

TRAINING NEEDS AMONG KAFA TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY IN SELANGOR

Hamdan bin Mohd Salleh
Universiti Selangor
hamdan@unisel.edu.my

Affezah Ali
Universiti Selangor
affezah@unisel.edu.my

Ng Ming Yip
Universiti Selangor
mingyip@unisel.edu.my

Afina Nazira Afnizul
Universiti Selangor
afinanazira@unisel.edu.my

Abstract

The role of elementary school teachers to teach religious education is increasingly crucial to deliver intensive education of the upcoming Muslim generation, specifically in a developed state like Selangor. Currently, there are 9,465 KAFA teachers teaching approximately 250,563 students in Selangor. These numbers certainly require a specific study of the training needs of these teachers. To this date, there has been no significant study that precisely addresses and discusses the training needs of the teachers. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the training required by religious primary school teachers in Selangor to identify the gap between the existing training and the training desired and form the basis for a training plan. This study is a qualitative study and uses a focus group discussion (FGD) approach. This study involved 20 teachers teaching Islamic education from the chosen five districts in Selangor. The findings revealed that the current training could be improved in several aspects, including disability facilitations, knowledge and skill mastery in educational pedagogy, teaching and learning, leadership in education, student counselling, and consultation. This finding is specifically significant in developing a truly holistic policy in regard to religious primary schools in Selangor.

Keywords: KAFA teachers, Training Needs Analysis, Selangor religious teachers

INTRODUCTION

As of June 1, 2016, there are 565 schools and 9,465 teachers, including 250,563 students under the auspices of Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor (JAIS). In addition to this, JAIS has also been

allocating RM20 million supported by the state government as the allowance to approximately 6,900 teachers of Religious Classes and *Fardhu Ain* (Kafa). It is also important to note that the number of teachers above-stated does not include private primary school teachers. On another note, it is agreeable that the role of the Islamic Education teachers is very pertinent in educating the learners, with the hope that they are well-equipped with the knowledge of Islam in the future. In accordance with this, it is significant for JAIS to ensure that Kafa teachers are still under contract to secure their position in a permanent position. This process requires systematic evaluation and training. Besides Kafa, Selangor has 267 SRAs and SRIs and it includes 10-40 teachers.

In relation to this, numerous training has been conducted for these teachers by the relevant bodies since the establishment of Religious and *Fardhu Ain* Classes (KAFA) as well as Religious Religious Schools (SRI) in the state of Selangor. This is due to the fact that the provision of qualified and competent teachers is essential to achieve the national education goals, specifically in Islamic Education. Teachers are not only responsible for imparting knowledge to students but also enforce the mastery and appreciation of the knowledge. Not only that, teachers are also expected to encourage positive and favourable behaviours from the students by incorporating the appropriate approach of preaching. Therefore, this study aims to discuss the training needed for Islamic Education teachers so that they are provided with the essential expertise and skills to educate the learners.

However, it is relevant to question the effectiveness of the abovementioned training to the teachers. To what extent does the training facilitate the process of achieving the goals? In general, to manage and execute the training, systematic planning and arrangement are required. Factors such as globalization, technological advancement, organizational culture and other contributing factors should be taken into consideration as they could accord an impact to the organization. Thus, it is safe to say that continuous, intensive, and impactful training are needed for the teachers to address the issue.

Muhammad Zahiri Awang Mat et al. conducted a study in 2013 to evaluate the level of professionalism of Islamic Education teachers in religious schools around Selangor. This study gathered 754 KAFA teachers from 31 schools in Gombak and Hulu Selangor as the respondents. Quantitative research methodology was employed with 21 items that were based

on Religion domain using convenience sampling method. The findings revealed that KAFA teachers need to be more consistent in coaching the students for worship-related practices such as daily rituals, reading religious books, engaging in religious activities, memorizing several surahs of the Quran, preaching the students, and attending the religious classes.

On the other hand, Abdul Halim Tamuri et al. (2012) also conducted a study aimed at evaluating the basic components of Islamic education teachers' training involving 1210 teachers and 3166 students at primary and secondary level in Selangor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, Johor, and Sarawak. The method used was a mixed-method research design engaging in 717 interviews and 493 observations. There are several essential arguments underlined by Abdul Halim Tamuri et al. (2012), which includes;

- The delivery techniques used in the training are heavily based on lectures and explanation
- Muaddib domain followed by Murabbi are the only two dominants domain exercised
- In the teaching and learning of Islamic Education, high emphasis should also be given to other domains, including Mursyid, Muallim, and Mudarris domain.
- Additional components including the teachers' personality, knowledge, pedagogical practice, and diversified teaching techniques should also be supplemented in the training.

Training Needs Analysis

Training Needs Analysis is a model that aims to identify workers who need training and areas of training needed. TNA is designed to identify the existing performance gap between the employees. The performance gap is defined as the difference between the desired performance underlined by the organization and actual performance by the employees. In relation to this, performance gap is also considered as one of the barriers for an employee to function in an organization (Khairunnezam, 2004). Correspondingly, an employee would face difficulties in completing a task in an organization if his abilities and skills are not aligned with the expectation or below the standard. Thus, in order to carry out training, evaluation of the training needs analysis to be made. Recent studies such as Kaufman and Christensen (2019), Cotes and Sebastian (2021), and Mukerjee (2020) agreed with past research of O'Connor, Bronner and Delaney (2002), Mathis and Jackson (2003), Stone (2004), Robert (2005), Junaidah (2007), and Ivancevich (2007) that the systematic process of TNA involves three forms of analysis - Organizational Needs Analysis, Employee Needs Analysis and Employee Needs Analysis.

