

## Teacher Trainee's Apprehension Towards Teaching Practice in Schools

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**Abstract:** Practical teaching plays a vital role in providing teachers with teaching experience and the skills needed in preparing them for their future career as teachers. In the process, most of teachers do encounter anxiety that might jeopardize their performance during this practice. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine the anxiety factors among these teacher trainees during their teaching practice in schools. The student-teacher anxiety scale (hart) was used as measuring instrument for factors including classroom management, teaching planning, teaching skills, language skills, self-efficacy and school/staff environment. The respondents of the study were 24th years Teaching as a Second Language (TESL) teacher trainees and data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 20 for descriptive statistics. Findings indicated that the teacher trainees suffered from high anxiety for teaching skills and classroom management factors, moderate anxiety for language skills and low anxiety for other factors.

**Key words:** Anxiety, teacher trainees, classroom management, planning, language, school environment, self-efficacy

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important aspects of a country's growth and success story. To ensure that a country is continuously progressing, the education system should be parallel or correspond well with the country's development. In Malaysia, over the last couple of years, special attention has been given to the educational institutions that offer teacher education since teaching has become rather difficult and challenging due to its prospects towards achieving and sustaining the standard being imposed on them. High expectations on behalf of the public in producing quality and effective teachers has increased over the years, particularly towards educating its future generations. Subsequently, in fulfilling this criteria in producing quality teachers, most of these educational institutions emphasize not only the theoretical part of teaching but also incorporating the practical aspects of it into their curriculum. It is thought that theories do not complete one's knowledge if they are not supported by practices that can assist in improving one's skills and ability. In line with this, the curriculum for future teachers at the Faculty of Education in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) not only concentrated on the pedagogical aspect of teaching but also provide exposure on the practical side of training. In other words, teacher trainees are taught in terms of essential philosophy, appropriate and adequate theories,

techniques, approaches, classroom technology used for teaching and learning process and class-based assessment. In addition, they are required to attend microteaching subject that is a prerequisite for the teaching practice. This subject is essential in giving a sneak preview to the teacher trainees of what is to be expected during their teaching practice. Teaching practice has been implemented by UTM in order to provide assurance that these teacher trainees will be exposed with the real roles of the teachers and for them to be able to transfer, express and convey everything that has been academically taught into actual classroom settings. It is important that the teacher trainees familiarized themselves with the process of professional development needed in their teaching profession as this process helps with their growth in competency and maturity, through which teacher trainees are able to add variety, depth and quality to their professional tasks (Costello, 1991). Generally, this process of growth that the teacher trainees are required to develop needs to be reinforced at an early stage of teacher training in order to produce quality teachers. According to Endeley (2014) in a teacher-training program, practical teaching is a key component that emphasizes helping the teacher trainees to gain practical and professional experience. Subsequently, this could be a platform for teacher trainees in upgrading their knowledge and skills required in teaching especially when they are normally observed by qualified expert in schools.

However, in accomplishing this task, one of the most common obstacles for teacher trainees to perform at their best would be the intrusion of anxiety. Over the last decades, it is proven that teaching has been widely acknowledged as a profession full of stress and anxiety (Aslrasouli and Vahid, 2014) which is alleged to transpire for many reasons. Usually, the feelings of anxiety among teacher trainees might occur due to lack of exposure towards real work settings, low communication skills in dealing with other teachers, parents or the students themselves, besides lack of teaching experience. As a result, these teacher trainees would nurture low self-confidence and trust in themselves. According to Harvey *et al.* (2000), teacher trainees believe that teaching practice is an essential part of their teacher education; however, they also regard it as a worrisome experience that causes them to suffer high level of stress and anxiety. In relation to this study, it is assumed that the practical teaching is a source of apprehension among teacher trainees as it involved multiple responsibilities that these teacher trainees need to fulfil and satisfy before they can proceed further into their study. Even though it cannot be denied that practical teaching brings several benefits for teacher trainees including a real life experience of teaching in schools, the negative reactions towards it should also be considered and prevented early so that their obligations of conveying knowledge to their students would not be affected and it should not be stopped by these feelings of stress, nervous or anxiety. Early detection of anxiety among the teacher trainees could provide useful information and guidance in preventing these aspects from occurring or getting out of hand. It is generally, accepted that practical teaching is significant in preparing the teacher trainees with their future duties as professional teachers. It is also established through the components of practical teaching that aim to help the teacher trainees not only in terms of their confidence but also in helping them to put their learned theory into practice. Wambugu *et al.* (2013) likewise agreed that through teaching practice, teacher trainees usually learn about student's possible behaviour, test their knowledge on the subject matter, learn to receive constructive criticism, identify their strength and weakness and develop pedagogical values that suit professional teachers. Above all, at the end of this teaching practice, the ultimate purpose is to allow the teacher trainees to rationalize whether or not they have made the right career choice in teaching. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to the feeling of apprehension among teacher trainees including classroom management, teaching planning, teaching skills, language skills, school/staff environment and self-efficacy.

