ISSN : 1985-5826 **AJTLHE Vol. 4, No.1, Jan 2012, 121-136**

ANALYSING THE DIMENSIONS OF VALUE ASCRIBED TO LEARNING BY MALAYSIAN TEACHERS USING A LEARNING VALUE SCALE

Norliza Kushairi

Institute of Teacher Education, Malaysia

Abstract

Rapid changes in educational settings place pressure on teachers to update their professional knowledge and skills, which can be accomplished by their participation in continuous professional development (CPD) programmes. The notion that teachers are true lifelong learners implies that they should hold positive attitudes and values needed to excel in learning. However, information on how teachers value their learning is sparse. This paper examines the dimensions of value placed on learning by teachers who undertook further learning as part of their CPD. As professionals, teachers are workers; therefore, their learning context is inevitably career-oriented. Thus, a Learning Value Scale questionnaire was developed by adapting Super's Work Values Inventory proposed by Super and Neville (1986). The respondents were 599 teachers categorised into four groups—three groups engaged in different types of learning programmes (Undergraduate (UG), Postgraduate (PG), and Generic), and the control group did not participate in any learning activities. The responses were subjected to Principal Component Analysis. Results show that teachers see learning in four dimensions which are conceptually meaningful for, or associate with, the values of Achievement, Humanitarian Concern, Status, and Career Security. Examination of individual item responses across groups reveals that items for economic and job promotion show a distinct difference between the UG and Generic groups. In light of these findings, the study discusses the systemic cultural factors that conditioned the teachers' concept of the value of learning. This baseline data can help teacher educators to understand teachers' identity as learners. The findings also suggest that policy makers should review their learning policy initiative, and teachers as implementers of education should reflect on their own practice of learning.

Keywords: lifelong learning, teacher learning, teacher professional development, learning value

INTRODUCTION

Major changes in contemporary economy, politics, and society have inevitably put pressure on the professional sector, particularly teachers, to undergo reforms. A report for discussion at the International Labor Organisation (ILO) Joint Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the Twenty-First Century recognised the significance of the changing roles of teachers (ILO, 2000). This shift is also made evident in another document, where the following statement is made:

> …government decisions are most likely to succeed when planned and implemented with the full participation of teachers and their organizations, since they are the ones who will ultimately implement policies. (ILO, 1996c cited in 2000: 64)

The UNESCO's World Teachers' Day theme in 2009—Build the future; Invest in teachers now!'—puts the roles and challenges of today's teachers in perspective and aptly captures the urgency with which nations must act to develop a quality teaching workforce (UNESCO, 2009). The theme revisits the significance of teachers' ongoing professional commitment, implying that the increasing intensification in the nature of teachers' work results in strong pressure for them to undergo continuous professional development (CPD). As maintaining updated information and knowledge is pertinent to teachers' work and professionalism, teachers' CPD and lifelong learning co-evolve, and thus, teachers hold a dual role of transmitters and learners of knowledge. This is where the notion of teachers as true lifelong learners arises (Nicholls, 2000).

However, in the eagerness to provide CPD programmes for teachers, it is noted that some programmes only cater to system-led or policy-led objectives, taking the one-off or piece-meal approach, which fuel debate on the weakening of teachers' autonomy and professional development (PD) sustainability (Bolam, 2000; Hustler et al., 2003). In particular, the issue concerns teachers' lack of ownership in determining their own professional needs. In addition, there are arguments that the approaches of catering to policy-led objectives are among the reasons for the ineffectiveness of content delivered during programmes in subsequent classroom practices (Harland et al., 1993; Bolam, 2000; MacBeath et. al., 2004). Not only is this form of teachers' PD said to undermine the aim of supplying teachers with the skills they need for the classroom, it also raises questions of teachers' accountability as learners and, hence, how they value their learning.

In Malaysia, in line with the Ministry of Education's Master Education Plan 2006–2010, aimed at upgrading teachers' professionalism via academic qualification, in-service training (INSET) has shifted towards long-term award-bearing courses. This format runs as an academic learning programme which confers a higher academic qualification degree to participants upon completion. The long-term format may well be seen as more sustainable for teachers' PD, which simultaneously addresses the aforementioned argument on the ineffectiveness of a one-off approach. Due to learning policy initiatives that encourage teachers to attain higher academic qualifications, the number of teachers seeking to enrol in such programmes increases each year. However, within the interface between lifelong learning and PD, there remain concerns revolving around how teachers who undergo such programmes view themselves as *learners* rather than as *teaching professionals*? This question is asked in response to debates on teachers' absence of ownership in their learning. It is argued that teachers may undertake learning solely for the sake of gaining material benefits which come along with the policy initiatives, rather than valuing the meaning of being a learner or fulfilling their professional needs. This paper argues that it is timely to look at how teachers perceive the benefit, worth, or advantage of learning in order to understand the value they place on learning, so as to gauge it's relation with the development of a quality teaching workforce. Thus, how teachers view themselves as learners in terms of the dimensions of the value they ascribe to learning is at the heart of this paper.

