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PERCEPTIONS OF REFLECTION ON A PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY TEACHER
EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE IN AN INSTITUTE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

by

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Abstract

The practice of reflection is embedded in the curricula of pre-service teacher education programmes in many parts of the world, but there have been few studies into how the term ‘reflection’ is understood by those who are required to do it, namely, the student teachers themselves. This study seeks to redress this gap by investigating the perceptions of pre-service student teachers and teacher educators on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme in Malaysia of the meaning and practice of the term ‘reflection’ and the way this is manifested in the written reflections of the student teachers during their Teaching Practicum. The study will also shed some light on student teachers’ engagement with reflection through an analysis of their written reflections, and the support they are given on the programme.

This study adopts a predominantly interpretive qualitative methodology in gathering and analysing the data, while a quantitative approach is used as part of the analysis of the written reflections. Interviews were conducted to explore the meaning of ‘reflection’ as perceived by the student teachers and teacher educators, while the written reflections of the student teachers were also collected and analysed inductively in order to understand how they engage in reflection during the practicum.

The analysis of the data reveals that ‘reflection’ involves the student teachers primarily identifying their strengths and weaknesses in their lessons and providing suggestions for improvements (SWIS). The result is that their written reflections tend to adopt a fairly rigid structure. The SWIS framework also results in a very strong focus on the student teachers’ written reflections with a predominant, but arguably narrow, focus on issues related to teaching performance and classroom management, and comparatively little attention to other aspects of the classroom, such as learning, learners and their language use. I have termed this characteristic of their reflections ‘teaching-centric’.

From the analysis of the written reflections, five features of their reflective writing emerge, namely ‘Evaluation’, ‘Reasoning’, ‘Self-Realisation’, ‘Problem Solving’, and ‘Describing Events’. These features demonstrate student teachers’ engagement in their day-to-day practice of ‘reflection’.

Furthermore, the analysis shows how five features of reflective writing were combined by the student teachers in different ways to form four identifiable ‘patterns of

flow', which I have classified as 'Linear', 'Dominant', 'Recursive' and 'Random'. These patterns of flow illustrate student teachers' engagement in reflective writing and have the potential to be a useful tool to develop student teachers' skills of reflective writing in teaching.

In terms of fulfilling the demands of the teacher education programme, arguably the support provided to the student teachers in reflective writing is arguably adequate, based on the reflective journals that the student teachers were able to produce. However, the textual analysis of the contents and the instructions in the course documents reveal that certain guidelines are fairly vague. In addition, the interviews with the teacher educators show that training student teachers in writing their reflections was limited to identifying SWIS. Therefore, the support provided to the student teachers in reflective writing is unsatisfactory and in need of improvement.

An implication of the findings is that if teacher education programmes are serious about developing a language teaching methodology that is more 'communicative' and less 'teacher-centred' than traditional approaches to teaching English in Malaysia, student teachers should be encouraged to reflect more widely, and their written reflections should move beyond the 'SWIS' framework to encompass areas such as the social, moral, ethical, cultural and political issues of their professional practice. Finally, the features of reflective writing identified in this study could be a useful guide to teacher educators of what constitutes good achievable practice among student teachers with limited teaching experience, and could serve a basis for developing appropriate, realistic frameworks for developing and assessing student teachers' reflective journals on their practicum.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| TESL | Teaching English as a Second Language |
| TESOL | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| HOTS | Higher Order Thinking Skills |
| SLTE | Second Language Teacher Education |
| IPG | <i>Institut Pendidikan Guru</i> |
| ITE | Institute of Teacher Education |
| PISMP | <i>Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Pendidikan</i> |
| BPG | <i>Bahagian Pendidikan Guru</i> |
| MQF | Malaysian Qualifying Framework |
| SBE | School Based Experience |
| SGM | <i>Standard Guru Malaysia</i> |
| SWIS | Identifying strengths, weaknesses, and suggesting improvements for teaching. |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 What My Thesis is About

This is a thesis about student teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions of 'reflection' on a pre-service teacher education programme in Malaysia. In the past 20 years or so, the ideas of 'reflection' have been promoted within courses and programmes for training and professional development in a variety of fields such as teaching (e.g. Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Hatton & Smith, 1994; Loughran, 1996; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Farrell, 1999), nursing (Pierson, 1998; Hannigan, 2001; Bulman, Lathlean & Gobbi, 2012; Bagay, 2012), and social work (Fisher & Somerton, 2000; Morley, 2004; Heron, 2005). The popularity of 'reflection' in these areas shows that 'reflection' is an important element and a valuable tool in training professionals. It is also a platform that integrates practical experiences and academic study.

In Malaysia, 'reflection' has become an increasingly dominant feature in teacher education especially during teaching practice. Although, the practice of reflecting on teaching is not something new, it has been stressed even more now since the Ministry of Education in Malaysia decided that teachers should attain the ability to 'think critically' and 'reflect on practice' as part of being a competent professional teacher. This would require a training approach that examines and highlights the potential of teachers which presumably could be achieved through 'reflection'.

