



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PROGRAMME PLANNING PRACTICES IN CONTINUING
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN SELECTED PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN
MALAYSIA**

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**PROGRAMME PLANNING PRACTICES IN CONTINUING
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN SELECTED PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATIONS IN MALAYSIA**

By

ONG MEK HIOK

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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July 2008

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The purpose of this study is to examine the process of programme planning in the selected continuing professional education providers in Malaysia. It specifically examines how programme planners design and plan CPE activities and what contextual influence these practices. The study also examines how planners negotiate these influences and how this affected their planning practice. The following research questions guides the study:

1. How do programme planners in the selected professional associations design and develop continuing professional education?
2. What are the contextual factors influencing the continuing professional educational programme planning practices in the selected providers?

3. Is programme planning a social activity in which interests are negotiated by planners in the context of the organization structured by power relations?

The study employed the qualitative multiple case study approach and data were collected through in-depth interviews and examination of relevant documents. Three professional associations, from the accounting, medical, and the architectural professions were purposefully selected for this study. Six programme planners, two from each provider were interviewed on the programme planning practices that they carried out in their respective associations. Their interviews were taped recorded and transcribed. A constant comparative method was used in the within-case and cross-case data analysis.

A framework of programme planning practices in continuing professional education in the selected professional associations in Malaysia was developed based on the eight themes that emerged from the data analysis. The eight themes are: (1) Initiation of Ideas, (2) Selection of Topics, (3) Identification of Speakers, (4) Development of Content, (5) Arrangement of Facilities, (6) Marketing, (7) Conducting the Programme, and (8) Evaluation of Programme. The study also revealed three contextual factors that influence programme planning practices in the selected providers and they are: policy on continuing professional education regulation, organizational power structure, and commercial support. The study also confirmed that programme planning is a social activity that requires planners to negotiate personal and institutional interests when developing programmes, and negotiations occur within the context of the organization structured by asymmetrical power relationships.

Three conclusions were drawn from the study. (1) The framework developed from description of the programme planning practices in the three selected professional education providers resembles that of the classical model but is very simplistic and not systematic in nature. (2) The three contextual factors that emerged from the data were interconnected in influencing the programme-planning practices in the selected providers. (3) The findings of the study confirmed that programme planning is a social activity that requires planners to negotiate personal and institutional interests when developing programmes and negotiations occur within the context of the organization structured by asymmetrical power relationships.

Iktisar tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia untuk memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan kursus Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERANCANGAN PROGRAM DALAM PENDIDIKAN
PROFESSIONAL BERTERUSAN DI KALANGAN
PERSATUAN-PERSATUAN
PROFESSIONAL YANG TERPILIH DI MALAYSIA**

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Kajian ini bertujuan menenerangkan amalan-amalan perancangan program pendidikan professional berterusan dan memahami factor-faktor mengikut konteks yang mempengaruhi amalan-amalan perancangan ini dalam tiga persatuan professional yang terpilih. Penyelidikan ini berpandukan soalan-soalan berikut:

- 1) Bagaimana perancang -perancang program dalam persatuan professional yang terpilih merancang aktiviti-aktiviti pendidikan professional berterusan?
- 2) Apakah faktor-faktor yang mengikut konteks yang mempengaruhi aktiviti-aktiviti perancangan program pendidikan berterusan dalam persatuan-persatuan professional ini?
- 3) Adakah perancangan program satu aktiviti sosial di mana kepentingan-kepentingan pihak-pihak yang terlibat dapat dirunding oleh perancang program dalam konteks jalinan struktur kuasa organisasi?

Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbilang kes kajian dan data telah dikumpulkan melalui temubual mendalam dan pemeriksaan dokumen yang relevan. Tiga persatuan professional telah dipilih, yang terdiri dari persatuan akauntan, perubatan; dan Arkitek. Enam perancang program, dua dari setiap persatuan telah ditemubual. Temubual-temubual ini dirakamkan, ditranskripsikan dan dianalisa.