Understanding the Concept of 'Value'

The conceptual meaning of 'value of learning' appears to be an under-researched construct, as no results emerged from an online search of the literature with the keywords 'belief' or 'value' and the adjacent word 'learning'. This became more significant when the word 'teacher' was added to the search in an effort to investigate how teachers value learning. In contrast to definitions of moral value, also known as ethics, few to no objective definitions of were found that related to both learning and value. This finding suggests that attempts to associate the two aspects in a learners' context are still sparse. It also implies that there is room to explore the construct empirically if we are to understand how adults see themselves as learners.

From the viewpoint of psychologists, such as Raths et al. (1966: 28), values are 'beliefs, attitudes or feelings that an individual is proud of, is willing to publicly affirm, has been chosen thoughtfully from alternatives without persuasion, and is acted on repeatedly'. In a similar vein, Fraenkel (1977: 11) and Shaver and Strong (1976: 15) view value as emotional commitment, ideas, and standards or principles for judging 'worth'. Dose (1997) suggests that a discussion of work values appropriately begins with an examination of the concept of values. While Super (1995) defines values as a refinement of needs through interaction with the environment, including socialisation. He believes that through socialisation, people's needs are satisfied when their values (that is, objectives or goals) are set. Super also adds that, unlike attitude, values occupy a more central place in a person's cognitive system and may be more closely linked to motivation.

What about the Value of Learning?

From the above discussion, it appears that understanding and defining the value teachers place on learning is not a straightforward task. In addition, to date, there appears to be no scale that specifically measures value and its dimension in learning. This implies the need to be pragmatic if we are to understand how people, particularly teachers, value learning. One practical way of doing so is to relate the way of valuing learning to practical reasons teachers undertake learning. Thus, the following question was used as departure point: 'What do teachers *seek* in their learning?'

During the exploratory interview (prior to the study), one teacher expressed the following:

> I enjoyed attending courses... this is my… mmm… can't exactly remember how many times [I've attended courses] this year. But I will keep on [joining them]. Because [by attending courses] I gain more confidence to teach and carry out my role [as an ICT deliverer at INSETs]. I obtained my degree also through [an] in-service programme [special graduation programme for non-graduate teachers]. People have more confidence if you have more certificates that symbolise your skills, and of course with a [university] degree, you feel more confidence yourself.

The above quotation is typical; it shows that the value placed on learning encompasses a broad range of definitions that cover preferences, reasons, motivations, importance, and anticipated benefits. It also resonates with the multidimensional definition of value as proposed by many theorists; some alternatively likened it to beliefs (Rokeach, 1968, 1973), needs (Super, 1973), goals (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987), criteria for choosing goals (Locke, 1976), and attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1992; Eishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Painstaking efforts have also been taken by some theorists to distinguish values from other constructs (i.e. Payne, 1980; Rokeach, 1973). What has fuelled more heated debate is whether values are merely preferences (e.g. Rokeach, 1968, 1973) or preferences that are more desirable (Beyer, 1981). This is in line with the psychological views on value, in which values develop through the influences of culture, society, and personality. Cassar's (2008) proposition of values reflects the teacher's opinion expressed above: Values are described as ideals that guide or qualify one's personal conduct, interaction with others, and involvement in one's career. Underlying all these debates is the general understanding that value describes a set of 'beliefs, needs, goals, criteria for choosing goals, criteria for choosing behaviours and preferences'. These initial findings serve as a platform to embark on a more rigorous effort to refine the concept of value in relation to teachers' learning.

Aims

The study aims to answer the research question, 'What are the dimensions of value that teachers ascribe to their learning?' To this end, a Learning Value Scale questionnaire (LV) was developed. The questionnaire was distributed to 599 teachers who were undertaking learning activities. This paper reports heavily on evidence from quantitative data gathered using the LV scale, and where applicable, interweaves it with interview data to illuminate the findings.

Rationale for the Learning Value Scale

To date, limited information has been available on how adults *value* learning. Most studies on adult learning have focused on the reasons, motivations, or barriers to participation, without attempting to establish the *root* of these constructs — that is, the 'value' embedded in them. It is noted that extensive research has addressed the value ascribed to work, but very little empirical research is found in relation to in-service teachers, specifically in Malaysia. This makes it difficult to gauge teachers' motivation and expectations for PD. A few studies relevant to the topic are the following: a comparative study on *student teachers'* (pre-service teachers) value of work in Nigeria and England (Ejiogu & Harries-Jenkins, 1980); and a study conducted locally in Malaysia on in-service teachers who took a PD course (Zakaria & Abdul Rahman, 1997). Nevertheless, these studies are not comparable with the present study for the following reasons. The former used pre-service teachers, whereas this study involved in-service teachers; these two groups are cannot be compared due to the difference in their work experience. The latter involved in-service teachers who undertook learning; however, it did not inspect the dimensions of the values that emerged or the reasons that they emerged, as these were not aims of the research. Instead, the study used Super's Work Values Inventory (WVI) to investigate the relationships between work value and socio-demographic factors (i.e. age, teaching experience, and gender). In practice, these studies do not allow for a comparison of findings.

