

Teaching Challenges In Military Setting

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Abstract: This article is on the challenges faced by instructors in the military setting. Although teaching has always been challenging regardless of its setting, the arm forces has an extra positive factors to ease learning, discipline. With the ultimate aims of defending nation and its interests from external threats, conducting right training is vital. Standardised training programmes and techniques, fixed tactical solutions, and common doctrine have made it easy for instructors to teach through the modular instructors' "book solution" and easy evaluation. However, these techniques are often ineffective in preparing soldiers to deal with evolutions, new missions, unique environmental conditions, and the uncertainties of combat. Therefore, this study using mixed methods approach is conducted to review factors that influenced the instructors' performance. Findings indicate that knowledge and experience is the core determinants of competency besides commitment, policy, motivation, and working environment. Further research can be done to identify areas of knowledge whether technical or leadership and management is the most critical.

Key word: teaching challenges, instructors' performance, military setting, training issues

INTRODUCTION

Arm forces across the globe evolved rapidly over the years in term of size, strength, equipment, weapons systems, infrastructure and others due to current demands and challenges that the their nations has to face. Besides their specific roles and tasks, the arm forces are also required to perform additional innovative tasks in support of national objectives. Thus, various new approaches in the training system were implemented to ensure that their professional credibility is maintained. In a dynamic military organisation that deploys sophisticated weapon technologies, highly educated and well trained officers and soldiers are required. The right person is not only the one who can do the job but also the one who wants to do the job; the right position is a job that he or she can do, and the right performance is a result of the person being in the right position given the opportunity to do the desired job. In line with the development in technology and diversification of responsibilities, arm forces training institutions are urged to update their instructors' competencies to enable the instructors in delivering evolving knowledge suitable for army environment. Thus, it is very reasonable that instructors' performance be among the main concerns in the arm forces. Quality of training often depends on the instructors' knowledge and teaching skills. Bramley (1991) defines training as 'the systematic development of the attitude, knowledge, skill and behaviour pattern required by an individual to perform adequately a given task or job'. The author outlined the key concepts of 'systematic development' that implies planning and control, and 'individual', which includes group and team development in this context (Bramley, 1991). Recently, the level of professionalism, credibility and competency of soldiers has been highly debated and warrant investigation to identify the root cause. Performance of instructors has been identified as having causal relationship with soldiers' competency. Thus, investigation into factors influencing instructors' performance at their job is important.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Factors Influencing the Instructor's performance:

Even though many researchers have studied teacher job satisfaction, performance and motivation, none of them have specifically studied the factors that influence the performance of military instructors. Studies conducted on the topic but in different setting can be adapted with minor modifications so that they may apply to a military environment. Factors influencing the performance of instructors can be categorised as three types, the internal factors, the external factors and the environmental factors. Mohd Said and Mohd Taha (2002) revealed that intrinsic factors related to ethics and personality of teachers significantly affect their teaching. The authors identified extrinsic factors such as rewards or incentives provided by the department teachers work with affect teachers teaching performance significantly. Environmental factors such as teaching facilities, locations and working environments also undoubtedly affect teachers' performance. Meanwhile, Hong *et al* (2004) indicated that there are nine key factors affecting teachers' creative teaching behaviours. The factors are personal qualities, thinking style, family factors, education experience, teaching beliefs, personal effort, motivation, professional knowledge, and environmental factors.

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Instructor's Quality:

OECD report (1994, pp.13-14) defines teachers' quality in five broad dimensions of (i) knowledge of the curriculum areas and content; (ii) pedagogic skill; (iii) reflection and ability to be self critical; (iv) empathy and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of other; and (v) managerial competence. Kounin's (1970) described effective teachers as those who are able to anticipate change in mood in a classroom and to be flexible enough in order to maintain the pace of lesson by using strategies which able to maintain student's interest. Kounin (1970) also wrote that pedagogical skill demands planning to meet the students' needs, which include selection of various flexible teaching strategies in achieving desired outcomes. In term of knowledge of curriculum areas and content, he found that the curriculum that is focused towards students' needs and presented in variety of techniques have motivating power on students which exhibited through their enthusiasm for the subject. Experience has also been recognized as important to teaching qualities where several studies reported positive relationship between teachers' experience and performance (Rice, 2003; Provasnik and Young, 2003; Goldhaber *et al*, 1996; Greenwald *et al*, 1996). However, it is important to enhance an instructor's creative personalities and capabilities in sharing their experience. What may also be equally important is to train them in specific creative teaching skills. This is why novice instructors entering the field of training institutions for the first time must be mentally prepared to take time to master the art and skill of teaching. At the same time, they are also required to undergo intensive training in order to develop their skills as an instructor.

