

Innovative Arabic Language Teacher: A Dream or A Hope

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i4/4844>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i4/4844

Published Online: 17 November 2018

Abstract

This article is based on the literature's focus on previous writings and studies by researchers at home and abroad regarding the importance of developing innovative teachers in the education system. This article also discusses the concept of innovative teachers in terms of definition, problem statement related to current situations in teaching, particularly in the field of Arabic language and the division of innovative teacher categories. Further studies are needed to explore the prepping of Arabic language innovative teachers at the school level to serve as a reference and sterling example.

Keywords: Innovative Teacher, Innovator, Arabic Education, Innovation, Innovative Teaching Strategy.

Introduction

Amidst the 21st century, innovation is significant to the ventures of every organization and the field within the country including education. Innovation is the motto, tagline and program in both the government and private institutions. Among them, the theme of Teacher's Day celebration in 2014, "Creativity Trigger Teacher, Innovation Prompter". Whilst this year, in 2017, the theme selected for the Labor Day is "Creative Workers, Innovation Generators". Every year, most organizations will host competitions based on ingenious inventions. It has been proven that innovation is one of the key agenda in the country and is cultivated in various sectors whether in public or private services when Quality Day is replaced by the Innovation Day celebrated on October 31st every year. The cultivation efforts of this innovation culture are under the responsibility of the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) of the Prime Minister's Department (MAMPU, 2010).

Innovation is also a key thrust in government programs and policies such as the Second Thrust of the Five Core Strategies in Malaysia Productivity Blueprint launched by YAB Dato 'Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak on 8th May 2017 to prompt digitization and innovation (Economic Planning Unit, 2016). Whereas in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan: 2016-2020, its focus is to generate prosperity through innovation and Malaysia's Post 2020 produces innovative citizens (Economic Planning Unit, 2015).

The goal of innovation in public services and non-profit-based institutions is the reduction in operating costs, time-saving, enhancement of work, effectiveness, efficiency and productivity levels, and increased customer satisfaction levels in contrast to profit-based business organizations. In educational policy, innovation is also a major agenda in achieving Student Aspiration through the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the government aims to foster creative and innovative thinking among every students so that they can innovate, generate new possibilities, and create ideas or new and improved knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2013). Based on that, teachers need to employ knowledge on subject matter, teaching and learning, technology to facilitate learning, creativity, and early learning experiences, applying innovation in face-to-face interactions and virtual environments with students.

In this century, the role of teachers is very important despite various fields and departments as they all act as role models in realizing the Student Aspiration which is the agenda of the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM 2013-2025) to build creative and innovative generations. Hence, teachers need to prepare themselves with various skills including applying creativity and innovation in their teachings to deal with new age students (Roslee Talip, 2012).

Teachers who teach Arabic language are also not excluded by this responsibility as they need to implement similar activities in their teachings. Although Arabic has been introduced as one of the subjects of the national education system in the past decades, the level of achievement of the language skills and proficiency is still a problem of various parties at all levels (Mohd & Nik, 2008; Zainur Rijal Abdul Razak & Rosni Samah, 2006; Kamarul Shukri Mat Teh, 2008). The weakness of the pupils in the dexterity of Arabic language is much related to the weaknesses of the teachings of the teacher either in terms of approach or material use (Maimun Aqsha, 1991; Noraini, 2010; Noh, 2013; Kamarul Azmi, 2010; Jasmi & Tamuri, 2011; Mohd Fadzli, 2012; Norhayati, 2014). In that regard, it becomes a requirement for teachers to be innovative and applying innovative strategies in their teaching.

Literature Review

Each teacher, especially teachers who teach Arabic language, needs to develop their potential as innovative teachers who are able to innovate and reduce the dependency on existing supplies in the commercial market that can ensure the effectiveness of students' achievements. Teachers should make innovation a practice and apply them in their teaching approaches as teachers know better and understand the best approaches and ways to overcome the problem of students with various life backgrounds and various cognitive levels.

Definition of Innovation

The term innovation was introduced for the first time by world economist and a Nobel prize winner from Austria, Joseph Schumpeter which obtain the name "Prophet of Innovation" in the title of a book (Thomas K. McCraw, 2007). The word innovation comes from the Latin word and originally, this word means renewal. Based on the Kamus Dewan (1991), innovation also means renewal. Some scholars provide a variety of definitions; among them are successful creation, development and introduction to new products, processes or new services (Udwadia, 1990).

Innovation is also said to be a dynamic process that requires the input of creativity to produce new ideas or existing assimilation into a new way with the emphasis to create something better (Majaro, 1992). Based on the above definition, it can be concluded that innovation is an element of renewal from the creation of some ideas which is not necessarily be original but must be new to the user, context or application. It includes the reconstruction, impersonation of new ideas and technologies for an organization, followed by developments and implementations (Rozihan, 2002). In the field of service including educational services, innovation is defined as new ideas in all aspects of the work to produce quality services.

