PROBLEMS FACED BY PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS DURING TEACHING PRACTICE: A SURVEY ON PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE AND B.ED TESL UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIMAS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstrak</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Background of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research Objectives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Definitions of Terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 Practicum</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2 In-service Teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.3 Pre-service Teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Limitations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Practicum</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 UNIMAS Teaching Practice Programme</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Problems during Practicum</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 The Problem with Self</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 The Problem with Students</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 The Problem with Teaching</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4 The Problem with School</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.5 The Problem with Supervision</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.6 The Problem with Learning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.7 The Problem with Preparation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Coping Strategies</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Summary</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research Design</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 Study Design</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.1 Questionnaire</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.2 Semi-Structured Interview</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1.3 The Pilot Test</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Population
3.3 Data Collection Procedures
3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

4. CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction
4.1 Problems Faced During Practicum
  4.1.1 The Problem with Self
  4.1.2 The Problem with School
  4.1.3 The Problem with Students
  4.1.4 The Problem with Teaching
  4.1.5 The Problem with Preparation
  4.1.6 The Problem with Supervision
  4.1.7 The Problem with Learning
4.2 Results from the Interview
  4.2.1 The Problem with Self
  4.2.2 The Problem with School
  4.2.3 The Problem with Students
  4.2.4 The Problem with Teaching
  4.2.5 The Problem with Preparation
  4.2.6 The Problem with Supervision
  4.2.7 The Problem with Learning

5. CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction
5.1 Summary
5.2 Conclusion
5.3 Implications of the Study
5.4 Recommendations
References
Appendices
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1
Categories of Problems and Statements 20

Table 3.2
Number of Pre-Service and In-Service teachers According to Programmes 22

Table 4.1
Responses of Respondents to Questionnaire on Problems Faced 26

Table 4.2
Analysis of Problems Faced According to Programmes 27

Table 4.3
An Overview of Respondents Problems 31
ABSTRACT

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS DURING TEACHING PRACTICE: A SURVEY ON PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE AND B.ED TESL IN UNIMAS

Nelson Martin Noel

This study sought to investigate the problems faced by the PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE and B.ED TESL undergraduates during the UNIMAS Teaching Practice Programme for the 2005/2006 session. The study also aimed at investigating if all the three programmes faced all the seven categories of problems such as self, students, teaching, school, supervision, learning, preparation and learning. The findings of the coping strategies are also part of the study. The study was carried out in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The instruments used to collect data are questionnaire and interview. A pilot test was first carried out for both instruments to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. A total of 193 questionnaires were distributed to the samples and only 150 questionnaires were returned and were used in the study. Out of the 150 respondents, 30 of them were selected as the sample for the interview. Frequencies and percentages were the descriptive statistics used in the study.

The findings confirmed that all the three programmes of PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE and B.ED TESL undergraduates faced the seven categories of problems such as self, school, students, teaching, preparation, supervision and learning. The coping strategies were also being contributed by all the respondents.
ABSTRAK

MASALAH-MASALAH YANG DIHADAPI OLEH GURU PRA-PERKHIDMATAN DAN GURU DALAM PERKHIDMATAN SEMASA LATIHAN MENGAJAR: SATU SURVEI KE ATAS PRA SISWAZAH PROGRAM PKPG ESL, PKPG SAINS DAN B.ED TESL DI UNIMAS

Nelson Martin Noel


Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa ke semua pra siswazah daripada ketiga-tiga program PKPG ESL, PKPG SAINS dan B.ED TESL ada menghadapi masalah semasa praktikum. Kajian ini juga dapat membuktikan bahawa semua pra siswazah tersebut telah menghadapi semua tujuh masalah yang telah dikategorikan seperti masalah kendiri, sekolah, pelajar, mengajar, persediaan, pemantauan dan pembelajaran. Responden juga dengan jayanya dapat memberi beberapa kaedah-kaedah penyelesaian masalah yang telah mereka guna semasa berhadapan dengan masalah tersebut pada sesi praktikum tersebut.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

