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Linking Theory and Practice: The Case of TESL Trainee Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the TESL trainee teachers' insights on the link between theory and practice. This study also sought to find out how they viewed the effectiveness of the teacher preparation programme in terms of preparing them for teaching secondary school students. The study involved 79 TESL Part 7 and 8 trainee teachers from the Faculty of Education, UiTM selected through purposive sampling procedure. This in-depth study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a wide coverage of areas and detailed explanations of those areas be gathered. To obtain the quantitative data, the survey design was employed and the instrument was questionnaire. On the other hand, to get the qualitative data, interviews were conducted and journal entries were scrutinised. The findings revealed that the trainees viewed that they were well prepared in three crucial areas which were field knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and professional knowledge. The results also indicated that gender and academic performance have no influence on the trainees' perceptions. At the end of the paper, implications of the study were discussed and recommendations were made to further strengthen the teacher education programme at the Faculty of Education.

Introduction

Teacher training is an important part of the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Programme in the Faculty of Education, UiTM since its inception in 1997. Since then, it has produced a few batches of TESL graduates that largely have become teachers. The TESL programme at the faculty is a

four-year programme to prepare students to be future teachers. These trainee teachers are exposed to courses such as Principles and Practices in English Language Teaching, Educational Psychology, Methodology courses, Literature courses, Linguistics courses, and Education courses to enhance their language ability and prepare them to be effective English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.

Trainee teachers also have to undergo a ten-week teaching practicum when they are in Part 7 (the semester before their final semester). They are generally assigned to specific secondary schools in Shah Alam and Klang. They are also assigned a university-based supervisor from the faculty and a school based supervisor/mentor at their respective school. Before these trainee teachers go for their practicum, they visit schools they are assigned to in order to familiarise themselves with the culture and system of a school. They carry out observations and write reports. They are also given a one or two-week pre-practicum seminar session to reinforce aspects related to teaching and learning prior to the practicum period. These are for example, classroom management, classroom organisation, methodology in teaching listening and speaking, reading and writing, and others. During practicum, they have to liaise with their university and their school supervisors. They also have to maintain a journal in which they jot down their teaching and learning experiences. They are encouraged to reflect and to follow up on their journal entries. After the practicum session, the trainee teachers attend a post-practicum seminar to reflect on their teaching practice.

These steps that are taken by the Faculty of Education, UiTM are similar to those of many other institutions in Malaysia which are offering teacher training for secondary school level. Knowing its important role, great emphasis is placed by the faculty in the preparation of students to be effective trainee teachers and subsequently, teachers in their own right. Basically, trainee teachers are exposed to both theory and practice. To illustrate, Aldrich (1990) states that the teacher training course should cover skills to organise an environment favourable for learning, provide knowledge and understanding of theory, current education system and curriculum, link between subjects and the wider curriculum, planning and teaching, evaluation and testing; as well as personal qualities needed for effective teaching such as sensitivity, compassion, cooperation and concern for students, colleagues and society. Teacher education courses should provide theoretical knowledge that has practical value which trainee teachers can use in their professional development (Dunne, 1993). As for Richards and Renandya (2002), they state that teacher-education programmes provide a basis in academic theory and research, to be checked against real teaching. Consequently, they enlarge and revise their new understanding of teaching as they encounter new problems, and their knowledge about teaching is heightened. Generally, teacher education should cover four aspects: teaching process (methodology), educational theory, practical experience in schools, and subject studies (Naish, 1990 in Aldrich, 1990).

It is a challenging and complex task as the faculty deals with individuals who come with different beliefs, perceptions, experiences, and influences to learn to be teachers. Groundwater-Smith, Ewing and Le Cornu (2003) point out that researches indicate that trainee teachers' learning in the practicum is a complex process as the experience is not the same for every trainee teacher and supervisor.

Beach and Pearson (1998) state that one of the conflicts trainee teachers face during practicum is that theory and practice do not meet. As a result, they feel helpless and give up. There are some trainee teachers who question the theories of teaching and learning and try to find alternatives when confronted with conflicts but their reflection is not in-depth (Hatton and Smith, 1995 in Beach and Pearson, 1998).

It could be that practicum being such a complex situation can cause many trainee teachers to have conflicts in reconciling theory and practice and to learn from their ongoing practicum teaching. Studies find that many trainee teachers are passive and do not perceive practicum as a learning experience but a test (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing and Le Cornu, 2003).

