

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA**

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This article will attempt to offer a brief description of the education of English language teachers in Malaysia. The description has been based on content analysis of documents and interviews with teacher trainers, both in teacher training colleges and the universities, as well as Ministry officials in the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education. Interviews were carried out with principals, senior language lecturers and six lecturers of two teacher colleges; with the Language Curriculum Officers in the Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education; and with 17 teacher educators in two local universities.

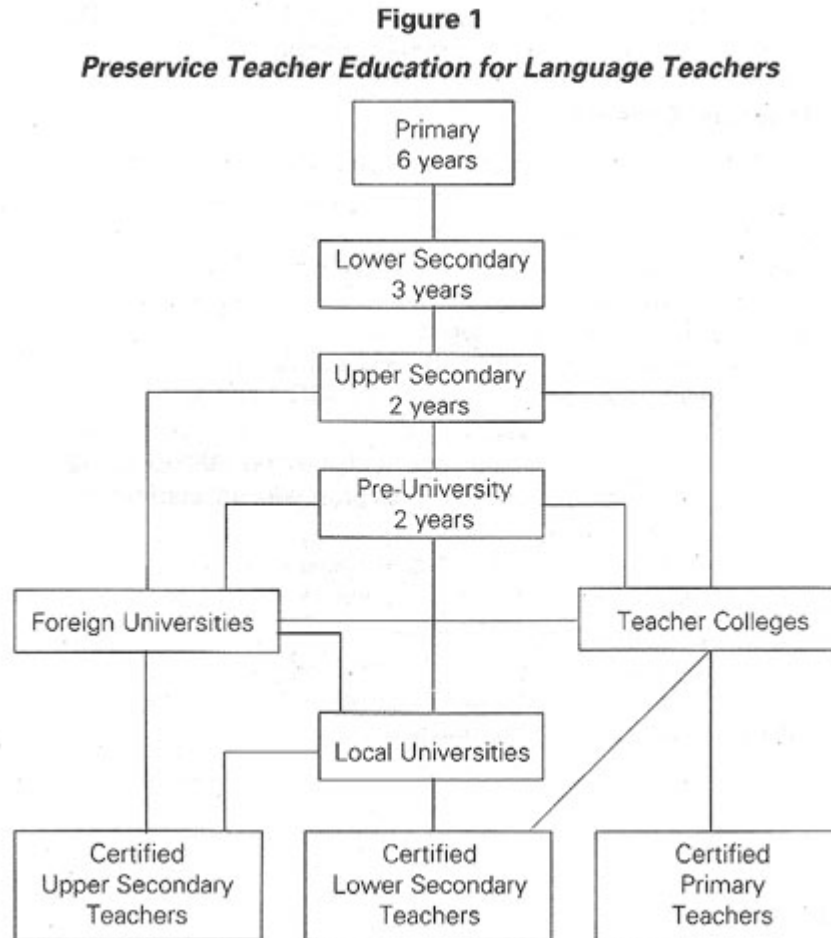
The purpose of this article is to review teacher education in Malaysia so that teachers and teacher-trainees will have some idea of teacher education outside their own experiences. It aims to answer the following broad questions:

- a. What teacher training facilities exist for the training of English language teachers?
- b. What constraints are there on the training of English language teachers in Teacher Training Colleges?
- c. What suggestions could be offered for the improvement of English language teacher education in Malaysia?

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Teacher Education Division or, to give it its rightful title, Bahagian Pendidikan Guru, more commonly known as BPG, is responsible for the major part of teacher education in Malaysia. It is entirely responsible for the training of non-graduate teachers. This would make up almost the entire primary school teaching force and a large portion of the lower secondary teaching personnel. A few years ago, the BPG took over some of the responsibilities for the certification of graduate teachers and the retraining of science graduates as TESL teachers. Local and foreign universities, however, remained responsible for the major portion of the language education teaching force in upper secondary classes and, more recently, some of the lower secondary teaching force as well. There are a handful of graduate teachers who are teaching in primary schools because there have been no vacancies in secondary schools in the urban area they requested to teach in. However, such cases are very rare. The exact number is not known, but is estimated to be fewer than ten. The Government appears reluctant to send graduate teachers to primary schools on the misconception that teaching in

primary schools is easier than teaching in secondary schools. Traditionally, graduates have taught in upper secondary classes and it has only been recently that graduate teachers have been permitted to have a heavier workload in lower secondary rather than in upper secondary. Figure 1 illustrates the pre-service teacher education cycle of student teachers entering teacher education programmes and going out into schools as trained personnel.



