who are responsible for their own development. Professional development initiatives must include the demands and preferences of the various stakeholders in academic settings (Yilmaz & Sever, 2021). Yaqub, Owusu-Cole and Ofosua (2020) agreed that effective training programmes should satisfy specified learning goals, analyze learning professional effectiveness, and assess programme design competencies.

3. Methodology

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the research methodology has been established by using qualitative methods through phenomenology and case study. Overall, this section consists of several parts namely research design, developing an instrument, sampling and data collection procedure, and data analysis phase.

3.1 Research Design

The importance of research design may be seen in the strategy and technique that spans the decision-making process from broad to specific a hypothesis to specific data collection and analysis methods. To produce reliable and acceptable research findings, the qualitative technique through phenomenology and case study approach is used in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the problems faced by higher education learning and teaching course's students and evaluate the effectiveness of the course. Specifically, a case study is the qualitative research approach in which an investigator studies a real-life event by a detailed description and analysis of one or even more cases among more than one individual, while the phenomenology approach focuses on understanding the nature of experience among some of the individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which is consistent with the nature of this study. According to Riessman (2008), there are three types of approaches used to analyze phenomenology study: a thematic analysis, a structural analysis, and the story can be cast during a conversation in various forms. Hence, this study analyses phenomenology and case research by thematic analysis and data was collected among selected students to achieve the study's objective.

3.2 Instrument Development

The instrument was created to make it easy for the researcher to collect data and information from respondents in order to achieve the study's objectives. The instrument is divided into three sections: student understanding, benefit, and obstacles faced by students during the course, as well as the impact of the course and proposals for development. Two different specialists who are masters in technique and research domains have given the instrument a constructive evaluation and adjustment for its reliability and validity.

3.3 Data Collection

The participants in this study are Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course students at one of higher education institution in Malaysia, including current and former students. From the first batch to the current batch, the sample for students was drawn from the databases of graduate school. There are 155 students in total, and 18 of them participated in this study by providing comments using an open-ended questionnaire. According to Creswell (1998), the sample size for the phenomenology approach of five to 25 respondents was sufficient.

For the data collection method, there are four potential data collection methods in qualitative research are interviewing, observing, collecting and examining, and feeling. Referring to unexpected circumstances and time constraints, this study collects the data by using interviews in form of qualitative interviews (open-ended questions). According to Yin (2015), interviews are divided into two types; structured interviews and qualitative interviews. In a qualitative interview, the researcher's relationship with the participant was not strictly scripted, and freely responded to the question with single-word answers. As a result, open-ended questions were used to collect data from the respondents in this study. The selection of this data collection method is due to open-ended data collecting as part of qualitative approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and this method of data collecting allows respondents to express thoughts in their own words rather than providing a fixed set of answers options (Popping, 2015), as well as does not impose any restrictions on respondents' answer choices (Schonlau & Couper, 2016). Subsequently, for the data collection process, the initial stage of the process involves defining the conceptual domain involving library-based research. Consequently, the research instrument was developed for potential respondents to achieve the study objective. After that, data was collected via open-ended questionnaires among 18 respondents based on a set of carefully designed questions guidelines. The questions were asked in an individual setting where respondents freely gave their opinion and views. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the mode of a questionnaire conducted online depends on the situations of respondents'

technical readiness (internet connectivity & equipment). Thematic analysis was used to transcribe and analyze the data obtained, allowing researchers to identify themes, patterns, strategies, and stages related to the course's issues and solutions.