Of course, 'teaching' is the main job that teachers must do in any teaching institution. Teaching is fundamentally a process which involves planning and implementation that follows a specific structure. However, conducting teaching alone is insufficient for teachers to develop beyond what they already know. Teachers also need to reflect on their practice as this could move teachers forward and improve their practice. Some scholars argued that 'reflection' is a reaction against the view of teachers as technicians who merely carry out what others, removed from the classroom, want them to do, and against top-down approaches to educational reform which only involve teachers as passive participants (Dewey, 1933; Zeichner, 2008). This means that through 'reflection', teachers are no longer inactive. Instead, they become active thinkers, constantly examining their classroom practices to improve their teaching. When teachers 'reflect', they can explore their experiences in many ways. This resonates with the aims

as stated in the recent education transformation plan in Malaysia (in Chapter 2) that to develop future teachers who have more authority, responsible and who could play an active role in developing their own professional development. Thus, being 'reflective' is seen to be crucial because when teachers are 'unreflective' (Grant & Zeichner, 1984) they tend to maintain to their conservative role of teaching which is limiting. If teacher education programmes want to move teachers to a more liberal role as active thinkers, as teachers who can make decisions independently, it is necessary for teacher education, whether in Malaysia or other parts of the world, to integrate and promote critical and reflective thinking skills in their teacher training programmes. Furthermore, attaining these skills contributes to the overall improvement of teachers' competence and professionalism in teaching.

'Reflection' carries diverse meanings and determining the concepts of this term is problematic (Finlay, 2008; Rodgers, 2002; Zeichner, 2008). For some, it may simply mean thinking about something, whereas for others, it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carry specific meaning and associated actions (Finlay, 2008; Rodgers, 2002; Akbari, 2007). Thus, different people would define this term differently depending on the purpose and the context it is in. This makes the term complex and confusing. For student teachers and teacher educators to perform effectively in 'reflection', it is important for them to have a clear understanding of the concepts of 'reflection' so that they would benefit from the practice.

Recent implementation of 'reflection' in teacher education programmes in Malaysia requires student teachers to produce written reflections during teaching practice. However, it is argued that when reflection is a 'required component' and when it is 'forced', it may not retain validity as genuine reflection (Loughran, 1996; Hobbs, 2007). Thus, this could limit its effectiveness and value, making the process of reflecting on teaching less meaningful. Some may also argue that student teachers might approach writing the reflections differently from when it is not a mandatory task (Zeichner, 2008; Loughran, 1996; Hobbs, 2007). This is an important issue to consider especially when it also involves assessment.

These are some of the issues concerning 'reflection' in education now. Based on these issues, this thesis investigates pre-service student teachers' and teacher educators' understanding of the meanings of 'reflection' based on their experiences of writing reflections on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language)

programme in an institute of teacher education in Malaysia. If ‘reflection’ is an important aspect that allows for effective teacher education, then it is equally important for student teachers (and teacher educators) to have a clear understanding of what ‘reflection’ means and why it is of utmost benefit to their practice. This study tries not to argue the importance of ‘reflection’, but to find out how those people involved in ‘reflection’ perceive the term and how they engage in the process. In addition, this study examines student teachers’ reflective journals where topics of discussions and features of reflective writing were identified. It also investigates the support and guidance that were given to student teachers to write their reflections during the practicum and whether the help provided to them was enough to develop student teachers’ reflective writing skills. Based on the findings, suggestions for improvements will be made to develop effective teacher training programmes that integrate ‘reflection’ as one of the important elements in developing competent professional teachers.

1.2 My Background

First, it is important for me to clarify my background as I come into this research with experiences as a teacher educator on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme and that I actually taught some of the student teachers in this study. As a teacher educator, I hold many different responsibilities such as conducting lectures as I provide input on content knowledge of teaching to my student teachers, evaluating student teachers’ performance as they progress through the teacher training programme, and motivating student teachers to develop their ability and aspirations to learn. However, my role is not limited to only be a teacher, an examiner or a motivator but also requires ‘an understanding of teaching that goes beyond being a good teacher’ (Loughran, 2006, p. 14). This means that I am required to reflect and explore the experiences and make connections with the knowledge and experiences that I have about teaching. It is believed that teachers who engage in the reflective process would broaden their perspectives on their practice and leads to greater understanding (Zeichner, 2008; Schön, 1983; Richards & Farrell, 2011). Thus, it is crucial to reflect on my teaching so that I could develop as a teacher that is critical and reflective of the profession. However, it is not I alone who need to reflect on practice but also my student teachers. Thus, as a professional teacher it is also part of my responsibility to create opportunities and encourage my student teachers to ‘reflect’ on their teaching. It is important for me to provide them with the

support and guidance they need to reflect on their experiences to enhance their learning further.

Starting the PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) programme means that I am no longer wearing a teacher's or a teacher trainer's hat. Instead, my role has shifted, and I am now a researcher. Undoubtedly, my experiences have given me both an advantage because I know the context so well, and a disadvantage because I must avoid being biased in my views. What this means is that I had to step back and detach myself from all the background information I have about the context. I had to make what was once 'familiar' to me 'strange' (Holliday, 2016) and examine the situations with fresh eyes. However, I cannot ignore entirely the things that I know about the setting as well as the people in it and because of this I still consider myself an 'insider' (Adler & Adler, 1987). But, in my writing I had to remain as an 'outsider' throughout this investigation to capture the different perspectives and interpretations of the data, avoiding bias, and maintaining objectivity. This was the biggest challenge for me.