## ESL TEACHER EDUCATION FACILITIES

The first question which needs to be answered is *what teacher education facilities exist for the education of language teachers*. Since different facilities exist for pre-service and in-service teacher education, the two will be dealt with separately.

### Pre-service Teacher Education

Pre-service teacher education is carried out in teachers' colleges, local and, to a limited extent, foreign universities. Teachers graduating from teachers' colleges have a teacher certification but no degree. They are categorised in the teaching service as C1 (with STPM) or C2 (with SPM) teachers. Teachers graduating from the universities leave the faculties of education with either a degree or a

post-graduate diploma and are categorised as D1 (honours degree) or D2 (pass degree) teachers. Salaries differ accordingly.

### Teachers' Colleges

There are 28 teacher education colleges in Malaysia, mainly certifying teachers for primary schools. Four are in Sabah, three in Sarawak and twenty-one in Peninsular Malaysia. Out of these colleges, 26 colleges train TESL teachers for primary schools. Between seven to ten colleges (varying every year) train TESL teachers for secondary schools. These include colleges in Sabah and Sarawak.

Table 1 shows the 1983 and 1987 numbers of student teachers accepted into the various colleges for TESL, and also the projected number for 1988. Five years or so ago, projected numbers were not usually filled. It is expected that, with the job market so tight, the numbers this year will be filled. This promises full staffing in schools in the next few years.

One may see from Table 1 that there has been a considerable increase in the intake of student teachers into the teacher colleges over the last few years. The primary school student teacher population has increased more strikingly than the secondary school student teacher population. This is felt to be because of the increase of student teachers from the universities.

**Table 1**  
**Accepted Number of TESL Student Teachers**  
**into Teachers' Colleges: 1983 - 1988**

	Primary	Secondary	Total
1983	945	165	1110
1987	2760	360	3120
1988 (Pro- jection)	2460	240	2700

*Source: Ministry of Education, Malaysia*

When the interviews were conducted, personnel for language education in teacher training colleges comprised only teaching personnel, since employment of technical assistants to man language laboratories and resource rooms was still under consideration. At the time the interviews were conducted, it was projected that there would be 180 lecturers for TESL in 1984. In 1983, there had been 160 lecturers for TESL. There are currently 350 lecturers.

Up to 1987, the Language Institute trained Bahasa Malaysia, TESL, and Mandarin teachers. It had eighteen lecturers for TESL, thirteen for Bahasa Malaysia, and two for Mandarin. The Institute ran both preservice and in-service teacher education. As a result, the TESL lecturers were sometimes called on to teach proficiency language courses as well as methods courses and might have to teach in-service as well as preservice courses. In 1987, a decision was made to discontinue the training of TESL and Mandarin teachers at the Language Institute. There are now about ten TESL lecturers at the Language Institute. Inservice teacher education of TESL teachers was shifted to Maktab Perguruan Lembah Pantai, across the road from the Language Institute.

Maktab Perguruan Lembah Pantai has been involved in the pre-service training of Bahasa Malaysia, TESL, Mandarin, and Tamil teachers. In this college, in 1984, there were seven lecturers for TESL.

In 1988, the staff has been increased to more than twenty to cope with the additional load handed to them with the closure of the TESL programme at the Language Institute.

Teacher educators in all colleges of education in Malaysia need to have certain minimum qualifications. For a person to be appointed as a TESL lecturer, he or she needs to have a professional qualification. TESL lecturers need to have at least a Bachelor's degree. Lecturers also need a minimum of three years of teaching experience in schools.

These guidelines for the appointment of lecturers in teacher colleges were substantiated by the staff in the two colleges in the study. Interviews with the heads of department for TESL in both colleges in the study, indicated that all language lecturers in both colleges had degrees.

Unlike lecturers of the other languages in teachers' colleges, most TESL lecturers have had some sort of extra training beyond their initial academic and professional qualifications. For example, in the Language Institute, in 1984, most lecturers were experienced teachers who also had master's and doctoral degrees. All lecturers from other colleges who were interviewed had had some kind of specialist training in TESL after having taught a few years. Many TESL lecturers had also been sent on short courses to England on British Council scholarships.