The practicum is an important yardstick in teaching profession courses. The practicum or teaching practice component is central to all teacher educational programmes (Murphy, 2003). It marks the time that pre-service and in-service teachers get to be supervised in their teaching practice components in schools (Clark and Cutler, 1990). They would face the real classroom situation and apply the teaching theories, techniques and methods that they have learnt throughout their courses (ibid). The current trend of the practicum carried out by most Malaysian higher education institutions is to have collaboration with the schools which play a part in teacher training because pre-service and in-service teachers will have the chance to undergo their practicum in schools.

In Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), the Teacher Educational Programme which is handled by the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Resource Development requires that the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process is the main aim to be achieved by every teacher (Teaching Practice Manual 2006). However, in-depth knowledge of the subject to be taught is not sufficient to achieve this aim. The practicum gives the opportunity to pre-service and in-service teachers to apply the knowledge learnt into the real learning in schools. It is during this period that the pre-service and in-service teachers consisting of the PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE and B.ED TESL undergraduates of UNIMAS will have the chance to evaluate and make reflection about their strengths and weaknesses in lesson planning, preparation of teaching aids, lessons delivery, classroom management and other aspects that lead to effective teaching and learning.
In schools, pre-service and in-service teachers work closely with students and teachers. However, the demands and expectations of the practicum may prove to be too challenging for some, resulting in a sense of despair and the feeling of discouragement among them.

Several studies have been conducted on teaching practice. In these studies a wide variety of aspects has received attention such as problems, stress, burnout, frustrations, adjustment, adaptation, needs, strengths, job satisfaction, attitudes, environmental factors and support provided (Murphy, 2003). The studies have also attempted to relate problems to different personal and situational variables, such as age, gender, personality traits, teaching behaviour and experience (ibid). In general, the findings are diverse and only concentrated on the problems faced. What are lacking in particular are comprehensive studies which seek to relate characteristics of the problems faced during practicum and their coping strategies. Therefore, this study is to seek if problems are faced by the pre-service and in-service teachers of UNIMAS and their coping strategies.

1.1 Statement of the problem

It is interesting to note that a large percentage of pre-service and in-service teachers who undergo the teachers' educational programme are facing problems during their practicum (Mohd. Noh Bidin, 1989). He says that this may be due to the fact that they are not quite ready or lack of experiences or exposure during their practicum. The pre-service teachers for instance, are not fully prepared to face classroom situation and most of the course content, in their opinion are not relevant to the challenges they are going to face in their teaching practice. As for the in-service teachers, who had left teachers' training colleges and teaching profession for many years, the teaching skills which they had once acquired perhaps had decreased. It is always true to say that
“Most training teachers are enthusiastic in asserting that teaching practice is one of the most valuable and one of the worst conducted parts of their training” (Wong, 1975).

From a preliminary survey which was done with some of the UNIMAS PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE and B.ED TESL undergraduates who had undergone practicum, it was found out that they did face problems. This study is to see if those problems faced by UNIMAS undergraduates during practicum are similar to the problems raised in other studies as in Subramanian (1997), such as the problems of:

1. Self
2. Students
3. Teaching
4. School
5. Supervision
6. Learning
7. Preparation

Having to spend ten weeks in practicum, for the B.ED TESL pre-service teachers and eight weeks for the PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE in-service teachers of UNIMAS, indeed they may have encountered various events or other difficulties during this period. That will be stated also in the study as well as the coping strategies that help them to endure the obstacles. Apart from that, it is the way they come up with solutions to face these obstacles is also part of this study.
1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to investigate pre-service (B.ED TESL) and in-service (PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE) teachers’ problems faced during practicum and to identify the way in which these pre-service and in-service teachers cope with these problems. The two research objectives mentioned will be able to help to answer the questions below:

1. Do the UNIMAS PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE and B.ED TESL undergraduates face the problems in the following categories of self, students, teaching, school, supervision, learning and preparation during practicum?