Besides, while findings from work value studies provide useful insights on ways to facilitate certain career routes, there seems to be a gap in the understanding of teachers who undertake learning during service. As teachers are agents of change, when their professional growth is concerned, learning becomes an integral part of their career development. Unlike discourse on teaching and pedagogy, there is little specific literature pertaining to learning undertaken by *teachers*, let alone exploration of the teachers' psychological domain as learners in regard to valuing learning. Hence, it is a challenge to understand the importance, expectation, or worth of learning to teachers. In sum, the vacuum that exists in the interface between lifelong learning and PD limits the possibility of gauging a correlation, if any, between the dimensions of value for work and dimensions of value for learning as perceived by teachers. Thus, the LV scale for measuring the dimensions of values which teachers ascribe to learning was developed to fill in the gap.

Developing the Learning Value Scale: Adapting Super's Work Values Inventory

The scale draws primarily on work by Super (1970) and Super and Neville (1986). Super's findings on the values of work shed light on motivations for professional growth. Super (1970) proposes that there are 23 dimensions of work value, which Super and Neville (1986) reduce to the following 12 dimensions: Self-development, Economic Reward, Job Security, Creativity, Working Condition, Life Style, Autonomy, Variety, Authority, Social Relationships, Risk, and Prestige.

Notably, the WVI has been reviewed by many scholars (Zytowski, 1994; Robinson, et al., 2008), who report that it has high internal consistency in objectively measuring the construct of value. The WVI was revised and widely applied to assess and aid occupational choice by

commercial companies, such as Kuder in the USA (Zytowski, 2006). Studies of the WVI provide evidence to support the relevance of work value theory in measuring values for *learning during service*. Thus, the WVI is able to lay a strong foundation that establishes the relationship between findings related to motivation and work values. Under these circumstances, Super's WVI was adapted and modified to provide an overall picture of the value teachers place on learning.

To determine the dimensions applicable to measuring the value of learning for this study, an exploratory interview was carried out. Some of the dimensions, when mapped onto teachers' interview data, revealed similarities. For example, Super advocates that people work because they need and value life security embedded in economic rewards. An interviewed teacher supported this idea:

> With better academic qualification, we will get promotion (to graduate salary scheme) afterwards. And, of course, [the] graduate salary is higher than what we are getting now.

Analysis of the interview data suggested only eight dimensions, some of which were renamed. Another one additional dimension (Religion) was added later, creating nine dimensions in all. To refine and validate the items and dimensions, a series of pilot studies was carried out with 119 teachers at two higher education institutions. Finally, a test of reliability showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.892. The nine dimensions were embedded in a set of 18 statements concerning the following themes: perceived benefits, impacts, goals, objectives, importance, and motivation/reasons. The dimensions are Professional Advancement, Altruism, Aesthetic, Economic Rewards, Achievement, Ability Utilisation, Prestige, Social Relationships, and Religion. The respondents used the set of statements to judge their agreement on what they observe, feel, experience or do. Thus, the dimensions were based on their own principles, ideas, and standards. These principles, ideas, and standards, in turn, were the said 'value' that they ascribed to the items. All the dimensions have a specific definition and are self-explanatory. Professional Advancement measures the impact of learning on occupation or careers, specifically on promotion or career advancement. Altruism measures how learning enables teachers to help others (students, colleagues, etc.) with problems. It also measures the extent to which teachers see helping others as their professional responsibility. Aesthetic reflects the sense of beauty in life stemming from feelings of devotion or vocation in learning. Economic Rewards corresponds to benefits such as salary, wages, or other monetary incentives. Achievement embodies elements that mirror the victory achieved in an explicit way. Ability Utilisation deals with the implicit enhancement of an individual's potential when more ideas are successfully or creatively built. It differs from achievement in its emphasis of the implicit, rather than the explicit, aspects of achievement, which only the learner realises. Prestige relates to the recognition or status that learners believe to be an outcome of gaining learning credentials. Social Relationships are concerned with how learning provides or improves the learner's social and relationship skills. Finally, Religion focuses on the learner's spiritual aspects and connectedness with God.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adapted a mixed method approach in designing the instruments as well as collecting and analysing the data. Given that the study was explorative in nature and no scale had, to date, been devised to measure the value teachers place on learning, a quantitative survey to cover the breadth of issues was plausible. Thus, a quantitative approach was used in designing the major parts of the questionnaire to allow for broad

coverage of the potential issues. To complement this method, a qualitative approach (open-ended questions in the questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview schedule) was selected to further reveal the emerging issues and to provide rich and thick data description, as advocated by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007).