Both colleges in the study indicated that lecturers had no problems with training teachers for TESL. They had a knowledge of linguistics and educational theory. Their knowledge of language teaching methodology was sufficiently up-to-date for the task they had in hand. Lecturers in the Language Institute enjoyed teaching the in-service courses, looking on them as a challenge. They agreed that teachers on inservice courses were more demanding but felt that this had positive benefits. Class preparation had to be well thought out. Preparations done for the inservice courses also benefitted students on the preservice courses.

Curriculum officers at BPG felt that positive attempts are now being made to upgrade the skills of teacher educators. Unlike Bahasa Malaysia lecturers, TESL lecturers are frequently sent abroad. Bahasa Malaysia lecturers are less likely to benefit from overseas training because Bahasa Malaysia is viewed by the Ministry as the first language of the school-going population. Therefore, only local training is given. The TESL scholarships act as incentives for the staff.

The curriculum officer at the BPG expressed satisfaction with the current teacher education programme. He felt, however, that they should continue to keep improving the programme. He was therefore constantly obtaining feedback and ideas from teacher educators on how the programme could be further improved. Interviews with language teacher educators of two colleges indicate positive feelings towards the organization of planning by the curriculum officer and the involvement of teacher educators in the planning processes. There is consistent monitoring and constant reviewing of the teacher education programme for TESL teachers.

The TESL program is formally reviewed every three years. The curriculum officer at BPG also regularly checks on the current state of language teacher preparation in the teacher colleges, through questionnaires and through interaction with the college lecturers. College lecturers are also involved in decisions pertaining to teacher education curriculum construction and change. Meetings, sometimes lasting a week, are held in resort areas where teacher educators make decisions regarding the teacher education curriculum.

Attempts are also made to involve teacher educators in Sabah and Sarawak. However, these teacher educators are not always able to attend because of the distance they have to travel and notices

arriving too late for them to book their flight to Kuala Lumpur, or because they cannot be spared, there being too few staff members in a particular college. The principal might also refuse to release particular lecturers when other colleagues are on long leave.

Within each teacher training college, too, there has been evidence of attempts to coordinate and improve efforts in teacher education. Meetings are held within each department at least once a month. Informal meetings are also held to discuss various problems as they appear. Department heads and lecturers also meet with colleagues from other colleges at other meetings, and inter-college discussions at an informal level take place frequently.

### **Selection Of Student Teachers**

The minimum requirement for prospective ESL teachers for entry into the teacher colleges are credits at the SPM or school-leaving examination in English, a credit in Bahasa Malaysia, and credits in any three other subjects. An aptitude test is administered to all applicants before the final selection is made. The test includes test items on language, mathematics, and interest and general knowledge in education. Most student teachers for Bahasa Malaysia and TESL have the STPM or Higher School Certificate. On paper, therefore, it would appear that ESL student teachers have the necessary language competence to be language teachers. However, since at the time of writing this article there is no English Language paper at the STPM level and most STPM holders do not have a principal pass in English Literature, it is doubtful if the candidates with STPM applying to be TESL teachers are much better off than others without the STPM.

### **University Faculties of Education**

Preservice teacher education, mainly for upper secondary teachers, is also offered by local and foreign universities. Upper secondary language teachers are certified mainly through the local universities but, in the last few years, a number of TESL teachers have been produced through preservice training in foreign universities, or through foreign universities with the help of the teachers' colleges. Attempts are also now being made for collaboration between local and foreign universities.

Preservice language teacher education is offered mainly by the Diploma in Education courses (post-graduate certification courses) at Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), a B.Ed. programme at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia and B.A. with Education programmes at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The newest university, Universiti Utara Malaysia, has just been started and it is still not known if the new university will offer courses in language teacher education. Since, at the time of writing this article, the Vice Chancellor is a prominent Malaysian educator, it is very likely that a Faculty of Education will be set up and within it, a department of language education. The new bilingual International Islamic University, with its media of education in Arabic and English, has also started contributing to the education of English language teachers. Bahasa Malaysia and TESL teachers will also be trained through the Bachelor of Science with Education programme at Universiti Malaya. Students will choose a Science subject as their first method and either Bahasa Malaysia or TESL as their second method. The first group of students have now finished their first year and have begun the Bahasa Malaysia or TESL components of their course this year. Universiti Malaya also plans to start a Bachelor of Education (TESL) programme next year. Like the programme at Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, the course will be open to STPM holders as well as to College-trained teachers. Students

will also be taken in from the matriculation course currently being run by Pusat Asasi Sains with the help of Pusat Bahasa.

