

**Student Study Approach Preferences and
Motivation in Teacher Training in Malaysia**

by

Abdul Rahim Hamdan

Ba.Ed. Hons (USM), M.Ed (UTM) Malaysia

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Department of Educational Studies
School of Arts
University of Surrey

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Student Study Approach Preferences and Levels of Motivation in Teacher Education in Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore how the students' study approach preferences and levels of motivation in teacher training differed between traditional [pre-service teacher] and non-traditional [in-service teacher] student teachers and to investigate how these factors might influence their academic performance (dependent variable). Apart from the two factors above, the students' characteristics and entry skill qualifications were used as the independent variables in this study. There were two stages in this study. First, the development of culturally appropriate instrumentation and the pilot study to test the instruments for a final questionnaire. Second, the research used the ex-post factor design involving two strands of surveys: a student data survey using questionnaires, and interviews with students and educators. In the first strand, the study examined the students' characteristics, entry qualification skills, study approach preferences, levels of motivation, and the academic performance of 100 students entering the course with traditional and non-traditional modes of entrance. The second strand involved interviewing the selected students based on the results of data analysis and educators that teach the students to explore their perceptions of the variables above.

Descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis are used to analyse the data. The triangulation method was used to interpret the results of the interviewing analysis in support of the results of the data analysis. Generally, at the 0.05 significance level, the results show that there is a difference between the two groups of students (traditional and non-traditional) for all of the variables. The results of the exploratory correlation analysis at the 0.10 significance level, show that for traditional students, only mathematics has a strong relation with academic performance. However, through step-wise regression, it is identified

that mathematics, Malay language, and surface approach were the possible influences on academic performance and this was represented by a diagrammatic picture. For non-traditional students, the results show that deep approach, surface approach, experience/time away from study and intrinsic motivation have a significant correlation to academic performance. However, using stepwise regression, it is interesting to see that deep approach to study and experience/time away from study were the better predictors of academic performance, and this is represented by a diagrammatic picture and a multiple regression plane. It was also interesting to discover that the independent variables for each group were significantly correlated.

In conclusion, the results show that the two groups were different to each other in their study approaches, levels of motivation, characteristics, and entry skill qualifications and in the predictor that might be the influential factor on their academic performance, which was also supported by the interview findings. Some suggestions were proposed for the institutions, educators and the students themselves to help nurture the preparation for high quality, competent teachers. The outcomes of this study should lead to the enhancement of a teacher education programmes in higher education.

<u>Tables of Contents</u>	<u>Page No</u>
Abstract	ii
Tables of Contents	iv
List of Abbreviations/ Acronyms	ix
List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xiii
List of Appendices	xvi
Acknowledgement	xvii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Rational	1
1.1 Importance of the study	2
1.2 Teacher Education in Malaysia	8
1.3 Research Purposed and Aims of the Study	10
1.4 The Interim Objectives	11
1.5 Mapping Sentence	12
1.6 Conceptual Model	13
1.7 Structure and Contents	15

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF MALAYIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.0 Introduction	17
2.1 Geographical information	17
2.2 Development of Schooling System in the early years	19
2.2.1 Before the coming of British (Before 1824)	19
2.2.2 Before the Second World War (1824-1941)	20
2.2.2.1 The Malay Vernacular School	20
2.2.2.2 The Chinese Vernacular School	21
2.2.2.3 The Tamil Vernacular School	22
2.2.2.4 The English School	22
2.2.3 Before Independence (1945-1956)	23
2.2.4 After Independence (1957)	23
2.3 The Malaysian Education Policy	24
2.4 National Philosophy of Education	25
2.5 Malaysian Education System	26
Pre School Education	27
Primary School Education	28
Secondary School Education	30
2.6 Higher Education in Malaysia	34
2.6.1 Admission to Higher Education	36

2.6.2	Study programmes	38
2.6.3	Semester system	39
2.6.4	Academic award requirement	39
2.6.5	Grading and evaluation	40
2.7	Teacher Training	41
2.8	Program Khas Pensiswazahan Guru/Special Programme For Teachers Degree award.	45
2.9	Conclusion	47
 CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY OF PROBLEM		
3.0	Introduction	50
3.1	The general questions	51
3.1.1	Learning Process	55
3.1.2	The Learning Theory	57
	i. Behavioural – Associationist Theories	58
	ii. Cognitive – Organizational Theories	61
3.1.3	Cognitive emphasis and preference to study approach	64
3.1.4	Learning outcomes	66
	3.1.4.1 Bloom Taxonomy of educational objectives	67
	3.1.4.2 Gagné learning objectives	70
3.1.5	Approaches to Learning	73
	3.1.5.1 Concepts of Approach to Studying	73
	a. Level of processing	73
	b. Approach to studying	74
3.1.6	Study Motivations	79
	3.1.6.1 What is Motivation?	80
	3.1.6.2 Theories of Motivation	81
	a. Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of needs	81
	b. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	82
	c. Kozeki, B. (1985) Motives and motivational style in education	83
	i. Intrinsic motivation	86
	ii. Extrinsic motivation	87
3.1.7	Model of study Motivation	88
3.1.8	Parallel relations to each domain	93
3.2	Professional Development of Teachers	94
3.3	The Investigation	97
3.4	Basic Assumptions of the Study	97
3.5	Student teacher's Educational Framework	90
3.6	Summary	100