My interest in this topic stems from my own experiences of writing reflections when I was a student teacher and later as a teacher educator. It would be rather strange to say that I actually hated writing reflections especially when I was a student teacher. At that time, I never understood the purpose of this practice and I always thought that it was a waste of time. However, I had to do it because it was part of the course and I wanted to pass my teaching practice. After graduating from the Bachelor of Education TESL programme, I became an English teacher at a secondary school. I was excited to write my lesson plans and write my reflections because I thought now, I get to practise what I have learnt and at the same time 'reflect' on my teaching in the style that I like. But to my dismay, I had to abandon my ambitious plan because there was hardly any space to write my reflections in the record book and I was too occupied preparing my lessons that at the end I either 'forgot' or lost interest in writing reflections altogether. As a result, I wrote short descriptive reflections for the sake of 'showing' to the Principal that I had completed my work as required.

Then, I became a teacher trainer at an institute of teacher education. This was the time when everything changed. I was extremely troubled by the fact that I had to 'teach' my students to reflect and to write reflections for their assignments and teaching practice. As much as I continue to believe that it is a good practice I wonder how 'reflection' can ever be taught and, moreover, how to write reflections. My own reflections were checked

by the Head of Department every month. I was horrified that one day he called me to his office and told me that, “This is not a reflection!” and instructed me to find books on reflection, read them and then make sure I write them ‘correctly’ next time. From that day onwards, I knew something must be done about this. I started recalling my own experiences of writing reflections when I was a student teacher, and as far as I could remember, none of the activities or approaches my previous lecturers taught me stayed with me. Then, I turned to my colleagues (who have more experience in teacher training than me) and hoped that they could give me the answer to my question of “What is reflection?” Despite receiving many responses, to me they seemed very confusing at the time. I asked myself if ‘reflection’ is an important element in teacher education which then prompted my asking why defining ‘reflection’ is so problematic. This is when I realised that I need to investigate what this term really means and what it is all about.

1.3 The Purpose of My Research

Through reading a comprehensive amount of literature on ‘reflection’, combined with my experiences on the teacher education programme, many questions about ‘reflection’ surfaced. I believe that looking at ‘reflection’ through the eyes of my student teachers and my colleagues would greatly add to my understanding of this term. I felt that the insights gained from such a process would allow me to be more competent to assist my student teachers to get a strong start in their practice.

Based on the issues I mentioned previously, one of the aims of this research is to gather information on how student teachers and teacher educators perceive the term ‘reflection’ on the programme, exploring what their expectations are of ‘reflection’ and determining whether the term carries similar meanings to what have been described in the literature. From this, I could construct my own understanding of the term ‘reflection’ as I compare it to others. More importantly, a critical evaluation on the ways the notion of ‘reflection’ is put into practice on teacher education programmes in Malaysia allows for greater understanding of its concepts and practice. This will help me to identify the benefits, values and the roles ‘reflection’ plays in developing future teachers, where recommendations for improvement to the teacher education programmes could be made.

I was also interested in exploring student teachers’ engagement in their reflections. In the context of this research, investigating student teachers’ engagement with the concept of reflection meant doing a close textual analysis of their written

reflections in order to do two things: firstly, to identify the topics and issues they wrote about in their journals (the content of their reflections) and secondly, to identify the features of reflective writing, such as describing events, evaluating, reasoning, self-realisation and problem-solving, which would show evidence of their level of engagement, and how they set about the process of reflecting on their lessons. This provides useful information to support the process of 'reflection' in the teacher education programme and for programme owners to plan and design teacher training courses that integrate effective application of 'reflection'. In addition, as I analysed the features of reflective writing, I was able to identify discursive patterns in the reflections as they moved from one feature to another, as will be shown in Chapter 6.

Overall, my interest in the perceptions of the student teachers' and teacher educators', and the quality and depth of the student teachers' written reflections, is to shed light on how effectively the concept of reflection is presented and put into practice on the programme (specifically on the practicum), and how effectively the student teachers are supported and guided in their teaching practice. If the programme aims to develop teachers who are 'reflective practitioners', then it is important that it supports and trains them to become so.

Research questions are very important in defining the limits and focus of my study. Based on the aims of the study, I constructed the following six research questions which guided me throughout my research. They are:

RQ 1 : What does 'reflection' mean to the pre-service student teachers and teacher educators on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme in Malaysia?

RQ 2 : What do they perceive to be the benefits of 'reflection'?

RQ 3 : What do the pre-service student teachers focus on in their written reflections?

RQ 4 : What features of reflective writing can be found in the student teachers' written reflections?

RQ 5 : What support currently exists to guide student teachers in their reflective writing during the practicum and how adequate is it?

RQ 6 : Based on the analysis of the answers to the above questions, what improvements can be made in the provision of pre-service teacher education in the training context of this study?

1.4 Research Approach

My research was designed based on the research questions and aims stated in the previous section. The methodology of this research is mixed methods combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in gathering and analysing my data. The data came from three sources which are interviews with the student teachers, interviews with the teacher educators and student teachers' written reflections. A central part of my research is examining and analysing written texts (both the reflective journals in Chapter 5 and also the course documentation). I analysed and organised the data using 'thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) approaching it from 'bottom-up' to shape the themes as they emerged from the data. Since I had been in the field and know the participants prior to conducting this research, I am familiar with the background which enabled me to reflect and comment on the larger meaning of the data.