Hasil dari analisis, kajian ini telah menunjukkan lapan tema yang berkaitan dengan aktiviti-aktiviti amalan-amalan perancangan program dalam persatuan-persatuan professional yang dipilih ini. Tema-tema ini ialah; (1) Percambahan Idea, (2) Pemilihan Tajuk, (3) Pemilihan Pengajar, (4) Pembentukan Isi Kandungan, (5) Mengatur Kemudahan, (6) Pemasaran, (7) Mengendali Program, dan (8) Penilaian Program. Satu kerangka amalan-amalan perancangan program di kalangan persatuan-persatuan professional ini telah di bentuk berdasarkan lapan tema/aktivi-aktiviti ini. Kajian ini juga telah menghasilkan tiga faktor mengikut konteks yang mempengaruhi amalan-amalan perancangan program pendidikan berterusan di kalangan persatuan-persatuan professional yang terpilih ini, iaitu: polisi kawalan pendidikan professional berterusan, struktur kuasa dalam organisasi, dan tajaan komersial. Kajian ini juga telah membuktikan yang perancangan program ialah satu aktiviti sosial yang memerlukan perancang program berunding untuk mempertahankan kepentingan peribadi dan institusi apabila menghasilkan sesuatu program, dan perundingan ini berlaku dalam konteks jalinan struktur kuasa dalam organisasi.

Kajian ini telah membuat tiga kesimpulan. (1) Kerangka amalan-amalan perancangan program di kalangan persatuan-persatuan professional ini menyerupai model klasikal tetapi simplistik dan tidak sistematik. (2) Tiga faktor mengikut konteks yang mempengaruhi amalan perancangan program pendidikan berterusan adalah saling berhubung-kait. (3) Hasil kajian ini juga telah memastikan yang perancangan program merupakan satu aktiviti sosial yang memerlukan perancangan berunding untuk mempertahankan kepentingan peribadi dan institusi apabila menghasilkan sesuatu program, dan perundingan ini berlaku dalam konteks organisasi yang terdiri daripada kuasa yang berlainan.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 14 July 2008 to conduct the final examination of Ong Mek Hiok on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “Programme Planning Practices in Continuing Professional Education in Selected Professional Associations in Malaysia” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously and is not concurrently submitted for any degree at UPM or at any other institution.

ONG MEK HIOK

Date: 23 January 2008

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has brought with it a rapid evolution in the global economy and the emergence worldwide of new patterns of work and learning. In our modern-day climate of seemingly endless innovation and change, it is more important than ever for people in all fields to commit themselves to continuing professional education (Guest, 2000; Gracy & Croft, 2007). In Malaysia, there is an increased recognition that updating of this seemingly endless innovation and change is more important than existing knowledge and skill, and development of new knowledge and skill are a part of professional life (Government of Malaysia, The Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006-2010). The changing demands now being placed upon the professionals have led to recognition of the need for a planned and structured approach to learning for work. Individual practitioners, their employers, the professional bodies, and the teaching institutions are increasingly aware that continuing professional education is a joint responsibility requiring shared commitment and action (Rapkins, 1995; Gracy & Croft, 2007); Sobiechowska & Maisch, 2007; Lehman & Fryd, 2008).

Background of the Study

Continuing Professional Education

Continuing professional education (CPE) is a field of practice and study directed on the on-going needs of professionals (Cervero, 2001). The purpose of CPE is to certify and



improve professional knowledge and practice. CPE is continuing because learning never ceases, regardless of age or seniority. It is professional because it focused on personal competence in a professional role; and it is concerned with education because its goal is to improve personal performance and enhance career progression. Many aspects of CPE is not new, most professionals have always recognized the need for professional updating; but CPE's emphasis on systematic development and the comprehensive identification of learning opportunities, now provides a framework within which formal and informal learning activities can be set. Learning and development becomes planned, rather than accidental (Cervero, 2001).