Participants

The target population was in-service teachers undertaking long-term professional learning (academic and generic) supervised and monitored by the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. Based on purposive sampling of institutions that provided courses for in-service teachers, a total of four Institutes of Teacher Education and two Higher Education Institutions were selected from the northern, central, and east coast regions. Another two schools from the northern and east coast regions were also selected to gather the opinions of teachers who were not participating in any long-term formal courses. This control group allowed for comparison between the learning and non-learning groups.

Table 1 Summarises the course types and numbers of teachers who participated in the survey

Programme/Course type	Number of participants
Bachelor's/Undergraduate (UG)	167
Master's/Postgraduate (PG)	188
Generic	111
Non-participating (control group; NP)	133
Total	599

The Following Briefly Clarifies a Few Terms Used in the Study Design

Higher-academic qualification courses: There are two basic types of courses that confer a higher degree for teachers in Malaysia: subject-based and administrative. Only subject-based courses were selected because they are the ones teachers generally take. The administrative courses only apply to head teachers or senior teachers and are used for training in relation to their promotion. The subject-based courses are offered in three programmes and lead to higher academic qualifications, namely Bachelor's, Master's, or doctoral degrees. For this study, only students in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes were selected, as these are the main programmes in which teachers commonly enrol.

Long-term programmes: The courses selected ranged from six weeks to four years. The purpose of this selection was to make a distinction from the one-off, piecemeal type of unsustainable PD programmes. This characteristic is important for the study because there were a variety of generic courses available. With the lengths selected, the generic courses are comparable with other long-term professional courses in the sample, where the minimum length of chosen courses is six weeks. Such programmes run in three formats:

Undergraduate Programmes: These consist of courses attended by teachers who are enrolled in various Bachelor's degree programmes. The teachers are labelled as the Undergraduate (UG) group.

Postgraduate Programmes: These consist of courses attended by teachers who are enrolled in various Master's degree programmes. The group is labelled as the Postgraduate (PG) group.

Generic courses: These are mainly pedagogy-based. Teachers undertaking SMART school skills (ICT-based) and courses for mathematics and science teaching constitute the Generic group.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed in person by the researcher at the above premises. The number of returned questionnaires was 599. Parallel interviews were carried out with 18 of 73 respondents who indicated in the questionnaire that they were willing to be interviewed. The interviewees were selected based on their availability between classes, with consideration given to ensure that each teacher group was equally represented (at least four respondents were selected from each group). The interviews were conducted individually. They asked, among other topics, the teachers' reasons, expectations, and barriers to learning. The interview data were analysed manually by the researcher through the thematic analysis proposed by Boyatzis (1998). A report on the interview findings is *briefly* interwoven in the Discussion section as a means of illuminating the issues that emerged from the quantitative findings.

Data Analysis

The analysis aimed to detect the dimensions of value teachers attributed to their learning. To accomplish this, a data reduction technique, namely Principal Component Analysis (PCA), was used. This was then followed by analysis of individual items to compare (using frequency) the responses across groups of teachers.

RESULTS

Principal Component Analysis

PCA is a data reduction technique for exploring the underlying structure of a set of correlated variables. Four of the initial components extracted by PCA met the Kaiser criterion for retention (an eigenvalue of 1.0 or greater, Field, 2009; Pallant, 2010). Thus, a four-component solution, accounting for 60.2% of the scale variance, was selected as the most meaningful conceptual representation of the data.

Table 2 presents the four components, LV items, and component loadings (or coefficient) of each item. Only those variables with a loading of 0.4 or higher were selected to define a given component; the higher the loading, the higher is the correlation between the item and that particular component. To help readers follow changes in the meaning of the dimension that came about during the interpretation process, the proposed conceptual meaning of the dimension given at the outset is shown in parentheses after each statement. The following interpretation captures the component's structure and defines its conceptual meaning.

Table 2 Results of PCA of four-component solution

Achievement	Loadings
It enables me to be a role model to others. (altruism – professional responsibility)	.445
It makes my life becomes more meaningful. (aesthetic)	.551
It enables me to be acknowledged for my updated knowledge or skills. (achievement)	.554
It enables me to do the things that I am really expert in. (achievement)	.709
It enables me to have the latest information in my field. (achievement)	.818
It enables me to be an expert in my field or in my subject of interest. (achievement)	.757
It enables me to prove my potential to accomplish tasks excellently. (ability utilisation)	.483
It enables me to develop more ideas of what I can do in my job or life. (ability utilisation)	.617
Humanitarian Concern	
It makes me feel closer to God. (religion)	.694
It enables me to help those with problems. (altruism)	.814
It enables me to mingle in a group of scholars. (prestige)	.499
It enables me to feel a sense of belonging or acceptance by the community. (social relationships)	.489
It enables me to foster a good relationship with colleagues through work. (social relationships)	.641
Status	
It enables me to be seen as important (prestige).	.672
It enables me to gain praises for my updated knowledge or skills (prestige).	.854
Career Security	
It enables me to get a job promotion. (professional advancement)	.808
It enables me to advance in my career. (professional advancement)	.475
It enables me to earn a better salary. (economic rewards)	.816

Component 1: Achievement

The eight highest loading items of the first component, ranging from 0.445 to 0.818, are a combination of several proposed dimensions. This component features multiple perspectives on achievement: cognitive (or intellectuality) and affective (or emotional/feeling) contentment, ability utilisation, and professional responsibility. The items '*enables me to prove my potential'* and *'develop more ideas'* convey how one feels when learning provides an opportunity to increase his or her potential to a level s/he did not previously realise, thus illustrating cognitive achievement. Individuals who score high on this dimension also indicate a value on professional responsibility when learning '*enables me to become a role model'*. The clustering of items from different dimensions reflects that teachers perceive the concept of achievement as encompassing multi-faceted elements. This dimension explained the largest proportion of the variance (36.9%).

