

## ISSUES AMONG NOVICE TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA

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**ABSTRACT:** Issues and problems faced by novice teachers have long been questions of great interest in the field of education and are still receiving considerable critical attention amongst players in the field. Hence, this study seeks to explore the issues and problems faced by novice teachers. Qualitative content analysis was used to examine 13 local journal articles written on the subject of novice teachers from 2006 to 2015. Data were then grouped into themes to identify issues and problems faced by novice teachers. Findings of this study showed that issues faced by novice teachers include issues related to efficacy, classroom and student behaviour management, professional development, competency, commitment, stress, and support among novice teachers. Based on the findings, more studies on mentoring aspect should be carried out to assist novice teachers to start off their teaching career and provide them with necessary emotional and motivational support to improve their teaching in schools.

**KEYWORDS:** Novice teachers, Novice teachers' support, Novice Teachers' professional development.

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### INTRODUCTION

When it comes to quality in education, UNESCO (2104) stressed on the main objective which is the production of teaching and learning process in classrooms. (Morales, 2016). The key to achieving meaningful and effective children learning is having quality teachers (Ahmad Mohd Salleh 2008; Boon & Wong 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Noriati A. Rashid). Accordingly, factors such as teachers' qualifications, competence, commitment and motivation to deliver quality education are essential if the goals related to education are to be achieved (Morales, 2016; Darling-Hammond, L. 2005; McArdle, Felicity, 2010)

In Malaysian context, the National Key Results Area (NKRA) for Education was targeted to produce quality teachers (Malaysia Ministry of Education (MOE), 2015). The fourth shift in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 was set to focus on producing quality teachers who are highly committed to contribute to the improvement of Malaysian image in the world economic scenario through education transformation. To help teachers improve and become effective, continuous professional development programmes must be available to these teachers (Morales, 2016).

### STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

In line with the effort to produce quality teachers in the classrooms, MOE strives towards providing trainings which are focused on new area based on grade promotion and on the improvement of teaching (Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani & Crow, 2013). The quality of candidates for Teacher Training Colleges (IPG) has also been improved when 42 percent of the selected candidates were excellent students in the Malaysian Certificate of Education Examinations (SPM) (Tan Sri Muhyidin Yassin, 2014).

Despite rigorous efforts taken by the government to address many issues of novice teachers, there are still many problems faced by novice teachers in schools (Fatiha Senom, Abd Razak Zakaria, Shanina Sharatol Ahmad Shah, 2013). These teachers are said to have failed to adapt themselves to the school environment, instill knowledge and skills in their students, effectively use knowledge and skills in their lessons, class management and co-curricular activities, as well as to not being able to convince others of the image they are supposed to carry as teachers (Yusof Boon & Tumirah Jemon, 2011). These findings showed that novice teachers face various problems in the early stage of their teaching career.

Besides, the issues surrounding novice teachers are not limited to issues in classrooms as they also face other challenges when they start becoming teachers (Fatiha Senom, Abd Razak Zakaria & Shanina Sharatol Ahmad Shah, 2013) especially issues related to emotional quotient (Anuradha, 2013), work stress (Tajulashikin, Fazura & Mohd Burhan, 2013; Kiveshnie, Christoff & Christo, 2013) and their commitment to the organisation they work with (Madhu & Manju, 2013; Fauziah, Rahmah, Rohani & Zabani, 2010). In summary, it can be said that novice teachers need to deal with problems regarding emotional quotient, work stress and job commitment.

Based on the findings, there are evidence of problems faced by novice teachers, locally and internationally (Majid, 2011; Leslie, 2010); and these problems can affect them in various aspects including their emotion and work stress in the teaching profession (Ahsan & Sumera, 2012; Anuradha, 2013; Syed Sofian Salim & Rohani Nasir, 2010) and eventually may affect their commitment towards their job and the organizations they are serving (Anari & Nahed, 2013, Tracie, 2009).

