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**KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION AMONG ACADEMICS AT A  
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY**

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**By**

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**Faculty: Educational Studies**

This study describes the knowledge acquisition of academicians at a local public university in Malaysia. This study is guided by four research questions: 1) the reasons for learning among academician in the context of academician practice 2) types of learning do academician learns in acquiring knowledge 3) factors influence and inhibit learning for knowledge acquisition among academician 4) personal characteristic of academician and the implication of learning outcome to academicians. A qualitative research method was used in the study and the primary data were collected mainly through interviews using a semi structured question guide during the in-depth interview with twelve respondents by using purposive and snowballing techniques. Three reasons of learning for acquisition of knowledge among academician emerged from the study. All respondents believed that learning is part of the knowledge advancement that academicians must keep abreast with the environmental change.



Learning is a lifelong. Learning should be continuous as the academicians need to updated their knowledge. Academicians need to keep abreast with the technology changes. The themes emerge from the academician's knowledge acquisition are: Academicians acquire knowledge through formal, non-formal and informal learning strategies such as conferences, seminar, by academic visit, industrial linkages. Sources of informal learning is through reading, discussion, sharing knowledge with student, and research. The three themes that motivate academicians for learning are: the quest for knowledge, academic performance and salary. There are some barriers that inhibits the process of learning among academicians such as time, costs infrastructure and management support. The characteristics of learner as open minded, hard working, good communication and interaction skill and patience also influence on their learning. The learning outcomes to academicians allow to keep abreast with environment changes, increase job performance, self-confident, add experience, career development and personal satisfaction. Five conclusions are drawn from the study. Academicians took responsibility to learn, learning is lifelong process, use multiple strategies of learning, and their personal characteristic and motivation to learn influence their learning for knowledge. Recommendation are put forth for knowledge acquisition are foster positive attitude toward lifelong learning, foster workplace learning, stimulate exciting environment, encourage active and cooperative learning and facilitate technology infrastructure.

Abstrak tesis dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEROLEHAN ILMU PENGETAHUAN DIKALANGAN AHLI AKADEMIK  
DI UNIVERSITI AWAM TEMPATAN MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Kajian ini menerangkan perolehan ilmu dikalangan ahli akademik di universiti awam tempatan di Malaysia. Ia dibimbing dengan empat persoalan kajian: 1) Alasan untuk belajar dikalangan ahli akademik dalam kontek amalan mereka 2) Jenis pembelajaran dalam memperolehi ilmu. 3) Faktor yang mempengaruhi dan batasan dalam memperolehi ilmu 4) Ciri peribadi dan implikasi pembelajaran kepada mereka. Kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif telah digunakan dimana data prima telah dikumpul melalui temubual mendalam kepada 12 responden dan menggunakan panduan soalan terbuka melalui 'purposive" dan 'snowballing sampling'. Tiga alasan pembelajaran dikalangan ahli akademik diperolehi didalam kajian ini. Kesemua responden percaya bahawa pembelajaran adalah sebahagian daripada penambahan ilmu yang perlu dipelajari selari dengan perubahan persekitaran. Pembelajaran adalah sepanjang hayat dan berterusan dimana ahli akademik perlu peka mengemaskini



