

# **BEST LEARNING PRACTICES FOR ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE BY TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTE STUDENTS OF PART TIME PROGRAMME**

*Amalan Terbaik Pembelajaran Pelajar Program Separuh Masa Institut Pendidikan Guru Ke  
Arah Pencapaian Akademik Cemerlang*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Excellence academic achievement is a sign of the level of development and mastery of knowledge and skill being learned. Obtaining excellent academic achievement demands effort and great perseverance and is influenced by internal and external factors. The achievement motivation theory by McClelland emphasised that the need to achieve outstanding success is motivated by intrinsic motivation. Hence this study aimed at exploring the experience and practice of students in the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PDPP), Part Time Programme (KDC) who have obtained excellence in academic achievement. This case study involves five PDPP KDC students in the June 2021 intake. Data collection was by interview with students, interviews with lecturers and document analysis. Data were analysed qualitatively through coding, categorisation, and building themes. The findings identified three factors influencing outstanding academic achievement namely the individual, education/career history and online learning approach. The strategy taken as practiced by excellent students is to manage time efficiently and make use of time day and night, high learning discipline, clarifying information through discussion, consistent and scheduled learning approach, and self-regulated learning without distractions. This study suggests holding more programmes involving excellent student role models or icons to produce more excellent IPG's teachers.*

**Keywords:** *Best practice, Teacher, Learning, Part-time programme, Academic Excellence*

## **ABSTRAK**

Pencapaian akademik cemerlang merupakan petunjuk kepada tahap kemajuan dan penguasaan ilmu pengetahuan serta kemahiran yang telah dipelajari. Harapan untuk memperoleh pencapaian akademik yang cemerlang memerlukan usaha dan ketekunan yang tinggi serta dipengaruhi oleh faktor luaran dan dalaman. Teori Motivasi Pencapaian McClelland mengetengahkan bahawa penggerak keinginan seseorang untuk mencapai kejayaan yang cemerlang didorong oleh motivasi intrinsik. Justeru kajian ini dilaksanakan bertujuan untuk meneroka pengalaman dan amalan pembelajaran pelajar Program Diploma Pasca Siswazah Pendidikan (PDPP) Kursus Dalam Cuti (KDC) yang telah memperoleh pencapaian akademik cemerlang. Kajian kes ini melibatkan lima orang pelajar PDPP KDC ambilan Jun 2021. Kaedah pengumpulan data adalah secara temu bual pelajar, temu bual pensyarah dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis secara kualitatif iaitu mengekod, mengkategorikan dan membina tema. Dapatan kajian mengenal pasti tiga faktor yang mempengaruhi pencapaian akademik cemerlang iaitu diri sendiri, sejarah kerjaya/pendidikan terdahulu, dan pendekatan pembelajaran secara dalam talian. Strategi yang menjadi amalan pembelajaran pelajar cemerlang adalah pengurusan masa yang cekap dengan memanfaatkan waktu siang dan malam, disiplin belajar yang tinggi, pencerahan maklumat melalui perbincangan, kaedah belajar berjadual yang konsisten, dan pembelajaran sendiri tanpa gangguan. Kajian ini memberi implikasi kepada penganjuran lebih banyak program yang melibatkan model/ikon pelajar cemerlang bagi melahirkan lebih ramai guru IPG yang cemerlang.

**Kata kunci:** Amalan Terbaik, Pembelajaran, Program Separuh Masa, Cemerlang Akademik

## INTRODUCTION

Individuals studying in educational institutions often dream about outstanding academic achievement. Outstanding achievement is the indication of mastery level and development in knowledge acquisition in what is being learned. Academic achievement is very important in the school system because it is the measurement for entry into an educational institution especially for the ivory tower. For students in Higher Education Institutes, academic excellence is very important because it is a factor in the ability to graduate (Mohd Yusof & Azman, 2018).