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is aimed at exploring issues faced by novice teachers in Malaysia. To explore the issues and problems faced by novice teachers in Malaysia, 13 related journals written from 2006 to 2016 were analysed.

**Table 1: List of research related to novice teachers 2006 -2015**

NO	NAME OF RESEARCHER(S), PLACE AND YEAR OF RESEARCH	THEME 1
J1	Zakaria Mohd Ariff, (2015) 325 novice teachers	Emotional quotient, Stress, Commitment
J2	Syed Kamarzuan Syed Ali, Mohd Zaki Che Hassan & Julismah Jani, (2014). 106 teachers: 64 novice teachers, 42 Expert Teachers in Kedah, teaching Physical Education in Kedah.	Efficacy, Class management, classroom
J3	Rahmah Murshidi, Mohd Majid Konting, Habibah Elias & Foo Say Fooi, (2006). 328 novice teachers in sarawak	Efficacy
J4	Khalid Johari, (2009). 176 novice teachers from 21 secondary schools in Sabah	Efficacy
J5	Khalid Johari, Zurida Ismail, Shukri Osman & Ahmad Tajuddin Othman, (2009). 928 teachers from 22 secondary schools in Sabah.	Efficacy
J6	Pauline Swee Choo Goh & Kung Teck Wong, (2014). 18 new teachers teaching at primary and secondary schools in Perak, Selangor, Johor, Sabah & Sarawak.	Competency, Classroom management

J7	Pauline Swee Choo Goh,(2013). 18 novice teachers from Perak, Selangor, Johor, Sabah & Sarawak.	Competency
J8	Fatiha Senom, Abd Razak Zakaria & Shanina Sharatol Ahmad Shah, (2013). 18 journal articles	Professional development
J9	Magdeline Anak Nor & Zamri Mahamod, (2014). 2 novice teachers teaching Bahasa Iban and 2 experienced teachers teaching Bahasa Iban from Sarawak	Classroom management Pedagogy, Technology
J10	Chee Kim Mang, (2008). 38 administrators from Post-Degree Teacher Training Course (KPLI), and 45 administrators from Malaysian Teaching Diploma Course (KDPM).	Self quality, Pedagogy, Task
J11	Siti Zohara Yassin (2007). 5 new KPLI teachers from Sarawak.	Support
J12	Aziah Ismail, Noraini Haron & Abdul Ghani Kaneson, (2012) 6 novice teachers and a senior teacher (administrator)	Professional development
J13	Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan & Kasthuri Veratharaju, (2013). 1561 teachers in Malaysia.	Professional development

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the various studies on issues faced by novice teachers, the researcher has identified four issues which are deemed problematic among novice teachers. The issues include efficacy, classroom and student behaviour control, novice teachers' professional development, novice teachers' competency, commitment, stress, and support among novice teachers. The details of the findings can be found below.

### 1. Novice teachers' Efficacy

Issues related to novice teachers' efficacy were highlighted by Khalid Johari, (2009); Khalid Johari, Zurida Ismail, Shukri Osman & Ahmad Tajuddin Othman, (2009); Rahmah Murshidi, Mohd Majid Konting, habibah Elias & Foo Say Fooi, (2006) dan Syed Kamarzuan Syed Ali, Mohd Zaki Che Hassan & Julismah Jani, (2014). The study done by Khalid Johari (2009) indicated that novice teachers' efficacy is focused on their ability to manage classroom followed by their teaching strategies and students' participation. In a study done by Khalid Johari, Zurida Ismail, Shukri Osman & Ahmad Tajuddin Othman (2009), it was found that novice teachers' efficacy differs based on the type of teacher training received and teaching experience. The study identified teaching experience as a major contributing factor to teachers' efficacy compared to the type of training received by teachers. In addition, Rahmah Murshidi, Mohd Majid Konting, habibah Elias & Foo Say Fooi (2006) found that preparatory programmes received by novice teachers affect the efficacy level of novice teachers. Similarly, in a study done by Syed Kamarzuan Syed Ali, Mohd Zaki Che Hassan & Julismah Jani (2014) it was found that there was a significant difference between expert teachers' efficacy and novice teachers' efficacy in classroom lesson delivery.