Table 1: Distribution of 4th year TESL students

Genders	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	3	15.0
Female	17	85.0
Total	20	100.0

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Respondent, instrument and analysis:** This study aimed to take a closer look at the anxiety factors affecting the teacher trainees while undergoing their teaching practice in schools. The respondents of this study were 24th year TESL undergraduate students in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) that had undergone twelve weeks of practical teaching at different schools around Johor, Malaysia. To identify teacher trainee's anxiety towards teaching practice, Student-Teacher Anxiety Scale (STAS) (Hart, 1987) was used that consisted of 50 items related to anxiety aspect towards practical teaching with six-sub categories-class management, teaching planning, teaching skills, language skills, school environment and staff and self-efficacy. A 5-point Likert scale was used with a scale of 5-strongly disagree, 4-disagree, 3-neutral, 2-agree and 1-strongly agree for all items in STAS. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 20 to find the mean, frequency, standard deviation and to create the range for anxiety levels; high 1.00-2.33, moderate 2.34-3.66 and low 3.67-5.00. Table 1 shows the total number of 4th year TESL students who participated in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are six issues of anxiety in this study which are classroom management, teaching planning, teaching skills, language skills, school environment and staff and self-efficacy as shown in Table 2 and 3. Findings in this study demonstrated that classroom management and teaching skills are the two possible sources of anxiety as experienced by the teacher trainees while language skills, teaching planning, school environment and staffs and self-efficacy showed either moderate or low anxiety. Subsequently, in this study, the discussion will only concentrate on the highest possible causes of anxiety found among the teacher trainees based on findings in Table 3 which is teaching skills and classroom management.

**Teaching skills:** Findings showed that the highest source of anxiety in this study is related to teaching skills with  $m = 1.59$  (Table 3). Based on this result, it is presumed that the teacher trainees had encountered several problems in the classroom related to their teaching skills during the implementation of the teaching practice.

Table 2: Anxiety level according to anxiety issues

Factors	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Mean (%)
Classroom management	-	7, 35.0	13, 65.0	20, 100.0	2.25 high
Teaching planning	19, 95.0	1, 5.0	-	20, 100.0	4.08 low
Teaching skills	-	-	20, 100.0	20, 100.0	1.59 high
Language skills	-	20, 100.0	-	20, 100.0	3.11 moderate
School environment and staffs	20, 100.0	-	-	20, 100.0	4.58 low
Self-efficiency	20, 100.0	-	-	20, 100.0	4.75 low

Table 3: Anxiety level according to teaching skills

Statement: My concern when I did my practical teaching was...	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Giving satisfactory performance from the point of view of the class teacher	17, 85.0	3, 15.0	-	-	-	1.15
Meeting the expectations of my supervisor	14, 70.0	5, 25.0	1, 5.0	-	-	1.35
How my supervisor reacted to one or more unsuccessful lesson if they should occur	17, 85.0	3, 15.0	-	-	-	1.15
Maintaining a smooth and interesting approach	13, 65.0	7, 35.0	-	-	-	1.35
Being observed by my supervisor while I was teaching	-	2, 10.0	-	4, 20.0	14, 70	4.50
What lessons my supervisor came in to see	15, 75.0	5, 25.0	-	-	-	1.25
Guiding the students towards intellectual and emotional growth	14, 70.0	6, 30.0	-	-	-	1.30
Getting a favourable evaluation of my teaching	15, 75.0	5, 25.0	-	-	-	1.25
Doing well when a supervisor was observing me	14, 70.0	5, 25.0	1, 5.0	-	-	1.35
Handling less proficient students	13, 65.0	5, 25.0	2, 10.0	-	-	1.45
Diagnosing students learning problems	13, 65.0	7, 35.0	-	-	-	1.35
Total	1.59 High					

SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; N: Neutral; DA: Disagree; SD: Strongly disagree

Table 4: Anxiety level according to classroom management

Statement: My concern when I did my practical teaching was...	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	DA (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Giving each student the attention he/she needed without neglecting others	1, 5.0	14, 70.0	5, 25.0	-	-	2.20
Having full control of the class	2, 10.0	16, 80.0	2, 1.0	-	-	2.00
Handling the problematic students	2, 10.0	11, 55.0	7, 35.0	-	-	2.25
Handling incidents of misbehaviour in class	-	12, 60.0	8, 40.0	-	-	2.40
Controlling the noise level in class	1, 5.0	15, 75.0	4, 20.0	-	-	2.15
Handling the rebellious students	-	13, 65.0	7, 35.0	-	-	2.35
Meeting the needs of different kinds of students	-	12, 60.0	8, 40.0	-	-	2.40
Total	2.25 High					

SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; N: Neutral; DA: Disagree; SD: Strongly disagree

