



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**IN A DIFFERENT CHOICE AND VOICE: THE PERCEPTIONS
OF MALES ENROLLED IN TEACHER EDUCATION
PROGRAMME**

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THE PERCEPTIONS OF MALES ENROLLED IN
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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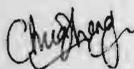
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**IN A DIFFERENT CHOICE AND VOICE:
THE PERCEPTIONS OF MALES ENROLLED IN
TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

by

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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
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ABSTRACT

IN A DIFFERENT CHOICE AND VOICE: THE PERCEPTIONS OF MALES ENROLLED IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Chua Kang Zheng

This study is set in the context of concern about the decline in the proportion of males entering teaching profession in Malaysia and focuses on the views of 10 male teacher trainees enrolled in various disciplines of teacher education programme as to determine the gender awareness of the male participants about men in teaching, to explore the reasons of the male participants for choosing teaching, and to describe the value of male teachers in teaching held by the male participants. The selected research design for this study is a case study based on qualitative methodology. Semi-structured interview was used for data collection and the data were transcribed and analysed according to emerging themes to address the objectives of this study. The findings of this study show that the male teacher trainees, in general, report gender awareness about the decline proportion of male in teaching, however, the gender awareness they hold is different from what the male teacher trainees hold in the Western societies. Besides, the findings of this study also reveal the various reasons for the male teacher trainees' choice of entering teaching and they were categorized into four major emergent themes, namely: the interpersonal experience empowerment theme, the service theme, continuation theme and time compatibility theme. Lastly, the findings of this study also reveal the value of male teachers in education held by these male teacher trainees, in general perspective, centers around the disciplinary domain. This study highlights the need for more researches to be carried out to find out the actual cause for the under-representation of men in teaching profession and address the issue of whether this under-representation does matter.

ABSTRAK

DALAM SATU PILIHAN DAN PENDAPAT YANG BERLAINAN: PERSEPSI KAUM LELAKI DALAM PROGRAM PERGURUAN

Chua Kang Zheng

Kajian ini dijalankan berasas pada pengurangan pecahan guru lelaki dalam profesion perguruan Malaysia dan fokus kajian adalah pada persepsi 10 orang guru pelatih yang terlibat dalam program perguruan dengan disiplin yang berbeza. Ia bertujuan untuk menentukan kesedaran jantina peserta terhadap isu lelaki dalam profesion perguruan, meninjau sebab-sebab atau faktor-faktor yang menentukan pilihan kerjaya mereka sebagai guru, dan mensoroti kepentingan serta peranan guru lelaki yang dipegang oleh mereka. Reka bentuk kajian ini ialah berasaskan kejian kes kualitatif. Temu bual semi-struktur telah digunakan untuk pengumpulan data dan transkrip data dianalisa mengikut tema-tema yang menjurus kepada objektif kajian. Hasil kajian menunjukkan guru pelatih lelaki secara amnya menyedari kemerosotan pecahan guru lelaki dalam profesion perguruan. Namun, kesedaran mereka adalah berbeza dengan guru pelatih di kalangan negara Barat. Selain itu, hasil kajian juga mendedahkan pelbagai sebab yang mendorong guru pelatih lelaki untuk menceburi bidang keguruan dan sebab-sebab ini dikategorikan kepada empat tema utama iaitu: "interpersonal experience empowerment theme", "the service theme", "continuation theme" and "time compatibility theme". Kajian ini juga menunjukkan pandangan guru pelatih lelaki terhadap kepentingan guru lelaki dalam bidang keguruan lebih kepada domain disiplin.

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This poem is dedicated to my parents and family members, my supervisor of this project, Mr Collin Jerome and friends and people who have helped me in making this project possible.

YOU

When I felt lonesome
being far apart from you,
You tell me this:
You are not alone
We are always with you,
You should not cry
for you are our son
and we have faith in you
and we love you.

When I felt drained
because of the project,
You tell me this:
I know you can do your best,
Push yourself to the limits,
And you arduously spent your time
Guiding me
Scaffolding me
Enlighten me in my drafts.

When I felt like hope is gone
because of the hardship of study,
You tell me this:
Keep holding on for I will pray for you
So that you are granted wisdom and strength,
and let's finish the race together.

And because of you,
I cast my fear aside
And I found the strength to carry on,
and I find no words
in expressing my gratitude
but only Thank You...

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of research problem

In the world of professions where gender reform is taking place, the gender imbalance within teaching profession seems impervious to the reform with the gradual decline in the proportion of male entering teaching profession. Many studies have been carried out abroad to identify the factors influencing male's choice of teaching as a career.