Policy:

Policies are most likely to have a large impact on teacher quality. Therefore, policymakers should address these issues carefully through the evaluation and implementation of programs that can provide incentives for teachers to perform effectively (Elizabeth, 2005). Meanwhile, Baratz (2009) found that, the quality of teaching is clearly critical in assuring the student achievements where her studies have shown that teaching quality is the most fundamental in school factor related to student academic achievement. Her finding has led to an intense policy focus on teaching quality. In her recommendation stated that, the policymakers should concerned on identifying teacher excellence, understanding the barriers to assuring excellent teachers in every classroom, and developing policies to cultivate and nurture excellence. The lack of investment in teacher standards and evaluation, and the stress placed on the school system will cause unmotivated teachers.

Commitment:

Simplicio (2000) pointed that creative teaching requires hard work and teachers must introduce new methods or approaches in their day-to-day teaching course. He said that this required a massive amount of time and effort in terms of planning and preparation. Petrowski (2000) further emphasised that a breakthrough in creativity is only possible after an extended preparation time. According to the 10-year rule (Feldman, 1999; Weisberg, 1999), it takes approximately ten long years for a person to master the knowledge of a particular domain to the extent that he or she experiences a creative breakthrough.

Environment:

Taufik (2011) found that the school environment plays an important role in determining student performance. This indicates that these two variables are able to influence student performance, which, in turn, can influence instructor performance in general. Thus, he concludes that instructor quality, school environment and time management are among the main factors which can influence the individual performance. These findings are relevant for this research, assuming that these variables will also have a positive relationship with instructor performance.

Motivation:

There are many historic and theoretical models of motivation that can be used to improve individual's performance. However, incentives that reinforce behaviour are often used to facilitate individual or team motivation which, in turn, can produce good performance (Steers *et al*, 2004). Weiss (2002) and others have shown that reward comes in many forms; one powerful form includes public or private recognition. The research indicates that, over the long-term, intrinsic motivation taps into deeper levels of energy and commitment than external sources of motivation. Hence, while external motivators are still effective and necessary to improve individual and team performance, finding ways to motivate team members intrinsically may have potentially greater positive results.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts pragmatic paradigm with a mixed methodologies approach to achieve all of the research objectives. Pragmatic paradigm with multiple methods of data collection and analysis has been widely recognised as most suited in the social sciences setting (Creswell and Clark, 2007). This study was limited to only one arm forces' training centre and contained within the analysis period of 2010 – 2011. The reasons for

limiting the study within those scopes are to enable researcher in completing the research within time frame allotted. Thus, different training centres may yield variation from the result contained herewith. The population targeted for this study are instructors and students of the arm training centre. Data collection was done via self-administrated questionnaires distributed by the researcher. Two different sets of questionnaires have been prepared for (i) instructors and (ii) students. A total of only 72 instructors and 100 students responded to the questionnaire. Secondary data have been tabulated to reveal patterns and uncovering issues. Questionnaires' distributed to students have been analyzed for frequencies supporting assessment by validation team. These two data sets inform researcher on the issues and supported in generating questionnaires for distribution to instructors. The responses obtained from instructors were analyzed using SPSS version 20 software. Hypotheses have been tested for relationship among variables via Pearson's Correlation and Multiple Regression, besides the descriptive analysis to analyse the frequency of the respondents' responses. Interviews with instructors were also conducted to confirm responses from questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 below presents a summary of descriptive analysis on factors identified as influencing instructors' performance. All factors carrying means greater than 3.5 on a 5 point likert-scale represents agreement with the items, standard deviation of 1.1 and below indicate agreement with the means.