Component 2: Humanitarian Concern

This component clusters together five items with loadings ranging from 0.499 to 0.814. The items relate to Religion, Social Relationships, and Altruism and concern spiritual and humanitarian value. For instance, '*mingle in a group of scholars'*, which was initially proposed as a measurement of Prestige, when grouped together with other items in the same component, actually taps into an element of socialisation. *'Feel closer to God'* indicates an adherence to religion, which reflects spirituality. '*Enables me to help'* relates to humanity. Socialisation and spirituality elements, which are embedded in religion, altruism, and social relationships, mutually relate to the concept of humanitarianism. These five items explained 10.1% of the variance.

Component 3: Status

The third component clusters two items with loadings of 0.672 and 0.854. It indicates the degree of importance that teachers place on how others perceive them. The component's key feature is dependence on others' evaluation that determines the recognition or credit desired by the learner. For instance, '*enables me to be seen as important'* emphasises the effort learners put forward to make themselves seen as valuable in order to attain a higher status in a society or organisation. This value can be distinguished from Prestige (the original label), which is defined as privilege that comes as a *natural benefit* of learning. Therefore, we can interpret this component as a measure of Status characterised by *dependence* on others' evaluation, assisted by the learner's effort to attain the desired recognition. The two items explained 7.08% of the variance.

Component 4: Career Security

The final component consists of three items: two are loaded very high (above 0.8), while the last has a much smaller loading of 0.448. '*Enables me to earn a better salary'*, which represents 'economic' value, along with the 'job promotion' item from the 'career advancement' value, indicates that monetary benefit and professional advancement are mutually related, and their combination leads to a perspective of security in life. This component accounted for 6.0% of the total variance.

Pursuant to the above analysis, the need arose for a clearer picture of how each of the four groups responded to each item of the scale. Thus, the frequency distribution of each item across groups was examined.

Examining Individual Item Responses by Percentage of Agreement

On the whole, there is high universal agreement (80% and above) reported across all groups for all the items. However, there is a distinct difference in the response patterns for economic and job promotion items. To highlight this difference, only a selection of the results is presented here (Note: Agree represents the combination of 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' responses; NS stands for 'Not Sure').

Two items (Items 1 and 2) that constitute the Career Security dimension, reported a distinct difference between the UG and Generic teacher groups (Table 3). Nearly all UG teachers (99.8%) agreed that learning leads to a better salary, but less than half of Generic teachers (33.3%) did. Similarly, 76.0% of UG teachers agreed that learning enables them to be promoted, in contrast to only 12.5% of Generic teachers. This result indicates the contrast in opinion between the two groups on the relevance of learning in providing their economic security. This finding inspired further examination of the topic; teachers' opinions as gathered from the interview data were used to illuminate how they perceived the value of learning for their economic security. The next section discusses this in detail.

Table 3 Distribution of responses (%) to selected items across groups

Item	Learning is important to me because	NS	Agree (A+SA)
1	It enables me to get a job promotion. (professional advancement)		
	Postgraduate	26.7	40.1
	Undergraduate	13.2	76.0
	Generic	34.2	12.5
	Non-Participating	21.1	56.4
	It enables me to earn a better salary. (economic)		
	Postgraduate	29.9	49.2
	Undergraduate	7.2	99.8
	Generic	38.7	33.3
	Non-Participating	16.5	70.7
3	It enables me to be acknowledged for my updated knowledge or skills. (achievement)		
	Postgraduate	13.4	80.7
	Undergraduate	10.8	86.8
	Generic	29.7	69.3
	Non-Participating	15.8	80.4

DISCUSSION

The objective of this section is to extend our understanding of what shapes teachers' concept of the value of learning by revisiting the aim and findings of the study. The results showed four components that are conceptually meaningful for, or associate with, these dimensional values: Achievement, Humanitarian Concern, Status, and Career Security. This suggests that, instead of demonstrating the nine predictable dimensions of values proposed at the study outset, Malaysian teachers only ascribed four meaningful dimensions to the value of learning. Analysis of each item's responses revealed the most distinctive pattern in the UG group, particularly in their universal agreement on the economic and job promotion items, which contrasts with the opinion of the Generic group. This response pattern suggests that UG teachers are primarily monetary-oriented. In light of the findings, it seems that mediating factors conditioned the teachers' concept of the value of learning, particularly the UG group's career security orientation. This signifies the need for data triangulation. Moreover, data from the interviews with the UG and Generic groups are interwoven in this section to corroborate the quantitative findings.