3.4 Data Analysis

Main foundations of a research project are data. To produce a credible outcome, data should be collected using a reliable and rigorous approach and analyzed using the appropriate tools. After experiencing a rigorously defined data collection procedure and proper instrument, the researcher analyzed the data through a thematic analysis. The selection of thematic analysis following the purpose of this study is to explore to what extent the learning and teaching course were able to be part of the confirmation process. Thematic analysis is known as a highly flexible technique that can be adjusted to fit the needs of a variety of research and provide a detailed and comprehensive explanation of data. This analysis was also effective for comparing and contrasting the participants' different perspectives, emphasizing similarities and contrasts, uncovering unexpected findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004), as well as summarising key features of a big data set, as it forces the researcher to handle data in a well-structured method, resulting in a clear and well-organized final report (King, 2004). As a result, the thematic analysis has been used to examine this study data in order to generate a trustworthy and accurate finding. To obtain credibility and authenticity of data analysis, the researcher analyzes this data through six phases of thematic analysis namely: (Phase 1) Familiarizing with data, (Phase 2) Generating initial codes, (Phase 3) Searching for themes, (Phase 4) Reviewing themes, (Phase 5) Defining and naming themes, and (Phase 6) Producing the report.

4. Result and Analysis

4.1 Students' Understanding the Objective of the Course

Based on the finding, the respondents believe that there are two (2) main purposes of Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course. The purposes are: (1) to enhance their teaching skills and (2) to produce a holistic and dynamic academician.

4.1.1 To Enhance Teaching Skills

Being an academician is not an easy job. They are required to take on multiple roles and to learn different skills throughout their career. For example, an academician is not only required to teach, they need to be a researcher and even have to do administrative jobs. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that their main job is to teach. Teaching requires a wide range of skills in order for them to perform their job well. In other words, teaching skills are some of the valuable skills that are required as an academician. They have to be able to create good lesson plans and conducive learning environments that will facilitate students' learning. These skills can be acquired through experience, continuous learning and development of their teaching abilities. Thus, it is understandable that many new lecturers are lacking these skills.

That is why the majority of the respondents believe that the main aim of the course is to enhance their teaching skills as all are newly appointed lecturers. An example is a response that states that the course is aim *"to add value to the teaching and learning aspects of new lecturers, as they may be proficient in the technical aspects of their respective fields, but need guidance from the teaching and learning aspects"*. Another response states that the programme is able *"to provide exposure on learning methods among young lecturers"*. All the responses as stated in Table 1.3 show that some of the respondents believe that the course aims to expose new lecturers about the techniques and ways of effective teaching. They believe that the course will enable them to learn different teaching skills that are required so that it will enable effective teaching and learning.

4.1.2 To Produce a Holistic and Dynamic Academician

As mentioned, being an academician is not an easy job. It involves long working hours and multitasking. That is why this profession is deemed to be challenging. To be a good academician, the new lecturers are expected to possess certain qualities. They are expected to be skilled and highly trained. Not only do they have to be a doctorate holder, they must possess advanced knowledge and skills in every related area. Ultimately, the new lecturer should be able to create a conducive learning environment, be able to motivate students, and prepare them to face the working environment in the future.

This belief is in accordance with some of the respondents' answers. The respondents believe that the objective of this course is to produce a holistic and dynamic academician. Examples of the responses state the objective of this programme is to allow the respondents to *"be a holistic and dynamic teaching force"* and *"to produce an academician that is techno -savvy, able to multitask, efficient and all -rounded"*. The reason why the respondents believe that the

purpose of the program is to produce a holistic and dynamic academician is because the programme provides the necessary knowledge and skills for an academician. All the courses such as Instructional Delivery in Higher Education and Supporting Holistic Student Development assist them to become a better and dynamic educator. Furthermore, the courses offered in this programme allow them to understand students better so that there will be effective communication between them.

4.2 Benefits and Difficulties Faced by the Students during the Course

For benefit and difficulties faced by the students throughout this course, the finding has confirmed that there are several benefits and difficulties obtained from this program. Precisely, the majority of the students reported they are having difficulties throughout this course due to heavy workload/assignment. However, overall students agreed that the course gives them numerous advantages and required comprehensive amendment, revision, and adjustment for better implementation.