One is associated with the perception of others towards their performance in the classroom that centred on assessment. During the 12 weeks of teaching practice, teacher trainees are being observed and evaluated constantly by three people, their own students in the classroom, teacher advisor in schools that they are attached to and their designated supervisor from UTM. The results of this study verify that the continuous appraisal is making them tense and edgy as they try hard to attain satisfactory performance and meeting the expectations of others as proven in the findings. Consequently, this lead to them doubting their own skills due to the high expectations from everyone. Instead of being more self-assured, feelings of insecurity, of being afraid and of extra conscious to show their true teaching potential creep in due to the feeling of being constantly appraised. Based on the findings, one of the main concerns among these teacher trainees is how their supervisor reacted to their lessons with  $m = 1.15$  (Table 4). A possible explanation could be due to the substantial role allocated to them in the school resulting in apprehensiveness as the assigned school-teachers

and supervisor are also concurrently responsible for grading them and determining their passing mark at the end of their teaching practice. Hence, the teacher trainees are always careful and anxious believing that they have not developed respectable and needed teaching skills. This is in line with Hart (1987) who stated that there are a few causes of anxiety among teacher trainees during their practical teaching including evaluation, students and the assessment of practical teaching itself. This concurred with Merc (2011)'s notion that when the teacher trainees feel that their teaching ability does not reach certain standards and whenever they are faced with any kind of evaluation, they are likely to feel more nervous and anxious resulting in high anxiety. Subsequently, these teacher trainees nurture another problem in their own self which is the sense of self-assurance towards their own teaching ability. This is supported by Lampadan (2014) who asserted that the teacher trainees might lack self-confidence because they are frightened that their students would evaluate them negatively which automatically triggers the uneasy feelings. Based on the findings of this study, another contributing factor to high

anxiety is excessive worry of finding suitable teaching materials and activities to teach language skills to the students in school. They fear that their students might not be interested in their lessons regardless of the variation of teaching aids they incorporated in the classroom. This is linked with the sense of fear towards failed lesson or maintaining a smooth and interesting approach due to their lack of teaching abilities. In addition, they are troubled with how to deal effectively with the less proficient students ( $m = 1.45$ ) and how to identify the students learning problems ( $m = 1.35$ ). The teacher trainees believed that because of their inexperience, it is not possible for them to detect the problems early and thus they are not able to offer suitable help to the less proficient students, thereby creating more discomfort. This finding corresponds with Oliver *et al.* (2011) who added that the teacher trainees are still lacking in term of skills but they felt concerned and responsible to help these students. Therefore, the teacher trainees perceive this situation as highly threatening as they are uncertain of the solutions. Despite their dedication and effort to teach, their inexperience may deter the learning process due to student's lack of understanding of the subject matter and limited background knowledge that hinders learning from taking place.

**Classroom management:** It is found that anxiety towards classroom management is the second highest among the teacher trainees ( $m = 2.25$ , Table 2). High-level anxiety is detected towards all items in this category that relates to having full control of the class, controlling the noise level and handling the rebellious students. These findings demonstrate that it is undoubtedly difficult for teacher trainees in this study to control a group of students with unruly behaviour in a classroom when they lack experience in dealing with such situations. Naturally, it requires high confidence and good classroom management and the need to learn how to be extremely firm with these problematic students. Their lack of experience in handling a real classroom setting can be physically and mentally challenging and a cause for apprehension among teacher trainees, especially the inability to handle incidents of disruptive behaviour such as not doing tasks assigned or fighting in class. This finding is supported by Smith and Smith (2006), Brouwers and Tomic (2000) who stipulated that the disruptive behaviour and violence among student's in the classroom would cause the teachers to become stressed and eventually lead to ineffective teaching. The teacher trainees might have problems in dealing with these rebellious students because of their inexperience in handling such behaviours resulting in high anxiety among them as they felt that their lessons could not be

conducted as planned. These findings also exhibit that teacher trainees are aware that giving each student the attention he needed without neglecting others and meeting the needs of different kinds of students could pose an actual test for them. In line with the findings of this study, Lampadan (2014) stated that the teacher trainees are said to be frustrated because the theories that they had learnt in UTM are very different and not quite applicable in the context of real setting. Hence, finding the right theories to be applied in the classroom could prove difficult for teacher trainees as it involved not only knowledge but also experience in learning how to control student's unpredictable behaviour through superb classroom management, continuous monitoring and engaging learning activities. Harmandar and Samanci supported this view stating that there are several abilities of classroom management that teacher trainees need to learn through school experience as each student has their own needs and they are different from one another. In addition, Shinn *et al.* (1987) emphasized that less appealing lessons with poor classroom management would cause the students to have less productive time and it is very likely for them to perform poorly resulting in lower grades for these students. Overall, it can be concluded that experience could play an integral part in the high anxiety relating to classroom management issues among teacher trainees in this study.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to identify the anxiety factors affecting teacher trainees while they undergo their teaching practice in schools. The findings revealed that the most prominent factor of anxiety among the teacher trainees are the teaching skills which hold the highest anxiety level followed closely by classroom management. Therefore, it is crucial that teacher trainees individually identify their weakest point during this practical training in order to resolve these pressing problems and with further experience improve on them as it could undoubtedly hamper the process of attaining the needed abilities to become better teachers in the future.

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