

# Teachers Readiness towards Reproductive and Social Health Education

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## Abstract

Sexual education has become a big issue in Malaysia over time since the country faces the highest number of sexually active teenagers. This sensitive issue causes the teaching process to become incomplete, lack of depth and insufficient. Teachers' readiness is essential in acknowledging curriculum reform, such as the Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) curriculum. In general, the purpose of this study is to determine the level and correlation between Health Education (HE) teacher readiness in teaching PEERS curriculum in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher attitudes. A quantitative approach with a survey method was used in this study. The selection sample was conducted by proportionate stratified random sampling involving a total of 354 HE teachers in Selangor secondary schools. The readiness of teachers in teaching the PEERS curriculum showed that the level of attitude is the highest value with a mean score of 4.05 followed by the level of content knowledge with a mean score of 4.00 and the last is the level of pedagogical knowledge with a mean score of 3.96. In addition, there is a significant positive and high-impact correlation between the level of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and attitudes toward teacher readiness. The study on teachers' willingness to teach the PEERS curriculum is expected to benefit teachers teaching HE in the Malaysia Education system. This study gives the impression that teachers should be prepared mentally and physically to face challenges in implementing the new curriculum. This study can be used as a reference by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) to improve the quality of education and improve existing programs.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Readiness, Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, Attitudes, Reproductive and Social Health Education, Health Teachers

## Introduction

Sexuality education is neither the exclusive preserve of parents in the home nor of that the teachers in the school (Joy-Telu, 2019). Education has aiming to provide opportunities for individuals to improve their standard of living and build a nation that actively contributes to the development of Malaysia (Hussien, 2016). To educate the young generation and prepare them for a life in a multicultural society, the needs for teachers to be equipped with relevant skills in facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of academic training have to be expanded for the teachers to be ready in meeting the challenges of the new education era.

The national curriculum is used by all the schools in the national education system. The national curriculum consists of core subjects and the specified subjects that will determine the students' knowledge, skills, and value at the end of their schooling. The use of the national curriculum enhances and teaches positive values that are expected in delivering the knowledge (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013)

The set curriculum will not be achieved without the involvement of teachers in making curriculum decisions. This is because teachers are expected to interpret the content of the curriculum, identify and decide the potential of the contents in improving the students' potential (Deng, 2018). In the Health Education curriculum implementation element, teachers are one of the main aspects in the teaching and learning that will focus on the development of the health-related skills and show how the features support the knowledge, comfort and skills in delivering the contents of the Health Education curriculum (Szucs et al., 2020). Therefore, teachers need to prepare themselves in terms of knowledge in the related field to teach effectively.

### **Problem Statement**

Teachers act as the implementers in ensuring the developed curriculum can be delivered to the students at school. Hence, teachers' readiness is crucial to accept the changes in the new curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Physical Education and Health is one of the subjects that has changed the curriculum content. However, based on a study by Sankhyan et al (2020), it was identified that 75 percent of teachers refused to teach sex education which is one of the sub-topic in the PEERS curriculum. These findings support a study by Razali et al (2017) on the level of readiness among teachers in delivering the PEERS curriculum is relatively low due to the negative opinions of the various party regarding the sub-topic.

In a study by Stiggins (2005); Veloo et al (2015), it was discovered that teachers are not prepared to teach the new education system due to a lack of training and confidence because of the lack of knowledge in delivering the content. Maimunah (2019) supports the study by stating that many teachers do not understand and are not ready to teach the new curriculum, especially the sex education sub-topic in the PEERS curriculum. For that to happen, teachers need to be ready to increase their potential in mastering and applying the existing skills.

According to Guerreiro (2017), teachers need to master the knowledge in multiple perspectives on pedagogical knowledge and teaching and learning knowledge as teachers are the hope in helping the students to reach their full potential in facing more complex challenges. In contrast, Novita et al (2020) found that the teachers' knowledge in teaching and learning is still lacking, and the teachers' teaching plan does not follow the teaching design. In this regard, teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge holistically and always be ready with new knowledge under any circumstances and changes in the education system.

A study by Cardina and Fegley (2016) discovered that health teachers are more positive overall about teaching and tend to disagree that they do not have the motivation they did when they started teaching. However, they are more than ready because of their content and pedagogical knowledge. Apart from that, their positive attitude towards job satisfaction and

support from the administrators is key to starting the teaching and learning process in school. However, Shariza (2017) mentions that teachers still feel uncomfortable and conservative in delivering information regarding sexuality to the students. Various reasons are given to avoid teaching sexuality. Among the reasons is the lack of knowledge about sexuality, inadequacy, and conflicting feelings in teaching that topic.

This study supports his research findings in 2008 that mentioned teachers were less willing to implement sexuality education lessons. They showed a low level of knowledge and a negative attitude towards sexuality education. The finding from the study on teachers' knowledge, attitude and skills can significantly be a key to their level of readiness towards sexuality education. Teachers are less prepared due to their low level of knowledge and attitude. The findings highlight important implications on the need for training for the teachers to implement sexuality education in the PEERS curriculum in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, according to Mahamod (2011), in determining a teacher's readiness, teaching and learning sessions in the classroom is influenced by the teacher's attitude. Knowledge and attitudes are significant elements in accepting and implementing a change in the curriculum. Therefore, the teachers' readiness during teaching and learning depends on the knowledge and attitude related to the subject taught. This study was conducted to look at aspects of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and attitude with teachers' readiness in PEERS curriculum teaching.