An example of the number of teachers being trained through the university system may be seen in the figures obtained from the Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya. Table 2 shows the number of student teachers who were offered places, the number of students who registered and the number who finally graduated.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Diploma in Education Students**  
**Offered Places, Registered and Graduating from**  
**Universiti Malaya in 1982 / 83 - 1986 / 87**

<b>1982 / 83</b>	<b># Offered</b>	<b># Registered</b>	<b># Graduated</b>	<b># Passed after Re-sit</b>
82 / 83	91	85	77	4
84 / 85	89	73	66	
85 / 86	76	59	59	
86 / 87	98	77	72	

*Source: Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya.*

It may be interesting to note the differences between the numbers offered places and the numbers actually graduating. It should be pointed out that very few students in TESL actually fail outright. In Table 2 the only actual failures were the numbers in the "Re-sit" column. These were students who failed in certain courses in their first attempt and took the examination in that course again. They passed on their second or third attempt. The difference between the number which initially registered for the course and the number which finally graduated, therefore, was caused by students dropping out when they were offered jobs outside the teaching service.

**Table 3**  
**Number of Diploma in Education Students in Language**  
**Education in the Faculty of Education at**  
**Universiti Malaya in 1984**

<b>1983 / 84</b>	<b># Offered</b>	<b># Registered</b>	<b># Graduated</b>	<b>Dropped out / Place not accepted</b>
B.M. & Malay Lit.	88	70	64	2
TESL	102	86	82	1
Mandar.	16	15	15	-

*Source: Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya.*

In Table 3, one might also notice that in 1984, although the numbers for Mandarin remain fairly stable, the numbers for Bahasa Malaysia and TESL vary a great deal, indicating a demand outside the teaching profession for those students accepted in these two courses.

### **Inservice Teacher Education**

All those interviewed for this research felt that inservice training was very important. Those interviewed felt that teachers who had not been trained to teach languages and were teaching these languages needed the necessary training. In most cases, these teachers formed the majority and all agreed that what training most language teachers had had was inadequate for their current needs. Unfortunately, those interviewed also felt that even the inservice training being given was inadequate and held back by financial constraints. One administrator felt that it was especially important for TESL because the role of English had changed over the years. TESL inservice courses are therefore being offered locally and also abroad, especially in England.

### **Local Training**

Despite the attractions of foreign inservice training, most ESL personnel are, in fact, given inservice training locally. These sessions vary from one-day courses to year-long programmes. Up to 1987, the major thrust of inservice education has not been from the teachers' colleges.

Only one teachers' college offers inservice training for TESL teachers, the Maktab Perguruan Lembah Pantai in Kuala Lumpur. It is a year-long course.

Inservicing of TESL teachers has mainly been done by the local universities, the CDC, State Education Offices, Examinations Syndicate, Inspectorate, the Malaysian English Language Teachers' Association (more commonly known as MELTA), the Malaysian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (more commonly known as MACLALS), the British Council and teachers' unions. Up to 1983, inservice training was also offered by the CFBT (or Centre for British Teachers)<sup>1</sup> through the "Transfer of Experience Project." It is thought that the British Council will contribute further towards inservice training when they begin their teacher training programme for TESL teachers.

Most formally-structured inservice programmes for TESL teachers are being offered by the universities which run short courses, diploma courses, and bachelor's and master's programmes. Four out of the seven universities offer such courses. The four universities are Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, and Universiti Sains Malaysia. The International Islamic University might also be expected to contribute to the inservicing of teachers in the future.

Universiti Malaya used to offer the most inservice courses, at diploma and master's levels, through two of its departments - the Language Centre or Pusat Bahasa and the Department of Language Education in the Faculty of Education. The inservice certificate course at the Faculty of Education has since been discontinued due to budget cuts at the Ministry of Education. Master's level programmes are available through both the Faculty of Education and Pusat Bahasa.

The other three universities mentioned previously also offer courses leading to master's degrees in TESL but very few candidates enroll. In USM, it is also possible for teachers to take off-campus courses leading to a BA in English Language Studies or a BA with Education. UKM offers similar

on-campus courses. UPM (and soon also UM) offers a B.Ed. (TESL) program for teachers of English who have graduated from teacher colleges and do not possess bachelor degrees.