2. What are the strategies used to cope with these problems?

1.3 Definition of Terms

1.3.1 Practicum

Practicum or teaching practice is one of the aspects in the Educational Programme being carried out by the Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Resource Development, in University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). This Teacher Educational Programme defines practical teaching or teaching training as a practical experience that is systematic and school based with the aim to assist the teacher in training to become committed and professional teachers (Teaching Practice Manual, 2006).

1.3.2 In-service teachers

Refer to non-graduate teachers of PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE who had undergone teacher training courses in teachers’ training colleges and had obtained teaching certificate or diploma in teaching (Holden, 1979). Most of them have been teaching for more than five years.
and now pursuing a three-year degree programme of Education in University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

1.3.3 Pre-service teachers

Refer to students of B.ED TESL who are pursuing a four-year degree programme in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) (Holden, 1979). They are prospective teachers currently undergoing teachers’ training in University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

1.4 Significance of the study

The findings of this study would serve as a practical guide for future pre-service and in-service teachers in carrying out their teaching practice or practicum. The significance of the findings will help to give the future pre-service and in-service teachers with the resources of the problems to expect during practicum. These resources are given in terms of the types of problems identified by the pre-service and in-service teachers in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) as well as those found by other researchers such as self, students, teaching, school, supervision, learning and preparation. Furthermore, the strategies they used to cope with such problems will be of benefit to them should they arise during their practicum. The findings will also provide useful insights on the coping strategies and assist pre-service and in-service teachers in preparing for the practicum.
1.5 Limitations

This study involves the respondents from the PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE who are the in-service teachers and B.ED TESL, the pre-service teachers in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Therefore, this study can only be the sign posts for students of UNIMAS. Furthermore, the findings from this study will not be representative of the whole population of pre-service or in-service teachers in other areas. The list of problems identified for the students of UNIMAS might be different with those from other higher institutions from other areas as the practicum is carried out in different schools and at different dates.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Understanding the impact of teacher training on teacher trainees as they enter their first time in school is a problem that has drawn the attention of a number of educational researchers. At the same time, they raise the issue of how well the college that prepares teachers and schools that employ them cultivate and support their capacity to learn from their teaching and to grow in their work. Clark and Cutler (1990) state that teaching practice is the central point of the teacher education. According to them, teaching practice is the time teacher trainees have the opportunity to apply all the theories that they have learnt into real classroom situation.

This chapter discusses the importance of the practicum and practicum done in UNIMAS. This is followed by the problems found in other studies done which might happen in the practicum of the pre-service and in-service teachers in UNIMAS.

2.1 Practicum

Practicum is one of the most important elements in teacher education programme. Teaching practice programme is an important component in the teacher-training curriculum with the aims and principles are according to the National Education Philosophy and Teachers Education Philosophy (The Teacher Education Department, 2005). Clark and Cutler (1990) also mention that teaching practice provides practical teaching experience to teacher trainees which will enable them to understand better of their teaching experience as teachers and make meanings to their teaching. Clark and Cutler (ibid), too divide teaching practice into two parts namely:
The first part is early field experiences which can enable the teacher trainees to have a look into the world of teaching and also to mentally prepare them to face the demands in that world. The second part is student teaching where the teacher trainees deal with real learners in real classroom situations. Here, the teacher trainees can test the theories learned in real teaching. These two parts are important to ensure the effectiveness of the teaching practice as the teacher trainees might encounter difficulties in applying the theories they have learned into their practicum. These will therefore lead to the problems that they will face during their practicum.

Furthermore, Cohen and Manion (1989) also regard teaching practice as the most important element in teacher education because it prepares teacher trainees to meet the demands in the world of teaching. It also gives the teacher trainees a chance to understand their learners and enables the efficient application of teaching methods into real classroom. Problems will arise if the pre-service and in-service teachers are not able to understand their learners and apply the teaching methods during their practicum.

