
The Principal and The Professional Growth of Teachers

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Guru-guru yang telah bertugas beberapa tahun di sekolah akan sedar bahawa peluang untuk perkembangan profesional bagi masing-masing adalah tipis. Oleh kerana tidak ada kemajuan di kalangan guru tersebut, apa yang mereka ajar kepada murid-murid pada tiap-tiap tahun tidak ada perubahan langsung. Oleh hal yang demikian mutu pengajaran di sekolah akan merosot dan akhirnya pelajaran murid-murid akan terjejas.

Untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut di atas pengetua sekolah boleh menjadi satu pengaruh besar untuk membantu guru-guru mencapai perkembangan peribadi serta profesional. Rancangan perkembangan profesional yang pengetua sekolah dapat memberi perhatian termasuk penggunaan tenaga yang sesuai dengan kelayakan dan pengalaman; penyeliaan dan penilaian prestasi guru; memberi peluang kepada guru untuk mendapat kelayakan yang lebih tinggi; dan penglibatan guru dalam aktiviti-aktiviti yang berkaitan dengan profesional perguruan.

Teachers who have worked in schools for several years will realise that there is little opportunity for them to advance professionally. Status wise also in the teaching profession there is little distinction between teachers who have worked three years in the school and those who have served ten years. The rewards for accumulated experience are slight and sometimes older teachers are even branded as "dead wood" instead of being revered as "masters" in the art of teaching.

For many teachers teaching has become just a routine so that there is little difference in what is being taught or done this year to that of last year. Most teachers just teach direct from text books and it is seldom that any distinction is made between the syllabus and the subject contents in the text books. The text book has become the main teaching tool of most teachers and pupils are rarely exposed to new knowledge outside their books or given the opportunity to have field experience.

When the professional growth of teachers becomes stunted the standard of teaching in the school may decline and in the long run the education of pupils may suffer. If this happens what can be done to give brighter hope for teachers so that they can continue teaching with interest and enthusiasm? In school the principal has the opportunity to exercise a powerful force in assisting the personal and professional growth of teachers. In this paper some of the school-based activities which can contribute to such growth will be discussed.

Proper Deployment of Teachers

The school is made up of a variety of teachers with different qualifications and experiences and it is most important that the principal deploy them according to their subject specialization and experience. However, at times conditions are beyond the control of the school especially when teachers not required by the school are sent there, and request for certain subject teachers are not met by the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education.

There is nothing more frustrating and disheartening to a new teacher than to be asked

to teach a subject he is not trained in. Before a new teacher is assigned to teach a class it is better to have a conference with him first to find out what he can do best with his qualifications and experience so that he can have a happy start in his career.

In Malaysian schools it is quite common to come across teachers teaching subjects they are not trained in; teachers teaching higher classes when they should be teaching lower classes; and teachers overloaded with an assortment of subjects. This is not a happy situation for the teachers and may retard their professional growth. The principal should remedy the situation immediately. However, if such teachers have to continue teaching subjects they are not trained in then the principal should send them to attend in-service courses whenever one is organised. As a temporary measure these teachers should be assigned to work with more experienced teachers in the same discipline for some time.

In assigning teachers their duties the principal should give the opportunities for them to work with academically weak pupils as well as good ones. A teacher should not be "condemned" to teach only a problem class year in and year out. In a double-session school the principal should also allow teachers to switch from the afternoon session to the morning one whenever appropriate. A teacher will work better and be more dedicated if he finds the principal sympathetic to his problems and also a caring one.

If the principal recognises capable teachers who can be groomed to be prospective school administrators then he should share his responsibility with them. In this way a teacher may escape from being a classroom teacher all his life when the opportunity comes. To many teachers to be appointed as administrators means gaining a higher status. This action by the principal will inject new interest and enthusiasm into the teachers as they feel their efforts are recognised.

Evaluation of Teachers

A teacher has to plan his lessons and write them in his official record book. When a principal examines the teacher's book he should do it thoroughly as this task is normally done once a week. The principal should not be contented to direct the senior assistant to do it or just put his rubber stamp on the pages to indicate that he has seen them. For the benefit of the teacher the principal should write some comments, encouraging or otherwise, on his observation of the teacher's work wherever appropriate.

From the record book the principal can get information on the course outline, the topics to be taught, lessons covered, and the activities planned for the pupils for each day or week. He can also assess the pupils' performance from test scores recorded in the book. If he has reasons to suspect that a teacher is not doing his work properly he should have a conference with the teacher and discuss the teacher's problem with him and then advise him accordingly.