Another important inservice teacher education program that needs to be mentioned is the Kakitangan Penting or Key Personnel Scheme, and, with the KBSM, now known as the Kakitangan Sumber or Resource Personnel Scheme. This scheme was started in the early seventies by the CDC to train Key Personnel throughout the country who could go back to their states and disseminate the information they obtained to their colleagues. It was an ambitious scheme and personnel for Bahasa Malaysia and English in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels have been sent to Kuala Lumpur for inservice education. According to interviews with CDC officers, most of these personnel were identified through personal contact and recommendations by persons known to CDC personnel and also by State Education Departments. It was felt that in this way they would obtain greater cooperation and also be sure of the efficiency of selected personnel. After about three weeks of training, the KPs returned to the states and in turn conducted inservice courses for other KPs at state level and ran courses for the teachers in each district. They were on trial for two years after which they were rejected or confirmed according to CDC evaluation. According to interviews with the CDC personnel and teachers, some of the KPs proved to be dynamic, competent and keen and have contributed in a great way to successful language programs in their districts. Others were not so effective, failed to get the respect of teachers and ran courses which proved to be mostly a waste of teachers' time.

With the introduction of the KBSM, Resource Personnel have been identified to conduct the same pattern of inservice training as was done for the KBSR. Like the KPs, the RPs have had very little training or experience as teacher educators. In some cases, principals of schools have deliberately failed to recommend their better teachers as RPs, feeling that the teacher's time would be diverted from the work in their own schools.

In fact, one major disadvantage with the scheme is the lack of incentives offered to personnel who participate in it. KPs who are expected to put in a great deal more time and effort have no added incentive, financial or otherwise, to do so. They thus put in extra time because they want to. Whereas this situation shows that there is a dedicated set of teachers, it also creates more teacher burn-out.

The implementation of the KBSM, has also introduced another category of resource persons, known as the Pegawai-pegawai Sumber. These are essentially teacher trainers from the Teacher Training Colleges who will be responsible for inservice teacher education in the various states. As experienced teacher educators, these PSs will require much less preparation than most RPs or KPs and would also be better able to project the spirit of the KBSM rather than merely conveying information, correctly or incorrectly, about syllabus items and administrative matters. They would also be in a better position to advise the district level officers, most of whom have not been trained in TESL.

The Schools Division also coordinates inservicing of teachers locally and abroad. One example of such coordination is collaboration with the Faculty of Education and Pusat Bahasa, Universiti Malaya. The Faculty of Education, for example, used to conduct an inservice course but the teachers who came for the course were sent by the Schools Division. At their end, the language section of the Curriculum Unit asks state departments of education to identify language teachers who they feel might benefit from such courses.

### **Foreign Training**



ESL personnel have traditionally looked overseas for inservice training. Opportunities are limited, however, and attract a great number of applicants. The British Council has been a major source of funding. In 1983 and 1984, for example, TESL personnel in all sections of the Ministry of Education were sent for short term three-month courses to universities in England under the auspices of the British Council. The British government budgeted five million pounds for the training of Malaysians in Britain from 1983- 1985. In 1983, 60 personnel were sent for short courses and 40 students, who had just graduated from schools, embarked on a five-year period of study for a Bachelor's degree in TESL.<sup>2</sup>

Besides personnel being sent for training to Britain, 100-150 TESL personnel were also sent to Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada for diplomas and master's degrees in TESL, Linguistics, English Language, or English Literature.

A foreign center to which, technically, all language education personnel could be sent is in Singapore. A dozen or more RELC scholarships to the ASEAN Regional Language Centre in Singapore are available for courses leading to diplomas or masters Degrees in TESL or Applied Linguistics or for short, three-month courses on specialized subject areas like translation and reading. In reality, however, those going on a master's course to RELC should be aware that the degree they receive will be from the University of Singapore and not from RELC. Since University of Singapore degrees are not recognised in Malaysia, this would be an added complication.

### **Constraints on ESL Teacher Education**

The next question which was asked was: *What are the constraints, on the education of ESL teachers in teacher colleges?* Besides constraints of finance, leading to insufficient students accepted into inservice courses, one of the most significant constraints is the calibre of the student teachers themselves.

#### *Language Proficiency Of Student Teachers*

All lecturers interviewed said that they required student teachers to have a high level of oral proficiency. TESL student teachers were required to be as near-native as possible - "native" in this case being the RP form of British English. Proficiency courses in the colleges as well as the universities are therefore a vital part of the student teacher's program.