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGIES, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND INSTRUMENTATIONS

4.0 Introduction	101
4.1 The Aims and Objectives	102
4.2 Specific Research Questions derive from the six general questions	103
4.3 Research Methodology	104
4.4 Issues of Data Collections	106
4.5 Research Methods	107
4.6 Research Design Model	112
4.6.1 Research Design I: Defining Hypotheses	112
4.6.1.1 Methods of Analysis	118
4.6.1.2 The research site, population, and sample	119
4.6.1.3 Sample selections	120
4.6.2 Research Design II: Instrumentation	123
4.6.2.1 The interviews	123
4.6.2.2 The review of literature for meaning orientation	128
4.7 Structure of Analysis.	134
4.8 Summary	135

CHAPTER 5: MEASURING VARIABLES

5.0 Introduction	137
5.1 The Questionnaire	137
5.2 The Respondent	140
5.3 Pilot study	141
5.4 Measuring Reliability of Trial items	141
5.4.1 Study Approach	143
a. Deep Approach item correlations	143
b. Surface Approach item correlations	147
5.4.2 Study Motivation	151
a. Intrinsic motivation item correlations	151
b. Extrinsic motivation item correlations	154
5.5 Structure of questionnaire	158
5.6 The tests	159
5.7 Interviews	159
5.7.1 Students (Pre/In-service teacher)	160
5.7.2 Educators	161
5.8 Ethical Issues	163
5.9 Summary	164

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

6.0 Introduction	165
6.1 The differences of Characteristics, Entry skills, Academic Performance, Study approach preferences and Level of motivation Between Traditional and Non-traditional Student Teachers	167
6.1.1 Differences in characteristics	167
6.1.2 Differences in students entry skills	170
6.1.3 Differences in academic performance	176
6.1.3 Differences in study approach preferences	179
6.1.4 Differences in level of motivation	184
6.2 Variables links to academic performance	189
6.2.1 Statistical test for associations of variables to traditional student teachers	190
6.2.1.1 Pearson Correlation Matrix of the variables to traditional student teachers	190
6.2.1.2 Regressions	193
6.2.2 Statistical test for associations of variables to non-traditional student teachers	200
6.2.2.1 Pearson Correlation Matrix of the variables to non-student teachers	200
6.2.2.2 Regressions	203
6.3 Summary	210

CHAPTER 7: INTERPRETATIONS OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

7.0 Introduction	212
7.1 The Results	212
7.2 Discussions on the differences in	214
7.2.1 Students characteristics and entry skill qualification	214
7.2.2 Students academic performance	218
7.2.3 Students study approach preference	220
7.2.4 Students level of motivations	222
7.3 Contributions to academic performance	225
7.3.1 Traditional student teachers	225
7.3.2 Non-traditional student teachers	226
7.4 Theories in a Malaysian context	228
7.5 Summary	229

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 Introduction	230
8.1 Student teachers in higher education	230
8.2 Implications for improving learning and teaching	234
8.3 Limitation of study	236
8.4 Recommendations and future research	237
Reference	240
Appendices	262

List of Abbreviations/ Acronyms

ASI	Approach to Studying Inventory
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CPA	Cumulative Point Average
DCL	Deep Approach Construct List
ECL	Extrinsic Motivation Construct List
I	Item number
ICL	Intrinsic Motivation Construct List
ITC	Item Total Correlation
KBSR/NPSIC	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah/National Primary School Integrated Curriculum
KBSM/NSSIC	Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah menengah/National Secondary School Integrated Curriculum
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LPQ	Learning Process Questionnaire
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUET	Malaysian Universities English Test
PKPG	Program Khas Pengsiswazahan Guru
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah/Lower Secondary School Assessment
SAL	Student Approach to Learning
SCL	Surface Approach Construct List
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia/ Malaysian Certificate of Education ('O' level)

STPM	Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia/Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education ('A' Level)
SPQ	Study Process Questionnaire
UPU	Unit Pusat Universiti/Universities Centralised Unit
UPSR	Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah/Primary School Achievement Test
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
UNITEL	Universiti Telekom Malaysia
UNITEN	Universiti Teknologi Petronas Malaysia