Table 1: Descriptive Results of Factors Influencing Performance

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Qualification	3.25	5.00	4.4062	.50252
Knowledge	3.00	5.00	4.5778	.50525
Commitment	3.00	5.00	4.4549	.56032
Seniority	2.25	5.00	4.2431	.66868
Management	1.00	5.00	4.1806	.80852
Policy	1.00	5.00	3.6759	1.13691
Motivation	1.00	5.00	4.1333	.81258
Career Advancement	1.00	5.00	3.5035	.87763
Working Environment	2.33	5.00	3.7083	.81446

The results indicate that academic qualification, knowledge and commitment are among the main determinants of good teaching besides seniority, management support and motivation. While other factors of policy, career advancement opportunity and working environment fetched lower importance. Filipe (2009) in her comparative analysis of teacher competence and its effect on the student performance recommended that the government improve the professional qualifications of teachers, including subject knowledge. She also mentioned the necessity of increasing teachers' level of academic qualification based on the level of their teaching. Therefore, academic qualification can enhance instructors' teaching skill. Based on interview, some respondents suggest that knowledge and experiences comes handy when they want to provide examples when applying theories.

On work commitment, respondents commented that an additional duty normally reduces their commitment and focus towards teaching. Although some (43.1%) respondents suggested that instructor's quality cannot be measured based on their seniority, they agree that being senior in the army does help in better teaching because senior instructors would have greater confidence level which improve interaction with students. Respondents (37.5%- agree; 55.6% strongly agreed) also agree that management plays important role in influencing instructor performance. They (80.5%) also suggested that the management in the training centre places more emphasis on training, and 94.5% respondents responded that close relationship between management and instructors enhanced their performance. 73.6% of the respondents agree that management should allows instructors freedom in planning of the training programme to develop creativity. The results also indicate respondents disbelieved in the current policies incentives towards instructor performance. However, majority (61.2%) respondents agree on the privileges provided for instructors' career in the current policies.

In terms of career advancement, the results revealed that most of the respondents (65.2%) believed that they had better opportunities compared with non-instructors. However, 65.5% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they were given priority to attend overseas courses. Meanwhile, only 65.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they received opportunities to enhance their teaching skill. Majority respondents believed that motivation increases their performance. Majority (65.2%) agree that the management of the training centre always motivate instructors and high majority (88.9%) responded that they performed better when the organisation expressed appreciation over their work and 91.6% expressed that they were more motivated when the management show commitment towards instructors.

Majority respondents satisfied with the working environment in the training centre, with only 37.5% of respondents expressed uncomfortable with the activities conducted in the training centre as well as its working culture. However, majority 70.8% think that management constantly taking charge of their welfare (interview

would reveal whether this is perceived as good or bad by instructors) and small majority (56.7%) teaching facilities in the training centre were well-maintained by the management. Responses collected were also used to test hypotheses set in this study. Nine hypotheses involving the dependent variables identified in this study were tested and results are as follows. Table 2 shows the summary of results of hypotheses testing.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of the Factors Influencing PerformanceNo.

	Hypotheses	Results
H1	There is a significant relationship between academic qualification and instructor performance.	Not supported (0.537)
H2	There is a significant relationship between instructor's knowledge and experience and their performance.	Supported (0.00)
H3	There is a significant relationship between instructor's working commitment and their performance.	Not supported (0.60)
H4	There is a significant relationship between instructor's seniority and instructor's performance.	Not supported (0.32)
H5	There is a significant relationship between management's role and instructor performance.	Not supported (0.104)
H6	There is a significant relationship between organizational policies and instructor performance.	Supported (0.03)
H7	There is a significant relationship between motivational factors and instructor performance.	Supported (0.04)
H8	There is a significant relationship between career advancement opportunities and instructor performance.	Not supported (0.36)
H9	There is a significant relationship between the working environment and instructor performance.	Supported (0.043)

Regression analysis shows that four variables were supported, which are, knowledge and experience, organizational policies, motivational factors significantly related to instructors performance. These results were expected especially for knowledge and experiences (H2), because it is the fundamental values for training institutions to determine their quality of teaching. This positive result is consistent with research conducted by Hong *et al.* (2004), and Simplicio (2000), who discovered that the knowledge and experience of the teachers, or instructors within the military context, can influence their performance. In addition to that, the instructors' ability to transfer their knowledge and experiences has become fundamental in producing high quality army personnel. H6 is supported which implies that policies related to instructors influenced instructor performance, which is consistent with Mwita (2002), in which strong support at the policy level for the use of market-type managerial reforms influenced performance. This includes policies related to the selection process, instructors' development, career advancement and recognition, which are all able to motivate them to improve their performance. 70.8% of respondents agreed that policies are able to influence their performance. Therefore, the policymakers should attempt to address these issues through the implementation of programs that provide incentives for teachers to improve (Elizabeth, 2005).

