

A STUDY ON THE STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING AMONG TRAINEE TEACHERS DURING TEACHING TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the principles and theories of learning used by teachers when choosing the teaching approaches and to which extent the trainee teachers diversify teaching methods for effective teaching strategies. This is a survey study on 30 trainee teachers majoring in Islamic Education in the Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia. The research tool of this research was a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package For Social Sciences version 17 software to find the mean, percentage and frequency. Findings showed that trainee teachers of Islamic Education are still using teacher-centered teaching approach. In addition, they often adopt the inductive method and theory of behavioral learning. In conclusion, the teaching approaches and strategies practiced by trainee teachers should be enhanced in order to give a good effect on the quality of teaching. Some suggestions regarding the implementation of teaching strategies were also made.

Keywords: Teaching practice; Teaching strategies; Trainee teachers; Islamic Education; Teaching training

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching strategy is a part of the important aspects of the subject of research in the field of pedagogy. Romano and Gibson (2006) explained that the teaching strategies to support high levels of learning for students are a great challenge for teachers who newly joined the service. It is evident that the teaching strategy is an aspect that should be emphasized and is a key factor that is often the subject of research in the field of pedagogy.

In accordance with that, the selection of teaching strategies is very important and teachers need to know how to manage students in the classroom to ensure that the teaching objectives are achieved. Rapid changes in the field of technology, social, politic and economy demands that teaching and learning in the Islamic Education can be applied in accordance with the current life and global development (Mohd Aliff et al. 2012). Apart from that, the main duty of teachers is to ensure that the content of the lesson can be understood by all students. Now, the teachers no longer act as a source of knowledge but, as a facilitator and mentor to students.

Important things that need to be emphasized by trainee teachers in developing effective teaching strategy are in-depth knowledge of pedagogy and management skills that are effective in the learning process. According to Norzaini and Mohammed Sani (2007), teaching strategies that will be selected and used by teachers should be strategies which aim to encourage thinking, comprehension, and application of knowledge of students.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There are many studies that have been conducted in identifying approaches and strategies adopted in teaching. A study by Siti Rohana (2007) showed that teaching practices carried out by the Islamic Education teachers are not student-oriented but more focused on their subject matter alone. This situation could have negative effects such as causing students to be easily bored and not interested in the subject.

The study conducted by Abu Hassan (1998) on the UTM trainee teachers showed that trainees are not competent in their work. Furthermore, a study conducted by (Lim et al., 1996; Zakaria & Abdul Rahman 1995) mentioned that the trainees performed poorly in planning and implementing the strategies appropriately. This resulted in the teaching and learning to be bland and the teaching objectives were not achieved as required.

Apart from that, Lilia and Subahan (2002) stated that most of the trainee teachers are not skilled enough to use appropriate teaching strategies in their teaching. Furthermore, a study by Johari (1995) explained that trainee teachers cannot execute the "critical and creative thinking skills" based teaching strategies. This indicates that trainee teachers desperately need guidance from mentors and supervisors to provide tutoring and guidance while in training.

Therefore, some of the problems mentioned have led the researchers to review the teaching practice of Islamic Education trainee teachers during their teaching training in schools. This is due to the fact that the practice of teaching approach and the selection of teaching strategies are very important since it can improve the quality of teaching and thus could increase the achievement of students in the classroom.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to:

- 1) Identify the principles and theories of learning used by the trainee teachers during their selection of teaching approach.
- 2) Identify to which extent the trainee teachers diversify the teaching methods to acquire the effective teaching strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This survey study used a questionnaire as the instrument. The sample of this study was 30 trainee teachers who were sampled randomly to represent the total population of the Islamic Education trainee teachers. The questionnaire used was divided into three sections based on 5-point Likert scale. The usage of Likert scale allows for collection of data on the degree of agreement of respondents to each item in the questionnaire. The answer for the items are range from; Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Not Sure (NS), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). Respondents have to answer based on their assumptions and their opinion about the given statement. The scoring will be based on the 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Likert Scale

Level of Agreement	Score
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1
Disagree (D)	2
Not Sure (NS)	3
Agree (A)	4
Strongly Agree (SA)	5

FINDINGS

The Practice of Principles and Learning Theories of Trainee Teachers

The table 2 below shows the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation of principles and theories of learning used by the trainee teachers

Table 2: Percentage, Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of the Principles and Theories of learning Used by the Trainee Teachers