Innovations and Teachers

There are two categories of teachers in terms of innovation. The first category is innovative teacher or innovator. This group is an active innovation agent. They not only accept innovation as a practice but even create a new idea from it. The second category is also accustomed as an adopter. Adopter teacher is a passive agent of innovation. They continue to innovate in teaching according to guidance (McLaughlin, 1993; Fullan, M. & Miles, M, 1992).

Definition of Innovative Teachers

Some definitions have been suggested by scholars. Among them, Don Wettrick (2014) defines innovative teachers as teachers using spirit-based teaching and open source to improve their student education. While Judi Randi and Lynn Corno (1997) explain that innovative teachers are pursuing innovative teaching and learning models and present them in the form of ideas, techniques, new teaching aids to practice in teaching and learning. The Innovative Teachers' Award Committee, Ministry of Education Malaysia, provides a more refined and detailed manifestation. Innovative teachers are defined as teachers who can produce innovations in terms of materials, methods, strategies and so forth to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching processes. Even innovative teachers are teachers who can produce original innovations or improvements to existing ones that include renewal activities and positive changes in learning and teaching processes. Innovative teachers are also regarded as the national curriculum translator into the process of teaching and learning practically (AGI 2018, BPK KPM).

Current Issues in Teaching Arabic Language

Mastery of Arabic among pupils is still weak (Kamarul Shukri, 2008; Mohamad Azrien, 2010; Rosni, 2012). Teachers are the key element in the effectiveness of learning and teaching besides students and classrooms (M.J Dunkin & Bruce Biddle, 1974). However, the problem of students' weakness in the mastery of these subjects is often associated with the lack of teacher teachings. Some findings find that most Arabic teachers are still confined to conventional and teacher-centered teaching approaches (Mohd Fadzli, 2012; Rosni, 2012; Habibah, 2016).

Similarly, the use of auxiliary materials based on student-centered teaching approaches and materials-based teaching rather than the use of teacher-centered approaches that are still low (Kamarul Azmi, 2010; Rosni, 2012). It has even been found that most Arabic teachers still lack in the latest and less creative and innovative teaching approaches (Kamarul Azmi, 2010). Hence, teachers are required to be creative and innovative.

Fatimah (2010) found that most Arabic language teachers are solely consumers while the auxiliary and teaching materials in the commercial market are less likely to meet the curriculum and student level (Tomlison, 2001). In this regard, Arabic language teachers should be innovators capable of translating the national curriculum into teaching to ensure the enhancement of students' achievement in learning this second language.

The Importance of Innovative Teachers

Abd Razak (2014) states that teachers play a very important role in applying elements of innovation among students through teaching and learning practices in the classroom. Innovative teachers can encourage and train students to be creative and innovative human beings through imitation of teachers' teaching (Sullivan, 1989; Randi, 1996). Moreover, teachers are often designated as key factors for students (Bolin, 1987).

In addition, it is found that innovative teachers can affect students' motivation (Bolkan, 2009). According to Arbaa (2010), innovative teachers can increase students' interest in learning and teaching. Even, the quality of teaching and learning practices can also be improved (Fullan Bennett, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1986).

Innovative teachers are associated with improved achievements and performances. Abd Razak (2014) in his writings found that innovative teachers can improve their students' achievement and contribute in improving school performance (Hassan, 1995). Innovative teachers are also role models and examples. As a role model, teachers need to be fully versatile in both theoretical knowledge and application of creativity and innovation to meet the challenges of the 21st Century learners. Innovative teachers also act as the primary catalyst who can realize the transformation in education. Along with the Transformation era in education in conjunction with the idea of School Transformation (TS 2025) and National Transformation (TN 2050), teachers are widely cited as the engine of transformation and innovation in the curriculum (Talip, 2012).

Hasan (2002) described innovative teachers as a problem solver that changes the problems faced by the opportunities. Additionally, brainstorming ideas to improve the delivery in solving student's problem in understanding lessons implemented by educators themselves are believed to reduce costs in educational services. Olson (1980) supports his view that the need for innovation is essential from teachers to teachers. This is because the development of innovation from the outside often does not coincide with the curriculum, teacher thinking and student level.

From the aspect of personality, it is found that innovative teachers are effective, excellent teachers and have good attitudes in terms of their own efficacy and confidence. This good attitude will definitely be an example for a student's future.

Conclusion

Innovative teachers make a huge contribution to the improvement of students' achievement and the performance of the school. Although the study of innovative teachers or teachers innovators and their teaching practices in the classroom is still lacking and inadequate. In fact, empirical studies have not been specifically identified regarding innovative teachers, but

many studies have proven innovative teaching strategies or the use of innovative materials in teaching and learning can improve students' achievement and teacher quality.

A more in-depth study like case study needs to be explored to review an innovative teacher group from a convention perspective. Hopefully, the practice and culture of innovation can be encouraged among public sector workers, especially Arabic language teachers to promote the growth of innovation and the improvement of the quality of educational services.

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