Preparing trainee teachers to be effective teachers is a demanding task. As schools are changing rapidly with technological advancements and are complex institutions where trainee teachers have to deal with teaching realities, they need critical and creative thinking skills. Thus, teacher trainers and teacher education programmes have to constantly check the quality of teacher education they are giving to trainee teachers to promote teacher effectiveness and to ensure the credibility of teachers. In view of these, this research hopes to explore what TESL trainee teachers do during practicum with regard to the theories they have learned and how adequately they are prepared for teaching by the Faculty of Education.

Statement of the Problem

Lately, the quality of some TESL trainee teachers at the Faculty of Education has been questioned by their university (UiTM) supervisors. It is undeniable that there are trainee teachers who have done the faculty proud with their achievements in the courses taught in the faculty as well as during practicum. The majority of the schools in Klang Valley also gave very positive feedback on the performance of many trainees during practicum. However, the negative feedback on some trainees from university supervisors is also a cause for concern. Some supervisors have commented about some trainee teachers in a number of areas for example, poor management of classrooms, inadequate knowledge of subject matter, poor teaching skills, weak in the English language, and poor attitude towards teaching and learning. Meanwhile, the common complain from school supervisors is a few trainee teachers are not very proficient

in the English language. It is disheartening because the faculty has provided essential courses based on theoretical perspectives to prepare trainee teachers to teach in secondary schools. The worrying issue that emerges is the inability of some students to put theory into practice. In view of this situation, this research looks at the perceptions of TESL trainee teachers with regard to linking theory and practice.

Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the views of TESL trainee teachers on the link between theory and practice based on their experiences during practicum. In addition, it is also aimed to discover how well the Faculty of Education has prepared these trainee teachers for teaching and to propose relevant changes in the syllabus of teacher education if necessary to further improve the programme. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the perception of TESL trainee teachers regarding the link between theory and practice based on their experiences during practicum?
2. Does the Faculty of Education prepare TESL trainee teachers well for teaching?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the trainee teachers' perceptions on the link between theory and practice with respect to gender?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between high and low achievers with regard to their perceptions on the link between theory and practice?

Significance of the Study

This study is important as it can benefit TESL trainee teachers and the teacher training programme at the Faculty of Education, UiTM. TESL trainee teachers can obtain insights on their weaknesses in linking theory and practice. With this knowledge, they can improve their ability in teaching and learning. They can also pinpoint areas in the TESL course that are beneficial to prepare them for the teaching practicum. In line with the significance to the TESL programme, these strong areas that are identified by TESL students can be further strengthened. As for courses which have shortcomings and are not beneficial to trainee teachers, steps can be taken to improve on them.

Research Methodology

Sample of the Study

Using purposive sampling, 79 students from Semesters 7 and 8 at the Faculty of Education, UiTM Shah Alam campus were selected for the study. These students entered the course through one of the following three ways: after TESL matriculation, after obtaining a diploma, or after Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM). They were selected to enter the course after their ability in the English Language was ascertained to be competent as seen in their academic results and ability to use the language through interviews, as well as reading and writing placement tests. Overall, the subjects had average to high level of proficiency in the English language.

Data Gathering Instruments

Since this study utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches, there were three types of instruments used in this research: questionnaires, interviews and journals. These instruments were used to extricate relevant information and also used for triangulation purposes.

i. Questionnaires

To obtain the quantitative data, the study employed the survey design using questionnaires since they can gather a lot of information easily within a short period of time. The questionnaires aimed to gauge the perception of the subjects toward the link between theory and practice based on their experiences during practicum and also to find out whether the faculty had well prepared them for teaching.

ii. Interviews

In-depth interview sessions were conducted with ten subjects who participated in answering the questionnaire. During the interview, the subjects were asked to explain the connection between what they had learnt and their actual teaching experience. They were also asked to clarify some of the comments made by them and their friends in the open-ended section of the questionnaire.

iii. Journals

The journals were kept by the subjects during the duration of their teaching practicum. The subjects were required to record their teaching experiences, teaching successes and disappointments, reflections, measures taken for improvements and others. Excerpts were taken from the journal entries to further verify the findings from the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data derived from the questionnaire were analysed using SPSS version 11.5 programme. In order to answer the first and second research questions on the link between theory and practice as well as the success of the faculty in preparing the trainees for teaching, the descriptive statistics of frequencies, means and percentages were used. For the third and fourth research questions that sought to find out whether there were any statistically significant differences in their perceptions with respect to gender and academic achievement, the T-test for independence of means was adopted.