To attain the desired excellent academic achievement requires great effort and persistence. Besides that, many other factors influence academic achievement as reported by many studies (Jia Chzin & Surat, 2021). Three main domains influence achievement namely student talent, teaching, and biological environment (Walberg, 2005). According to Mohamad Rofian et al. (2020), internal and external factors are the two main factors influencing student academic excellence. External factors are the pressures and external elements that encourage and help students to succeed in academic pursuits while intrinsic factors are the attitudes and efforts of the students themselves (Mt. et al., 2021; Razali 2019; Mahat et al., 2017; Halimatus, 2020; Sapari & Abdul Halim, 2019; Maalip et al., 2020) to succeed in academic pursuits. Student success does not only depend on the self-factor or internal factors but also external factors. This is because student success not only depends on the individual efforts but also on the education system, teachers, school facilities, parents and family environment (Keshav Raj Dhakal, 2020; Wan Muhamad, 2018).

Students who desire excellent academic achievement are encouraged by intrinsic motivation. The Motivation Theory of Achievement by McClelland (2000) emphasised that need for achievement (N Ach) is the individual's desire for achieving excellent success at the workplace. Those persons with high achievement motivation are able to carry out tasks well and act with energy. Association of this theory with excellent students can be seen through behaviour and effort toward implementing the best practice of learning excellence. Intrinsic motivation is very closely related to a student's self-concept. The study by Abdul Aziz et al. (2021) showed that self-concept had a significant relationship with academic achievement and there were self-concept factors influencing academic achievement. Sarlito Wirawan Sarwono (2014) explained that someone with a positive self-concept can understand and accept their own strengths and weaknesses. They also have high motivation in achieving success and have high self-concept in themselves.

## BACKGROUND

The Postgraduate Diploma in Education Programme (PDPP) at the Specialist Teacher Training Institute (IPG) does not only train pre-service student teachers/teacher trainees but also gives training to in-service teachers. The postgraduate diploma in education (PDPP) for the Part-Time Programme (KDC) mode is a programme offered to untrained in-service teachers placed in schools throughout Malaysia. This programme is specially for training teachers at the Teacher Training Institute (IPG) as determined by the Ministry of Education in various specialised fields. This Programme began in 2019 where its duration was three semesters.

Prerequisites for acceptance of PDPP candidates are based on certain criteria to ensure the teachers produced to achieve the needed quality for fulfilling the national education needs. The PDPP programme aimed at producing graduate teachers as certified dynamic leaders competent in implementing their duties as educators and filling the aim of the National Education Philosophy and the Teacher Education Philosophy. Appreciating and having awareness of the National Education

Philosophy and Teacher Education Philosophy can produce a generation of high-quality teachers from the aspects of character, professional field, social skills as well as the ability to achieve excellence in education (Artini Ramlie, 2017). The PDPP IPG programme objectives are: i) graduands have deep and wide knowledge as well as creative and critical thinking and are able to solve problems in specialised teaching fields, ii) graduand is able to apply various skills in specialised fields in teaching including practical, digital and numeracy, iii) exhibit leadership characteristics and responsibility, communication and interpersonal skills in performing tasks, and iv) exhibit personal skill and entrepreneurship in personal and professional development. Apart from that, this programme also has eight learning outcomes across ten domains as determined by the Malaysian Qualification Framework (Malaysian Qualification Agency, 2018).

Candidates for the Postgraduate Diploma in Education are from the ranks of untrained teachers who have been appointed. These teachers are Education Service Officers Grade DG41 appointed by contract (CoS). The programme implemented by the Ministry of Education is with agreement from the Education Service Commission (ESC) as the Authorised Appointing Power (AAP). Appointment as Education Service Officers Grade DG41 CoS is subject to Service Circular No. 2 Year 2008 and Service Circular No.2 Year 2016.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The PDPP KDC student intake of June 2021 follow the part time learning at IPGKIK because they are bound by teaching tasks at school. Besides that, Movement Control Order (MCO/ PKP) because of the COVID -19 situation has caused PDPP KDC student learning in semester 1 and semester 2 to be carried out entirely online. Although lessons are carried out only during weekends, the PDPP KDC students need to manage time wisely because at the same time they have to be with their families. This situation might cause emotional stress such as fatigue and lack of sleep because of difficulty in dividing their time between studying online and working (Shaiful Baharum et al., 2021).

