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THE PERCEPTIONS OF TESL TEACHER TRAINEES TOWARDS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MICROTEACHING SUBJECT (SPA 2001) IN PREPARING THEM FOR TEACHING PRACTICE

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A report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science and Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
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2008
I declare that this thesis entitled "The Perceptions of TESL Teacher Trainees Towards the Effectiveness of Microteaching Course (SPA 2001) in Preparing Them for Teaching Practice" is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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Name: NURFAREZA BINTI YAHYA

Date: 29 April 2008
Special Dedication

To my beloved mother and father
To my supporting brother and sisters
And to him
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ABSTRACT

Microteaching is a subject that helps teacher trainees in practicing their knowledge and skills of teaching to prepare themselves for teaching practice. In relation to this, a study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of UTM’s TESL teacher trainees towards the effectiveness of microteaching subject (SPA 2001) in preparing them for teaching practice. A total of 39 TESL teacher trainees were selected to be the respondents of this study. The instruments used in this study were questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies done by Ngui Kuan Sang (1982/1983) and McGarvey and Swallow (1986). Interviews were also carried out on 4 respondents to gain further insight on the topic of this study. Data were analyzed descriptively using Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16. The overall findings of the study show that the TESL teacher trainees perceived microteaching subject as effective in preparing them for teaching practice. However, there were problems faced by the trainees during teaching practice especially in handling students and teaching situations. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that the respondents highly valued the feedbacks given by their supervisor, peers and cooperative teacher. Finally, suggestions were also given on how to improve the microteaching subject for the benefit of TESL teacher trainees.
ABSTRAK

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UTM - Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
TESL - Teaching English as a Second Language
SPSS - Statistic Package for Social Science
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Teaching is well-known as an honourable profession all over the world. Teaching is the act of imparting students with knowledge so that they can use the knowledge in their academic life as well as in the future. Thus, teachers play an important role in educating our children today as they are also the ones who shape the youngsters so that the young generation will become the leaders of the nation in the future. According to Moore (1989), teachers play many roles such as an instructional expert, a manager as well as a counsellor to the students. The importance of the role of the teachers was further expressed by the Director-general of Education, Datuk Alimuddin Mohd Dom who stated that teachers as change agents were the driving force behind his mission to provide quality education (cited in The New Straits Times, September 8, 2007).

In order to be a teacher, a person has to enroll in a specialised educational program that can train him or her to become skilful in this particular profession. It is a common practice for a would be teacher or teacher trainees to enroll in such a program in order to equip themselves with effective teaching skills. These skills
can be obtained through practice because practice can help teacher trainees to apply effective teaching methods which can lead to the changing of the pupils’ behaviour.

One important subject that helps teacher trainees in practicing the theories, approaches and methods of teaching is the teaching practice. The fact that teacher trainees need to undergo teaching practice itself can make them become nervous because they know that they have to teach in real situation. To overcome this problem, teacher trainees need to take a special subject known as microteaching. Microteaching is one of the effective ways to train teacher trainees before they face the real classroom situation when they do their teaching practice. According to McGarvey and Swallow (1986), microteaching was first introduced at Stanford University in 1963. They stated that microteaching focuses on teaching a particular skill in a short session with a small group of people to help the students improve their teaching skills and self-confidence. Therefore, teacher trainees need to perform microteaching in order to learn skills, theories and methodology which they can use in their teaching practice.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Microteaching is a subject that helps the teacher trainees in practicing their knowledge and skills of teaching and preparing themselves towards the teaching practice. McIntyre, MacLeod and Griffiths (1977) stated that microteaching helps trainees in recognizing teaching as an intellectual job which involves the integration of a range of distinctive professional skills. They also stated that microteaching can increase trainees’ awareness of teaching aspects as well as the need for creativity and originality in teaching. Furthermore, the most important aspect is that microteaching gives trainees’ a view of real teaching which
according to McIntyre, MacLeod and Griffiths (1977) can “avoid the distress sometimes associated with students’ first experience of classroom teaching.”

In Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), students who are pursuing their studies in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) course need to take a microteaching subject (SPA 2001) before they go for their teaching practice. In taking the subject, they will learn how to prepare the lesson plan, handle difficult situations in a classroom, and mostly how to conduct a lesson. In addition, they will be evaluated by their supervisor as well as their peers. The trainees need to obtain at least grade C+ in the microteaching subject before they are allowed to go for their teaching practice.

For some trainees, they did not face any difficulties in adapting and applying what they had learned in the microteaching class during the teaching practice. However, there were also some trainees who faced problems in implementing the theories, skills and approaches learned during their course in their teaching practice. They also felt that the microteaching subject did not help them much in their teaching practice when they faced such problems.