On the other hand, the qualitative data were derived from the interview and journal. Firstly, the researchers listened to and evaluated the interviews manually. The content was classified into themes. The excerpts from the interview were utilized to support the quantitative data, and provided details that were not mentioned in both the questionnaire and the journals. Secondly, the researchers extracted the relevant information from journal entries needed for the study. These excerpts were also used for the purpose of triangulation.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

All together 79 respondents answered the questionnaire. Nineteen percent of the samples were males and the remaining 81% were females. The majority (77.2%) of the trainees belonged to the age group of 21-25 years old. The other 22.8% were trainees above 25 years of age who joined the faculty after matriculation or after obtaining a diploma in various courses. On the whole, the students' ages ranged from 21 to above 35 years of age.

Out of the 79 respondents, 86.1% were single, 12.7% were married and 1.3% opted for the category of "others". In terms of race, the majority (82.3%) were Malays from East and West Malaysia, and the remaining 17.7 % were trainees from East Malaysia, namely Ibans and Kadazans. They were all TESL students from semester 7 (44.3%) and semester 8 (55.7%). This was because the respondents belonged to two separate batches from the three-year and four-year programmes of B. Ed. TESL.

Trainees' Perceptions Towards the Link Between Theory and Practice

The results indicate that 72.6% of the trainees believed that generally the teacher education programme had succeeded in equipping them with the field knowledge which comprised knowledge of the subject matter and theories needed

in order to be effective teachers. Only 27.4 % thought that they were inadequately prepared in terms of field knowledge. As mentioned in the studies in the previous section, some students could not see the link between the theories learnt and the actual teaching in the real school setting. It is true that some theories are not applicable in certain settings. However, trainees have to be flexible and creative in handling certain unexpected situations. Unfortunately, some trainees have not acquired the skill. It is sad because as future teachers, they will encounter these situations throughout their career.

More than 86% of the trainees agreed that the Educational Psychology and English courses adequately prepared them for their teaching practicum. Close to 80% of them also believed that the course on curriculum and instruction provided them with useful information about the curriculum and teaching in the real school setting.

The majority of the trainees (76%) viewed that the teaching experience alone was not enough to learn about what they needed to know about teaching. More than 70% believed that teachers do teach better with the help of theories.

It is also not surprising to discover that slightly more than half of the trainees (54.4%) were not only concerned about incorporating what they had learned in their teaching, but they were also concerned about their grades. This is understandable since the system of education in this country is very much assessment oriented, and paper qualification is highly stressed. These students had undergone the system for many years and their mindset could not be changed if the whole system is not revised.

On the whole, a great majority (77.5%) claimed that the university had prepared them well in terms of pedagogical knowledge or the teaching skills that they needed to deliver the content of their lessons and to manage their classrooms. Approximately 85% stated that they benefited a lot from the methodology courses that they took at the university. Those courses helped them in terms of the teaching methods employed and the activities carried out in the classroom during the teaching practicum.

In terms of lesson planning and preparation of instructional materials, the majority of the trainees, 83.5% and 82.3% respectively, believed that the courses they took at the university helped them in carrying out their duties as teachers.

Pedagogical knowledge is regarded as equally important as field knowledge. Having the ability to deliver a good lesson is as important as having content knowledge. If a teacher has the knowledge but fails to make the students understand the lessons, he is regarded as an ineffective teacher.

As for professional knowledge, the trainees held the view that the teacher education programme at the university had successfully trained them to be professional teachers. The mean percentage shows that 76.3% of the trainees agreed that they were well-equipped with professional knowledge which referred to general knowledge and beliefs about teaching that they required in order to

put theory into practice. This aspect of knowledge assisted them in performing their duties as professional teachers.

Among the items in this dimension, more than 90% of the students purported that generally all the courses taught at the programme had helped them in their teaching whether directly or indirectly. The same percentage also believed that the teaching experience was equally important as the educational theories learnt prior to their practicum. Both were necessary for them to become better teachers.

About 80% of the trainees also claimed that the programme at the university had great influence on their beliefs about teaching and had prepared them well to become professional teachers. They also agreed that they had managed to adapt the theories of learning and teaching in light of new knowledge and experience.

However, only about 56% of the trainees felt that the programme managed to provide them with a realistic view of teaching in a full classroom/school context. It was implied that quite a big percentage (44%) thought that the programme did not successfully portray to them the realistic view of teaching in the real school setting. This may be a cause for concern for the faculty to relook into the matter to ensure that the reality in school is explicitly portrayed to the trainees. Even though only less than half of them felt this way, the faculty still needs to evaluate the matter seriously. This will be further discussed in the following section.