H7 is also supported which indicates that motivation is one of the influencing factors. The result of this study is consistent with that of other researcher (reference) which found a positive relationship between motivation and performance. Literatures show that motivated employee will feel that their welfare and performance are appreciated (reference). This may come in the form of monetary incentives or internal factors such as recognition and challenges at work (Mahmud and Idrish, 2011). It is extremely essential for the management to bolster motivation among instructors in order to ensure that they remain highly motivated. According to the survey results, most of the respondents (91.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would be more motivated if the management was highly committed. The research also revealed that the instructors' working commitment as well as their additional duties can influence their performance. It is the fifth factor in this study that influences instructor performance. The results are consistent with findings of other researchers who conducted studies at civilian training institutions. It is highly essential that the management of the training centre ensures the workload of instructors should not become a burden for their instructors when performing their main duties. H9 is supported at the significance level of 0.043, which implies that relationship between working environment and instructor performance are significant. The results of this study is consistent with the results reported by Mohd Said and Mohd Taha (2002), and Hong *et al.* (2004), who found that there is a strong relationship between the working environment and teaching performance. This research also found that most of the respondents agreed that the training facilities can influence them to perform better. Other than teaching facilities, the working environment also refers to the relationship between and among the team and management, both of which can influence instructor performance.

However, academic qualification (H1), working commitment (H3), seniority (H4), management's role (H5) and career advancement opportunities (H8) were not significantly related to instructors' performance. The results for H1 contradict the literature conducted by Filipe (2009), and Hong *et al.* (2004) who found that academic qualification is significantly related to instructor performance. The different results might be due to the type of profession and work culture. In this study, military knowledge may play a more important role in influencing instructor performance compared to academic qualification, which is required by civilian teachers. H3 is not supported indicates that the instructors' commitment towards additional tasks or workload does not influence their performance in carrying out their main duties as an instructor which contradict with the results found by other researchers. The different results might be due to the nature of work among military personnel, who must always obey instruction and display loyalty towards the organisation. H4 is not supported which

implies that that seniority of instructors does not have any influence on their performance. Even though military organisations are well-structured and have a hierarchy system, the survey results revealed that 80.6% respondents believe that their seniority and rank do not determine their quality as instructors in a military training institution. However, most of the respondents agreed that one's seniority in service portrays one's experiences.

H5 is also not supported implying that no influence of the management roles on instructor performance. The fact that these results differ from those conducted in civilian training sectors could be due to the more complex nature of work prevalent in a military organisation. Military personnel possess a sense of loyalty towards their organisation that drives them to prioritise their duties over their personal interests. However, the survey results' frequency percentage also revealed that most of the respondents acknowledged the management could influence their performance in the long term, especially in terms of the privilege given to instructors. H8 is not supported in which instructors perceived that their performance is not influenced by career advancement opportunities. The reason these results are inconsistent with that of other research is due to the differences between a military training centre and civilian training centre in terms of its nature of work. Even though career advancement was one of the issues the instructors highlighted during the interview session, it does not influence instructor performance when they carry out their duties.

Conclusion:

Outcomes of this study offer important insight into factors that can contribute to or influence instructor performance especially in military setting. Although findings of this study are consistent with findings from studies conducted in other civilian teaching fields, several differences were identified. Instructors seem to demand for more training and policies needed careful determination. Frequent rotations of instructors are not a good practice since teaching requires experience and skills. Concerted effort from various management levels to create and deliver sound policies is critical to assure high quality and motivated instructors are appointed to train soldiers. The goals and linkage to policies have to be well communicated across management levels so anyone in the authority would understand the importance of adhering to the policies and procedures.

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