All language sections in all colleges run proficiency courses. For Bahasa Malaysia and English language courses, there were two streams of proficiency classes - one for those who were to be teachers of Bahasa Malaysia or TESL and another for all the other student teachers. The student teachers took placement tests for both proficiency courses and were put in classes according to ability. Within each stream, however, students were also placed in groups according to ability.

The proficiency course for TESL teachers is based on notions arising from ESP (English for Special Purposes). Although there is emphasis on grammar, the grammar which is chosen to be taught is the grammar which lecturers feel teachers of TESL need. The emphasis, then, is on aspects of syntax such as question forms and language for instruction. These have been drawn from various studies of discourse analysis conducted in Malaysian schools.

There was unanimous agreement among all those interviewed, lecturers and administrators, that the majority of student teachers of TESL had low proficiency in English. Principals of colleges expressed concern about the language ability of the TESL teachers, and appreciated how hard TESL

staff had to work to try to raise the language ability of the TESL student teachers. TESL personnel in colleges pointed out that even though student teachers did possess the HSC, many of them had weak credits in English in the examination, Paper 122. It was also felt that some student teachers had lower language proficiency than their pupils. All those interviewed felt that they were turning out sub-standard language teachers who were compounding pupils' language problems instead of relieving them. One lecturer said that what was worse was that student teachers were teaching sub-standard English using very good methodology. This meant that the errors were even more likely to stay with the pupils.

The situation is not much better at the Diploma of Education level. At the Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, for example, students are accepted on the course with a '3' in English 1119 or 121. Remedial work for many students is still necessary, however. In fact, it has been found that even students with degrees in English require remedial English. Teacher educators in Diploma of Education programmes have the unenviable task of trying to improve proficiency as well as methodology in the space of nine months.

Three teachers' college lecturers when interviewed, offered the teaching practice period as an example of what lecturers had to do to ensure that "mis-structures" were not taught. Lecturers went early to the schools in which they had to observe student teachers. They checked students' lesson plans and corrected whatever structures were to be taught. If incorrect structures were taught during the lesson, lecturers insisted that the structures be re-taught.

Lecturers felt that a poor credit in the SPM was not good enough for teachers of English. Remedial work conducted in the colleges had limited effectiveness because there was not enough time to spend on remedial work in the time allocated for TESL. The time had to include other content areas such as linguistics. It was suggested by the lecturers that English teachers be made single subject specialists. At the time of the interviews, teachers of English were also being trained to teach another subject in Bahasa Malaysia. Another alternative was to form a "bridge" class in which students would undergo a year's intensive course in English Language proficiency.

In addition to the problem of applicants for TESL being accepted without an adequate command of English, it would seem that candidates who do have an adequate command of English are getting more difficult to find. Many pupils who are proficient in English enter universities, leaving the less motivated to apply for the teachers colleges.

Lecturers observed, however, that TESL student teachers enjoyed a high prestige in the colleges, mainly because they were more active and gregarious, and able to perform better because of being more able to cope with extra reading in English. The prestige enjoyed by TESL students did, however, give rise to problems of jealousy among students.

### *Time Constraints*

Every college teacher educator interviewed, objected to the time allocated to the language and "methods" components, holding that the time allocated was insufficient for the tasks required of student teachers. Too much was crammed into too short a space of time so that students had no time for any further reading in their own time.

The solution to this problem, which all interviewees gave, was to decrease the time allocated to "common core" subjects. These "common core" subjects comprised various components intended to introduce general educational theory.

### *Service in Sabah and Sarawak*

One constraint on ESL education which pertained to Sabah and Sarawak was a problem which really cropped up after the initial training of the student teacher. It arose because not all the teacher-trainees in colleges in Sabah and Sarawak were actually from those states. Many of them were from Peninsular Malaysia because not enough students from Sabah and Sarawak could be found to fill the available places. However, students from Peninsular Malaysia who were sent to colleges in Sabah and Sarawak, signed a contract with the government, agreeing to serve there for a period of five years. Many changed their minds after qualifying, and asked to return to Peninsular Malaysia. The Ministry of Education was almost inflexible in not allowing them to do so unless they had valid reasons. Marriage to a person from Peninsular Malaysia was one such valid reason.