On the whole, it was verified that the majority of the trainees ranging from approximately 73% to 78% purported that the teacher education programme at the university had prepared them well in the three dimensions: field knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and professional knowledge. This is very important for the faculty to know because these aspects of knowledge are crucial in nurturing the students to become effective teachers for the nation.

Results of the T-test

The next part of the paper will discuss the results of the T-test conducted in identifying whether there were statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the trainees with respect to the following variables: i) gender ii) academic performance.

Gender

RQ3 — Ho1: There is no statistically significant difference between genders in their perceptions on the link between theory and practice.

The result shows that there were no significant differences in terms of gender for all the three dimensions. It was found that for the field knowledge dimension, $t = .293$, $df = 77$, and $p = .770$. For the pedagogical knowledge dimension, $t = .211$, $df = 77$, and $p = .833$. Lastly, for the professional knowledge dimension, $t = .768$,

$df = 77$, and $p = .445$. All the results revealed that they were insignificant. The study failed to reject the Null Hypothesis. This implies the fact that whether they are males or females, it does not influence their perceptions toward the link between theory and practice. Even though some people may think that males and females tend to think differently, the results did not indicate that gender influences trainee teachers' perceptions of the link between theory and practice.

Academic Performance

RQ4 — Ho2 : There is no statistically significant difference between high and low achievers with regard to their perceptions on the link between theory and practice.

The trainees were categorised into high and low achievers according to the CGPA they obtained in the previous semester. The results of the T-test indicated that there were no significant differences between high and low achievers in their perceptions on the link between theory and practice. For all the three dimensions: field knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and professional knowledge, the values were $t = -1.371$, $df = 77$, $p = .174$; $t = .298$, $df = 77$, $p = .767$; and $t = .371$, $df = 77$, $p = .711$, respectively. Again, the Null Hypothesis failed to be rejected. What this means is that academic achievement has no influence on the trainees' view on the link between theory and practice. This is contradictory to the general belief that low achievers tend to be more critical of the programme offered at the faculty due to their inability to perform well.

Analysis of the Written Data and Interview

The written data include the open-ended section in the questionnaire and the trainees' journal entries. These sections sought to find out their additional comments regarding the link between what the trainees learnt in the teacher education programme and their teaching experience in school. Besides the written data, as mentioned in the previous section, ten trainees were also interviewed to find out their views and to help clarify some of the vague comments gathered through the questionnaire. Generally, the written data showed that more than 85% of the trainees felt that the faculty had succeeded in preparing them for the teaching practice. Many thought that the courses taken and the theories learnt helped them in their teaching practice. One of the trainees asserted that the teacher education programme "did help in moulding" his "skills and ability to become a teacher." Another trainee claimed that the programme "enhances" and "enriches" her teaching experience.

However, there were also the ones who thought that some of the theories learnt did not match with the practice. Despite the mismatch, they still benefited from what they had learnt. Among some of the encouraging comments made were:

“Basically, what I have learnt at the teacher education programme for the past four years has given me some picture about what I must be able to do and master before I can start teaching...From my teaching experience, a few of the theories learnt are not applicable to the local school context but others are applicable. The thing is that I must know how to relate what I have learnt to the real world...However, it cannot be denied that what I have learnt here have (sic) prepared and exposed me to the school expectations. I have a rough picture of the classroom situation and able (sic) to use the knowledge where appropriate (J3).”

Some also gave very positive comments regarding specific subjects taught at the faculty, namely Literature, Educational Psychology, Curriculum and Instruction and the methodology courses. One of the trainees voiced her opinion that the teacher education programme had a strong relationship with her teaching experience. She said that the programme provided her with “the realistic view of teaching in the classroom.” She further expressed that courses such as Teaching of Literature (TOL), Methodology of Teaching Reading and Writing (MTRW), Methodology of Teaching Listening and Speaking (MTLS), Curriculum and Instruction and Psychology of Education were very important because they exposed her to “real (authentic) teaching.” Another trainee also agreed that TOL “really helped” her during the teaching practicum.