pengetahuan sejajar dengan perubahan teknologi. Tema yang muncul dalam memperolehi ilmu adalah: Ahli akademik memperolehi ilmu adalah melalui pembelajaran secara formal dan bukan formal seperti menghadiri konferensi, seminar, lawatan akademik, hubungan industri. Pembelajaran secara bukan formal adalah melalui pembacaan, perbincangan, berkongsi ilmu dengan pelajar dan penyelidekan. Tiga tema motivasi untuk belajar adalah: menimba ilmu pengetahuan, prestasi akademik dan gaji. Terdapat beberapa halangan yang membataskan proses pembelajaran dikalangan ahli akademik seperti faktor masa, kos, infrastruktur dan sokongan pihak pengurusan. Ciri-ciri peribadi seperti berfikiran terbuka, berkerja kuat, kemahiran komunikasi dan interaksi yang baik dan kesabaran mempengaruhi pembelajaran mereka. Hasil pembelajaran ini juga mempengaruhi ahli akademik untuk peka dengan perubahan persekitaran, peningkatan prestasi kerja, keyakinan, pengalaman, peningkatan kerjaya dan kepuasan peribadi. Lima rumusan dapat dikemukakan dalam kajian ini. Mengambil tanggungjawab untuk belajar, pembelajaran adalah sepanjang hayat, kaedah pembelajaran yang berbeza dan ciri peribadi dan motivasi untuk belajar juga mempengaruhi pembelajaran untuk ilmu pengetahuan mereka. Cadangan disarankan untuk perolehan ilmu di kalangan ahli akademik adalah berfikiran positif pada pembelajaran sepanjang hayat, pembelajaran ditempat kerja, merangsang persekitaran yang kondusif, pembelajaran secara aktif dan berkerjasama disamping menyediakan kemudahan teknologi.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASTRO	ASTRO All Asian Network (Direct-to Home Satellite)
NCTE	National Conference on Tertiary Education
ITM	Institut Teknologi MARA
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
UiTM	Universiti Teknologi MARA
PTK	Penilaian Tahap Kecekapan
WCL	Workplace/Community learning
UNITAR	Universiti Tun Abdul Razak
MATRADE	Malaysia External Trade Corporation
PNB	Permodalan Nasional Berhad

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, lifelong education, industrialization policy and education in Malaysia, the background of the faculty, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study and definitions of terms, This is a study of knowledge acquisitions among academics at a Malaysian public university.

#### **Background of the Study**

Knowledge is an organized combination of data, assimilated with a set of rules, procedures, and operations learnt through experience and practice (Keskin, 2005). Teaching is about dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge is meant to be shared for the betterment of people's life. Academicians role are to help diverse learners become competent and skilled, understand what they are doing, and communicate effectively (Ball and Cohen, 1999). Their education background, knowledge and experience are most important ways to improve the quality of their teaching and learning. To understand learning in practice, Ball and Cohen (1999) considered three basic requirements of professional education. First,



professional education must be education for professional practice if it is to be either professionally responsible or usable. Thus, a conception of the practice itself, and what it takes to practice well, should lie at the foundation of professional education. Second, any defensible education requires a sense of its purposes, a map of the relevant terrain that is ideas about appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, the materials and experiences best suited to help people learn. Third, since such schemes do not apply themselves, ideas are needed about the kinds of knowledge, skill, and other qualities crucial to educator. UNESCO and ILO 1966, recommended that teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which require teachers expert knowledge and specialist skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous continuing study; it call also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of pupils in their charge (in Robinson and Latchem, 2003). For many people , the pillar of expertise may refer to substance, knowledge, or competence (Schulman, 1987).

In that respect, academicians are professional who need to be adequately equipped with knowledge, expertise and be socialized professionally to provide the distinct services expected of them. Among academician, it is important to realize that continued learning is their responsibility that their improved knowledge and expertise provide higher quality service to the society.

## Lifelong Education

The lifelong education agenda maintains a pivotal role in educational discourse. Knowledge has become an important resource to have in any organization especially in the higher learning institutions. In an ever changing environment, current knowledge become absolute as new circumstances come into existence. Therefore, having the passion for continuous learning, acquiring new knowledge has become a generic requirement for the academician at the Faculty of Business management.

Learning is a lifelong process. Knowledge acquisition of academician can be enhanced through learning by considering the fundamental properties of human knowledge, as well as by the ultimate function of the desired information. Research on learning in acquiring knowledge has significantly altered fundamental understanding of how and why people learn. Rothman (1991) urged that there are a number of core beliefs related to how people learn about which most researchers appear to be in considerable agreement. Alexendar and Murphy (1998) in Hammond and Sykes (1999) have reviewed the relevant research and they have identified five types of learner principles. They are: 1) the knowledge base principle, 2) the strategic processing principle, 3) the motivation principle, 4) the development principles and finally, 5) the context

principle. All these principles are important to the educator for their professional development.