Continuing Professional Education in Malaysia

Contrary to the developed countries in the West, continuing professional education is a relatively new field of study in Malaysia. The term itself has only come into common use since the 1990s and later after the financial crises, whereby many professional associations, providers, agencies, and individuals became aware that the need to change and update themselves with new knowledge, skills and competencies has become apparent, that the future is more diverse, demanding more fragmented than the past. With the increasing speed of technological, economic and social change which propels the need for improvements in both the quality and quantity of CPE, these changes result in the need for individuals, corporations, associations, and providers to develop educational cultures that support continuous retraining, educational opportunities and exposure to new ideas, processes and technologies (Balan, 2005).

As envisaged in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (Government of Malaysia, The Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006-2010), it is believed in order to enhance Malaysia's competitive edge, special emphasis will be given to increasing productivity and efficiency through human resource development, encouraging research and development, as well as utilizing the latest technologies. The successful implementation of this development plan (Ninth Malaysia Plan) is crucial if Malaysia is to achieve "Vision 2020", a developed nation status by the year 2020. During the plan period, the principal thrust of human resource development is to create a strong human resource base to support the development of a knowledge-based economy and enhance productivity and competitiveness. In this regard, efforts will be undertaken to develop an efficient and responsive education and training system to meet the demand for a knowledgeable and highly skilled labour force that is responsive to the changing needs of industries and technological advancement. Besides that, lifelong learning programmes are to be expanded to provide greater opportunities for individuals to improve and add value to themselves through continuous acquisition of knowledge and skill to support the development of a learning society.

Studies on CPE are still lacking and very limited empirical evidence is available to support CPE research in Malaysia. However, Balan (2005) attempted, when he conducted a study on contextual factors associated with CPE practices in selected professional providers in Malaysia. His study identified, that CPE activities, programmes and resources in these providers are not properly controlled and evaluated, CPE programmes are planned by seminar schedulers, who have no experience in programme planning, thus, not meeting the needs of the members, resulting in non-

attendance. These organizations do not have a mandate to regulate CPE practice. CPE in most providers under study are still not mandatory, hence, the professionals do not take CPE seriously. In fact, in most providers, it is still being debatable as to whether CPE is to be regulated mandatory. CPE is still managed rudimentary, that the management of CPE in these providers is generally an issue yet to be recognized as an activity worthy of management time. There is an absence of a coherent CPE policy, which reflects business-driven needs. These findings have intensified further the need for this study to be conducted in order to get a better understanding of the process of planning CPE programmes for the professionals, in keeping them up to date and enhancing their productivity and competitiveness in moving towards a knowledge-based economy and the status of a fully developed Malaysia.

Adult and Continuing Professional Education

Continuing professional education practice is influenced by the fact that the participants are adults who work in a particular setting. Thus, many of the educational processes used in the continuing education of professionals are the same as those used in adult and continuing education and in human resource development and training. The theory and research in these two areas can do much to inform continuing professional educator (Cervero, 1998).

Programme planning in the field of adult and continuing education is one about which much has been written, and which has inspired vigorous debate for the past few decades. Given the centrality of programme planning practices to the work of adult educators, this attention is clearly understandable. Indeed, programme planning in adult

and continuing education always has been, and always will be an inherently ideological practice with high stakes for all involved (Mabry, 2000).

According to Maznah and associates (2001), adult and continuing education has been practised for six centuries in Malaysia. However, the subject is not well established as a field of study. Very limited systematic inquiry has been done in the area. Neither is there any specified professional association or independent body that links all stakeholders in the field. To meet the needs of both the individual and the country, there is a dire need for the field to be well established (Maznah et.al, 2001).

In the Malaysian context, however, the most frequent issues encountered by continuing education providers in Malaysia is programme planning; in which they found that; most educational programmes planned do not meet the learners' needs, programmes are planned on ad hoc basis, and there is lack of follow up after the programme. (Maznah et.al., 2001).

If Malaysia is to rely on continuing education to improve professional competence and implement policies, in order for her to achieve a developed nation status by the year 2020, then planning will have to play an important role. In fact, continuing education planning shapes programmes; these programmes will shape professional practice (Wergin, Mazmanian, Miller, Papp & Williams, 1988; Fox, Mazmanian & Putnam, 1989; Umble & Cervero, 1996; Umble, 1998). In short, how continuing education programmes are planned will greatly influence the nature and quality of programmes delivered which will in turn shape professional practice and policy implementation.