Besides that, another important aspect of teaching practice is the exposure to the real teaching environment. According to Collier (1999), the exposure enables the teacher trainees to learn to access their personal beliefs about teaching and subsequently to construct a reality about teaching. Thus, teaching practice provides the teacher trainees with valuable teaching experience. In addition, according to Cohen and Manion (1989), the exposure to real teaching environment enables the teacher trainees to perceive school as an organisation and therefore, encourages the teacher trainees to work towards the same goals as the other members of the school. Actually, this exposure to the real world will definitely leads to the existence of different problems among the pre-service and in-service teachers. All these while, they have been in the university learning all the theories. Now, facing the real world outside is a contradict situation. Apart from working with the learners, effective learning also needs to achieve the transfer of knowledge from the
The artificiality of a training course, to practical application where the teacher trainees adapt the acquired knowledge to the perceived needs of a particular problem or situation (Robotham, 2003). This again is another difficulty to be faced especially in the knowledge transfer situation.

In general, practicum consists of practical teaching and experience inside and outside the classroom. The Teacher Education Section (1989) defines practical teaching or teaching training as a practical experience that is systematic and school based with the aim to assist the teacher in training to become committed and professional teachers.

It can be shown in the diagram below:

```
+-------------------+-------------------+
|                   | TEACHING PRACTICE |
|                   | PROGRAMME         |
|                   |                   |
| Pre-practicum     |                   |
| Micro Teaching    | Teaching &       |
|                  | experience       |
|                  | inside the       |
|                  | classroom        |
|                  |                   |
|                   | Practicum         |
|                  | Teaching &       |
|                  | experience       |
|                  | outside the      |
|                  | classroom        |
```


With reference to the diagram, we are actually looking at practicum. As mentioned earlier by some researchers, practicum consists of teaching and experience inside the classroom as well as teaching and experience outside the classroom. Therefore it is said to be a systematic approach as teacher trainees will precede to the other higher level of the teaching practice programme. On this level, teacher trainees are committed as they are presumed to have learned all the necessary
theories while in the pre-practicum level. From then onwards, they will slowly build up their professional skills as teachers teaching in the real world. This is explained further below:

(a) Pre-Practicum covers the teaching of micro/macro that forms the preparation for the potential teacher trainee before carrying out the Teaching Practice Programme.

(b) Practicum covers the teaching and experience of the teacher trainee in and out of the classroom.

The Teaching Practice Programme (Practicum) as stated by Teachers Education Department gives the opportunity to teacher trainees to practice the theories in the teaching and learning process as well as to create their own teaching and learning theory should they have the chance to find out in the actual classroom situation. This is what refers to as the situational knowledge in the diagram. With this experience, the teacher trainees produce their situational knowledge, that is the foundation for the development of their professional teaching knowledge and skills, (professional skills) as they are slowly building up the professionalism of a teacher as illustrated below:

![Diagram](attachment://diagram.png)

2.2 UNIMAS Teaching Practice Programme

According to the Teaching Practice Manual (2006), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) realises the importance of teaching practice for students in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) programme in their education of becoming teachers. In alignment with the aims of University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) which are;

1. To produce teachers who are able to give quality and world class teaching and learning in science and technology as well as to be able to help in the development of the country, community and individual as a whole.

2. To produce professional teachers with strong interest in knowledge and life long learning, who are also committed in guiding the new generation.

3. To shape teachers into leaders and agent of change, able to work in various situation and willing to face challenges in the field of Education at present and the near future.


Therefore, the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FSKPM) is committed to producing professional and competent graduate teachers. In the first semester of the fourth and final academic year for B.ED TESL undergraduates, and in the first semester of the third and final academic year for PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE undergraduates, will have the opportunity to undergo teaching experience during their ten weeks teaching practice for the pre-service teachers (B.ED TESL) and eight weeks for the in-service teachers (PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE) in selected secondary schools in Sarawak.