Besides the positive comments about the teacher education programme at the university, the trainees also gave several suggestions to further improve the faculty. The suggestions can be categorised into six areas:

i more exposure to the real school setting

There were 18.99% of the trainees who expressed that they would like to have more exposure to the real school setting. This was because they would like to be mentally prepared about the reality in school before they were thrown into the deep end. Some would like to have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers teaching school children. According to them, the few opportunities they had during the four years at the university were not enough. Very few courses required them to do school observation. They believed that the early and more frequent exposure to school reality would make them better teachers.

ii more exposure to the latest school syllabus and lesson plan

Approximately 16.5% of the trainees viewed that there was not enough exposure on utilisation of the current school syllabus and involvement in drawing up of lesson plans as required by schools. They were taught to do detailed lesson plans as required by the university. When they did their teaching practicum, they discovered that some schools wanted them to adhere to the school lesson plan as set by Jabatan Pelajaran Negeri Selangor (JPNS). The school lesson plan is a more simplified version compared to the one taught at the university.

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It is worth mentioning here that the university version is more detailed because supervisors need to monitor the students' understanding of the objectives of the lessons and their implementation of the lessons through planned detailed activities. Supervisors are not present in school all the time; therefore, the detailed lesson plans are crucial for supervision purposes. The simplified version is more suitable for experienced teachers or the ones who have undergone training. Some of the trainees understood this fact but some did not. As a result, they felt pressured when they were asked by the school to also produce the simplified version.

iii. more English grammar courses to be included in the study plan

It is surprising that about 7.59% of the trainees would like to have more grammar and proficiency classes. An extreme case is highlighted when one of the trainees said that she would like to "have grammar classes every semester." At present, students receive proficiency training only at pre-degree level either one or two years depending on their performance largely in five areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar. There are also drama and other education classes that they have to take at the pre-degree level which also contribute to the students' CGPA.

However, when they enter the degree level, there are no more grammar classes and one of the trainees recommended that "the management should put grammar in the syllabus. Some of the TESL students are lack of this. How do we teach pupils if we ourselves are not well versed in grammar (J10)"

iv. more input on classroom management and control

About 6.33% of the trainees claimed that they did not receive enough input on how to manage and control their classroom. They would like to know more on the various ways of how to deal with students of the new millennium which to them were different from students from the earlier batches. They claimed that some of the students were "uncontrollable." They would also like to be taught how to identify students with disciplinary problems so that they could identify them right away when they met them.

When asked during the interview about whether classroom management and control was also dealt with in methodology classes, the trainees gave affirmative answers. Some even said that no matter how much they learnt about students' behaviours, the real school experience would still give them challenges in dealing with the various types of student personality. One trainee pointed out, "I can't rely on what I have learnt at the faculty only, I have to be able to figure it out on my own also..."

v. lengthen the pre-practicum and practicum period

There were 6.33% of the trainees who would like to have more courses conducted during the pre-practicum period. Among the comments was "I think that pre-practicum courses should be taught in the semester because so many (sic)

useful information from pre-practicum cannot be covered because of time constraint (only one week) (J2).”

Another trainee wanted the pre-practicum session to be conducted “more than two weeks” because they enjoyed the tips and exposure to the reality in school. They felt that the detailed explanation and discussions of case studies were really useful for their teaching practicum.

As for practicum, the same percentage of trainees proposed that the teaching practicum period be extended between three and six months. They said that the ten-week period was not enough for them to effectively put theory into practice. This was in line with the suggestion made by trainee teachers from various local higher learning institutions who participated in the study conducted by the Jawatankuasa Penyelarasan Pendidikan Guru (JPPG) in 2005. Many wanted the duration of the practicum to be extended to 16 weeks (JPPG, 2005).

vi. more exposure to school administrative duties and school politics

It is quite interesting to find out that there was 1.27% of the trainees who thought that it was necessary for them to be exposed to how to handle administrative duties and politics in school. The trainee urged the faculty to provide students with these skills so that they would be better prepared to handle non-teaching duties like writing minutes and reports using a specific school format for a particular programme or activity conducted in the school. The trainee would also like to know specific ways of how to handle teachers and school politics.

Nevertheless, the researchers believe that the knowledge of writing minutes and reports was already provided in the foundation English courses that they took at the university. Even though the specific format of minutes and reports may be different from those practiced in school, the trainees need to learn to adapt to the various ways of writing minutes and reports in various educational sectors. The university can only provide the foundation of that knowledge.

Implications of the Study

It is important to highlight the implications of the study for two parties namely the Faculty of Education and the TESL teacher trainees.

- i. For the Faculty of Education lecturers, they can rest assure that generally they have done a good job in nurturing TESL trainee teachers. The basic curriculum structure designed has managed to equip the trainees with the necessary knowledge and skills required to begin their journey into the teaching profession. Nevertheless, the trainees would like to further enrich their knowledge by having more exposure to real school experience and

more topics to be covered during their four-year programme at the faculty. Thus, some minor amendments to the curriculum structure or content of the courses may be able to strengthen their needs for their real teaching practice.