List of Figures	Page No
Figure 1.1: Teacher training progression routes	13
Figure 2.1: The structure of Malaysian National Education System	28
Figure 2.2: Requirement of current Teachers Training Programme in Malaysia	43
Figure 3.1: Student's Mode of Entrance in Technical and Vocational Programme, Faculty of Education, UTM.	53
Figure 3.2: Relations of emphasis of teaching, learning and level of assessment	63
Figure 3.3: Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs.	82
Figure 3.4: A model relating source of motives to motivational style.	85
Figure 3.5: A model of factors influencing learning process (Entwistle, 1988)	91
Figure 3.6: A refined model of factors influencing learning process elaborating on study motivation, approach/style and process of learning (after Entwistle, 1988)	92
Figure 3.7: Student Teacher's Educational Framework	99
Figure 4.1: Influence factors of students learning process variable map.	111
Figure 4.2: Model of data collections	119
Figure 4.3: Operational Framework of the study	136
Figure 6.1: Traditional and non-traditional student's Malay language grades distribution	173
Figure 6.2: Traditional and non-traditional student's Mathematics grades distribution	175
Figure 6.3: Comparing of traditional and non-traditional student teachers academic performance	178
Figure 6.4: Comparing of deep approach scores (traditional and Non-traditional students)	182
Figure 6.5: Comparing of surface approach scores (traditional and Non-traditional students)	184
Figure 6.6: Comparing of intrinsic motivation scores (traditional and Non-traditional students)	186
Figure 6.7: Comparing of extrinsic motivation scores (traditional and Non-traditional students)	188
Figure 6.8: Associations pairs of variables and academic performance To traditional student teachers	192
Figure 6.9: Diagrammatic representation of apportioned for the Establishment of relationship between dependent and independent variable to traditional student teachers	198
Figure 6.10: Associations pairs of variables and academic performance to non-traditional student teachers	202
Figure 6.11 Multiple regression plane for CGPA, deep approach and experience/time away from study to non-traditional student teachers	208

Figure 6.12: Diagrammatic representation of apportioned for the Establishment of relationship between dependent and independent variable to non-traditional student teachers

List of Tables	Page No
Table 2.1: Comparison of grading system Malaysia and England	33
Table 2.2: Public universities in Malaysia	35
Table 2.3: Minimum general admission to first degree in Malaysia	37
Table 2.4: General admission to pre-university matriculation or to diploma course in colleges and polytechnics in Malaysia.	37
Table 2.5: Enrolment in Public Institution	38
Table 2.6: General Academic Requirements	39
Table 2.7: Marks, Grade, and Grade Point Distribution	40
Table 2.8: Academic Awards and Qualification	41
Table 3.1: Students Qualifications on entry to Technical and Vocational Course in Faculty of Education, UTM.	54
Table 3.2: Learning theories, concept, and applications.	56
Table 3.3: Defining features of approaches to learning	78
Table 3.4: Educational orientations (as in Entwistle,1987)	86
Table 3.5: A model of study orientation and outcome (from Entwistle, 1988)	89
Table 3.6: Parallel relations across three cognitive models	93
Table 4.1: Student's Population, Semester 1, 2003/2004 academic year.	121
Table 4.2: Meaning orientations from the interviews	127
Table 4.3: Meaning orientations and construct list of Deep Approach and Surface Approach in Entwistle ASI (1983).	129
Table 4.4: Orientation of study approach as a result of combining literature definitions and interviews	130
Table 4.5: Meaning orientations and construct list of intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations in Entwistle ASI (1983).	132
Table 4.6: Orientation of motivation as a result of combining literature definitions and interviews	133
Table 5.1: Item distributions.	138
Table 5.2: Deep approach construct list, items and item total correlation.	144
Table 5.3: Deep approach construct list, items and item total correlation after items selections.	146
Table 5.4: Differences of item correlation in trials and after item selections.	147
Table 5.5: Surface approach construct list, items and item total correlation.	148
Table 5.6: Surface approach construct list, items and item total correlation after items selections.	149
Table 5.7: Differences of item correlation in trials and after item selections.	151
Table 5.8: Intrinsic motivation construct list, items and item total correlation.	152

Table 5.9: Intrinsic motivation construct list, items and item total correlation after items selections.	153
Table 5.10: Differences of item correlation in trials and after item selections.	153
Table 5.11: Extrinsic motivation construct list, items and item total correlation.	154
Table 5.12: Extrinsic motivation construct list, items and item total correlation after items selections.	155
Table 5.13: Differences of item correlation in trials and after item selections.	156
Table 5.14: Item distributions in final questionnaires	157
Table 6.1 : Sample characteristics of the two sample groups	168
Table 6.2 : WMW test Malay Language grades distributions	172
Table 6.3 : WMW test Mathematics grades distributions	174
Table 6.4 : Means and S.D's of the academic performance of the traditional and non-traditional student teachers	177
Table 6.5 : Result of t-test: Two sample assuming equal variance of academic performance between traditional and non-traditional student teachers	179
Table 6.6 : Means and S.D's of the deep approach preference to the traditional and non-traditional student teachers	180
Table 6.7 : Result of t-test: Two sample assuming equal variance of deep approach between traditional and non-traditional student teachers	181
Table 6.8: Means and S.D's of the surface approach preference to the traditional and non-traditional student teachers	183
Table 6.9: Result of t-test: Two sample assuming equal variance of surface approach between traditional and non-traditional student teachers	183
Table 6.10: Means and S.D's of the intrinsic level of motivation the traditional and non-traditional student teachers	185
Table 6.11: Result of t-test: Two sample assuming equal variance of intrinsic level of motivation between traditional and non-traditional student teachers	186
Table 6.12: Means and S.D's of the extrinsic level of motivation to the traditional and non-traditional student teachers	187
Table 6.13: Result of t-test: Two sample assuming equal variance of extrinsic level of motivation between traditional and non-traditional student teachers	188
Table 6.14: Pearson correlation of deep approach, surface approach, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and students academic performance to traditional student teachers	191
Table 6.15: Summary output for academic performance versus all possible variables except age and experience – traditional student teachers	195