The Teaching Practice Manual (2006) states that during the pre-service and in-service teachers of UNIMAS practicum, teacher trainees would teach two classes in their assigned
schools and expected to be in the schools most of the time. Furthermore, teacher trainees would have between ten to twelve lesson periods per week and each lesson takes up forty minutes. Teacher trainees would have to plan for both weekly and daily lessons. They would have to look for references as well as sources of information that is helpful in their teaching and learning. Besides, they have to familiarise themselves with the extra-curricular activities of their schools.

Apart from that, according to the Teaching Practice Manual (2006), teacher trainees are also being expected to work closely with the university supervisors and supervising teachers from school. Both the university supervisors and supervising teachers would assess the performance of the teacher trainees in order to monitor their progress during practicum. Teacher trainees are being assessed on aspects such as their preparation on the lesson plans, their personal presentation, content of the lessons, the use of relevant teaching aids and classroom management (ibid). With all the duties and responsibilities mentioned above, it would be appropriate to say that actually those might be the cause of the problems which will be faced by the pre-service and in-service teachers during the practicum.

2.3 Problems during Practicum

A study done by Subramanian (1997) is based upon the journal writings of ten participants of the Batu Lintang Teachers College. His findings indicated that in teaching learning, teacher trainees faced some problem. These problems are put into seven categories of self, students, teaching, school, supervision learning and preparation.

Another study done by Hall et al, (2004) which is based upon ongoing research with a group of teacher trainees at the beginning of their teaching profession. The research has been conducted in London and Manchester, and has focused upon the experiences of teacher trainees
learning to teach. It has sought to examine that trainees faced with the problems mentioned such as self, students, teaching, school, learning and preparation. Surbeck, Han and Moyer (1991) studied the reflective responses and levels of reflectivity of ten university student teachers. In their study, Surbeck and colleagues attempted to find strategies to assess the journals entries. They have analyzed eight problems which are categorized as related to feelings (self), teaching strategies, future preparation plans, educational theories, social problems with school, mentoring concerns, students’ moral issues and health.

Therefore the problems that will be looked further on in this study are the problems which were brought up by Subramanian (1997), Hall et al (2004) and Surbeck et al (1991) under a few categories such as self, students, teaching, school, supervision, learning and preparation.

2.3.1 The Problem with Self

According to Subramanian (1997), teacher trainees’ main concerns in their practicum were mostly about their own self such as self confidence, commitment, health and personality. They are facing problem in believing in their own ability to change the students’ discipline and attitudes towards learning. This was an important indicator of lack of self confidence which is a limitation they would have to face. The trainee’s lack of self confidence was also influenced by his or her theoretical knowledge about the subject or subjects that he or she was teaching. As for the commitment, it was shown by the worries and concerns such as in the poor results in their students tests or examinations results which is the students’ development and specifically their skills and knowledge. Health also hindered the effort to teach in which lessons could be carried out when they are sick and thus jeopardized their self commitment as a teacher (Surbeck et all, 1991).
2.3.2 The Problem with Students

Subramanian (1997) points out another problem faced by teacher trainees during practicum. He said that the encounters with students of diverse abilities are causing a problem to the teacher trainees. Teacher trainees had to teach students from different classes in various subjects. They might also face problems with students with all the abilities (fast learners) and the others (slow learners) neither had the abilities to complete their learning tasks, nor interested in doing them. He also mentioned about the students' discipline, prior knowledge and skills of the students were also problems faced by the trainees.

2.3.3 The Problem with Teaching

Concerning about the problem faced in teaching, Subramanian (ibid), again mentions that teacher trainees usually concerned about whether the lessons went on smoothly or interrupted as these would affect the learning and teaching objectives of the lesson. According to Anderson (1989), teachers should know their teaching goals, possess the proficiency in either selecting or developing curriculum that enables them to achieve their goals and also are proficient in selecting appropriate teaching approaches to deliver the curriculum to the students. The lack of this knowledge is therefore the cause of the problem in teaching which are whether they can carry out their lesson and to achieve the objectives stated before the lesson.