Questions asked during the interviews were aimed at eliciting how teachers see the worth of learning, which was believed could disclose the value they place on learning, as captured in literature. Nevertheless, great care was taken to avoid leading answers. This was done by using non-directive or implicit questions surrounding 'value conception'. Surprisingly, the UG group's money-oriented tone stood out, as evidenced in the following excerpts:

> With better academic qualification, we will get promotion (to graduate salary scheme) afterwards. And, of course, [the] graduate salary is higher than what we are getting now.
>
> Even though it (the process) will take years, we will be upgraded to DG41 (a graduate teacher status) after finishing [our] studies.

Alternatively, teachers from the Generic group showed a remarkably high rate of unsure responses to Item 3 '*learning enables me to be acknowledged'*, which suggests that they were unsure of the material reward of learning. This is captured in their comments below:

> I guess I will just be given more responsibilities after this [completing the course]... you know, this kind of 'Hey look, she just got back from a course so she can hold this post [responsibility]'. Promoted?? No (hesitantly, while shaking her head slowly). Being assigned more duties [responsibility/workload]? – Yes, definitely!

These two conflicting values imply the presence of underlying issues. Demographically, it is well understood that the salary or economic background of non-graduate teachers (UG group), is far lower than that of other learning groups. Incidentally, during the same period of the new learning policy, the Malaysian government also introduced a public servant salary reform (in 2007). This reform has implicated the teachers' salary scheme, particularly the non-graduates; those who obtained a degree after ten years of service benefit from the salary increment. However, the reform did not apply to those (non-graduate teachers) who took up learning (to earn a degree, hence, became graduate teachers) with less than ten years of service. Most of the UG teachers in this study would have benefitted from the reform because they all had at least ten years of service experience. To be upgraded to the graduate service scheme with a long list of material benefits after they completed received their Bachelor's degrees, is argued to have contributed to the shaping of their instrumental learning. In contrast, those who attended the Generic courses (which were open enrolment courses, meaning both non-graduate and graduate teachers could enrol), were not entitled to any degree or award, or any material benefits outlined in the learning policy, and as such,

they did not reflect the instrumentally-oriented learning motivation. When all of these factors are taken into consideration, they explain why the UG teacher group demonstrated a more instrumental learning value in contrast to the Generic teacher group. This observation reflects the learner traits proposed by Houle typology.

Houle's (1961) typology describes the traits of adult learner groups as follows: goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning-oriented. Goal-oriented learners use learning to gain specific objectives; activity-oriented learners participate primarily for the sake of the activity itself, without the intention to develop a skill or learn subject matter; and learning-oriented learners pursue learning for its own sake. Many researchers extended the work of Houle to further understand adults' motivation for learning (see Boshier, 1971; Morstain & Smart, 1974). They used factor analysis to identify the factors that motivate people to become involved or engage in learning. Some of these factors are social relationships, external expectations, social welfare, professional advancement, escape/stimulation, and cognitive interest. These findings extended beyond Houle's work, as they showed that people have more than a single motive for learning, and their motives can change over time. More crucially, the findings reflected the dimensions of value ascribed to by teachers in the present study.

Then, the question becomes, Should the instrumental learning demonstrated by UG teachers be seen as wrong? According to Mott (2006), one reason that adults participate in learning is that the more education one attains, the more control and autonomy one presumably has on the job. He adds, this circumstance leads to greater earning power, which includes 'more money one is likely to earn and more rewards of society to be enjoyed' (Mott 2006: 96). This connection helps us to understand the bond that exists between the reasons for learning and expectations regarding it. It is then easier to see where the definition of the value of learning stands for the teachers. As workers in a PD programme, teachers value learning in terms of its perceived benefits, expectations, and importance. This value, in turn, becomes the motivation and reason for them to participate. It is mediated by external factors, as Jarvis (1995: 52) noted: 'The reason for participation does not always lie within learners but in the dynamic tension that exists between learners and the socio-cultural world'. The teachers' comments (in the above excerpts) that their 'salary will be upgraded' and they will secure 'graduate status' imply there are external factors conditioning the value placed on learning.