In addition to the interpretive qualitative approach discussed above, I adopted a quantitative methodology as part of my analysis of the written reflections, in order to measure the frequency of occurrence of the different topic areas that the student teachers wrote about. I used 'open coding' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) procedures to identify the topics which student teachers wrote in their reflections. I 'triangulated' the data from the written reflections and the interviews to show the connection between them. The process of 'triangulation' is crucial as they confirm and validate the findings in the different data as well as enhances the accuracy and credibility of the study (Cresswell, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further discussion about the procedures of collecting the data and analysing them can be found in Chapter 4 Research Methodology.

1.5 The Significance of My Research

This study will generate some insights into the concepts, roles and values of 'reflection' in teacher education in Malaysia. Previously, as I attempted to clarify the concepts of 'reflection' particularly in the context of teacher education, I realised that the development of these concepts is constantly evolving which resulted in the various definitions that are often ambiguous and confusing (discussed in Chapter 3). This confusion seems to penetrate the construction of 'reflection' in teacher education in Malaysia. For example, one of the main problems is the ill-defined concept and purpose of reflection on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme. An investigation of student

teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions of the term 'reflection' through the analysis of the interviews with the student teachers and teacher educators will inform the potential improvements that can be made to the way 'reflection' is understood by the course participants and integrated in the delivery of the programme (RQ1). From the findings, suitable and more effective materials could also be developed to 'teach' student teachers to reflect (RQ6).

From the literature, it is believed that using written reflections is useful in helping student teachers learn about teaching during teaching practice (e.g. Rushton & Suter, 2012; Farrell, 2013). In empirical studies such as Hussin (2004) and Rarieya (2005) (in 3.7) there is evidence that writing reflections helped student teachers to reflect critically on their teaching. However, it is unclear if it is true of pre-service student teachers in this study. By exploring this issue, it will be revealed whether 'reflection' on the teacher education programme has similar outcomes to those found in other studies and whether the support was enough to aid student teachers' reflective writing (RQ5). Thus, this investigation will shed light on the benefits of reflection, as perceived by the participants of the study (RQ2).

While there are many studies (e.g. Kember, 1999; Ward & McCotter, 2004; Larrivee, 2008; Lane, McMaster, Adnum & Cavanagh, 2014; Murphy & Ermeling, 2016) that used or developed a framework and set of criteria to assess the quality of student teachers' reflective writing, mine does not. As the aims demonstrate, my research explores the process of reflecting on teaching through the practice of writing reflections to understand what this process means to the participants, what it involves, and what kind of reflective writing student teachers produced. The information gathered here will focus on the topics that pre-service student teachers often write in their reflections (RQ3) and the features of reflective writing (RQ4) which could support the development of student teachers' reflective writing as they train to become professional teachers. The analysis of documentation, particularly student teachers' written reflections, will also shed light on the experiences of the programme in this area, and the training and support the student teachers receive on it (RQ5). In addition, I conducted a textual analysis of the written reflections to identify the features of reflective writing (RQ4) in which various 'patterns of flow' emerged and illustrated student teachers' thought processes, navigating their way between the features. This is perhaps the most significant part of the research which other previous studies did not reveal.

A number of research studies such as Hobbs (2007), Rarieya (2005), and McCabe, Walsh, Wideman & Winter (2009) suggested that the engagement of student teachers in the process of reflection is often 'superficial'. One of the causes for this is assessment. The implication of student teachers' reflections being assessed is they feel 'forced' to write their reflections and they need to impress their examiners to pass the course instead of using reflections as a platform for self-development. Clearly, it is crucial for the teacher education programme to develop student teachers' understanding of the value of reflecting on their practice so that the process would be more meaningful. Thus, exploring the process of writing reflections on the course and the substance of these 'reflections' is necessary to capture and provide greater understanding of the student teachers' and teacher educators' views of the value of reflection (RQ1). Through these perceptions, course developers could consider suitable ways to integrate 'reflection' with assessment and suggest alternative approaches to assess written reflections (RQ6).

In addition, I wished to examine the support and guidance the student teachers were given on the course to assist them in writing their written reflections (RQ5). This could take the form of support from their peers, from their lecturers and practicum supervisors, and from the course documentation they were given (e.g. sample reflection and guidelines for writing reflections). It is important to explore the ways help was given to the student teachers as this helps identify the approaches that were successful or lacking in supporting and guiding the process of writing reflections among pre-service student teachers.

Furthermore, in the context of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE), this study is one of the first initiatives to examine pre-service TESL student teachers' perceptions of reflection in Malaysia. Often, 'reflection' is a useful tool in the SLTE learning process that helps student teachers to develop deeper understanding of their experiences and events that occur during teaching practice (e.g. Wallace, 1991; Farrell, 2007, 2015; Zeichner & Liston, 2014; Freeman, 2016). Thus, the practical significance of researching and analysing student teachers' engagement with reflection through student teachers' reflective journals will provide useful information to trainers and course developers about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision they offered (e.g. support and guidance, course materials and assessment practices) so that improvements can be made, if needed (RQ6). This information, and the subsequent recommendations

for improvements may well, by extension, be of relevance not only in Malaysia but also to other training contexts where reflective journals are part of the course.