### **Research Objectives**

In general, the purpose of this study was to identify the readiness of physical education and health education teachers from the aspects of knowledge and attitudes in the teaching of Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS).

The specific objectives of this study are:

- Identify the level of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, attitudes and readiness of teachers in the teaching of Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) in secondary schools.
- Identify the relationship between content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, attitudes and teacher readiness in the teaching of Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) in secondary schools.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, attitudes and readiness of teachers in the teaching of Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) in secondary schools?
2. What is the relationship between content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, attitudes and teacher readiness in teaching Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) in secondary schools?

### **Methodology**

The design of this study is descriptive correlation through data obtained from the instruments provided. Research methods in the form of surveys are suitable for collecting

information on the variables studied (Konting, 2009). Creswell (2012) pointed out that the design of the survey study is a step in a quantitative study in which researchers conducted surveys on samples and populations. The design of descriptive studies and correlations is suitable if researchers want to see relevance between the variables studied. Correlation studies also highlight and measure the level of relationship between two or more variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2015).

The instrument for evaluating the teacher's readiness in the PEERS curriculum teaching refers to content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and teacher's attitudes. Questionnaires are a data collection method often used by researchers as they are easy to administer and the data is accurate (Ary et al., 2009).

## Findings

### Level of Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, Attitudes and Readiness of Teachers in Teaching PEERS

The findings and discussion of this section answer the research questions that have been constructed by the researcher to identify the level of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and attitudes with the readiness of teachers in teaching PEERS. Descriptive analysis was used and categorized into three levels of evaluation namely high, medium and low. The evaluation of Health Education subject teachers is divided into four variables studied, namely teacher readiness, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and attitude in teaching PEERS seen through the mean value of each variable studied to explain in more detail.

Table 1 shows the findings for Health Education teachers' level of a dependent variable and independent variables. The highest level ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) was recorded for teacher readiness and the lowest level ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) recorded was for pedagogical knowledge. Attitudes of the teacher's readiness on the content in the PEERS curriculum recorded the second-highest level ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) when compared to content knowledge in the PEERS curriculum ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). This indicates that the levels of the four variables studied are at a high level.

Table 1

*Level of Teachers Readiness towards PEERS curriculum*

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Teachers Readiness	4.10	0.59	High
Attitudes	4.05	0.61	High
Content Knowledge	4.00	0.62	High
Pedagogical Knowledge	3.96	0.61	High

### The Relationship between Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge and Attitudes with Teacher Readiness in Teaching PEERS

Pearson correlation analysis was used to look at the relationship between content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and attitudes toward teacher readiness in the teaching of the Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) curriculum.

Based on Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between content knowledge ( $r = .816, p = 0.00$ ), pedagogical knowledge ( $r = .803, p = 0.00$ ) and attitudes ( $r = .806, p = 0.00$ ) with readiness teachers in the teaching of PEERS curriculum. All relationships can be interpreted as positive relationships with high impact.

Table 2

*Correlation between independent variables with teacher readiness*

Independent Variables	Teacher Readiness	$p$	Conclusion
Content Knowledge	.816**	0.00	High
Pedagogical Knowledge	.803**	0.00	High
Attitudes	.806**	0.00	High

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### Discussion and Recommendations

The finding in this study show majority of HE teachers are ready for teaching the PEERS curriculum in secondary school in terms of the level of teacher readiness, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and attitudes. This study indicates that the teachers must be knowledgeable about the field of pedagogy, the subject matter, and the learning needs of the students. Furthermore, the teacher must not only be knowledgeable about the content of the curriculum but good, open-minded, and great attitudes are very important for the HE teachersto give a positive impact on students' effective learning and meaningful (Veloo et al., 2015). Teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward the PEERS curriculum need to enhance to ensure the successful implementation of PEERS. Teachers must take a smart approach to delivering their lessons, have content knowledge of the curriculum, and be highly creative so that the learning environment is conducive.

### Conclusion

In sum, PEERS is a curriculum that plays a vital role in the education system to realize the nation's aspiration in creating awareness among the community to carry out an active and healthy life. Teachers' readiness for the PEERS curriculum in teaching and learning has a significant impact on pupils' interest in the curriculum and influences pupils' achievement in academics and their future lifestyle. In this regard, the willingness of teachers to effectively deliver the PEERS curriculum with appropriate approaches is needed to enhance the knowledge and shape students' personalities to face an increasingly challenging life. At least three groups will get direct benefit from this research: current teachers, student teachers and school students. Further, qualitatively oriented research should be undertaken with a focus on observations and how teachers develop their knowledge and practices in this field The proposed approach should be practiced in the PEERS teaching and learning process to overcome misconduct among today's youth. Therefore, teachers' willingness in terms of high knowledge, rigorous planning, and teacher attitude is necessary to ensure that students' interest in the PEERS curriculum can be strengthened and delivered effectively.

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