- ii. As for TESL trainee teachers, generally they have acquired the minimum requirements of becoming school teachers. However, they still need to be creative and flexible in tackling the challenges of teaching school children. They need to be aware of the fact that there are many types of student and teacher personalities that they will deal with in school. A lot can be learnt through experience, and the theories only provide the foundation of education. They serve as a guide for the trainees to understand the teaching and learning processes. They are not supposed to dwell on theories alone, but instead they must be innovative and wise in evaluating the situations they are in.

In terms of language proficiency, the trainees who are not very proficient in the language need to double up their efforts to improve their command of the language. They need to use the language in their everyday lives because practice makes perfect. They also need to polish their knowledge of grammar rules.

Recommendations for the Faculty and TESL Trainee Teachers

The researchers would like to recommend the following in order to further strengthen the B. Ed. TESL programme at the faculty:

- i. *have the students do teaching practicum twice during their course of study*

In order to not shock the trainees with the realities in school, they need to be in the school environment more than once. Doing the teaching practicum only once during their fourth year is quite a late exposure to the school system. It is recommended that a shorter version of the teaching practicum be carried out during the semester break after semester 5. The duration can be between five and six weeks. If this is done, there is a lot that they can learn before they experience their actual independent teaching in semester 7. During the five or six weeks, they can observe and assist their mentors in teaching the real school students.

- ii. *expose the students to more fieldwork incorporated in existing courses*
It is undeniable that a few courses at the faculty do require the students to go to school to collect data for certain projects. It would be good if more courses can do the same and ask the TESL students to do more fieldwork like school observations and interviews with principals, teachers or even school students

as part of the course requirements for relevant courses. These can familiarize the students to the school environment.

iii. lengthen the School Orientation Programme (SOP)

At present, SOP is carried out during pre-practicum for one week. This is too short a duration because the students need time to adjust and be familiar with the do's and don'ts in a particular school. It is advisable if the programme is lengthened to two or three weeks so that the students have the opportunity to mingle with school staff and familiarize themselves with the actual teacher roles and responsibilities in school. This exposure will prepare them mentally about what they are expected to do as teachers.

Besides that, they can explore the teaching materials and syllabus used in school. They can also observe the school infrastructure as well as the teaching and learning facilities. This will better prepare them for the school experience.

iv. expose the students to the JPNS lesson plan format prior to practicum

Currently, students are only exposed to the faculty lesson plan format in their Curriculum & Instruction and methodology courses. It would be wise if they can also learn the JPNS format so that they are not shocked when they are asked to produce their lesson plans using that format.

The researchers believe that the university format that is taught is very detailed, comprehensive and suitable for pre-service teachers. However, the students also need to know the actual simplified JPNS version for the lesson plan. This serves as a back up for the students if schools require them to do so. This knowledge and exposure can also boost their confidence.

v. have remedial classes for students with weak language proficiency

Even though students have undergone screenings during their Pre-TESL years, some students managed to get through in their exams because they were better test takers. When it comes to speaking the language, they could not apply what they have learnt because they have not reached the state of "automaticity". According to Brown (2000), this is a state whereby students have acquired the language and their speech is automatic.

There is no doubt that these students need to polish their language skills independently using traditional means or new language software available in the market, but it is also advisable that the faculty assist them by providing remedial classes weekly during each semester. Once they have reached a certain satisfactory level, they are exempted from attending those classes. Their progress can be monitored through writing and speaking assessments.

Conclusion

The Faculty of Education has produced many batches of TESL teachers for schools throughout Malaysia. Academic and non-academic staff have worked

very hard to make sure that the faculty is on par with other faculties of education in the country. The faculty has generally received very positive feedback from secondary schools regarding its trainee teachers even though lecturers are still dissatisfied with the performance of some of the trainees.

Preparing pre-service ESL teachers is not an easy task. The faculty needs to ensure that the students have acquired the necessary content and pedagogical knowledge as well as the English language. Unlike teaching non-language subjects, English language teachers must be proficient in the language to start off with. They must be comfortable using the language in order to show their credibility as teachers.

On the whole, this study further strengthens the positive feedback obtained from school teachers each semester that the trainees were well prepared to begin their teaching career. In general, the trainee teachers also perceived that they were well trained for teaching and ready to immerse into the school system.

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