1.6 The Structure of My Thesis

This thesis is organised into nine chapters:

Chapter 1 gives a brief overview of what the whole thesis is about and how the research was conducted (as alluded to above). It contains a biodata about me, my experiences in the teaching profession, my position in the institution, and in the research process itself. In this chapter I also stated the aims of my research, statement of the research questions, some discussions of the research methodology, as well as a justification for the study.

Chapter 2 describes the context of the study which includes an explanation of the policy of the transformed education system in Malaysia as well as the structure of the new teacher education programme focusing on the issues of ‘reflection’ on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme during the practicum.

Chapter 3 discusses the concepts of ‘reflection’, synthesising them to the literature as well as to empirical works produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners in various fields, particularly in education.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology of the study. It restates the research questions, explains data collection and data analysis methods procedures, and describes the participants, the setting, and the research methodology, discussing these sections in further detail. Following these are three chapters that contain the findings to my research.

Chapter 5 contains the data analysis for student teachers’ interviews. It describes what ‘reflection’ mean to the student teachers based on their experiences of writing reflections during teaching practice.

Chapter 6 describes the findings from student teachers’ written reflections. This chapter identifies the topics that student teachers often write about in their written reflections. I have also identified the features of reflective writing from their reflective journals which characterise pre-service student teachers’ written reflections.

Chapter 7 contains the findings from teacher educators’ interviews. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the views teacher educators have about ‘reflection’ on the programme and identify what sort of training was given to support student teachers in reflecting on their teaching as well as writing their reflections. Here is where I begin to

make comparisons between the three data sources to find links between the findings. This ‘triangulation’ process (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) will help to validate the overall themes of my research.

Chapter 8 presents the discussion of the main findings of my research. Here is where I make sense of the issues that emerged from this research.

Chapter 9 is the final chapter in this thesis, and it contains my concluding discussion about the research. I also include in this chapter the implications, suggestions, and limitations of the study. I end the chapter with my own reflection based on my findings about the meaning, role, value, and importance of ‘reflection’ on the pre-service teacher education programme in Malaysia as well as other countries.

1.7 Terms Used in My Research

Before I proceed further into the discussion of my research, I would like to note that I will be using the term ‘written reflection’ and ‘reflective journal’ interchangeably. They are the daily and weekly reflections that student teachers wrote during the practicum. ‘Teacher educators’, ‘lecturers’, and ‘supervisors’ are used to refer to the trainers of the teacher education course, ‘student teachers’ to the trainees, ‘teacher mentor’ or ‘supervising teacher’ to refer to the teacher who supervises student teachers during teaching practice.

CHAPTER 2: THE TEACHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MALAYSIA

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter it is important for me to establish the context of my research to give readers a clear picture of the setting I am investigating. The chapter begins with an examination of the general structure and policy of the Malaysian education system. This will shed light on the agenda, aims and objectives behind the transformation education plan that the Ministry of Education Malaysia has described in their 'Blueprint'. Then, this is followed by a focused examination at how the improved teacher education programme in Malaysia is structured particularly in the professional practice component where reflection is integrated during the practicum. I will discuss how the training of writing reflection is conducted through an analysis of curriculum documents such as the guidelines and format for writing reflections. I will also discuss the conceptual differences of daily and weekly reflections, the two types of reflections student teachers must write during the practicum, to show how reflective writing has been conceptualised on the programme. The final section of this chapter discusses how student teachers' written reflections are assessed based on documents such as the guidelines of writing daily and weekly reflections, sample reflection and assessment criteria (see 3.5). A clearer picture is intended to be obtained of the assessment process involved during the practicum which may impact the assessment of student teachers' written reflections.

2.2 The Aspirations of the Ministry of Education Malaysia

In 2011, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia conducted a comprehensive review of the Malaysian education system and launched the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025¹. The Blueprint is a document that states the ministry's 13-year education transformation plan based on three specific objectives, as presented in Figure 2.1:

¹ The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 can be downloaded from the Ministry of Education website: <http://www.moe.gov.my/index.php/en/dasar/pelan-pembangunan-pendidikan-malaysia-2013-2025>

Figure 2.1: Objectives for 13 Years Education Transformation Plan

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>i) Understanding the current performance and challenges of the Malaysian education system, with a focus on:</p> | <p>ii) Establishing a clear vision and aspirations over the next 13 years for:</p> | <p>iii) Outlining a comprehensive transformation programme for the system, including:</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •improving access to education •raising standards (quality) •closing achievement gaps (equity) •fostering unity amongst students •maximising efficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •individual students •the education system as a whole | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •key changes to the Ministry which allow it to meet new demands and rising expectations •to ignite and support overall civil service transformation |