Knowledge acquisition of academicians is a subject worthy of study, not merely because by understanding it, academicians can be encouraged to learn and acquire new knowledge more effectively, but because it lies at the foundation of all human being. To study learning is to study people and not people isolated in laboratories or in artificial situations, like classrooms but people in time, space and society (Jarvis, 1992). What is to learn, what is offered and the way in which people learns are determined by the nature of the society at any particular time (Merriam and Caffarella, 1998). Some writers have emphasize a variety of humanistic concerns (Habermas 1984) and even the humanistic and experiential nature of human learning itself (Kolb, 1984). They recognize that professional practice is not the mindless application of knowledge acquired in the classroom but the use of a knowledge reflected on during the experience of professional work to learn and practice more effectively (Schon, 1983).

However, cognitive and humanistic research pointed more towards the importance of experience. For example, we can see the rudiments of the experiential theory in Saljo's (1979) hierarchy of student views of learning.

1. Learning as a quantitative increase in knowledge. Learning is acquiring information or 'knowing a lot'.
2. Learning as memorizing. Learning is storing information that can be reproduced.
3. Learning as acquiring facts, skills, and methods that can be retained and used as necessary.
4. Learning as making sense or abstracting meaning. Learning involves relating parts of the subject matter to each other and to the real world.
5. Learning as interpreting and understanding reality in a different way. Learning involves comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge. (quoted in Ramsden 1992) p.26.

Among academicians is important, to help them realize that continued learning is their responsibility that their improved knowledge and expertise provide high quality services to their student and society. Learning today are focuses on the importance of learning in the context of knowledge acquisition that is relevant to one's professional context (Skyles, 1999). How academician experience their own learning has become an important dimension of professional development. Knowledge acquisition among academicians in Malaysia is an important field in the continuing

professional education. This is due to the rapid transition from an industrial to an information society. A global economy and competition have all led learning for knowledge acquisition increasingly important. The purpose of education is to improve one's quality of life while having a positive impact on humanity, through consideration of our natural environment. However, education can provide conditions, and sometimes motivation for learning. Continuing education can help professionals especially academicians to provide higher quality service to clients by improving their knowledge, competence and performance (Cervero, 1988).

Most academicians at the Faculty of Business Management spend a considerable time and commitment in acquiring information, exposure and learning new skills. They need to learn to use such knowledge, skills, and values that enable them to improve their practice and also highly effective in helping students to learn. This is due to the rapidity of change and continuing creation of new knowledge and widening access to information make such acquisitions of knowledge and new skill necessary. The global economy also gives an impact on learning in broader ways too. Baskett, Tremblay and Foucher (1993), viewed that the idea of learning has considerable ideological appeal, and is often aligned with the notion of autonomy (Chene, 1983) and freedom. They stated that the conditions of the institution, the content requirements related to a profession, and

personal characteristics will determine the power that learners may have over their learning activities.

Cross (1991) stated that the growth and development in an environment characterized by rapid change require people who understand the important of information, and who use that information to construct knowledge, think creatively and function productively. Most of the learning takes place at the initiative of the learners themselves even if available through formal setting. Boud (1999) indicates that the most effective location for academic development is within the department: Most academic development takes place in locations where academics spend most of their time; departments, professional settings and research sites. It takes the form of exchanges with colleagues, interacting with students, working on problems, writing and associated activities. It is informal and not normally viewed as development.

### **Industrialization Policy and Education in Malaysia**

The aims of the Malaysian government to turn the nation into an industrialized country by the year 2020 have received wide and tremendous support from various government agencies, private sectors as well as the public. The higher learning institution in Malaysia have design