### 2. Classroom and Student Behaviour management

Issues related to class and student behaviour management were studied by Magdeline Anak Nor & Zamri Mahamod, (2014); Pauline Swee Choo Goh & Kung Teck Wong, (2014) dan Syed Kamarzuan Syed Ali, Mohd Zaki Che Hassan & Julismah Jani, (2014). In a study done by Pauline Swee Choo Goh & Kung Teck Wong

(2014) on 18 novice teachers in Perak, Selangor, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, the researchers concluded that novice teachers are aware of the importance of classroom management knowledge and the need to know students' backgrounds to curb disciplinary issues among students. A study done by Syed Kamarzuan Syed Ali et. al (2014) which involved 106 novice teachers teaching Physical Education in the state of Kedah showed a significant difference in classroom management between novice teachers and experienced teachers. In addition, a study done by Magdeline Anak Nor & Zamri Mahamod, (2014) on novice teachers teaching Bahasa Iban in Sarawak has also shown that novice teachers focus less on the aspect of classroom management compared to the more experienced teachers.

### **3. Novice teachers' professional development**

Another key issue observed in studies done on novice teachers is the issue of professional development among them. Researchers divided the issue into two categories namely novice teachers' personal quality and professional identity. This issue was investigated in studies done by Aziah Ismail, Noraini Haron & Abdul Ghani Kaneson, (2012); Fatiha Senom, Abd Razak Zakaria & Shanina Sharatol Ahmad Shah, (2013) and Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan & Kasthuri Veratharaju, (2013). The research done by Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan & Kasthuri Veratharaju, (2013) has established that English Language novice teachers were not given any professional development courses in their first three years despite their readiness to attend such courses. Meanwhile, a research by Fatiha Senom, et al in 2013 on English as Second Language (ESL) novice teachers in Malaysia noted that recent changes in education changes in the structure of teacher professional development. Besides attending programmes such as seminars, workshops, and courses, novice teachers must undergo a more structured professional development programme like narrative inquiry, lesson study group, and peer coaching.

### **4. Novice Teachers' Competency**

Studies on the competency aspect of novice teachers were done by Chee Kim Mang, (2008); Pauline Swee Choo Goh & Kung Teck Wong, (2014). A study by Chee Kim Mang (2008) on 38 administrators from Post-Degree Teacher Training Course (KPLI), and 45 administrators from Malaysian Teaching Diploma Course (KDPM) has come to a conclusion that school administrators were satisfied with novice teachers' competency at their schools based on four aspects which were identified which include personal quality, teaching practice, involvement in co-curricular activities and job management. The findings showed that school administrators were satisfied with novice teachers on their ability to adapt school culture, work well with other people in carrying out their teaching task in school, and their discipline. They also demonstrated punctuality and carried themselves appropriately to reflect the image of teachers in the profession. However, the researcher argued that novice teachers must become proactive and work on improving their ability to face challenges in schools.

Another study was carried out by Magdeline Anak Nor & Zamri Mahamod, (2014) on 2 novice teachers and 2 experienced teachers teaching Bahasa Iban in Sarawak. The issue explored in the study was the difference of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) possessed by novice teachers and experienced teachers. It was reported that novice teachers gave less importance to induction set and lesson summary in their teaching. They were also found to be giving less motivation to their students compared to the experienced teachers. Novice teachers were also found lacking in PCK compared to their experienced counterparts. The study has also documented that novice teachers prefer to work individually and seldom teach using the demonstration technique. However, it was noted that novice teachers are well versed in technology and thus allow them to keep abreast with the development in technology.