Table 6.16: ANOVA – traditional student teachers academic performance versus all possible variables except age and experience	195
Table 6.17: Regression coefficients – traditional student teacher academic performance versus all possible variables except age and experience	195
Table 6.18: Summary output for academic performance versus surface approach, Malay language and mathematic	196
Table 6.19: ANOVA – traditional student teachers academic performance Versus surface approach, Malay language and mathematic	196
Table 6.20: Regression coefficients – traditional student teacher academic performance versus surface approach, Malay language and mathematic	196
Table 6.21: Pearson correlation of deep approach, surface approach, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, experience/time away from study and students academic performance to non-traditional student teachers	201
Table 6.22: Summary output for academic performance versus all possible variables except age – non-traditional student teachers	204
Table 6.23: ANOVA – traditional student teachers academic performance versus all possible variables except age	205
Table 6.24: Regression coefficients – traditional student teacher academic performance versus all possible variables except age	205
Table 6.25: Summary output for academic performance versus deep approach and experience/time away from study	206
Table 6.26: ANOVA – traditional student teachers academic performance versus deep approach and experience/time away from study	206
Table 6.27: Regression coefficients – traditional student teacher academic performance versus deep approach and experience/time away from study	206

List of Appendices	Page No
Appendix A1: Malaysia Vision 2020	263
Appendix A2: List of Subjects in Primary Schools	264
Appendix A3: Lower Secondary School Subjects	265
Appendix A4: Upper Secondary schools Subjects	265
Appendix B1: Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of The cognitive Domain	266
Appendix B2: Gagne Learning Process	267
Appendix C1a: Trial Questionnaires (Malay version)	268
Appendix C1b: Trial Questionnaires (English version)	278
Appendix C2a: Final Questionnaire (Malay version)	287
Appendix C2b: Final Questionnaire (English version)	295
Appendix C3a: Outline of semi-structure questionnaire for instrumentation (Pilot)	303
Appendix C3b: Semi-structure Interviews (Students)	303
Appendix C3c: Semi-structure Interviews (Lecturers)	305
Appendix D1: Deep approach item correlation	306
Appendix D2: Deep approach final item correlations	307
Appendix D4: Deep approach power test	308
Appendix D5: Surface approach item correlation	309
Appendix D6: Surface approach final item correlations	310
Appendix D8: Surface approach power test	311
Appendix D9: Intrinsic motivation item correlations	312
Appendix D10: Intrinsic motivation final item correlations	313
Appendix D12: Intrinsic motivation power test	314
Appendix D13: Extrinsic motivation item correlation	315
Appendix D14: Extrinsic motivation final item correlations	316
Appendix D16: Extrinsic motivation power test	317
Appendix E1: Choices of significant level (Alpha at 0.10)	318
Appendix E2: T-test for Age	319
Appendix E3: T-test for Experience	320
Appendix E4: Chi-square for students majoring subject	321
Appendix E5: Chi-square for student's gender	322
Appendix E6: Chi-square for student's race	323
Appendix E7: Correlations and Stepwise regression of variables to traditional students	324
Appendix E8: Correlations and Stepwise regression of variables to non-traditional students	326
Appendix E3e: Traditional student teachers all variables raw scores	328
Appendix E8e: Non-traditional student teachers all variables raw scores	329
Appendix F1: Interviews analysis	330
Appendix G1: Letters for data collections	

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Student study approach preference and motivation in Teacher Education in Malaysia

Chapter 1

Introduction

Of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education (Locke, J. 1989)

1.0 Rationale:

The inspiration to conduct this study originated firstly with the researcher's background and experiences of teaching in secondary schools before becoming a teacher in the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Malaysia: here his interest is in teachers' needs with regard to professional development, and his concern is for mature students in continuing education.

The second inspiration stems from the fact that adult education in Malaysia has become increasingly important, and is expanding tremendously through non-traditional ports of entry to higher education programmes. In teacher education in Malaysia, teachers with teaching experience and a certificate from teacher training college will have chances to further their study in higher education in a special programme through non-traditional ports of entrance for relevant courses in Malaysian universities. It is the intention of Malaysia Ministry of Education to upgrade teachers in Malaysia with higher qualification (degree level) in teaching profession. Thus, it was important to investigate student teachers progress in a special programme with non-traditional ports of entrance in Department of Technical and Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, University Technology of Malaysia (UTM).

Thirdly, there are two groups of students studying together in the Technical and Vocational course in Faculty of Education, UTM. The first group is the pre-service student teacher with traditional port of entry. They are young direct entry student, inexperienced and fresh from secondary schools. The second one is the in-service student teacher with experience and teaching certificate from teacher training college with non-traditional port of entry. Thus, in the present study, traditional student teachers are referring to pre-service teacher and non-traditional student teacher is referring to in-service teacher. Therefore, it is important to explore the experience of students with traditional and non-traditional port of entry studying together, studying on how a combination of their characteristics, entry skill qualifications, study preferences, and levels of motivation might be the predictor of academic performance.

