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A STUDY ON FACTORS THAT AFFECT RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY AMONG LECTURERS SERVICING AT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER (INTEC)

NOORKHAIDA BT ABDUL MURAD¹, ROSMA MOHD DOM² & ZALINA ZAHID²

¹Pusat Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

²Fakulti TMSK, UiTM Shah Alam

ABSTRACT

Research is important for the progress of a university. Excellence in research can lead to innovation and can benefit society, industries and nation. Despite its importance, research productivity is still below the expected target. From 1985 until 1999, only 3% of the total number of academic staff of UiTM were involved in research activities. (Prof Datuk Ibrahim Abu Shah, 2000). Thus, the objective of this study are to:

(i) determine the level of research productivity among INTEC lecturers

(ii) identify the factors which affect research productivity

(iii) identify Special Interest Groups among INTEC lecturers.

A questionnaire is distributed among 50 lecturers servicing at INTEC. The responses were analysed using SPSS.

Key words : research productivity, INTEC

INTRODUCTION

Many factors determine the reputation of a public university. Among the criteria for ranking is publication of research findings in an international journal. Undoubtedly, research is important for the progress of a university. Excellence in research can lead to innovation that benefits the economy of a country. At the same time, activities in research and consultancy can help to generate income for the university.

While the importance of research is clear, research productivity is still below the expected target. From 1985 until 1999, only 3% of the total number of UiTM academic staff were involved in research activities. (Prof. Datuk Dr Ibrahim Shah, 2000)

An exploratory survey of fifteen INTEC lecturers was conducted with an overall objective of identifying their level of research productivity. The objectives of this study are to

- i. determine the level of research productivity among full-time lecturers serving INTEC
- ii. identify factors that influence research productivity
- iii. identify Special Interest Groups among INTEC lecturers

LITERATURE REVIEW

Productivity is defined as “ability to produce; state of being productive” or “efficiency, especially in industry, measured by comparing the amount produced with the time taken or the resources used to produce it” (Oxford Advanced Dictionary, 1994) However, in this study, research productivity is measured by the number of research projects presented.

Importance of research

Research is crucial for the progress of a university. Research excellence can lead to innovations and can benefit society, industries and the nation. Furthermore investments in research can contribute to the economic growth of a country. This is because investments in research can lead to investments in the private industries. For example, California’s recovery from the 1990s recession is partly due to investment in high technology ventures. The success in high technology ventures can be linked to research universities in California. (Atkinson, 1997)

Due to the importance of research activities for a country's economic growth, our government has a substantial allocation for research and development. In the year 2000, our country spent RM1.2 million for research and development. (Prof. Datuk Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah, 2001) An essential way to promote research and development is to promote research and consultancy among academicians.

Quality of academicians

Prof. Datuk Ibrahim Shah in his paper 'UiTM Kecemerlangan penyelidikan dan pembangunan' has outlined three aspects that determine the quality of a lecturer. The first aspect covers research and development activities. The other two are teaching and continuous learning. In addition, lecturers are encouraged to be involved in consultancy, as this will provide hands-on experience. Moreover, research is an important part of promotion.

As the biggest university, UiTM must prove its capacity in research. The target is 50% of the lecturers to be actively involved in research. Therefore, each faculty and branch campus has been directed to carry out twenty-seven research projects per year. (Prof. Datuk Dr Ibrahim Abu Shah, 2000)

Current reality

What are the factors that may affect research productivity among the lecturers? Also, what are the measures to improve research productivity? One factor that may cause some lecturers to shy away from research is the difficulty to find a new (and feasible) area to research. Furthermore, some lecturers may experience difficulty in forming a research question due to the lack of reading and exposure to creative thinking processes. ("How to do research", 2001) another factor that may limit involvement is a lack of time. Potential solutions are more mass lectures, less involvement in committee work, and courses on time management. (Prof. Datuk Dr. Ibrahim Shah, 2000)

Several measures may help to increase research productivity. These include a "teaching load compatible to (research) expectations," and an office fully equipped with telephone, computer and printer facilities. Additional forms of support needed include assistance with preparing manuscript for publication. (Schact, 1993)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(i) POPULATION / SAMPLE:

The population consists of twenty six full-time permanent lecturers from various faculties servicing INTEC. The respondents differ in length of service and their academic qualifications. Out of the twenty six questionnaires distributed, only fifteen are returned. The analysis in this paper is based on the fifteen responses.

(ii) QUESTIONNAIRE:

The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A is on the Demographic Profile and section B is on the Research Involvement of the respondents which includes factors that motivate research productivity and reasons for lower involvement in research.

(iii) METHOD OF ANALYSIS:

The statistical technique used to analyze the responses are

- (a) descriptive statistics
- (b) correlation technique.

Analysis were made based on the results obtained from the SPSS.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS.

1. Research productivity level among respondents was measured by the following variables:

	VARIABLE	RESPONSES		
1.	Importance of research	Yes (70%)	No (30%)	
2.	Time spent per week for research work	< 3 hours (73%)	3 – 5 hours (20%)	<5 hours (7%)
3.	Currently involve in research	Yes (53%)	No (47%)	
4.	Frequency of doing research	Once a semester (7%)	Once a year (53%)	Once in two years (7%)
5.	Had completed research project/s before	Yes (73%)	No (27%)	
6.	Number of papers presented	< 5 (87%)	> 5 (13%)	

2. Factors that motivate research productivity.

The top three factors identified by respondents to be the factors that motivate them to do research are Professional Development, Self Development and Promotion (Table 2).

3. Reasons for not doing research.

Lack of time and lack of exposure were identified to be the main reasons for not doing research. (Table 2)

4. Relationship between length of service and productivity level .

(i) Length of service varies from one to fifteen years. Majority has served for a period of nine years (Table 1).

(ii)The finding shows that there is a weak relationship between length of service and level of productivity (Table 4).

DATA INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Research productivity level among lecturers servicing INTEC is still far below the expected target of UiTM.
2. Lack of time and exposure hinder research productivity.
3. Lecturers involved in research are self-motivated people.
4. Lecturers do research more for self-development and betterment.
5. Lack of support system which includes peer support, mentors and encouragement from top management leads to poor involvement in research activities.
6. Majority of the respondents (73%) have had experience in doing research before.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTEC should provide support system in the form of SIG's (Special Interest Groups) and mentors in order to increase research productivity among lecturers.
2. INTEC should conduct or send lecturers for training as to expose them to research activities and knowledge.
3. Less teaching load for lecturers involved in research projects.
4. Encouragement and recognition from top management for active researchers can promote others to follow suit.

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