2.3.4 The Problem with School

The problem with the school is another category which has been look into (Hall et al., 2004). As Sharifah Alwiah Alsagoff (1995) suggests that familiarity with the school systems such as its goals, hierarchical system of authority, rules and regulations would increase the teacher trainees'
ability to perceive school as an organization. It was made up of the problem in involvement and cooperation between trainees’ participation in school programmes and activities. The trainees’ experiences problems in working with other teachers in schools. These create uneasiness in the minds of the trainees as to whether they are really welcome in the schools (Subramanian, 1997). Therefore, the problems are the abilities to mingle with others and making oneself available to school’s needs.

2.3.5 The Problem with Supervision

Supervision is defined by Hoy and Forsyth (1986) as a set of co-operative activities between teacher trainees and supervisors to improve teaching and learning process. It is neither to evaluate the competence of teacher trainee nor to control them. Subramanian (1997) mentioned that feedback and discussion were identified as problems of the teacher trainees. They wanted to know more than about their achievement. They were also disappointed because supervisors did not allocate time for them to discuss about their weaknesses. So, the problems faced with supervisors are that trainees are not being treated fairly especially in giving marks and in times of observation which might be too rigid (Surbeck et al., 1991).

2.3.6 The Problem with Learning

Before planning a lesson, it is crucial to have a good grasp of how to think and talk about learning (Hall et al., 2004). Some teacher trainees’ think they are in the school to practice teaching. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Teachers are in the school to practice designing and encouraging learning. Learning is not just about absorbing knowledge (Murphy, 2003). Therefore, the problems are that trainees still could not see students’ styles of learning which
might lead to inappropriate teaching. Their own learning might face problems in the school as some senior teachers are reluctant to share their experiences.

2.3.7 The Problem with Preparation

Subramanian (1997) also states that another area to be looked into is the preparation stage. Teacher trainees faced problems especially on their ‘first-day’ experiences. They described the anxiety of their feelings on the first day. In the process of getting ready to teach, trainees need to focus on collecting the time-tables and finding text as well as reference books which add up to their existing problems.

Since the study looks into the problems which are categorized according to the ones mentioned, the researcher’s study is also going to base on the same categories but done on pre-service (B.ED TESL) and in-service (PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE) teachers of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

2.4 Coping strategies

Coping strategies, in this study refer to the pre-service and in-service teachers’ efforts in dealing with the problems they encounter or the necessary steps taken during practicum. Different teachers have different ways to cope with the problems they encountered in the practicum. Whatever coping strategies they employed may not be able to solve all the problems faced but they may be able to minimize the problems encountered. Hovels (2003) indicates that four strategies of coping with problems, which are reflection, discussion with peers, discussion with supervisor teachers and group discussion.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology applied in this study to collect data with the purposes of investigating the problems faced by pre-service (B.ED TESL) and in-service (PKPG ESL and PKPG SCIENCE) teachers of UNIMAS during practicum. Then, it presents the instruments used in the study. Finally, it discusses the data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Study Design

This is a survey research that aimed at investigating the problems faced by the participants of UNIMAS undergraduates, namely the pre-service teachers and in-service teachers during the teaching practice for the session 2005/2006. Another objective of the study is to gather information about the ways of coping with the problems from the pre-service and in-service teachers.

3.1.1.1 Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire which contains close-ended and open-ended questions is used to collect the data from all the pre-service and in-service teachers (PKPG ESL, PKPG SCIENCE and B.ED TESL) in UNIMAS. A survey questionnaire is used because it can cover a big population within a short time. It can also address the research questions which are focused on finding problems faced. The survey data will be used to test the research questions raised by the