Finally, the research was inspired by the economic emergence of the South-east Asia region, in which Malaysia is located, as a region of rapid development with ambitious educational plans to provide its people with world-class education and life-long learning programmes and in which teachers have an important role in fulfilling Malaysian Vision by the year 2020 (*See Appendix A1*).

1.1 Importance of the study

Education is become heavily committed to communicating existing knowledge to a new generation; it has become committed to producing the knowledgeable man (Raven, 1980, p. 132). Dewey (1966) points out that education is the integration of liberal aspects with the cultivation of both intellectual and vocational aspects (Wirth, 1977) – preparation for life and education also meant for preparation for work. Cooper, et al. (1994) states that, by definition, education could be considered ‘a process that gives the individual a set of principles, not detailed application’. It is used to facilitate the provision of a set of tools for the interpretation, evaluation, and analysis of new knowledge in an unbiased manner, by developing the critical capabilities of students. Therefore, in the educational system, the process of transferring these sets of knowledge is the teachers’ responsibility.

The need to provide world-class education and life-long learning has established the importance of teaching professions. The aim of this section is to define what is teaching and why it is important in the educational system and to explain the general interest of the present study.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2001, ninth edition, p. 935) defines 'teaching' as:

1. To give information to (a class or pupil) so as to help them to learn something
2. To show (someone) how to do something
3. To make (someone) realise, understand, or be less likely to do something

In terms of causation, it enables a person to learn or acquire knowledge or a skill. Scheffler (1960) defined teaching as 'intended behaviour for which the aim is to induce learning'. Eisner (1979) defined teaching as 'that array of activities the teacher employs to transform intentions and curriculum materials into conditions that promote learning'. Thus, teaching is a system of activities, where the teacher seeks to interpret his or her specific task in relation to modification of the learner's state of knowledge.

Teaching is not just a mechanical process; it is an event, a mixture of enthusiasm, of adaptability, and of the capacity to react spontaneously to situations. The teaching and learning situation is unique, calling for innovation on the part of the teacher, untried and individual responses to new circumstances, and the courage and willingness to venture into new methods. All the skills, knowledge, experience, attitudes, understanding, and emotions of the teacher come to be focused on the moments in which learning may be successful. Therefore, to be competent as a teacher is to have clear standards of personal skills and confidence and to be able to put them into practice at specific moments. The art of teaching is a complex, demanding, and a serious matter for a good teacher; to teach well a teacher cannot rely on his or her intuition alone, as his or her knowledge and skills needs to be wide-ranging, structured, relevant, and grounded in learning. The important thing is not how much a person [teacher] knows, but the quality of what he/she [teacher]

knows. It is a great interest in the present study to look at student teacher performance. Therefore, how different the traditional and non-traditional academic performance [based on Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA)] in their recent results was used to determine their performance. It is argued that academic performance was a projected competence in future especially in teaching profession.

Teaching and learning are becoming part of the main focus of business due to a dramatic modernisation taking place in education at present in Malaysia. To improve education, teachers and learners have to review and adapt to the current needs of education. Intellectual assets are the most valued capital in any country. Malaysia is a multi-culture country; therefore, the success of formal education is the key to greater national integration and national development. Undoubtedly, a nation's future stability and development will depend very much on the quality of its work force. An educated citizenry is a fundamental requirement for every country especially in Malaysia.

Teaching preparation has a large impact on students' abilities to educate themselves. According to Joyce (1996), the most important long-term outcome of instruction is the students' increased ability to learn more easily and effectively in the future because of the knowledge and skill they have acquired and because they have mastered the learning process.

The human activity we call 'education' is, in the society, based largely on the related processes known as 'teaching' and 'learning'. Education in one's culture is concerned generally with the handing on of beliefs and moral standards, accumulated knowledge and skills. The teacher's prime task is to engage the student in the learning process. Teaching can be the most fulfilling and the most frustrating of human activities. Teaching itself is a process of learning experience and a journey of discovery about oneself and others.

Higher Education has witnessed a great deal of change over recent years. Teachers and lecturers have been confronted with the demand for quality teaching, not only lecturing, and, therefore, teachers have had to prepare themselves both to deliver knowledge to students and to facilitate their acquisition of skills. Various methods for improving the effectiveness of different models of teaching: lectures, tutorials and discussion groups, independent study, practical and project work and, more especially, computer-based teaching can be applied.

Teaching responsibilities have been seen as a striving for quality. It is a priority to deliver good teaching because students (clients) are more concerned about, and aware of it. Yanghong Li and Kaye (1999) suggested that students' expectations remain steady over time, but their perceptions of service quality change. In particular, their perceived service quality level decreases as their course progresses. This indicates that teaching is an element to be improved according to the students' needs. Therefore, continuous training for teachers is important.

In the present study, it is important to look on how the student teacher learned how to learn. It is important that the findings can show the differences in the preferred approach [deep and surface] used by the traditional and non-traditional student teacher and also as a predictor to their academic performance. Therefore, the study approach that they preferred to use might affect their preparation in learning to be excellent teachers and this also should be the basis of how they will teach their future students how to learn to be excellent.

