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**TEACHING PRACTICUM:
PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT TEACHERS
TOWARD ROLES OF COLLEGE SUPERVISOR IN
KOLEJ ISLAM JOHOR BAHRU, JOHOR**

BY

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**A PROJECT PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
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**INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to help trainee and supervisor realise the importance of supervision process. It investigates their experiences and perceptions on the effectiveness of supervision. It attempts to improve supervision activities. The secondary purpose of this study is to determine the need of supervisory activities of student teachers during their practical teaching. It is also to show the relationship between supervision activities and trainees' professional growth.

This study employed a survey instrument adapted from studies done by Yeoh Siok Tee (1997) and Umi Kalthom Abdullah (1999). One hundred and twenty sets of questionnaire were distributed to student teachers in Kolej Islam Johor Bahru, immediately following their teaching practicum. The respondents returned 105 completed questionnaires. The data collected was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r). One out of five hypotheses was supported.

Findings suggest that the supervisory activities are of particular importance to the professional development of student teachers. Additionally, the issues of pre- and post-lesson conference emerged as prominent but less favourable features of the supervisory experience. It is recommended that the relationship between supervisor and student be considered when assessing the quality and effect of practicum supervision, and that feedback be viewed as a key issue for future research concerning practicum.

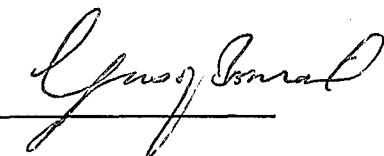
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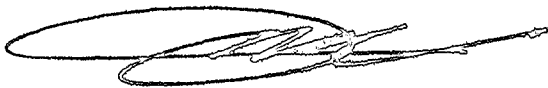
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by reference notes and a bibliography is appended.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

While the responsibility of being a teacher can be overpowering in itself, the task of learning to be a teacher can be just as overwhelming. Beginning to grasp what it means to be a teacher and to teach effectively is just part of the process. Growth and lifelong development of new teachers as persons and professionals are another crucial element.

The practicum or internship is a crucial time in teacher education where new or novice teachers are grounding their teaching and grappling with the many issues related to teaching. Practicum has wider meaning since it includes “actual teaching activities either on campus (in microteaching) or off campus (in teaching practicum) in the primary or secondary school” (Umi, 1999).

Supervising student teachers during the practicum is the most challenging activity for supervisors. This is because the supervisors will have to put all their energy and effort in improving student teachers’ teaching method, encouraging development and assessing student performance with regard to qualitative and quantitative expectation of the practicum program. Supervisors then will be expected to give corrective measures in any areas that might be deficient so that the student will fulfil or exceed all competencies.

Firestone (1980) notes that supervisory practices in school systems should foster meaningful involvement of teachers. In doing so, supervisors must allow

teachers to help decide what supervisory assistance will be most useful to them. Despite recommendations about what constitutes the most effective approach to supervision, supervisory practice often excludes teachers from playing meaningful roles in their own supervision.

According to Haggarty (1995), in order to improve and eliminate much of the fear and negative feeling that teachers harbour toward supervision practices, he proposed that teacher assessment should be an integral part of a system of professional development that include the total career of a teacher from pre-service into continuing practice. He is concerned that typical supervision practices had not been successful in increasing professional growth. Haggarty (1995) challenged educators to develop supervision practices that would assist teachers in their professional growth. The works of Miles, Everton and Bonnett (1994) also advocated supervision that focuses on the professional development of teachers.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Wong and Gwee (1972) the Malaysian national education system is a legacy of British colonial education begun in the early 19th century. However, the introduction of the teacher education system was due to the recommendations made by the Wolley Committee in 1870. The system prepares teachers for schools. At that time schools were undergoing rapid growth thus needed for a large number of teachers. The British explicitly aimed to provide liberal, secular education to the native Malays with religious education confined to voluntary classes. For that reason, training was restricted to teachers for primary schools. Different

program then existed for training of teachers of government schools, for government-assisted schools and even vernacular schools.

With the implementation of the new economic policy in the 1970s, a special committee then was set up by the Ministry of Education to study the aims of teacher education. This leads to the restructuring in the teacher education curriculum. As a result, better quality teachers are expected to be produced as the outcome of the new program.

The objective of the Practicum is to ensure that student teachers acquire the skills, knowledge, attitudes and the values that are required of every professional teacher. Practicum is a vital component of the Teacher Education Program. It is regarded as a series of practical and systematic experiences to help its teachers to become professionals in their teaching career (Malaysia Education Ministry, 1990).