Most of the teachers serving in KAFA and SRI in Selangor has little to no background in education like Certificate of Education or Diploma in Education. A preliminary survey by consulting agency Intellitech Solution (2017) found that most of these KAFA and SRI teachers are lack formal training. This is reflected in their performance as the inadequacy of training has resulted in poor performance in the field.

It is important to note that most of the teachers still need fundamental training to improve their quality of teaching and learning, respectively. These trainings are crucial in ensuring that the teachers are competent as they are the key role in shaping the minds of the younger generation. In this regard, the study is conducted based on two main objectives of identifying the training required and identifying the gap between the existing training and the training required.

METHODOLOGY

This study opted to employ qualitative methods concentrating on focus group discussion (FGD) and used a structured interview method. This method utilizes a focus group discussion consisting of four experts in education and 24 respondents from two KAFA and two SRI schools. In order together an integrated data, the schools that were selected for the study involved schools from both rural and urban areas. Relevant questions to be used in the study were devised.

Each discussion session took approximately 2 hours. All respondents in the group were expected to provide information, feedback and ideas to the questions asked. To facilitate the interview session and data collection, voice recorders were also used. The interviews were branched into five sections. All these questions serve as a guide in scheming the interviews in order to meet the objectives of the study. The questions ranged as follows:

- (i) Training
- (ii) Infrastructure
- (iii) Profession
- (iv) Government Assistance
- (v) Overall

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The focus group discussion has revealed that there is a demand to improve the existing policies and training and the vision is tabulated as follows:

Subject	Issue	Recommendation
Training and Career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use JAIS, JAKIM and personal syllabus. • Annually replicated JAIS training. • Irrelevant training that does not concern the SRI • Essential training needs to be subject-based • Training that emphasizes special needs students is highly required. • Lack of all-inclusive trainings including counseling, curriculum management, ICT and psychology. • Lack of career development • Salary increment is mainly time-based. • No Social Security Organization (SOCSO) contributions and insurance coverage is borne independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on disability facilitation- special needs • Certificate of teaching credentials is required. • Respective trainings including psychology, pedagogy, classroom management, accounts. • Training needs to be carried out in phases. • Complementary (free) intensive training • Mandatory trainings (pedagogy, mission and vision courses) for new teachers. • Allowances should be converted to salary as it will facilitate any loan application. • Introducing Grade DG29 to enhance the teachers' career • Group insurance for teachers. • Clear career development for the profession
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating budget constraints caused inadequate facilities. • Books are purchased independently and may result in effectiveness. • Insufficient classrooms in the schools resulted in difficulty in providing additional classes for academically challenged pupils. • No library • School supplies are insufficient and teaching aids are purchased independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special provision by the government allocated for equipping the facilities and training.

Government Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate and inconsistent assistance by the state government. • Assistance is periodic and highly dependent on the appointment of the Exco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberate coordination and consistency in executing the policies across all the religious primary schools.
Overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are exclusively dependent on the fees and quite a number of students face difficulties paying the expenses. • Unsystematic arrangement across SRI and SRAI leads to confusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for consistency of all types of religious primary schools • Additional assistance for schools that bear underprivileged students. • Requiring all national primary school students to attend religious school.

Based on the findings above mentioned, there are several issues and gaps that were underlined by the respondents. One of the issues mentioned is the lack of training that specifically cater students with special needs. This is parallel to the findings from the World Health Organization (WHO), which reveals that 10% of Malaysian are considered as learners with diverse needs. Thus, relevant techniques and trainings will indeed decipher many challenges during the learning process.

Inadequate training is not the only complication that the teachers are facing, as lack of career development prospects is also examined as one of the problems too. It is claimed that it will be the deciding factor in strengthening the policies. The underlined issues are significant as majority of the teachers do not have a teaching certificate and long-term career. This needs to be highlighted and improved by the Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS).

In the case of the current training, it is also mentioned that the organizer arranges the same trainer for each series embedded in the course. Owing to that, the presentation techniques are mainly based on purely lectures; thus, the effectiveness of the course could be questioned. The teachers also declared that hands-on and practical trainings from various coaches with different ranges of experience and field of expertise are more favoured. Consequently, it is hoped that the trainings would be more effective and meaningful to the teachers.

Another highlighted aspect from the findings is that only 50% of national primary school students are enrolled in Islamic religious schools as it is not mandatory. *Fardhu Ain* and

religious classes are treated as an additional option for the students. Accordingly, it will have an impact on the overall development of the learners.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that it is pertinent to enhance the existing policies. Islamic education teachers in religious primary schools in Selangor are still in need of relevant educational training. This is due to the fact that majority of them do not possess teaching certificates which resulted in an average or moderate performance in subject matter, teaching and delivery skills. In relation to that, additional trainings in regard to counselling, curriculum management, ICT and psychology are also vital for their career development. This training should be supported by the provision of experienced trainers with diverse expertise. Schools and school administrators also need all-inclusive support. This includes special provisions and opportunities for them to provide a good career path for all teachers in the school. By the same token, schools and administration also need a comprehensive support with the aim to provide a good career path for all teachers in the school.

For future studies, it is recommended that intensive analysis of the training needs to be extended to Islamic Education teacher at secondary and tertiary level appointed by JAIS and not to mention teachers in *tahfiz* institution. This is to evaluate the breadth and depth of their skills, knowledge, and pedagogical mastery in delivering and preaching the content. Accordingly, the aspects could be examined, and this will help the authorities to provide appropriate training for teachers. This needs to be done so that the quality of the learners produced by these teachers are enhanced.

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