The principal can also check a sample of the pupils' exercise or work books to ensure that whatever is planned and recorded by the teacher is actually taught to the pupils. A principal who is not alert to this practice will find some teachers writing the same lesson plan for all classes irrespective of different academic achievements among the pupils. Some teachers consider the weekly inspection of their record books just a bureaucratic practice and have been known to prepare their lesson plans a month ahead without making any subsequent adjustment. This of course defeats the whole purpose of maintaining a record book.

As teaching is the main activity of teachers the principal will be able to know the strengths and weaknesses of his staff from the way they prepare their lessons. Those who are weak or incompetent should be advised to improve and if they have any difficulty with the preparation of their lessons they should be asked to consult their more experienced col-

leagues or other specialists. If the principal comes across good practices such as innovative ideas, new approaches or presentation in the preparation and teaching of lessons, he should bring them to the attention of other members of the staff.

Besides evaluating the daily work of the teachers the principal has also to prepare an annual evaluation of the performance and progress of his staff. These annual reports are sent to the State Education Office to be scrutinised and acted upon if necessary.

To make the annual reports meaningful and useful the principal should make it his responsibility to advise any teacher whose performance and progress are unsatisfactory rather than keeping it confidential. In this way the teacher concerned can make extra efforts to improve himself.

Opportunity for Advancement

The principal should encourage and give every opportunity for teachers to advance in their career in order to add new life and interest to their work. In the Malaysian Education Service a teacher can advance to a higher salary grade if he gets a higher qualification while in service. So, a teacher who does not want to remain stagnant in his position should try to get higher academic qualification e.g. a university degree if he does not have one.

A teacher who wishes to do a degree course should get the permission of the Ministry of Education first and the course should be related to a teaching subject. Those who wish to study for a degree normally must not be over 40 years of age.

In Malaysia the Universiti Sains Malaysia is the only university in the country which offers an off-campus course leading to a degree for those who are unable to study full time at the university. This degree programme appeals to many teachers as they can retain their regular job as well as study part-time.

Occasionally the Ministry of Education and other organisations such as the British Council and the Malaysia-American Council for Educational Exchange (MACEE) do offer scholarships, grants or fellowships for degree or non-degree courses. The principal should bring to the notice of his staff as quickly as possible if there are such awards. Usually such notices reach the school late and teachers do not have sufficient time to apply.

Various departments of the Ministry of Education such as the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD), the Schools Division, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), and the Ministry of Education Staff Training Institute (MESTI), also organise in-service courses for teachers, subject specialists, key personnel and school administrators. Such courses are normally held to familiarise school personnel with new syllabi, methods of teaching, implementation of new educational programmes, research projects, administrative procedures and so on.

The principal should grant leave or allow teachers time off to attend such courses and he must be fair in his selection of teachers who wish to attend.

At the end of an in-service course teachers should be asked to brief their colleagues in the school on the programme they have attended. In this way other teachers will be kept informed of the latest development in education.

Outside Interests

Teachers can generate new interests in their job by organising or involving themselves

in activities which can promote personal and professional growth. For example, the school can have its own professional development committee to plan, organise, and coordinate activities related to staff development. Such a committee will be useful for organising forums, talks or field visits and also maintaining a resource area for the staff.

A teacher can learn a lot of things by visiting each other's school. However, at present information on exemplary or model programmes in schools is lacking. In this matter perhaps the Federal Inspectorate of Schools should consider producing a directory giving such information based on the numerous reports written by school inspectors. Such a directory will be useful for teachers when planning activities involving field visits.

Each school should have a materials resource area where the staff can get information on staff development. This can be in the library, the staff room or any suitable area which the school can spare. The resource area should be supplied with reference books, pamphlets on training programmes, university catalogues and other items of value to the staff.

Most teachers also have the opportunity to do extra teaching after school hours e.g. teaching adult students in further education classes or part-time tutoring at a university. If this extra work does not interfere with the normal teaching duties of the teacher, the principal should approve it. By teaching in a different situation and interacting with people other than their own pupils the teachers will find their work more interesting and the new experience gained will benefit the school also.

Every year the Ministry of Education requires examiners for its various public examinations such as the **Sijil Rendah Pelajaran**, **Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia**, and the **Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia** and teachers may be selected to undergo training as examiners in their specialised subjects. Teachers who are appointed as examiners may find the new experience rewarding.

Conclusion

The school has a variety of teachers with different qualifications, experience, philosophies, and talents and within it the principal has an important role to play as a staff developer responsible for the personal and professional growth of his teachers.

References

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