Student teachers carry out their practicum in Semester Five. The student teaching field experience is an essential component of learning to teach and supervision plays an important role (Zahorik, 1988). During this program student teachers are required to teach, write journal and participate in the co-curricular activities in the school. They will be guided and supervised by supervisors and co-operative teachers in the school, all of whom form a supervisory triad.

Presently, the practicum committee of each teacher's training college makes a review of each practicum program to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and to focus on areas for attention and improvement. However, information

gained from the review is only seen from the perspective of the committee. Views of student teachers on their practicum program and supervisory activities are also important aspects that should be considered. Thus, investigation into their perceptions could provide useful information to the practicum committee and the policy makers.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Educators consider practicum to be an important, highly valued experience. It is “critical to the development of pre-service teachers’ pedagogical skills” (Richardson, 1988). Despite the importance, research suggests that beginning teachers have problems because they are under-prepared despite various programs during the practicum and school orientation. The training in general is only sufficiently directed towards specific type of jobs and contexts. The student teachers also receive inadequate help and support whenever they face problems.

Teaching supervision and practicum are an essential part in the teaching profession. There are many studies related to supervision process, especially on the desired outcome of the practicum program. However, to date there have been very few studies to find out the actual activities that take place in the macro teaching process during the practicum.

Shahling (1981) and Neettle (1988) in Umi (1999) agree researchers should also focus on the supervising activities. According to Shahling (1981), supervision is one of the important elements in any educational institution being it for the purpose of

staff development or professional growth. He too agrees that there are only few studies done in this area.

1.3 Problem Statements

Supervising is mandatory for all teachers' training institutions during practicum. It is supposed to prepare student teachers for the tasks facing them in the first year of teaching. Problem of beginning teachers is not a new phenomenon. Numerous problems exist ranging from classroom management, curriculum and evaluation issues and stress to mention but a few.

Harris (1985) and Mosher and Purple (1972) have emphasised the need for research on supervision, particularly on what happens during supervision. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to carry out this study in order to determine the extent to which the supervisory roles are perceived as important by student teachers. Which types of supervisory roles contribute to student teachers' teaching effectiveness and confidence development?

1.4 Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to describe the perceptions of student teachers on the importance of supervisory roles and its contributions to prepare the student teachers to meet the challenge of teaching profession. Specifically, the purposes are:

- a. to determine student teachers' perceptions on the importance of supervisory roles;

- b. to identify whether student teachers' perceptions on the importance of the supervisory roles correlate with their satisfaction level;
- c. to determine whether the supervision process promotes self confidence of student teachers in facing the challenge of teaching.

1.5 Hypothesis Statements

Table 1 summarises the null hypotheses and the previous research studies done on the subject. There is no study done relating to the perceptions of student teachers on the importance of supervisory roles and its contributions to the satisfaction level of those roles.

Table 1.1

Summary of Hypotheses and Related Studies

Research Ques.	Specific Ques.	Hypo. No.	Variables	Hypothesis Statement	Previous Studies
(a) & (b)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 21, 22, 23, 24	H1a	Role Model	Student teachers perceptions on the importance of the role model are negatively related with the satisfaction level of that role	No previous study done
(a) & (b)	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20	H1b	Counsellor	Student teachers perceptions on the importance of the role of counsellor are negatively related with the satisfaction level of that role	No previous study done
(a) & (b)	12, 13, 14, 15	H1c	Advisor	Student teachers perceptions on the importance of the role of advisor are negatively related with the satisfaction level of that role	No previous study done
(a) & (b)	11, 16, 17, 18, 19	H1d	Coach	Student teachers perceptions on the importance of the role of coach are negatively related with the satisfaction level of that role	No previous study done
(c)	25 – 32	H2	Teaching effectiveness	The importance of at least one of the supervisory roles is negatively related to student teachers' teaching effectiveness	Umi (1999)

Table 1.1 continued...

(d)	33 – 37	H3	Confidence development	The importance of at least one of the supervisory roles is negatively related to student teachers' confidence development	Umi (1999)
(d)	38 – 41	H4	Teaching effectiveness	There is no relationship between the frequency of pre- and post-lesson conference in term of frequency and time spent with teaching effectiveness	No previous study done
(d)	38-41	H5	Confidence development	There is no relationship between the frequency of pre- and post-lesson conference and time spent with confidence development	No previous study done

1.6 Significance of the Study

In Malaysia, the importance of supervision has grown over the years due to pressing needs in the education system: increasing size of schools and teaching staff, and a huge number of beginning and inexperienced teachers. Despite many studies being made in other aspects of education (for example administration and curricular), only a few have attempted to learn and understand the actual supervisory practices during practicum.