This policy regarding newly trained teachers posted to Sabah and Sarawak created a vicious circle. If the Ministry allowed teachers to return to Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak would be very short of staff. If the Ministry held the teacher trainees to their contract, there was unhappiness and discontent among their ranks. No solution has as yet been offered to this problem.

### *Involvement of Teacher Educators in Curriculum Design and Evaluation*

Two curricula need to be distinguished from each other - the teacher education curriculum and the schools' curriculum. While teacher educators are fully involved in teacher education curricula, the same is not true of the schools' curricula. Very few teacher educators are really involved in the planning of curricula and the briefing sessions to inform them of what is happening usually comes too late. The uncertainty leads to a lack of confidence and this detracts from their performance as teacher educators.

### *Certifying Teachers*

Interviewees from the teacher colleges also expressed concern about the certification of some student teachers. They felt that they were placed in a situation where they felt obliged to pass their student teachers because of the money which had been expended for the training of the teachers.

Interviewees at the universities did not feel that they were obliged to pass their students. However, introspectively, a few of them felt that they would find it very difficult to fail their students, especially if the students had put in a great deal of effort. Of those interviewed, only two lecturers had failed students. Each lecturer had only ever failed one student.

## **Suggestions For Improvement**

The third broad question which was asked was *what suggestions could be offered for the improvement of teacher education in Malaysia?* A number of suggestions were offered by various interviewees. These follow below.

Two teacher educators suggested that there should be a "posttraining" program. Currently, after leaving the Faculties of Education or teachers' colleges, teachers are put on probation for two years.

It was suggested that during that probation period, the training institute should follow up the teacher's training through visits and supervision.

One teacher educator suggested that teacher educators should go back and teach in schools periodically. It was suggested that teacher educators should serve one year in school for every three years in the colleges.

Five teacher educators felt that student teachers should not be allowed into schools if their linguistic competence was not good enough. They felt that simply passing the students for financial reasons was not beneficial to the pupils they were going to teach.

The first problem that needs to be solved, therefore, is the linguistic competence of student teachers. Information obtained from sources at the Inspectorate of Education, revealed concern regarding the overall deteriorating standards of English and the inadequate competence of some English Language teachers. It is sufficient for just a few teachers to lack the competence for the rest of TESL teachers to be tarnished with the same brush. If time does not permit remedial work to be carried out during the course, then measures must be taken to ensure a stricter admission level. If a credit in English 322 or 122 has not discriminated in favour of better students, then a higher qualification, like the English 1119 or 121 results or a proficiency examination might be more economical. There is really not much point in teachers being able to teach well if what they teach is to the detriment of their pupils.

## **Conclusion**

Over the last few years, there has been a great deal of activity in the pre- and in-service training of TESL teachers. It cannot be denied that the need is there although the supply is rapidly diminishing. This article has attempted to describe, very briefly, the various teacher education programmes in the country, the constraints on ESL teacher education and some suggestions for improving ESL teacher education.

While efforts are being made to produce as many TESL teachers as possible, however, this should not be done at the expense of quality. Financial considerations are generally of over-riding importance and those holding the purse-strings often fail to see that to sacrifice quality is to be non-economic. The result of decisions based along financial considerations has resulted in a number of non-profitable situations in Malaysia:

- a. insufficient inservice opportunities for teachers
- b. student teachers obtaining certification because of the money which has been expended on them, rather than on their real ability
- c. graduate teachers being prevented from teaching in primary schools even though they might make better primary than secondary school teachers.

Teacher educators try their best but they need the help and cooperation of the various divisions of the Ministry as well as the JPA itself, to function to the best of their ability. It is hoped that, with the formation of the Committee for the implementation of the KBSM that teacher educators will be allowed to contribute a greater share to TESL in Malaysia.

## **NOTES**

1. Teachers were recruited specially for Malaysia by the Centre for British Teachers in England. A British Council Officer attached to the Schools Division was given the task of organizing and designing the program, including recruiting teachers from abroad, to teach English in rural lower secondary schools in Peninsular Malaysia. Teachers came on contract for two years. Some renewed their contracts for another year. The final year for CFBT teachers to be on contract in rural areas was 1983. The scheme was then changed to meet the needs of the new TOEFL Programme for preparing pupils for universities abroad.
2. British Council, Kuala Lumpur, "English Language Teaching Profile for Malaysia, " Monograph, Kuala Lumpur: British Council, 1983.

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