4.2.1 Gaining Teaching & Learning Knowledge

In terms of the benefit of the course, the students indicated that they had gained numerous advantages particularly related to their teaching and learning soft skills. For teaching knowledge and skill development, they proudly inform that they have learned new things about teaching and learning. Through this course “we learned a lot of new knowledge about teaching and learning, how to ask questions, how to understand students, methods that can be used for learning and teaching, current trends and issues in the academic world and more”, “learn technology in teaching”, as well as “correct and effective way to teach”. This program also assisted them in enhance their teaching skill by “improving the quality and methods of teaching,” and knowing in-depth about the fundamental of teaching and learning through a variety of teaching theories as they were mentioned “ many teaching theories and techniques were introduced to us” and “after starting to follow this program, I found it very helpful to “fill in the lacunae” because I was not proficient in T&L skills. By following this course, I understand and know (1) it is important to prepare before class, make a teaching plan and not only are slides counted ready, but we also must be prepared with activities and assessments ready (2) understand constructive alignment between curriculum, activities and assessment must be parallel (3) understanding the student is very important”. Through this course, they slowly make some changes and improvement in their teaching and learning activities for instance “implement the VARK questionnaire at the beginning of the semester for me to better understand my students”

4.2.2 Gaining Teaching and Learning Soft Skill

In addition, the student also exposed they gained something unexpected from this course. After being attached to this course, they noticed how their personal development has changed. Prior, they barely know about teaching and learning and consider it as a burdensome thing to do. However, through the course, they make transformations in their self-confidence and self-esteem by saying “this course makes me more confident in teaching”, and guiding them on “how to be a good supervisor”.

4.2.3 Build A Networking

In addition, they also agreed the course has given an opportunity to build new networking among them as they barely know each other. Some of the students reveal that this course truly gives them an opportunity to build a “networking” by “get to know friends from different schools (work as a team and be closer)”.

On the other hand, the majority of respondents said the course causes difficulties particularly related to workload/assignment and has made them feel burdened.

4.2.4 Heavy Workload/Assignment

When asked about whether they are having hardship with the course, the majority of students admit they have difficulty throughout this program due to heavy assignments. Heavy workload/assignment completely makes them feel distressed and dissatisfied with this course. Although the course was having a positive effect on them, they cannot tolerate the heavy workload of this program. Precisely, the majority of them claim about the burden from heavy workload and assignments which they need to complete. They firmly state that “lots of assignments and subjects”, “too many assignments”, “workload is too high”, and “too many weekly assignments and activities” as the main reasons why this course is difficult for them.

While, others students also claim the course definitely contributes a negative effect on their personal life and career development. Due to heavy workload and assignments, they have difficulty and obstacles to completing other main tasks for the confirmation process such as publication and research. As they were mentioned, “heavy workload, delaying confirmation of positions, obstructing other responsibilities, affecting the quality of another task, and

disrupting family and personal life". This is because they are having insufficient time to implement their responsibility due to a packed schedule of life. As they were mentioned "every week there is plenty of assignment that needs to be submitted", "it takes a lot of time to discuss and carry out the course tasks because there are many tasks, so much time is allocated to discuss, implement and report on all these tasks", "increase workload, and finally "slowing down the confirmation process". Subsequently, the implementation of the course also gave a difficulty to them in terms of burden and commitment. The course was excluded as a burden in the betta system in which they have to hold numerous responsibilities and commitments particularly related to teaching and administrative work. As they were mentioned, *"the learning and teaching course as a whole is excellent and has positive implications, there are no flaws in terms of content. However, the implementation and support system from the university is still weak. The course is not made a burden in the betta system, therefore it creates an additional burden for new lecturers on top of their existing responsibilities at the other school/PTJ. For example, I held the administrative post of Coordinator while at the same time I was attending this course. Although the teaching load is reduced to 2 subjects in 1 semester, other responsibilities are still the same, such as members (JK) at school and university level"*.

Subsequently, when they were asked how things were being difficult to cope some of them mentioned because of insufficient time. They were unable to balance between the commitment of academic work, research, programs, club activities, and teaching with a large number of assignments that dragged on almost every week. They also claim that they already have their main responsibility as a lecturer and ultimately neglect our priorities due to this matter. Sometimes their teaching quality also declines due to insufficient time and space to make some revisions and better preparation for teaching and learning activities. This obviously demonstrated that they did not have sufficient time and space to complete other tasks due to the workload from the course.