Elements of excellent teaching have been variously described as containing certain traits required of the innovative member of staff: humility, courage, impartiality, open-mindedness, empathy, enthusiasm, judgement, and imagination are the qualities required of the good teacher (Hare, 1993). Planning skills and academic competence in both knowledge and skills are the main expectations of a good teacher. As Aristotle said, teaching is the highest form of understanding. Even though there is a difference between

learning and understanding in the context of studying or as a form of professional development, and learning in the context of groundbreaking research, one yields knowledge that is new for the individual, the other generates knowledge that is new in an absolute sense and creates skills. Teaching is often viewed as a routine function, tacked on, something almost anyone can do. When defined as scholarship, however, teaching both educates and entices future scholars. Great teachers create the common ground of intellectual commitment. They stimulate active, not passive, learning and encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning.

Baumlin and Weaver (2000) note that teaching proceeds by way of seduction; the student wants to learn because he or she loves the teacher insofar as he or she presumes that the teacher has knowledge. Hence the teacher, in order to be effective, i.e. to be a teacher at all, must assume fully the mantle of the subject to be taught. To relinquish that imaginary position would be to lose the most important pedagogical tool of all. Baumlin and Weaver (2000) also stated that a teacher is not only an advisor, but also as indispensable rescuer and benefactor. Teaching also requires a person to be a good manager. Thus, teachers need to establish rules and a work-oriented environment for students in order to create positive working behaviour. Teachers also need to be strongly people-oriented. They need to be able to establish relationships and commitment, to inspire trust and affection from their students. Teachers also have to be motivated, creative and innovative when doing their planning for the students. Therefore, in teacher training, student teacher was given the necessary foundation to be a good teacher. In this present study, it is a desirable to know what is the level of motivation [intrinsic and extrinsic] that the student teacher has for learning and how it influence in their becoming a teacher, how motivated they are during the process on becoming a graduate teacher and how different is their level of motivation referring to traditional and non-traditional student teachers. The finding should project their motivation to motivate their future students.

Education and experience are essential. The importance of education in one's life can never be over-emphasized. It is the chief vehicle for life preparation. Education provides

the necessary background to prepare a person to cope with modern life. To this extent, it is important to show that student teachers have all the knowledge, skills, and training necessary for future teachers. There is a very high expectation from society for teachers to teach with quality, competence, and knowledge. Academic background has always been used as indicator in studies of student performance in higher education. Traditional and non-traditional student teachers have similar entry skill requirements [Malay language and mathematics] to study to become graduate teachers. It was a general interest in the present study to look at student teacher academic ability referring to entry skill qualification as a predictor to academic performance. In other words, how consistent was past achievement with present performance.

The present study also gives the opportunity to learn more about the student teacher characteristics [age, experience, gender, marital status], especially for traditional student teachers without experience studying together with non-traditional student teachers with experience in the same classes. It also provides the knowledge on how good the social interaction between these two groups is, are they helping each other on their studying or they have they have their own interest? The findings should provide additional knowledge of a mixed classed programmed in general.

Therefore, this study is based on the importance of preparing teachers in education system, especially in Malaysia and the general interest of knowing their characteristics, their academic background, how they learn, what is their motivation and how does their performance influence student teacher [traditional and non-traditional] preparations in becoming competent teachers.

1.2 Teacher Education in Malaysia

Malaysia is becoming a post-modern society, in which people are no longer satisfied with merely acquiring a job. Further education is a means of improving one's socio-economic standard. In order to be part of global change, Malaysia is poised to become the centre of academic excellence in this part of the world in the next decade (stated in Ministry of Education, 1995). In the Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-2000 document, it is stated that,

'The provision of quality education for our children and the training of a quality teaching force have always been the government's top priority in the national budget, and shows the importance of educational progress in the country.'

(Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-2000, 1996)

The government's efforts are demonstrated by the increase in funding for the development of education in the Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001-2005 (Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001-2005, 2001,p. 136-137), where 20.6 % of the human resource development allocation has been allocated to educational training and to a development programme. It was increased from RM 20 millions (Seventh Malaysia Plan 1996-2000, 1996) to RM 23 millions (Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001-2005, 2001). This allocation from the national budget shows that the government has a continuous priority for education training and the development programme. This document also explains that the educational programme and training should focus on the chances, quality, and performance of the students. Furthermore, in a knowledge-based economy the work force must be highly educated, and have the skills, motivation, positive attitude and innovation to benefit from all opportunities offered by globalisation and the development of technology (Eighth Malaysia Plan 2001-2005, 2001,p. 137-138).

Teacher education is potentially the most important aspect of an education policy because teachers are supposed to translate educational goals into reality. In the Position Paper on Teacher Training (Ministry of Education 1963), it is clearly pointed out that:

“The strength of our national education system must depend upon the quality of teachers. However enlightened the aims, however up-to-date and generous the equipment, however efficient the administration, the value to the children is determined by the teachers. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to secure a sufficient supply of the right kind of people to the profession, providing them with the best possible training, and ensuring them a status and esteem commensurate with the importance and responsibility of their work. With the rapid expansion of schooling, both in numbers and extent all over the world, these problems acquired a new importance and urgency.”