Hence, there exists a critical need to have an insight into the perception of student teachers in Malaysia about a wide range of aspects of supervision. It is hoped that this study will fill the gap. It is not sufficient to depend on the results of research conducted in foreign countries due to limited applicability.

The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will:

- a. provide some insight for the college administrators and school managers on problems encountered by supervisors in performing their roles;
- b. provide policy makers some guidelines on how to improve the supervising activities during practicum so that a more organised, comprehensive and effective programme could be implemented; and
- c. report on the extent to which the perception of student teachers and supervisors conform with the function of supervisory activities as set out in the literature.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The research was limited to, and reflected the responses of student teachers in one of the training colleges in Johor. The findings thus will not be reflective of other student teachers in the country. While the results may apply to all student teachers, they will have to be verified by replicating the study in all states throughout Malaysia. In order to generalise the results, a larger number of respondents should be included in the future research.

The use of questionnaires as the main instrument of data collection may give rise to the second limitation. There might be some disparity between student teachers' perceptions and their preferences of supervisory behaviour. Thus, although confidentiality was emphasised, it is uncertain to what extent the responses of student teachers provide correct and honest opinions about their supervisors.

Finally, the study focused only on the importance of the supervisory roles as perceived by the student teachers. There were no research questions formulated to study the supervisor's relationships with the student teachers.

1.8 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used.

- a. Cooperative teacher: A teacher who has demonstrated the mastery of teaching skills and subject matter, knowledge and has been selected by the principal to provide emotional and pedagogical support to an assigned student teacher.
- b. Perceived: Something when it is understood, viewed or interpreted in a certain way or a situation where someone is to be aware of something by using senses or to interpret something in a certain way (Blumberg, 2000).
- c. Perception: Awareness about what are recognisable sensations or impressions received by the mind through the senses that result in knowledge gained about something (Blumberg, 2000).

- d. Practicum Program: A program designed to facilitate the professional growth and personal well being of student teachers. Or the complete school experience program in a course.
- e. Role Expectation: The behaviour expected from a person in a particular position, situations in which interactions between individual repeat themselves in a regular pattern over a period of time (Blumberg, 2000).
- f. Teaching Practicum Supervisor: A lecturer who has demonstrated the mastery of teaching skills and subject matter, knowledge and has been selected by the college to provide emotional and pedagogical support to an assigned student teacher.
- g. Teacher Training College: Institution primarily involved in the training of teachers to meet both quantitative and qualitative aspirations of the Malaysian Education System.

1.9 Organisation of the Project Paper

This study is written and organised into five chapters. In the first chapter the importance of the study, problem statement, the limitations of the study, and the organisation of the study are presented. Definitions of several terms, research objectives, research questions and hypothesis statements are also presented.

Chapter two will look into supervisory relationship, and its roles toward effective teaching. Other findings and conceptual framework of the study will also be included in this chapter.

Chapter three discusses the methodology employed in the present study that includes the research design, research sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

The results of the survey will then be highlighted in chapter four. In this chapter, respondents' characteristics and lesson conference experiences are examined. This is followed by tests of hypotheses and ends with further interest on the results.

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study on which conclusions are drawn and interpretations made accordingly.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will review research and related literature on supervisory roles and their contribution in improving teaching credibility of student teachers.

2.1 A Historical Overview

Supervising process from the historical perspective exists since many centuries ago, but the emphasis was more on the content than the teaching technique. In the eighteen centuries, the characteristics had changed towards the importance of school controlling and quality teaching content, but the supervising process was more on autocratic method: giving order as what a teacher should do.

The literature shows that supervisory practices reflect a wide range of perspectives. The difference due to factors such as the change in population, changing in school community, and concern for better education. Theories of reinforcement, personalities, learning behaviour and communication have all contributed to the development of the present character of supervision which was explained by Lucio and McNeil (1969) as a synthesising process, assimilating predicted consequences suggested by various theories with judgements about the desirability of consequences in unique situation.

Thus, the overflowing models may lead to confusion, some supposedly new schools appear to be only different names for existing schools or merely a new