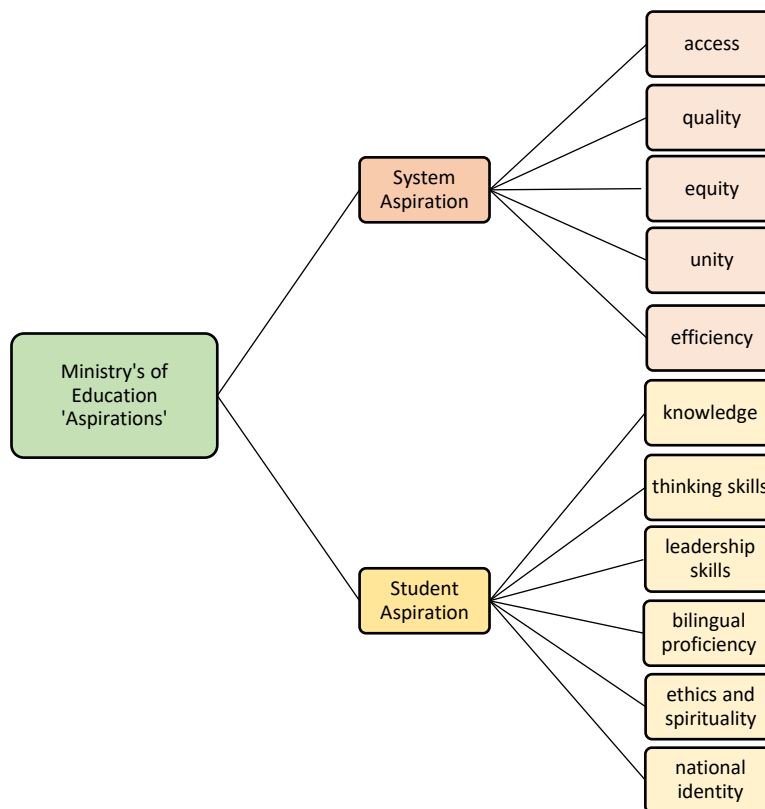
(Ministry of Education, 2013, p. E3)

In addition to these objectives are the Ministry’s ‘aspirations’ which are divided into two aspects: i) System Aspiration, and ii) Student Aspiration, each bearing its own outcomes; five outcomes for System Aspiration and six outcomes for Student Aspiration (see Figure 2.2). The outcomes for Student Aspiration are based on the ‘National Education Philosophy’ that envisions a balanced education as its foundation. It reads:

‘Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, in order to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically, balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society, and the nation at large’.

(Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1988)

Figure 2.2: The Aspirations of the Ministry of Education Malaysia



(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013)

From the aspirations and outcomes, the Ministry has identified 11 Shifts to ‘transform the system’. Each Shift will address at least one of the system outcomes as stated earlier. For example, the outcome of ‘quality’ is made as the common focus across all Shifts since ‘this is the dimension which requires the most urgent attention’ (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013, p. E10). Some of these Shifts represent a change in strategy and direction. Others represent operational changes in the way the Ministry and schools have historically implemented existing policies. Regardless of whether it is a strategic or operational shift, they all represent a move away from ‘current practices’ which are claimed to be mainly ‘examination oriented’ (Abdul Wahid, Abdul Hamid, Low & Mohd Ashhari, 2011; Ong, 2010) or ‘teacher-centred’ (Ahmad, Mohd Shah & Abdul Aziz, 2005; Abdul Razak, Ahmad & Mohd Shah, 2007). These studies found that the focus on exams influenced the learning process mainly in the form of rote learning or memorisation. Thus, the approach in teaching and learning the lessons were often ‘teacher-centred’. The Ministry hopes that through the education transformation plan,

changes could be made to the overall education system which would give opportunities for teachers and students to develop their individual potential in terms of creativity and critical thinking. Thus, transforming the teaching and learning process to be ‘student-centred’ and less exam-oriented.

Thus, one of the governing bodies that is involved in implementing the Shifts and responsible in making the changes in education is the *Institut Pendidikan Guru* (IPG) or the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE). IPG is a network of teacher education institutes placed in 27 different campuses² in different locations in Malaysia under the management of IPGM (*Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia*), the main governing body for all IPGs. Before 2009, IPG is known as *Maktab Perguruan* or Teacher Training College then these colleges were upgraded into institutes. This change means that teacher training institutes can now offer teacher education courses up to Bachelor’s degree level and produce teachers with higher qualifications. The aim is to transform the IPG into a world-class teacher training university by 2020. To achieve this, several ‘shifts’ within the IPG curriculum are required:

‘The Ministry will review the current pre-service training curriculum to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to teach the higher-order thinking skills desired of Malaysia’s students. This will include increasing the percentage of time spent on practicum training to 40% across all programmes. The IPG will also offer different programmes (diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees) to cater to candidates with varying experience levels (fresh graduates and mid-career leavers). The selection criteria for new lecturers will be enhanced, and existing lecturers will be upskilled’.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013, p. E26)

By reviewing the current teacher training curriculum in Malaysia, plans and actions for changes can be made such as designing teaching and learning programmes that are

² In 2016, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia announced that several campuses will be changed to vocational colleges or polytechnics in line with the need and expansion of Technical Vocational Education and Training. While two IPGs have been turned into *Permata Centres* as announced by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak during the 2017 Budget report. This is a step taken by the Ministry to downsize IPG and enhance other education bodies. However, in 2019 the Ministry decided to maintain all IPGs as teacher training institutes after the 2018 General Election in which a new government was formed and restructuring of the departments in the Ministry of Education occurred.

relevant and effective in developing competent student teachers. This also means that improvements will be made to the teacher training programmes according to the current aims and needs.