Overall, when they were asked as an educator whether the course benefits outweigh the difficulty, the majority of them mentioned the course gives an advantage over disadvantage but required some improvement. They mentioned that through that course they were able to practice learning and teaching appropriately *"I know the inside and outside of teaching. I also know the philosophy and methods of learning"*, *"understand the role as an educator and learn to be a better educator"*, *"strengthen knowledge in teaching and learning of higher education and expand social networks among young lecturers"*, *"I get more ideas when dealing with students because I have been exposed to the correct and interesting techniques in class"*, and *"during the MCO period I managed to utilize the skills and techniques that I learned in throughout the course"*. However, they emphasize that the course needs some adjustment and improvement for better development, "needs to be reviewed because it is burdensome", overlapping subjects" and "too much workload, assignments, and program that we need to execute".

4.3 The Impacts of the the Course on New Academic Staffs' Teaching and Learning Activities

For impacts of higher education learning and teaching course, finding show the positive and negative impacts of the course on the new academic staff's teaching and learning activities. The following are the discussion of the impacts.

4.3.1 Application of New Skills

The majority of respondents believe that the programme is very helpful in carrying out their teaching and learning activities. The reason is because the programme has taught the respondents new skills and knowledge, especially the skills that relate to the application of new technology. This is important because the incorporation of knowledge can be improved by using the current digital tools or technology.

Besides, the course taught them ways on how to understand their students and different approaches that are available in teaching and learning. There are some courses that discusses some of the student development theories. The theories provide ways on how lecturers are able to understand students' growth and development. Consequently, this will affect their ways of teaching and learning.

4.3.2 Transfer of Knowledge

Aside from being able to apply new skills in classes, the respondents also mentioned that the biggest impact of the programme is on their teaching skills. They mentioned that the programme taught them ways to improve their teaching skills. Not only that, the programme did assist them in having better understanding of their duties as an educator, so that they would be able to transfer knowledge to their students effectively.

4.3.3 Development of Identity as an Educator

Most of the responses are positive, mainly stating about the fact that they are feeling motivated to become a better educator. The course taught them numerous important knowledge and skills. Aside from that, it taught them ways to understand students better, thus allowing them to provide effective and appropriate teaching methods. As a result, they

are becoming more equipped, enthusiastic, confident and are passionate to become a good educator. All these will lead to quality and effective teaching and learning activities.

4.3.4 Better Understanding of Their Job as an Educator

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the programme allows them to have a better understanding of their job as an educator. However, some respondents stated that even without taking the course, they are already well aware of their duties as an educator. Another respondent added the point that the new lecturers can learn the skills and have better understanding of their job even without taking the course by attending relevant short courses organized by university teaching and learning unit on a regular basis.

4.3.5 Demotivation

Majority of the responses are positive. However, there are some responses that mentioned the negative impacts of the course. The main one is the demotivation that the course students suffered due to this mandatory course. One of the responses states the effect of the programme to himself/herself and mentioned that, *“The effect of the course, tarnishes one’s identity as an educator. Caused me to rethink why I chose this university which requires this course”*. This response clearly shows that the respondent felt demotivated after taking the programme. Another response states as follows, *“Mental health is a bit compromised, especially this semester, because the assignment and implementation of the program takes time, and disturbs the mind”*. This response shows the negative effect of the programme on the respondent’s mental health.

The reason for demotivation is mainly due to the increasing workloads in the forms of assignments and activities given by the lecturers to them. For one course, they have to complete more than three assessments together with lots of activities. In addition, they still have to fulfil their obligations as a lecturer. They have to teach a few subjects, apply for grants, publish in outstanding journals, attend seminars and at the same time do administrative jobs. All these are necessary as these are the requirements that need to be fulfilled for job confirmation. As a result, it is difficult to manage their time and to juggle between work and family. It is easy to say that you need to manage your time wisely. However, it will not be that easy if you have heavy workloads and obligations. In fact, some even face different kind of problems and almost quit the course, but continue for the sake of getting paid and for confirmation. Not only that, the majority suffered stress, lack of sleep and silent depression due to the heavy workloads and obligations. All of these are the factors that lead to demotivation.