In the United States, Williams (1995) found that, "the generally slow movement of men into traditionally 'female' occupations such as teaching and nursing has been attributed to two factors: the relatively poor economic prospects offered by these occupations and social pressures arising from conservative community perceptions of appropriate male roles" (cited in Sumsions, 2000). Likewise, Galbraith (1992) also reports that occupations that are more gender-typed for women are less likely to attract men because they tend to carry low status and low pay (cited in Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997). Connell (1997) provides some further

insights into the findings of the declining numbers of men entering teaching profession by arguing that, “since the 1960s of transformations in U.S. sexual politics, sex roles and what is thought of as ‘appropriate’ work for men and women remain strongly evident in people’s choice of entering teaching profession which historically women have dominated men in terms of numbers” (cited in Johnston et. al., 1999).

In Malaysia, it is apparent and noticeable that teaching profession is facing the declining proportion of men’s participation. With reference to the table below, over the ten years from 1993 to 2003, the numbers of male teachers are not decreasing. In fact, it increases. However, in comparison with the increase of numbers of female in teaching proportion, the increase of numbers of male teachers is comparatively low, thus, resulting the declining proportion of male teachers in primary and secondary education. In other words, such statistics suggests that the chances of students to get a female teacher in class are higher than getting a male teacher.

Table 2.1.2 Number of Teachers at Primary and Secondary Schools in 1993, 1998 and 2003 by Gender

Level of Education	Number and Percentage of Teachers					
	Male			Female		
	1993	1998	2003	1993	1998	2003
Primary	55106	57035	58138	78869	96798	116563
	41.1	37.1	33.3	58.9	62.9	66.7
Secondary	37880	40547	46128	46072	62439	81645
	45.1	39.4	36.1	54.9	60.6	63.9

Source: Educational Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia: Malaysian Educational Statistics, 1993, 1998, 2003.

1.1 Statement of the problem

While Malaysia ministry of education has taken the initiative to identify the declining proportion of men entering teaching profession in the statistics above , however, little or none researches have been carried out to explore the reasons for the slow movement of male into teaching. Moreover, the issue of how well Malaysian male teachers are aware of this decline and how much they value the importance of male in this female dominated profession is also unknown. In addition, many other studies of occupational gender imbalance have focused on women's experiences in male-dominated occupations; little research has been done on the flip side of this occupational gender imbalance: the decline of men in teaching profession. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the phenomenon of decline proportion of male entering teaching profession in Malaysia by focusing on the perception of male teacher trainees.

1.2 Research objectives

The purpose of this preliminary study is to investigate the perceptions of males enrolled in teaching degree programme in Malaysia concerning men in teaching profession. The research objectives are to:

1. determine the gender awareness of the male participants about men in teaching
2. explore the reasons of the male participants for choosing teaching
3. describe the value of male teachers in teaching held by the male participants

1.3 Significance of the study

The result of this preliminary study may be importance in providing some insights into the reasons for the continuing under representation of men in teaching profession and reveal the level of gender awareness among the male teacher trainees. Besides, the results may be importance to highlight the needs for Malaysian education policy makers and learning institutions to address the issue of gender imbalance in teaching profession, and pave the way for further researches to investigate this issue.

1.4 Operational definitions of terms

Perceptions

According to Oxford Advanced Dictionary (6th Ed, 2000), perception means “an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something”.

Thus, the perceptions that this study examines are in terms of:

1. The awareness of target male participants about the decline of men entering teaching profession.
2. Their reasons for entering teaching profession.
3. The opinions or views in relation to the significance of male teachers in teaching held by the participants. For example, if the participant says, “I think that male teachers can be a positive role model for male students”, then, this response is considered as a perception.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis is formulated on the basis that little is known about the level of male teachers' awareness and concern with regard to the phenomenon of male under representation in teaching profession in Malaysia, hence to confirm whether the findings of the study will fulfill or reject this hypothesis.

- ❖ Male teachers in Malaysia are not aware and show no or little concern with regard to the under-representation of male in teaching profession in Malaysia.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces various previous studies which investigated the reasons for the under-representation of male in teaching profession by focusing on the perceptions of male teacher trainees and some include females' as well.