(Ministry of Education, 1963, p. 18)

In an address to celebrate Teachers’ Day, The Minister of Education (Utusan Malaysia, 16 May 2003) stated that, by the year 2010, all teachers teaching in secondary school would be graduate teachers, whilst in primary schools, 50% would be graduate teachers. Providing schools with more highly qualified teachers is the main priority of the Ministry of Education. With this intention, The Ministry of Education has taken further steps by promoting programmes that give wider opportunities for teachers with teaching certificates or teaching diplomas and for those with higher degrees. Teaching has long been characterized as career-less and flat (e.g. Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Shen, 1997; Whitaker & Moses, 1995; Shen, and Hsieh, 1999). Therefore, to build a career ladder in teaching becomes an argument for improving the professional status of teaching.

To prepare for the challenge from globalisation and technological change and society’s expectations, it is essential to produce the expected teachers from teacher training centres. This study examines two groups of student teachers entering universities by different routes (traditional and non-traditional means) whose studies in higher education prepare them with the skills, quality, and competence to become future teachers.

1.3 Research Purpose and Aims of the study

Competencies and skills are important to teachers and teachers need to be educated accordingly through training, about theories, methods, and practice in a teaching course. The observation of study motivation and the approach to study that enhances academic achievement recognises the need for an appropriate approach in instruction to ensure the success of those teachers. This study also considers training needs and planning to enable lecturers to improve their teaching skills and strategies to impart knowledge and skills. Such skills can be defined as falling within the parameters of the experiences, academic or subject skills and competencies, and skills and competencies of teaching. It also provides a source of information on the standards of students' entrance qualifications into the Faculty of Education.

In this study, possible factors that could influence the academic performance of technical and vocational degree students entering by traditional and non-traditional means were investigated in the context of the academic environment, with particular attention paid to their study approach preference [deep and surface] and level of motivation [intrinsic and extrinsic]. It was argued that academic performances would show the students' performance in their studies based on their results and grades, which in turn can be considered as possible indicators of their future success as teachers. From a personal experience and observation, in this study it is suspected that there would be a difference between these two groups of students in terms of their academic performance [CGPA]. Furthermore, there is a difference in their means of entrance to the university to study their undergraduate course.

The principal aims of this study are to:

- Explore the characteristics of students entering university by traditional or non-traditional means in the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Malaysia and to see how these might influence learning.

- Explore variables that might differentially influence academic performance of traditional or non-traditional student teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Malaysia
- Explore the possible links between variables that influence the academic performance of traditional or non-traditional student teachers in the Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Malaysia
- Consider how to improve teacher training and professional development in light of the findings

1.4 The Interim Objectives

In order to achieve the aims of the study, as described above, the objectives of the study are to investigate the possible relationship between means of entrance and the factors influencing academic achievement.

The findings will be used to:

- Identify the characteristics of students entering university by non-traditional and traditional means
- Identify the possible links of variables influencing the academic performance of traditional and non-traditional student teachers
- Identify any factors that might contribute to differences in study approach preferences between traditional and non-traditional student teachers
- Identify factors that might contribute to differences in levels of motivation between traditional and non-traditional student teachers
- Consider variables in regression equations for the two groups in light of the interviews
- Provide professional suggestions and recommendations, through research evidence, for the planner, implementer, evaluator, and academician involved in this programme

- Provide a source of information for future research in this area
- Endeavour to determine why differences exist, or otherwise, in study approach preference and motivation between the two groups

1.5 Mapping Sentence

The basic postulations of aims and objectives are reiterated below in the form of a mapping sentence to provide an integrated framework of the study.

"The capacity of students-teachers (traditional student teachers and non-traditional student teachers as subject variables) to become competent, highly qualified teachers in the future, having completed teacher training in higher education depends on academic performance (CGPA/CPA) as the dependent variable, depends upon student's characteristics (age and experience/time away from study), entry skill qualification (Malay language and Mathematics) preference of the study approach (deep and surface approach), and levels of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) as independent variables".*

* Level of higher education – Bachelor of Education.

1.6 Conceptual model

A conceptual model of student teachers' training progression routes in (*Figure 1.1*) shows the definition of the relationship between the variables and gives a picture of the processes undergone by the student teachers. The model illustrates the various components that the study examined.