Furthermore, the monetary benefits and expectations serve as a means to ensure one's economic stability, where 'wealth' is defined as noble. This position aligns with Johnstone and Rivera (1965: 159–160), who suggest that, as one moves up in social class, they experience an overall shift in their reasons for learning, which, in turn, marks a shift in the value placed on learning, as evidenced in this study. Social expectations, such as being wealthy, economically stable, and having high academic achievement, shape the value teachers place on learning, as they are seen as a 'rule' that allows a member to be accepted in the community. Thus, it is proposed that contextual factors (governmental or policy reforms, cultural and societal), which are termed here as the systemic culture, affect and mediate the portrayed value, as depicted in Figure 1:

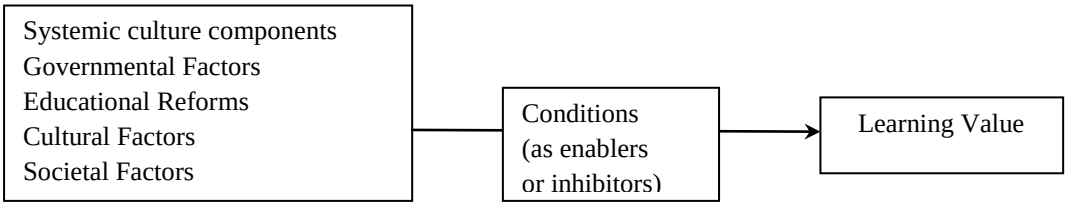

Figure 1 Relationship of systemic culture components in conditioning the value placed on learning

It is too early to define the influence of the systemic culture components here. In addition, Figure 1 is perhaps too simplistic. Nevertheless, as the study itself is explorative in nature, the findings reported here provided initial clues that the systemic culture (in the form of governmental or educational policy or reforms, cultural, or societal) are capable of conditioning teachers' concept of the value of learning. In other words, teachers' professionalism is conditioned by their surroundings, or the context in which their learning and professional activities take place.

In order to provide a contextual comparison, this study referred to Anderson et al.,(2008) who investigated teacher perceptions of award-bearing programmes. They found that teachers in Bachelor's degree programmes in Scotland (similar to the UG teachers in this study), see award-bearing courses (that is, ones that confer a higher academic qualification) as increasing their cognitive achievement. This finding contradicts the discovery of this study, that UG teachers valued cognitive achievement, as demonstrated in their interviews. It again entails that external factors (e.g. the learning policy with embedded instrumental incentives), which act as a system, conditioned the value teachers ascribed to their learning when they themselves became learners. Conditions can serve as either promoting or inhibiting factors that mediate teachers' concept of the value of learning (as depicted in Fig. 1).

There are acknowledged limitations to this study. For instance, the study did not compare teacher opinions by major field of study. Thus, it limits the group comparison in terms of the subject streams. However, the responses of the non-participating teachers, which were almost similar to those of the other learning groups (except the UG group), suggest that teachers *do* place a high value on learning even when they are not involved in formal learning. This further implies that all teachers are, in one way or another, involved in some kind of learning, be it formal or informal. Informal learning was not a main focus of the study, and this is another limitation of the investigation. Nevertheless, it is basically agreed that, among the various types of informal learning, daily occurrences in classroom practice are learning experiences undertaken by teachers intuitively or unintentionally. Thus, in light of this assumption, even though teachers were classified as either formally engaging in learning or not, they universally agreed to the benefits and worth of learning. The differences only lie in the dimensions of the value they ascribed to learning. Future works should explore the extent to which this value correlates with the power or capacity teachers ascribe to learning.

CONCLUSION

Teachers engaging in learning should be seen as a manifestation of the creation of a learning society. Although we welcome whatever values they ascribe to learning, we have yet to take stock of what will happen in years to come, when instrumental benefits no longer exist to attract or retain teachers in learning. The interplay between their concept of value and the contextual factors within which their professionalism operates provides the Ministry of Education with insight into a way to move forward in planning teachers' learning that allows for more balance of extrinsic-intrinsic value. This balance is crucial to orient and produce a teaching workforce highly devoted to learning so as to direct them not only towards instrumental goals, but also towards 'learning for the sake of learning'. Given that the process of crafting rewarding lives for ourselves calls for much learning, the essence is to develop a workforce of teachers who not only engage in a lifelong process of learning but also understand and manifest the intrinsic value of being a learner in their profession and life.

REFERENCE

Anderson, J., Bobis, J. & Way, J. 2008. Teachers as learners: Building knowledge in and through the practice of teaching mathematics. In H. Forgasz, A. Barkatsas, A. Bishop, B. Clarke, S. Keast, W. T. Seah & P. Sullivan (Eds.), *Research in Mathematics Education in Australasia 2004-2007* (pp. 313-335). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Beyer, S. M. 1981. Ideologies, values and decision making in organizations. In P. C. Nystrom & W. H. Starbuck (Eds), *Handbook of Organizational Design, 2, (*pp. 166-202). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bolam, R. 2000. Emerging policy trends: Some implications for continuing professional development. *Journal of In-Service Education, 26*(2): 267 - 280.

Boshier, R. 1971. Motivational orientations of adult education participants: A factor analytic exploration of Houle's typology. *Adult Education Quarterly, 21*(2): 3-26.

Cassar, V. 2008. The Maltese university students' mind-set: A survey of their preferred work values. *Journal of Education and Work, 21*(5): 367 - 381.

Dose, J. J. 1997. Work values: An integrative framework and illustrative application to organizational socialization. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 70*: 219-240.