Involvement of PDPP KDC students in part time learning in IPGKIK while working in school is a learning approach based on contextual totally. Nevertheless, part time work can also give negative effects specifically on student academic performance because of several factors including poor time management. The study by Sim (2013) identified six main obstacles faced by students undergoing distance learning programmes namely i) time constraints, ii) social interaction obstacles, iii) technical, iv) motivation, v) infrastructure, and vi) prerequisite skills. Among the six obstacles, time constraint was seen as the most influential on student learning. Hence this study was implemented to explore experience and practice of PDPP KDC IPGKIK students who succeeded in achieving excellent academic performance so that they can be the role models in practice to other part time students.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This study aimed to explore the experience and practices of PDPP KDC students towards excellent academic achievement. Objectives of this research are to;

- i. Identify the factors motivating PDPP KDC students towards achieving academic excellence.
- ii. Study the time management practices of PDPP KDC students aimed at achieving academic excellence.
- iii. Identify learning strategies or approaches practised by PDPP KDC students in achieving academic excellence.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study was carried out in order to answer the following research questions;

- i. What are the motivation factors in PDPP KDC students towards excellent academic achievement?
- ii. How do PDPP KDC students manage their time in achieving academic excellence?
- iii. What learning strategies or approaches practised by academically excellent PDPP KDC students while studying?

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a case study design with focus on the best practice of learning among excellent students at the PDPP KDC IPGKIK. Selection of research subjects was by purposive sampling with focus on exploring PDPP KDC student experiences that resulted in academic excellence achievement. The research subjects were identified as excellent academic performers based on their end semester examination result slips. Students who achieved CGPA of 3.75 - 4.00 are known as Academic Excellent students and are awarded the Director's Award Certificate. Although 20 students obtained excellent CGPA, this study only involved five students as research subjects because of saturated data. Information on the academically excellent students of the June 2021 intake at PDPP KDC is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Information on Academic Excellent Students in the PDPP KDC June 2021 Intake*

PDPP KDC Programme according to intake and option	PDPP June 2021 Intake Semester 1 / Year 1				PDPP June 2021 Intake Semester 2 / Year 1			
	PE		BM		PE		BM	
Number of academically excellent students	15		12		8		12	
Number of Excellent Students by Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	8	7	1	11	4	4	1	11

Notes:

PE – Physical Education option

BM – Bahasa Melayu option

Data collection approach in this study was through interview and document analysis. Interviews were carried out with six PDPP KDC students with excellent academic achievement as the research subjects. The interviews were implemented through Google Meet for all individuals who agreed to voluntarily share their experiences.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Motivation Factor

This study identified three motivation factors in answer to the first research question. The findings are based on interviews with majority of research subjects and are categorised under the same sub factors.

- i. Individual

This study categorised individual as the main factor because five out of six subjects stated about their interest and their own self satisfaction towards achieving academic excellence.

- TSK1 ‘... because of **deep interest in the teaching field. In this matter, interest** truly plays an important role in enhancing my motivation to keep on achieving my goals...’
- TSK3 ‘... I am so enthusiastic and **I always motivate myself** to make use of this opportunity as much as possible’
- TSK4 ‘...is the **factor of self satisfaction**. I feel I need to get excellent results and that is my self satisfaction. In studying we need to set high targets . . . we need intrinsic motivation to achieve excellent results’
- TSK5 ‘...**self satisfaction** in myself to see those close to me happy with my success’
- TSK6 ‘... very closely related with **readiness and commitment in oneself** to learn much better than before’

Notes:

- TSK1 – Interview of participant 1  
 TSK2 – Interview of participant 2  
 TSK2 – Interview of participant 3  
 TSK2 – Interview of participant 4  
 TSK2 – Interview of participant 5  
 TSK2 – Interview of participant 6

ii) Career/education history

The career/education or learning history is a factor identified in this study based on the experience of five out of six subjects.