2.1 Occupational sex segregation

For the past centuries, occupational sex segregation, which is defined as the phenomenon whereby “men and women are concentrated in occupations that employ workers of predominately one sex” (Renzetti & Curran, 2003), is one of the most perplexing problems in the society of many countries. However, further discussion on this phenomenon of socially and culturally prescribed “work for men and women” (ibid) will not be adequate without looking at the historical overview of peoples' beliefs and awareness about gender differences, and how they vary in the West and the East respectively. In the West, as early as the seventeenth century, sociologists and researchers had been involved in the study of gender which then ignited two

decades of feminist study and shifted its attention to masculinity study in the late twentieth century. Such early and flourished awareness of gender in the West had brought about political and social changes—so much so that the issue of occupational sex segregation had been a commonplace for everyone in the Western society to be aware about the social construction of gendered occupational roles. On the other hand, histories of gender studies or movement in the economically undeveloped and developing countries of Asia are relatively scarce. Perhaps, for most Asians, ideas about social construction of gendered occupational roles are still confined to the “natural attitude—a kind of baseline thinking which majority of people take it as that just the way things are” (Hussey, 2003). This ‘because we see it a lot, so it must be that way’ attitude makes Asians belief about gender roles and differences overshadowed by the leading Western scholars who continue to explore and challenge any social construction of gender across culture and society.

Nevertheless, despite the differences of Eastern and Western level of awareness about social construction of gender, occupational sex segregation remains the puzzling problem shared by both worlds. As Williams (1992) claims, “even though the proportion of men and women in the U.S. labour force is approaching parity, men and women are still generally confined to predominantly single-sex occupations”. Among the occupations, teaching is claimed as a job which most women would go into (Sugg, 1978; Williams, 1992; Wrigley 1992 cited in Benton DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). In New Zealand, national intake suggests that the figures

of beginning teachers entering primary schools show that 1,133 females began teaching in 2005, compared with only 267 males. (New Zealand United Future party, 2006). The small proportion of male in teaching profession can be attributed to various reasons. Jacobs (1993) and Williams (1995) both state that the generally slow movement of men into teaching has been attributed to the relatively poor economic aspects offered by these occupations and social pressures arising from conservative community perceptions of appropriate male roles (cited in Sumsion, 2000). Galbraith (1992) confirmed Jacobs and Williams' findings, reporting that occupations that are more gender-typed for women are less likely to attract men because they tend to carry low status and low pay (cited in Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997).

In relation to the purpose of this study, four research papers which focus on the points stated earlier are drawn upon as the basis of investigation and discussion. In the following section, the reasons for men general slow movement into teaching as a career will be described in three perspectives: the potential rewards, tensions and risks as a teacher in a female dominated profession, societal social factors and individual psychological characteristics that influence such career choice, and the decision-making of teaching as a career across gender and cohort differences among pre-service teacher. However, it should be mentioned that it is uncertain whether the findings of the cited studies which are carried out in the West generalize or correspond with the view of male teachers in Malaysia context, for the fact that social construction of gender roles and relations differ across society and culture.

2.2 Rewards and Risks

Sumsions (2000) in her research draw on a theoretical perspective of potential rewards and risks that can be faced by men who make unconventional gender choices in becoming early childhood teacher. Her research describes the perceptions held by a group of 6 male early childhood student teachers concerning the potential rewards and risks entailed in their non-traditional career choice, and the gender-related tensions they encountered in their pre-service programme using an in-depth, individual interview of approximately one hour in duration with each of the six participants. The findings revealed that the participants all shared the potential rewards in teaching such as to contribute to gender reform (i.e. effort in countering the sex stereotype) and gaining opportunities for personal growth, the tensions that they had to counter against how the society view their choice, and the potential risks of emotional distress and loss of career.

The theoretical perspective of potential rewards, tensions and risks proposed in Sumsion's research is significant for this study to investigate whether it corresponds with the reasons for the continuing under-representation of men in Malaysia teaching profession as well as exploring the male teachers' level of awareness and concerns of this under-representation phenomenon.

2.3 Social Constructivist Views of Behaviour and Career Choice

Benton DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) grounded their study in social constructivist views of behaviour and career choice which explain how the social factors and individual psychological characteristics influence male teachers' choice of teaching as a career. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews, they surveyed 11 male elementary teachers enrolled in or graduates of a pre-service programme at a small liberal arts college to investigate the participants' motivation and attitudes for entering teaching profession, perceptions of the public regard for their profession, and their sense of professional efficacy. The findings revealed that direct contact with and nurturing of children was the most cited reason for teaching as a career, and the participants had found pleasure in teaching knowing that they would face possible rewards and risks in entering such female dominated profession. Their self efficacy of this profession was high as they implied that they had something different to offer: a different approach from a female approach to classroom teaching and provide a different type of role models.