In Malaysia, Bloom's taxonomy (see 3.2.2) is a popular framework to design the curriculum and often used as a yardstick to measure students' academic performance in schools, colleges, institutes, and universities. Since the taxonomy is hierarchical, teachers would expect their students to master these skills while progressing from one level to the next and eventually achieving the highest level, that of 'critical thinking'. In fact, it is important for learners to show evidence of learning using higher order thinking skills and 'must ultimately reach the critical level for deep, active learning to occur' (Ryan, 2011, p. 101). Therefore, the Ministry believes that training our student teachers how to use and teach the higher-order thinking skills or even to develop these skills within themselves could be a step forward in transforming teacher education in Malaysia.

The Ministry's intention to increase the duration of practicum time for each semester means that student teachers would have more opportunities to practise their teaching (Ministry of Education, 2013). In addition, it is supposed to give student teachers more chances to reflect on their teaching since most teacher training courses in Malaysia require student teachers to write reflections after every lesson during the practicum (e.g. in the Bachelor of Teaching programme which I will discuss more in section 2.4). The rationale for the increase in practicum time is to produce highly skilled and well-prepared teachers to work in schools.

Furthermore, the new transformative education plan challenges and increases expectations on teacher educators. This means that the teacher trainers themselves should be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge (such as the higher-order thinking skills) so that they can provide quality training and help their student teachers to learn as well as to function effectively within today's context and demands. For example, necessary steps have been taken by individual departments in teacher education institutes to provide professional development courses such as 'Training of Trainers' course, 'Six Thinking Hats' and 'New Pedagogies for Deep Learning' to the current teacher educators to enhance their training skills. This effort is supposed to help raise and improve the standards of teacher education in Malaysia as a whole.

2.3 The Teacher Education Programme at the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia

The Bachelor of Teaching programme or *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan* (PISMP) is a four-year local teacher training programme for pre-service student teachers at undergraduate degree level. Previously, most teacher training programmes in Malaysia at the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) or *Institut Pendidikan Guru* (IPG) are designed for the training of pre-service and in-service teachers for both primary and secondary schools. However, in 2010 the administration of IPG was separated from BPG (*Bahagian Pendidikan Guru*) or Teacher Education Division, making the IPGs responsible only for the training of pre-service and in-service student teachers for primary schools³ especially for the Bachelor of Teaching programme. This change signifies the recent growth in the education system.

In 2007, the IPGs took their first group of students to enrol in the Bachelor of Teaching programme. Its curriculum operated on five basic principles; namely, to be ‘outcome-based’, ‘coherent’, ‘spiral and developmental’, ‘holistic’, as well as ‘practical and contextual’ (*Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2009*). The aim of this programme is to develop quality primary school teachers in terms of their knowledge, skills, and professionalism in line with the ‘National Education Philosophy’ (in 2.2) and ‘Teacher Education Philosophy’⁴ as well as to meet the standards as required by the Malaysian Qualifying Framework (MQF) and Malaysian Teacher Standard or *Standard Guru Malaysia* (SGM) in accordance with the 21st century skills. The Bachelor of Teaching programme is supposed to integrate both the learning of the ‘teaching knowledge’ and the ‘teaching skills’ together with practising ‘noble values’ (such as empathy and kindness) through the practice of teaching in real classroom situations in schools.

³ The Bachelor of Teaching programme or PISMP only trains pre-service student teachers for primary schools. However, other programmes such as the Bachelor of Education which is a programme partnered with universities in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia trains English teachers for secondary schools.

⁴ The Teacher Education Philosophy reads: ‘Teachers who are honourable with a progressive and scientific viewpoint, ready to uphold the aspirations of the country as well as respect the country's cultural heritage, guarantee individual development and foster a community that is united, democratic, progressive and disciplined’.

2.4 The Structure of the Bachelor of Teaching TESL Programme

The information which I am providing here about the structure of the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme is for cohort before June 2014. TESL is one of the eighteen different courses or fields offered by IPGM that train student teachers to teach English for the primary schools (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2012*). Appendix A shows the list of the major courses offered on the programme. The course is divided into two semesters per academic year. Learning is disseminated through three components which are tutorials, lectures, and practical teaching. Table 2.1 illustrates how the different components are combined for each semester. The research I have conducted in this study is in Practicum 3, which took place in the first semester on the fourth year of the programme. The School-Based Experience (SBE), Practicum and Internship courses together comprise the Professional Practice component of the programme. The differences between these courses and between the three practicums will be discussed below. Overall, the programme provides opportunities to student teachers to experience both the practical and theoretical aspects of learning to teach.

Table 2.1: Learning Components for Bachelor of Teaching Programme

| Year | Semester | Learning Components |
|------|----------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Tutorial, Lecture & SBE 1 |
| | 2 | Tutorial, Lecture & SBE 2 |
| 2 | 3 | Tutorial, Lecture & SBE 3 |
| | 4 | Tutorial, Lecture & SBE 4 |
| 3 | 5 | Tutorial, Lecture & Practicum 1 |
| | 6 | Tutorial, Lecture & Practicum 2 |
| 4 | 7 | Tutorial, Lecture & Practicum 3 |
| | 8 | Internship |

SBE = School Based Experience

The Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme is built on three curriculum components called ‘compulsory’, ‘core’, and ‘elective’. ‘Compulsory’ means that the courses under this component must be studied by each IPG student teachers following the Bachelor of Teaching programme. The aim is to integrate and comprehensively develop student teachers’ potential of their cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities through aspects such as spirituality and humanity, communication, basic knowledge in literacy and education, as well as physical, social and cultural development (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2014*).