- TSK1 ‘... **my work background before this**. I previously worked in the Prime Minister’s Department as the assistant director on contract status but because of some matters my contract was not extended and I made an application for work in education because my experience was under the Education sector. When offered this programme I was so enthusiastic and I motivated myself to use this opportunity in the best way possible’
- TSK3 ‘. . .I feel it is about **career**. In the time allocated I need to complete my course and be called for interview and although some quarters say this is just a formality for being absorbed into the post I feel I still need to **give high commitment and achieve a good result because I feel competition is always present....**
- TSK4 ‘. . . **past success**. In this matter I resolved to maintain my success that I had attained during my undergraduate studies’
- TSK5 ‘... this academic excellence was to continue my history and learn from my mistakes because during my diploma I was excellent but when entering my first degree studies I was not excellent so I wanted to **return to my era of excellence**’
- TSK6 ‘...success factor was my success in **getting excellent examination results before this, here** and I share one mind set. It is a loss if we waste opportunities. Here I take steps and try to maintain or even exceed my previous examination results ...’

iii) The Online Learning Approach

The findings on motivation by online learning approach was identified through interview with five research subjects:

- TSK1 ‘. . . **yes it is the online learning approach that is attractive**. Indirectly this approach was able to . . . facilitate me and also gave me full attention throughout my final studies’
- TSK2 ‘. . . **technology facilities and lecturer’s guidance** Technology facilities and also guidance from lecturers is a factor in enhancing my motivation’

- TSK4 ‘The second factor was the **lecturer**. The lecturer also is an important factor for success as we are aware learning in KDC mode using entirely online. Seeing the lecturer so committed to spend time on guiding us’
- TSK5 ‘...Online learning is different. Previously I learned using face to face mode so there were so many challenges that can motivate myself’
- TSK6 ‘...my opinion is that **online learning is so flexible and easy to carry out wherever you are**. This is a motivation because when tired I am forced to spend my off days/holidays with studying, lectures and completing assignments. Here I use and take advantage of educational technology to the maximum ....’

Apart from three main sub factors, this study found that family factor also was a motivation to some of the subjects.

### **Making use of night and day time.**

The study findings identified that all subjects used their available time night and day wisely by distributing time for implementing essential tasks as teachers and also as PDPP students. The findings for answering research question two are based on the following;

- TSK1 Make a schedule according to priority
- TSK2 ‘... I do divide my time between school teaching and work for IPG. All school tasks I shall complete in school and sometimes I stay back in school to complete the task since I do not bring back school work home.  
Back at home I do my IPG work. I usually stay up until midnight. Because every day I spend my time at school settle all school work at school only....’
- TSK3 Day time – I focus on my work as a teacher  
Night –I complete tasks and matters related to my PDPP course
- TSK4 Day time – focus on my tasks as a teacher  
Night – complete my assignments and other matters related to my PDPP course
- TSK5 ‘... For my tasks as a teacher and other work such as making the DLP I will focus on working from morning until 2 pm. In the afternoon I set aside time for the family. For my course work, for PDPP I focus on night time only; whatever course work I only give attention at night....’
- TSK6 ‘...In the time management context, as a student and teacher same time I, the first thing is that I divide my time on essential tasks as a teacher into two. For learning I give attention to night time. At this time I do my work such as completing assignments, read journals to produce work that meets the required criteria...’