Professional Association as a CPE Provider

Professional Associations, the world over is the major provider of continuing professional education. In fact, education is one of the major, if not the primary function of associations (Cervero, 1998). Professional associations have been the major drivers for continuous learning for many people. Traditionally, most professional associations have provided a range of opportunities for their members to keep up-to-date with services including journals, conferences, meetings, research, and information sources such as libraries. With the increasing levels of redundancies among professionals, there is the need to enhance members' employability and professional associations now provide a range of education and training courses, as well as guidance and support services to members (Senior, 1999; Rapkins, 1995; Friedman & Phillips, 2004).

In establishing, an environment favourable to CPE there should be acknowledgement of, and the building of partnerships between those who will benefit from and have responsibility for CPE: the individual professional, the professional associations, the employer, providers and society. As the instigator of CPE policy, the professional association plays a crucial role. Professional associations should act as ambassadors for continuous learning and encourage practitioners to start to think about CPE during the initial professional education and to establish a synthesis of initial and continuing education. These associations should be able to make informed recommendations to professionals about what knowledge, skill or expertise needs to be developed or maintained at particular times in their career. Professional associations, therefore, are largely committed to incorporating CPE into the lives of their members (Rapkins, 1995; Senior, 1999; Friedman & Phillips, 2004).

Perspectives on Programme Planning

The literature on planning educational activities has influenced the field of adult education may be viewed from three broad viewpoints: the technical, the naturalistic, and the critical perspectives (Cervero and Wilson, 1997). The technical perspective is the area in which the most has been written (Tyler, 1949; Pennington & Green, 1976; Knowles, 1980; Boyle, 1981; Boone, 1985; Sork & Buskey, 1986; Langenbach, 1988; Sork & Cafferella, 1989) and addresses the technical “how to” and it has usually advocated a version of the “classical” viewpoint on curriculum planning. This model advises planners to complete several basic technical steps; which include how to write objectives; how to conduct needs assessments; how to create optimal conditions that are conducive to learning; how to plan sequences of experiences that will produce desired learning; how to select the most effective methods and the techniques to produce these learning; and how to measure and evaluate the outcomes of the learning experiences (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). The general continuing education literature too contains much guidance on how to conduct each of those steps (Queeny, 1993; Cafferella, 1994; Goody & Kozoll, 1995). Most models in this perspective defined in theory what effective adult and continuing education should be but ignored the realities of programme planning practice as it actually occurs (Cafferella, 1994; Cervero & Wilson, 1996). This has given rise to the disagreement among these theorists and practitioners on how programmes should be planned and organized (Pennington & Green, 1976; Sork & Buskey, 1986; Brookfield, 1986).

As if in response to the recognition that early prescriptive models of programme planning did not address what occurs in the actual practice of adult education

programme planning, several adult educators in the developed countries in the West set out to describe the nature of adult education programme planning practice, and base models on what actually occurs. The naturalistic models described the work of programme planners holistically.

The critical models (such as Cervero and Wilson's 1994 model) incorporated a description of what occurs in the politics of planning practice with a decidedly ethical stance regarding what the ethical programme planner ought to do or consider. Planners can make the best judgment in everyday practice, the theory of critical viewpoint argue, only if they clearly understand that education is a political and ideological activity intimately connected with social inequalities of society as a whole. Because the judgments are made in a world of unequal and shifting relationships of power, they are inherently ethical and political, not technical (Cervero & Wilson, 1994).

Statement of the Problem

A review of the adult education literature shows that there is a gap between the programme planning theory and practice (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). The majority of the programme planning literature is normative in nature and prescribes what planners "ought" to do in their planning practice while ignoring the reality of what programme planners actually do. Most of these models assume an ideal world in which planners face well-defined problems and have a full array of alternatives, complete information about context, and unlimited resources to solve these problems, when in fact problems are ill defined, resources are limited, and time limits are unrealistic. Practitioners find that application of these models is virtually impossible (Brookfield, 1986; Sork &