Principles and Theories of learning Used by the Trainee Teachers		Aspects Percentage (%)					Mean	SD
		SD	D	NS	A	SA		
Principle of Inductive Approach	Provide appropriate, comprehensive, and adequate examples.	-	-	10 (3)	66.7 (20)	23.3 (7)	3.934	.5882
	Provide examples one by one.	-	-	10 (3)	80 (24)	10 (3)		
	Guide students to make generalizations based on examples.	-	3.3 (1)	23.3 (7)	66.7 (20)	6.7 (2)		
	Request students to give other relevant examples.	-	-	10 (3)	70 (21)	20 (6)		
	Ensure that the senses of the students are used the most.	-	-	46.7 (14)	40 (12)	13.3 (4)		
Principles of Deductive approach	Present problems	3.3 (1)	20 (6)	23.3 (7)	36.7 (11)	16.7 (5)	3.885	.654
	Ensure that students can recall generalizations, principles or law related to the problems presented	-	-	16.7 (5)	70 (21)	13.3 (4)		
	Help students relate the generalization, law or principle to the problems presented	-	-	20 (6)	73.3 (22)	6.7 (2)		
	Guide students to solve problems presented by question and answer technique	-	-	-	73.3 (22)	26.7 (8)		
Learning Theory	Taking care of students' behavior changes (Behaviorism)	-	-	16.7 (5)	60 (18)	23.3 (7)	3.937	.568
	Taking care of students' thinking processes (Cognitive)	-	-	26.7 (8)	60 (18)	13.3 (4)		
	Taking care of student participation in actual learning situations (Constructivism)	-	-	16.7 (5)	80 (24)	3.3 (1)		
TOTAL						3.92	.603	

The table 2 above shows that most of the principles and theories of learning has high mean. The principle of the aspects that have the highest mean is the inductive principle approach (mean = 3.92, standard deviation = 0.603). A total of 20% of the respondents expressed their agreement and 10% of respondents said they are not sure that in choosing inductive approach principle, teachers should provide appropriate, comprehensive and adequate examples. The deductive approach principle has the lowest mean (mean = 3.885, standard deviation 0.654) which 16.7% respondents strongly agree, 36.7% respondents agree and 20% indicated disagree and about the frequency aspect of trainee teachers begin their teaching by presenting problems.

The table also shows that the learning theories aspect that have the highest mean is the behavioral learning theory (mean = 4.07, standard deviation = 1.104). 23.3% of respondents strongly agree and 60% of respondents stated they agree, while 16.7 % respondent stated they are not sure that trainee teachers care about the changes in students' behavior. This means that the aspects of inductive approach principle obtained the highest mean and deductive approach principle obtained the lowest mean. The learning theories aspect that obtained the highest mean is the behavioral learning theory.

Diversity of Trainee Teachers' Teaching Methods

The Table 3 below shows the percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation of the diversity of trainee teachers' teaching methods.

Table 3: Percentage, Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation of the Diversity of Trainee Teachers' Teaching Methods

Diversity of Trainee Teachers' Teaching Methods		SD	Aspects Percentage (%)					Mean	SD	
			D	NS	A	SA				
Teacher-Centered Teaching Methods	Lectures	-	46.7 (14)	10 (3)	40 (12)	3.3 (1)	3.44	.918		
	Story-telling	-	6.7 (2)	20 (6)	53.3 (16)	20 (6)				
	Blackboard	-	20 (6)	6.7 (12)	46.7 (14)	26.7 (8)				
	Workbook	-	26.7 (8)	13.3 (4)	40 (12)	20 (6)				
	Textbooks	-	13.3 (4)	30.0 (9)	33.3 (10)	23.3 (7)				
	Category of Observe-Do	Demonstration	-	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	46.7 (14)	33.3 (10)	4.10	.803	
	Student-Centered Teaching Methods	Category of Listen-Speak	Group discussion and presentation	-	6.7 (2)	10 (3)	43.3 (13)	40 (12)	4.01	.759
			Brainstorming	-	-	6.7 (2)	60 (18)	33.3 (10)		
			Debate	3.3 (1)	26.7 (5)	23.3 (7)	50 (15)	6.7 (2)		
			Recitation	-	-	10 (3)	60 (18)	30 (9)		
Category of Read-Write		Literature review	3.3 (1)	26.7 (8)	36.7 (11)	30 (9)	3.3 (1)	2.62	.845	
		Essay writing (article)	3.3 (1)	50 (15)	36.7 (11)	10 (3)	-			
		Scrapbook writing	10 (3)	63.3 (19)	16.7 (5)	6.7 (2)	3.3 (1)			
Category of Observe-Do		Simulation	3.3 (1)	13.3 (4)	33.3 (100)	43.3 (13)	6.7 (2)	3.26	.912	
		Inquiry / discovery	3.3 (1)	10 (3)	46.7 (14)	33.3 (10)	6.7 (2)			
		Survey	-	36.7 (10)	33.3 (9)	30 (9)	-			
	Experiment	-	40 (12)	36.7 (11)	16.7 (5)	6.7 (2)				
	Drill	-	6.7 (2)	13.3 (4)	46.7 (14)	33.3 (10)				
	Project	-	33.3 (10)	33.3 (10)	26.7 (8)	6.7 (2)				
	Problem solving	-	6.7 (2)	16.7 (5)	60 (18)	16.7 (5)				
	Visitation	26.7 (8)	33.3 (10)	23.3 (7)	10 (3)	6.7 (2)				
	Workshop	16.7 (5)	43.3 (13)	30 (9)	10 (3)	-				
	Games	-	10 (3)	20 (6)	30 (9)	40 (12)				
Case study	-	10 (3)	20 (6)	60 (18)	10 (3)					
TOTAL							3.41	.892		