Eagly, A. H. & Chaiken. S. 1992. *The Psychology of Attitudes.* Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Ejiogu, A. M. & Harries-Jenkins, G. 1980. Marginal professionalism: A study of teachers work values. *Durham and Newcastle Research Review, 9*(44): 74-84.

Eishbein, M. & Ajzen, A. 1975. *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Field, A. 2009. *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS (Introducing Statistical Method*). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Fraenkel, J. R. 1977. *How to Teach about Values: An Analytic Approach*. Prentice-Hall: Prentice-Hall.

Harland, J., Kinder, K. & Keys, W. 1993. Restructuring INSET: Privatisation and its alternatives. Slough: NFER.

Houle, C. O. 1961. *The Inquiring Mind*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. Published as a second edition in 1988 (with an afterward by Houle) by the Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education: University of Oklahoma.

Hustler, D., McNamara, O., Jarvis, J., Londra, M. & Campbell, A. 2003. *Teachers' Perceptions of Continuing Professional Development* (No. RR429): DfES; Department for Education and Skills.

ILO, International Labour Organisation. 2000. *Lifelong learning in the twenty-first century: The changing roles of educational personnel*. Report for discussion at the Joint Meeting on Lifelong Learning in the twenty-first century. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/jmep2000/jmepr1.htm,http://www.ilo.org/ [26 January 2012]

Jarvis, P. 1995. *Adult and Continuing Education: Theory and Practice* (2nd ed.). London Routledge.

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Turner, L. A. 2007. Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(2): 112-133.

Johnstone, J. & Rivera, R. 1965. *Volunteers for Learning: A Study of the Educational Pursuits of American Adults.* Chicago: Aldine.

Locke, E. A. 1976. The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology.* 1297-1345, Chicago: Rand McNally.

MacBeath, J., Galton, M., with, Steward, S., Page, C. & Edwards, J. 2004. *A life in secondary teaching: Finding time for learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge Printing. www.educ.cam.ac.uk/download/aLiSTreport.pdf. [26 January 2012]

Morstain, B. J. & Smart, J. C. 1974. Reasons for participation in adult education courses: A multivariate analysis of group differences. *Adult Education 24*(2): 83-98.

Mott, V. W. 2006. Is adult education an agent for change or instrument of the status quo? In S. B. Merriam, B. C. Courtenay & R. M. Cervero (Eds.), *Global Issues and Adult Education: Perspectives from Latin America, Southern and the United States*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Nicholls, G. 2000. Professional development, teaching, and lifelong learning: The implications for higher education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 19*(4): 370-377.

Pallant, J. 2010. *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step by Step Guide to Data Analysis using SPSS*. McGraw Hill, Open University Press.

Payne, S, L, 1980. Organizational ethics and antecedents to social control processes. *Academy of Management Review,* 5:409-414.

Raths, L. E., Harmin, M. & Simon, S. B. 1966. *Values and teaching: Working with values in the classroom* Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merill. Cited in Halstead, J. M. 1996. Values and Values Education in Schools. *Values in education and education in values.* J. M. Halstead and M. J. Taylor. London: The Falmer Press**:** 3-14.

Robinson, C. H. & Betz, N. E. 2008. A psychometric evaluation of Super's Work Values Inventory--Revised. *Journal of Career Assessment, 16*(4): 456-473.

Rokeach, M. 1968. *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rokeach, M. 1973. *The Nature of Human Values.* New York: Free Press.

Schwartz, S. H. & Bilsky, W. 1987. Toward a universal psychological structure of human values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 53: 550-562.

Shaver, J. P. & Strong, W. 1976. *Facing Value Decisions: Rationale-Building for Teachers*. Belmont, CA, Wadsworth.

Super, D. E. 1970. *Work Values Inventory*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Super, D. E. 1973. The work values inventory. In D. G. Zytowski (Ed.), *Contemporary Approaches to Interest Measurement.,* pp, 189-205. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Super, D. E. & Neville, D. D. 1986. *The Salience Inventory: Theory, Application and Research*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Super, D. E. 1995. *Life Roles, Values, and Careers. International Findings of the Work Importance Study*. Palo Alto: Jossey-Bass.

UNESCO. World Teachers' Day 2009 - Build the future: Invest in teachers now. http://www.unesco.org/en/teachereducation/advocacy/world-teachers-day/ [5 Oktober 2009]

Zakaria, K. & Abdul Rahman, M. A. 1997. Hubungan nilai kerja dengan jantina, umur dan pengalaman mengajar Guru Pelatih (The relationship of wok value with gender, age and teaching experience of trainee teachers). *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities, 5*(1): 39-44.

Zytowski, D.G. 1994. A Super contribution to vocational theory: Work values. *Career Development Quarterly, 43*(1): 25.

Zytowski, D. G. 2006. *Super Work Values Inventory-Revised: Technical manual* (Version 1.0) www.Kuder.com/PublicWeb/swv_manual.aspx [26 January 2012]

Corresponding Author: norliza@ipda.edu.my