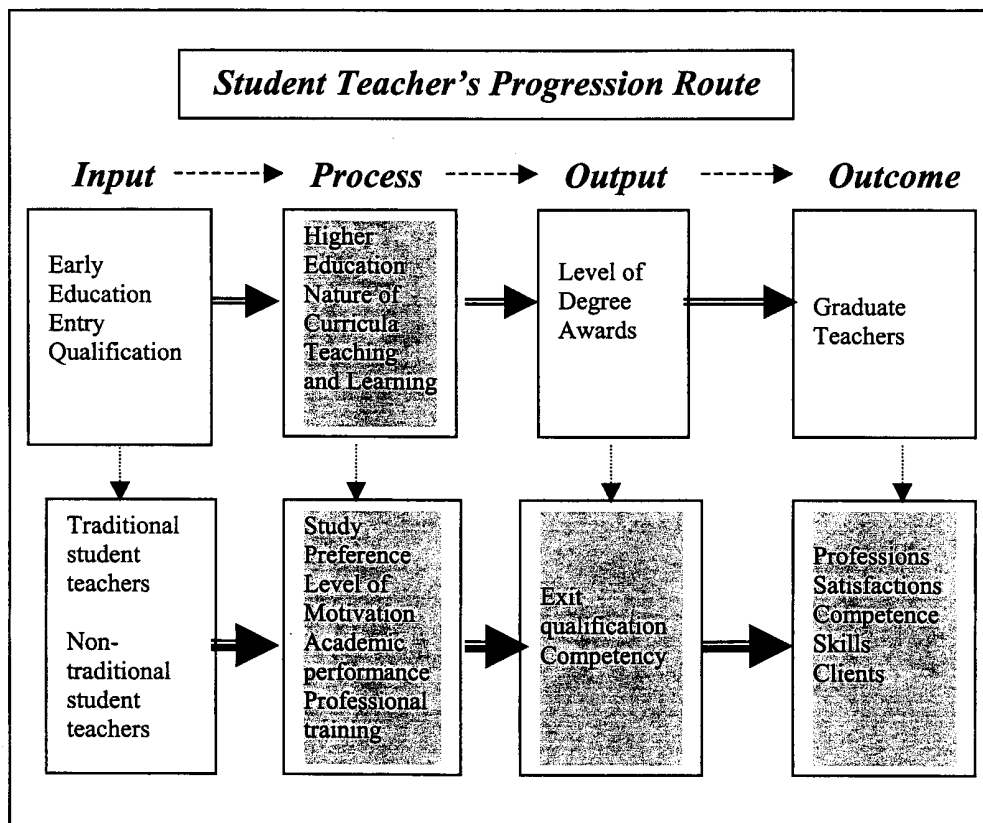


Figure 1.1: Teacher training progression routes.

In terms of *Input*, the students have undergone formal schooling for about 13 years, and have taken the examinations administered by the national examination board. From this, they have obtained the qualifications necessary for entry onto specific programmes, in this case, for entry onto teacher training programmes run by higher institutions, they entered through either traditional or non-traditional means, leading to the award of a first degree in education.

Within the so-called *Process*, which is categorised as the higher education experience, the students' admissions into the higher institutions is to follow the institutions' curricula, and attend the programme of modules and courses designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills both for life and for work. As students', it is proposed that their progress is influenced by their preferred approach to study, and their level of motivation for their higher academic performance. It is usually assumed that students with good entry qualifications and experiences will attain higher academic achievement when compared with those less qualified and less experienced. Their preferred study approach and level of motivation is also assumed to influence their academic performance.

The *Output* might be seen as the award or qualification students obtain based on their achievement in the programme at the relevant level of higher education. The acquisition of skills and competence from the programme's course and learning experiences, and professional training in the industry are assumed to increase the students' ability and capacity to become good teachers, based on a better understanding of the programme and the nature of teaching professionalism.

As an *Outcome*, it can be argued that students who perform well during the academic year, and are awarded a degree in accordance with their level of excellence, will also fulfil their teaching responsibilities to the satisfaction of their profession (competence and skilful) and their clients (The Nation, The Ministry of Education, The public, fellow teachers, students, and parents).

1.7 Structure and Contents

This study is concerned with the exploration of student teachers' study approaches and study motivations, and the extent to which they influence academic performance.

Chapter 2 explores the background to the study, which is associated with the educational context of Malaysia. It outlines the history of the system of education in Malaysia from colonialism, before independence, and after independence until the present. As the study involves teachers in higher education, the development of higher institutions and teacher training is also included in this review.

Chapter 3 reviews the statements of the problems and the literature relating to the research questions of this study. The literature is used to refine and define the variables in the general statements of the problems. Each problem statement will be defined in light of the relevant literature, in order to highlight the importance of the study.

Chapter 4 explains the designs used in the study. It consists of a definition of the hypotheses used to address the research questions, the process and validation of the instrumentation used, and the structure of analyses in the study.

Chapter 5 explains how the measurement of variables will be organised. It also includes discussion of the trials and instrumentation used (validity and reliability of instruments), the sample, the population, and the method of data collection (questionnaires and interviewing).

Chapter 6 presents the findings of the primary and secondary data collected from all the methods employed. The analysis process was conducted using the Microsoft Excel programme. The findings are presented mainly in the form of correlations, regression, and t-test among the variables. The chapter also provides discussion and

interpretation of the data collected. The provisions of the data help to identify possible patterns or trends pointing the study towards its objectives.

Chapter 7 presents the reviews of the initial aims behind the study and the representation of the final inferences drawn from the results achieved. Interpretations of the qualitative analysis to support the results of quantitative method were also part of discussion in this chapter.

Chapter 8 in the final chapter, the conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study are discussed. Evaluations of the process and limitations of the study are also presented in this final chapter.