Based on Table 3 above, it was found that teaching techniques aspect that have high mean is teacher-centered teaching techniques (mean = 3.66, standard deviation = 0.967). Teacher-centered teaching method most frequently used by the teachers was demonstration (mean = 4.10, standard deviation 0.803). A total of 79.3% of respondents stated that they agree and strongly agree, 16.7% of the respondents are not sure and 3.3% of the respondents do not agree on the frequency of teacher trainees performing a demonstration during their teaching sessions.

Teaching techniques aspect that gained the lowest mean is student-centered teaching techniques (mean = 3:32, standard deviation = 0.867). The student-centered teaching method that obtained the highest mean was brainstorming method (mean = 4.27, standard deviation = 0.583). 93.3% of respondents agree and strongly agree; while 6.7% of respondents are not sure about the frequency of teachers who conduct the brainstorming sessions in their classroom. This means, the teaching methods aspect that have the highest mean is teacher-centered teaching method and teaching methods which have the lowest mean is the student-centered methods.

DISCUSSION

Results from the analysis show that trainees tend to prefer the inductive approach compared to the deductive approach principle. The principle of inductive approach most often practiced by trainees is to provide appropriate, comprehensive and adequate examples. The findings were in line with the findings of Kamilah (2000) that stated 94.1% of students agreed that their teachers always used accurate and interesting examples while teaching in the classroom.

In addition, the findings showed that the majority of trainee teachers use Behavioral Learning Theory compared to Cognitive Learning Theory or Constructivism Learning Theory in the classroom. This supports the findings of Siti Rohana (2007) who stated that many teachers still practice traditional and conservative natured teaching. According to Ab Halim and Nik Rahimi (2010), this is the effect of the teachers' experience of being taught using the same method, and therefore, they are inclined to use the same methods on their students.

The study also found that most trainees try to diversify the teaching methods to attract students. Nevertheless, teacher-centered teaching methods still dominate compared to student-centered teaching methods. Among the teacher-centered teaching methods practiced are storytelling, blackboard, textbooks and demonstration techniques. Abu Bakar (1991) stated that teachers who often use teacher-centered approach will cause students' cognitive processes to be low and not challenging. In fact, if the teacher continues to use this approach, this will cause students to easily get bored and feel sleepy in the classroom environment (Ab Halim & Nik Rahimi 2010). Instead, teachers need to make students to be more active in the learning process in the classroom. Thus, the trainee teachers should give high focus on student-centered approach in order to improve the cognitive level of the students.

However, the findings also show that trainee teachers do try to use student-centered teaching approaches methods such as group discussion and presentation, brainstorming, recitation, drills, problem solving, games and case studies. This is in accordance with the findings of Hasnah (2000) which states that over 75% of the teachers try different teaching methods in their teaching to improve the quality of teaching thus manage to attract the interest of the students in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Trainee teachers should diversify approaches and teaching methods to attract students' attention in the classroom. As a matter of fact, teacher-centered teaching has long been applied by the previous generation of educators but, following the situational change in the education system causes teachers to emphasize more on the student-centered teaching approach. This can be emphasized by supervisors and mentoring teachers when the trainee teachers are doing their teaching practice in schools. Periodic assessment during the teaching practice also should be done by the supervisor lecturers so that trainee teachers will strive to increase student-centered teaching practices to get the best grade in teaching practice.

In addition, trainees should be given adequate exposure and a better understanding of the theory and effective teaching strategies to improve the quality of teaching. Exposure is very important so that the trainees are skilled in the new education theories either of Western or Islamic sources as long as it benefits the quality of teaching and learning. This is expected to erode the tendency of trainees towards traditional teaching practices that can lead students to be passive in the classroom.

This study revealed that improvements need to be done in the teacher training courses to improve the skills of trainee teachers in the classroom. The teaching institutions should also emphasize on evaluation of 'micro-teaching' in their institution before trainees are placed for teaching practice. It was also suggested that the authorities create courses that can provide exposure to teaching and learning that is interactive and updated so that they are more creative when planning teaching techniques. This is very important to produce top quality trainee teachers so that the aims of the Ministry of Education Malaysia can be achieved.

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