AN INVESTIGATION INTO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUT-OF-FIELD AND IN-FIELD HISTORY TEACHERS' INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to investigate whether there were differences between the way in-field and out-of-field teachers in Malaysian secondary schools perceived and practised History education, and the way their students perceived the teaching and learning of History. In addition, it sought what approaches to learning students adopted in the History classroom, and how far curriculum learning objectives in History had been achieved.

The theoretical model developed was drawn from Biggs’ 3P (Presage, Process, and Product) Model of Learning to examine the possible relationships between two sets of variables related to teachers and students. The teacher level variables were teachers’ characteristics, years of teaching (experience), and approaches to teaching, classroom methods, and teaching conceptions. Student level variables related to student characteristics, students’ approaches to learning, classroom climate, and History learning objectives.

The study adopted quantitative method to answer three major research questions that were derived from the theoretical model. The respondents involved in this study were drawn from 18 of the 94 secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A total of 52 History teachers and 1653 students from year 11 (Form Four) participated. The method involved collecting information from the respondents by using two sets of questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students. A factor analysis of the model constructs based on Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), was employed to validate the constructs in the survey instrument, by testing their fit in the different measurement models used. Partial Least
Square (PLS) and Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) were used for testing the relationships between the variables examined in this study.

According to the research results, no statistically significant differences emerged between in-field and out-of-field teachers on a number of key variables, such as approaches to teaching, methods of teaching and students' approaches to learning. On the other hand, there were a number of other variables where the statistical analysis revealed differences between in-field and out-of-field teachers. These included the teacher characteristic of experience, the dimensions of classroom climate, both preferred and actual, especially in relation to the personalisation of teaching in response to students' needs and interests and, most importantly, students' learning outcomes, defined in terms of their understanding and appreciation of the objectives of the History syllabus they were studying. Despite the limitations of data being gathered only from Kuala Lumpur secondary schools, the results of this study provide some justification for the steps taken by Malaysian government to employ out-of-field History teachers in secondary schools in Malaysia. It is a policy which can be continued, provided the issues surrounding out-of-field History teachers discussed above are properly understood and appropriately handled.
Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Umi Kalsum Mohd Salleh and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, excepts where due reference has been made in the text.

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