Likewise, the research of Benton DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) provides this study on investigating the factors that influence the target male participants' choice of teaching as a career. Besides, this research also highlights the importance of male teachers to provide male role models for the students, and to configure the curriculum by providing a different kind of learning environment, different from the females'.

2.4 Gender and Cohort Differences and Similarities

Montecinos and Nielsen (1997) carried out a study seeking to address the issue of whether the intervention of teacher education has tended to perpetuate the absence of men from the elementary teaching force, by exploring whether gender differences and similarities of undergraduates majoring in education programme emerged as they went through their education programme. Their study provided empirical data about gender and cohort differences and similarities among pre-service teachers in four areas, namely the time when they make their vocational choice, the main factors influencing their decision, their certainty of their choice and their long-term professional aspirations.

They distributed a survey questionnaire to 390 students (64 males and 326 females) majoring in elementary and preschool education and enrolled during the fall of 1995 semester in one of the three phases of the teacher education programme of a public midsize university in the Midwest. They gathered data using a written questionnaire that required short answers to 13 open-ended questions and some selected demographic characteristics of the participants. The results of their study showed that male and female pre-service elementary teachers were quite similar in their reasons for selecting elementary education (e.g. commitment to children, having prior experiences working with children, and following the steps of their exemplary teachers) and these reasons are stable across cohorts. They claimed that their findings clearly indicate that increasing the number of men in the elementary teaching force is

much more complex than just recruiting them and some dimensions of this challenge are revealed and further discussed.

2.5 Gender Differences

Likewise, Johnston, McKeown and McEwen (1999) also carried out their study to seek to extend what is currently known about the factors that influence male's choice of teaching as a career by examining how these factors differ with regard to gender among teacher trainees. They held focused group discussions with Bachelor of Education (primary) students from two teacher training colleges in Belfast, and with admissions tutors from these colleges in order to ascertain the reasons why respondents chose to enter primary teaching.

The data generated from the discussions, together with material drawn from relevant literature, informed the construction of a questionnaire which was administered to a structured opportunity sample of 334 first, second and third year Bachelor of Education teacher trainees, 15% of whom were male and 85% female. The questionnaire elicited perceptions with regards to careers and career choices before asking detailed questions concerning respondents' attitudes towards teaching. The findings revealed that female in training claimed to have been motivated by the perceived intrinsic aspects of primary teaching whereas males in training reported an awareness of the feminization of primary teaching but considered a male presence in primary schools to be important. Their study also found out that while the males were

aware that they had to confront the societal negativity about choosing to work with young children, the females had no such concerns.

Both the research done by Montecinos and Nielsen (1997), and Johnston et. al (1999) provides empirical data that extend and support the already-known factors that influence choice of teaching as a career by examining how these factors differ with regard to gender among teacher trainees.

2.6 Reasons for males becoming teachers

Lortie (1975) carried out a study on a group of male pre-service teachers and he found various reasons that he labelled them as five attractors to teaching, namely: the interpersonal theme, the service theme, the material benefits theme, the continuation theme, and the time compatibility theme.

He stated that the interpersonal theme, or 'working with people', is not exclusive to teaching as it was also found in the highest profession, and so, it adds prestige to the occupation. Though, he found that among the teachers he interviewed, very few placed importance on the creative interpersonal skills that might be involved in teaching. The service theme is one that has been long associated with teaching, and comes from the 19th century notions as a 'mission in society' and 'moral worth', ideas that grounded in both sacred and secular beliefs (Lortie, 1975). This attractor proved slightly more significant for women than for men, and also more for primary teachers than secondary teachers. Lortie argued that the concept of service is more likely to

appeal to those who approve of the prevailing education system than to those who are critical of it. The continuation theme referred to the process whereby the male participants are influenced by predecessors such as their former teacher or their family members who work as teachers that they decided to follow their footsteps into teaching. Lortie found that the theme of material benefits was underplayed by teachers for two reasons. First of all, there is the public perception of teaching as being badly paid, and second, since values such as 'dedication' and 'service' are emphasised, teachers feel uncomfortable about considering the attractions of money, power and prestige. Teachers in Lortie's study were also sensitive to the theme of compatibility, which referred both to the length of teaching hours and the duration of teachers' vacation.

He argues that these are the values which one would expect to find among new entrants to teaching. Summing up the attractions of teaching, Lortie (ibid) states that:

Teaching is special in at least two respects: few occupations can offer similar opportunities for protracted contact with normal children, and few can provide such compatible work schedule. The definition of teaching as service (the aura of its mission) sets it apart from many others ways to earn a living. Although muted, material benefits theme play their part in drawing persons into the occupation.