This study focused on fourth year students who are doing a course in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). These students had done their teaching practice when they were in their third year and had taken the microteaching subject when they were in their second year.
1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Microteaching experience has been said to have strong links with teaching practice. This is because microteaching is considered as a platform for the teacher trainees to apply the theories that they had learned in their course in order to become an effective teacher. According to McGarvey and Swallow (1986), the experience gained, the skills learned and the practice that teacher trainees received in the microteaching class can be used to develop a “practical and penetrating understanding” of teaching and to build up an overall teaching ability.

However, the effectiveness of the microteaching subject in helping students to become skilled teacher trainees has been questioned by many educationists. Based on the research by McIntyre, MacLead and Griffiths (1977), teacher trainees claimed that their pre-service training seemed to be of little or no help to them. This was due to their dissatisfaction to the subjects taken by them in dealing with students’ attitude. Since microteaching is a course teaching peers, it was not really challenging for them as they were not teaching the real students. However, can they perform well in their teaching practice when they face the real classroom situation? This is the issue that needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, in the Malaysian context, Abdul Raof Latif and T. Subahan (1991) stated that many graduate teacher trainees today are lacking in professionalism to be teachers. They stated that this issue will be uttered over and over again by parents in order to improve the education quality of their children. The former Deputy Education Minister, Datuk Mahadzir Md. Khir even stated that some teachers were not creative enough in teaching which led to the boredom in the classroom (cited in Utusan Melayu, 2004, October 16). Furthermore, he also stated that one of the factors that students play truant was due to the incompetent teachers. The question now is why are these teachers incompetent and lacking in professionalism as a teacher? Did they get enough training before they started teaching? Thus, it is the aim of this research to find the root of the problems.
Apart from these two problems mentioned above, some of the TESL trainees claimed that they did not get the exact view of real classroom situation in their microteaching class such as in managing the class, the teaching materials, the lesson plan and many more. As a result, they had difficulties in facing the real situation and the environment of classroom situation when they went for their teaching practice. In fact, there had also been cases where the teacher trainees often changed to the bad old methods such as chalk and talk which they had experienced during their school days when they started to teach in schools. This tendency is also reinforced and influenced by the advice and example of old-fashioned headmasters and senior teachers at the school they go to (Hill and Dobbyn, 1979).

All three issues mentioned above lead back to the training that trainees received and the subjects which they had to take before they graduated from their specialised education program. Questions were raised as to whether teacher trainees had been given enough preparation before they go to teach? Were the subjects taken by teacher trainees helping them to become effective teachers? These are two important questions that would be address in this study to ensure that quality graduate teachers are produced.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of TESL trainees towards the effectiveness of microteaching subject (SPA 2001) in preparing them for teaching practice. It will determine whether the microteaching subject meets the needs of the teacher trainees in carrying out their teaching practice. Other than that, this study will find out the perceptions of teacher trainees towards microteaching. This study also will recommend ways on how the microteaching subject can be improved.
1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research are:

1.4.1 To find out UTM’s TESL trainees’ perceptions towards the effectiveness of the microteaching subject (SPA 2001) in preparing them for teaching practice.

1.4.2 To investigate whether the microteaching subject meets the needs of the students in carrying out their teaching practice.

1.4.3 To recommend ways to improve the microteaching class.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are based on the objectives of the study. Thus, this study will provide answers to the following questions:

1.5.1 What are UTM’s TESL trainees’ perceptions towards the effectiveness of the microteaching subject in preparing them for teaching practice?

1.5.2 Does microteaching subject meet the needs of the students in carrying out their teaching practice? If so, in what ways?
1.5.3 What can be done to improve the microteaching subject?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Through this research, it is hoped that there are solutions to improve the microteaching subject (SPA 2001) that can be beneficial to various parties such as the TESL students, the syllabus designers and also the Faculty of Education which offers the TESL course.

Firstly, the findings of this research will help the syllabus designers to improve the microteaching subject. They can plan ways to improve the microteaching subject (SPA 2001) since some trainees are still lacking in teaching skills and knowledge during the teaching practice. They may also revise the syllabus and improve the quality as well the effectiveness of the subject. The syllabus designer can come out with a more comprehensive microteaching subject that will enable TESL trainees to teach more effectively. In addition, with the improvement of the syllabus and the microteaching subject, the TESL trainees will be well-equipped with the skills needed in order to become a qualified future teacher. This also can actually improve the Faculty of Education’s image.

This research is also significant to the TESL trainees themselves. Hopefully, through this research, it will make the teacher trainees aware of the importance and the benefits of microteaching subject as it is a platform for them to practice teaching in order to face the real teaching situation. In this way, they will not be demotivated when they go for their teaching practice. Moreover, from the findings of this research, it is hoped that the teacher trainees will be better prepared to face teaching situations. They need to improve their teaching techniques, skills and approaches of teaching to become skilful, knowledgeable and efficient future