Findings related to effective time management by all subjects were supported by two lecturers who taught them. The lecturers confirmed that all subjects never delayed submitting assignments or coursework and never missed tutorial activities; they completed tasks before or at the time given. All the subjects often asked lecturers about their lessons.

### **Learning Strategy That Became Practice**

The findings identified four practices by the sample aimed at excellent academic achievement namely i) high learning discipline, ii) clarifying information through discussion, iii) consistent scheduled learning approach, and iv) self-regulated learning without distraction.

- TSK1 Time management – high discipline and good time management
- TSK2 ‘I plan a schedule where every day I focus on one subject I have my personal schedule specific for me for IPG subjects. If stressed I do what I like such as listening to songs or

- cook. I love to cook and after cooking I eat when okay I continue doing the things I like. That is one of the ways I study’
- TSK3 ‘I am the type since the past I like to study alone. I can learn late at night, that is my approach to memorise at night but I also do group discussion when exams are near’
- TSK4 ‘I practise self-study by learning in a calm place without distractions. This is for the final examination. I have done so since my Bachelor degree level days. For the final exam I like to be alone in comfortable surroundings without disturbance. But to produce assignments I have no problem with group discussion to get a good outcome.’
- TSK5 ‘To enhance my knowledge or retention of a certain topic I need discussion to get two or three opinions. I love group discussion rather than individual study. If I study alone I tend to fall asleep. During the MCO/PKP I often call my friends to discuss a topic or assignment.’
- TSK6 ‘Ask my fellow teacher friends in school if I lack understanding of a certain matter. Based on experience of teacher friends it can enlighten me regarding something unclear through the opinion and idea given. Second, group discussion especially in producing assignment. All facts and ideas discussed can be used in the best way in producing and completing the assignment. Using the internet is able to give me all information needed. I love silence and distraction-free environments that enable me to produce better assignments. A noisy place will block my focus on the task at hand. I am not the sort to do tasks at the last minute, and usually I start preparing the assignment early and I do not like delaying it because we can ask the lecturer and can revise if any shortcoming exists’

The findings were supported by lecturers’ statements that confirmed all the subjects presented consistent high quality coursework.

A summary of the findings showed that the three main factors contributing to the academic excellence of PDPP KDC students are motivating factors, the efficient use of the day and night time, and the learning strategies that became practices.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study identified three factors motivating the students namely the individual, career/education history, and online learning approach. Someone who is not interested in something will not carry it out with excellence. The finding on interest factor and self-satisfaction identified in this study is significantly associated with the academic results obtained. Because of interest and self-satisfaction, the student will show persistence and effort toward excellent academic achievement. This finding supports the theory of achievement motivation (McClelland, 1970) and Education Productivity Theory based on internal (intrinsic) and extrinsic factors. The individual factor is an internal factor or intrinsic motivation while the historical factor namely former career/education as well as an online learning approach is the extrinsic factor contributing to motivation in PDPP KDC students toward excellent academic achievement. This study supports the Practicum Excellence Model (Taib et al., 2019) which shows how intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to excellence in IPG student practicum.

Time management with full use of day and night time is a practice not easy to implement. The sacrifice of spending time to complete tasks and assignments is challenging and tiring work. Nevertheless, all subjects could implement their tasks successfully because they were strengthened by motivation. Students who could manage time well could enhance their academic performance and this gave them satisfaction in life. The learning strategy of excellent students had distinct characteristics: i) high learning practice discipline, ii) clarification of information through discussion, iii) scheduled consistent learning, and iv) self-regulated learning without distraction. These were identified in both part-time and full-time students. Variation in learning strategy was strongly associated with student learning styles.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the intrinsic motivation factor is the main factor contributing to excellence in student academic performance. Together with extrinsic motivation, the student uses various strategies and practices in learning to achieve excellence. Achieving academic excellence requires a combination of motivation and great effort. This study gives implications to holding more programmes that involve models or icons of excellent students to produce more excellent IPG teachers.

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