### **5. Commitment and stress**

The issue related to commitment and stress among novice teachers was explored by Zakaria Mohd Ariff (2015) in his study involving 325 novice teachers from Kedah, Perlis, Penang and Perak. His findings have

found an association between stress and commitment among novice teachers. He reported that job stress was an indicator to novice teachers' commitment towards their job and schools. He also concluded that there was a significant association between emotional quotient and commitment towards organisation among novice teachers.

## **6. Support**

Another issue faced by novice teacher is the support they receive. This issue was investigated by Siti Zohara Yassin in 2007. This study which was done on 5 novice teachers in Kuching, Sarawak have found that novice teachers were high-spirited but in a need of enough support from others. The study indicated that these novice teachers need to work with mentors to enable them to ask questions when the need arises, to confide in and to make them feel comfortable when they are facing problems. The researcher suggested that these mentors should be appointed among senior teachers to ensure that novice teachers receive the necessary assistance in their professional development.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

A few issues faced by novice teachers related to efficacy are how to encourage students to be more actively involved in the teaching and learning process, class management, and teaching strategies. Wolff et. al (2015) carried out a study in the Netherland and found that experienced teachers are really focussed on students' learning in classroom and they rely on their own ability to ensure the success of their lessons. Experienced teachers were also found to give more focus on building and retaining the quality of teaching and learning. The study also established that novice teachers put more focus on discipline issues and student behaviours compared to the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it seems that novice teachers' efficacy issue is related to the fact that they are inexperienced in the profession

Novice teachers also face problems related to class management and student behaviour control. This is concluded by Akcan (2016) who carried out a study on 55 novice teachers in Turkey and found that among major challenges faced by novice teachers are issues related to the management of student behaviours, student low motivation and student with below average academic achievement. In addition, in a study on novice teacher in Finland, Blomberg dan Knight (2015) found that the most frequent problem faced by novice teachers is their failure to control classes with too many students.

Other than that, novice teachers also have problems in issues related to personal quality and professional quality. These novice teachers are found to be in need of special programme and support to improve in these two aspects. A study done by Hao Xu (2012) in China concluded that a teacher's professional identity is affected by identity image (spiritual drive), routine practice, external factors (social rank), and internal factors (experience and educational background). Furthermore, a study done by Horn dan Campbell (2015) on three novice teachers in the United States of America revealed that novice teachers found it difficult to establish communication without proper practice.

In the issue related to competency, it seems that novice teachers are still having problems in presenting themselves in line with what their schools want from them. This is a global issue, as shown by previous research. The findings of a study done by Warren and Miller (2013) in Australia indicated that very few novice teachers posted to rural areas are prepared to teach effectively. The study also concluded that novice teachers need to have good reference materials and professional training to produce effective lessons. Hence, it is imperative that enough focus is given to professional development programmes for novice teachers by providing them enough exposure during teacher training programme and during their teaching practicum.

Moreover, novice teachers really need enough support in the early stage of their teaching career. Therefore, there is a need for a good mentoring system to be implemented in schools to assist all novice teachers in their

quest to become quality teachers. A study done by Mann and Tang (2012) on four novice teachers in Hong Kong showed that a mentor play a key role in providing the necessary support to a novice teacher. Similarly, Asada (2012) concluded that a mentor should function as a role model and should be responsible in training a novice teacher to use effective teaching technique which they have been using. Meanwhile, Mavroulis (2013) found that novice teachers who are lacking in preparation in teaching could be given a motivation boost through collaboration with their mentors and peers in schools. When novice teachers are positive on their job, they are likely to increase their commitment to the organisation they are serving.

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that the authority concerned must be more proactive when setting up curriculum and when dealing with teacher training programme to ensure novice teachers' improvement in their level of efficacy, efficiency in classroom management and student behaviour control, as well as their professional development, competency and commitment. These efforts must be carried out to produce quality teachers who can respond to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

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