5. Recommendations

The study came up with some recommendations to improve the delivery of the course for the benefit of all academic staff. The recommendations are as follows:

- (i) Curriculum Review
- (ii) Workload/Assignment - shared assignments / alternative assessments
- (iii) Duration of Study

It is recommended to review the structure of the course. This may include the number of courses offered. The total number of courses and the long duration lead to challenges faced by the students. The main difficulty faced by students is the heavy workload. They are given lots of assignments and activities that need to be completed within a specific time. As mentioned before, the students have other responsibilities as a senior lecturer which includes teaching, publication, research, supervision, and also administrative work.

Students understand the objective of the course. It is undeniable the advantages of the course. However, to ease the burden of the course students, it is recommended to revise the workloads in all courses wherein shared assessments or alternative assessments can be implemented to reduce the workload. It is suggested to implement shared assessment across the courses. In addition, to ease the students burden, alternative assessment can be used as a substitution of the traditional assessment. Alternative assessment includes activities in classes where students have to complete the task during the class.

Regarding the duration of study, some of the respondents are of the view that the period of the study should be shortened so that they can concentrate on other matters such as fulfilling requirements for confirmation. For example, instead of having to complete four (4) semesters, the period of study can be shortened to two (2) semesters. Other factors should be considered as well such as reducing burdens of the new lecturers in other matters such as their key performance index (KPI).

The study also found that there is a need for effective communication between the management and academic staff

regarding the policy for the course. It is found throughout this study that the students are not well informed regarding the policy. It is evident that they comprehend that they need to complete the course for confirmation in post but they actually do not understand the policies of the course. Communication is a very imperative element in the imperceptible organization (Ritter, 2003). Managing communications effectively is a key dimension of leadership. Effective communication is an element of technical process in the organization. Though this element of communication is defined by policies because policies can maintain the relationship between staff and management through pleasant and understanding behaviour. Effective communications enable the superiors to communicate even challenging message without creating conflicts as it is a two-way process. Thus, the management must have a two-way communication with the academic staff to build strong relationships and trust. The staff must be informed regarding the policies of the course before enrolling for the course.

6. Conclusion

Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course is a timely initiative given the increasing attention on the quality of teaching in higher education over recent years. Professional development programs for academic staff has been widely recognized as initiatives and events that seek to improve academic staffs' expert knowledge, competencies, and behaviours which is necessary for ensuring the enhancement of enhanced students' learning. Almost every proposal for enhancing education aims to include high-quality academic staff development as a key component of such research. However, the implementation of development programmes has enhanced the workloads of academic staff, resulting in a poor work life balance, lack of management support and other factors. This has caused academic staff to suffer workplace anxiety and stress which affect their mental well-being. In order to ensure the effectiveness of academic staff's professional development, it is critical to identify the mechanisms by which academic staff can develop and improve, as well as the environments that facilitate and foster that growth.

In a nutshell, the study found that the students believed that the purpose of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course is to enhance their teaching and learning skills as well as to produce a dynamic and holistic academician. It is undeniable that these students have benefited from this programme in terms of knowledge transfer, personal career development and also building a network which have left a positive impact on their teaching and learning activities. However, there were some difficulties with the heavy workloads during the programme which has led to some students feeling demotivated and affecting their mental health. Finally, the study proposes revising the structure of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Course by considering reducing the workload, revising the duration of the programme. The study also found that there is a need for effective communication between the management and academic staff regarding the policy for the course. It is expected that the findings would benefit new academic staff and serve as a catalyst for future research.

Acknowledgement

This research has been carried out under “SKIM GERAN PERSATUAN AKADEmia UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA 2021”, S/O Code: 333038, provided by PERSATUAN AKADEmia (PERSATU) Universiti Utara Malaysia.

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