‘Core’ consists of three courses which are: i) Professional Education, ii) Professional Practice and iii) Major Courses. ‘Professional Education’ includes courses that focus on developing the student teachers’ knowledge, values and ethics of teaching as well as professional skills in producing future teachers who are capable of carrying their teacher responsibilities effectively. ‘Professional Practice’ is the component where student teachers develop and master the knowledge and skills of teaching and learning in real situations at school. Throughout the program, students are required to undergo a 32-week Professional Practice implemented through three forms: i) School-Based Experience (SBE) is conducted for 4 weeks without credit through professional, major and elective courses; ii) Practicum is implemented for 24 weeks which is distributed in three phases e.g. Practicum 1, Practicum 2 and Practicum 3; and iii) Internship is conducted for 4 weeks in semester 8.

‘Major Courses’ provide student teachers with subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge for student teachers to master and later be applied in schools when they become qualified teachers. ‘Elective’ courses consist of two Elective Packages offered to enable student teachers to teach two other subjects apart from major courses. The scope of the course covers aspects of pedagogical content and assessment based on the Primary School Syllabus and curriculum. The list of courses or subjects for each component can be found in Appendix B.

2.5 The Professional Practice Component of the Bachelor of Teaching TESL Programme

As I mentioned previously, the Professional Practice component consists of three courses: SBE, Practicum, and Internship. A summarised description of these courses is provided in Table 2.2. The purpose of these courses is for student teachers to gain ‘hands-on’ experience, knowledge, and skills in teaching in real classroom situations. From here, student teachers reflect on the experiences that they observed and write these in their teaching practice reflective journals. Thus, the Professional Practice component relates directly to the practice of writing reflections. From these three practical courses, the practicum is the main course where ‘reflection’ is supposed to be integrated within the teacher education programme.

Table 2.2: Descriptions of School Based Experience, Practicum and Internship

| Year/Semester | Course | Description |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Year 1 & 2 Semester 1, 2, 3 & 4 | School- Based Experience | School Based Experience is the orientation stage where student teachers attend schools and observe the everyday routine of schoolteachers. The aim is to familiarise the student teachers with the school context and to prepare them for the teaching experience in the later stages of the professional practice component. |
| Year 3 & 4 Semester 5, 6 & 7 | Practicum | Practicum provides the opportunity for the student teachers to observe and evaluate teaching-learning practices. It also enables student teachers to plan lessons and apply the theories that they have learnt through guidance and collaboration with guiding teachers, supervising lecturers and peers in a variety of situations. |
| Year 4 Semester 8 | Internship | Internship is a professional transitional stage aimed at linking the student teachers' experience of professional practice and their responsibility as beginning teachers. Student teachers are expected to plan, implement and evaluate teaching and learning activities outside the classroom and the activities that are routinely done in the schools as part of the school culture. Student teachers are to demonstrate leadership qualities in managing various school activities. Internship also gives opportunities to student teachers in developing their self-confidence, endurance, leadership and inculcates professionalism as effective beginning teachers. |

(Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2014)

In Year 1 and 2 of the teacher training programme, student teachers attend SBE for one week for each phase from semester 1 to 4. The role of the SBE is to familiarise student teachers to the routine and culture of the school, the everyday teaching practices, the staff and the pupils. For each phase of the SBE, student teachers focus their observations on a specific area based on the courses from the different curriculum components (e.g. Philosophy and Education in Malaysia, ELT Methodology, Songs and Poetry for Young Learners). Thus, it is expected for the student teachers to write their reflections on these specific areas as required by the course. However, their reflections are not assessed since SBE is a non-credit course. Table 2.3 shows the examples of the focused area for each SBE phase. Thus, student teachers' reflections would be primarily related to the area of 'teaching', 'classroom management' or 'education' in general.

Before student teachers attend their SBE, they are given a briefing explaining the things student teachers have to do during this stage. Student teachers' role in this stage is as an 'observer'. Their task is to familiarise themselves to the daily routine of a teacher and the school system. Student teachers collect the information they need and compile it in their SBE portfolio. For example, student teachers may wish to draw the classroom layout and identify the teaching materials or resources being used in the classroom. These tasks enable the student teachers to look at things more closely and help develop their awareness of the workplace and the school culture. With this information and experience, student teachers are better prepared for a smooth transition into the next stage of training which is the teaching practice.

In addition, student teachers are encouraged to write the things they observed during SBE in their reflective journals. In order to help student teachers to prepare for reflective writing, they are given a general introduction about reflection including guidelines on how to write the reflections by the practicum unit or respective lecturers. For example, a format and a sample reflection are given, similar to the ones for the practicum (as in Appendix D, E and F). Student teachers are supposed to be taught how to write reflections appropriately at this stage since they will need to write more reflections during the practicum. Usually, a brief explanation of the process and expectations of reflecting on practice is given; such as: i) student teachers begin by recalling what had happened in the classroom, ii) the reflections might contain student teachers' emotions and reactions toward something and relate to the affective domain, iii) student teachers' reflections may also involve a conscious effort to do something, and iv) student teachers should be open and ready to change in terms of character, self-awareness, practice and develop positive behaviour (translated from Bahasa Melayu based on the SBE Briefing Handout).

Table 2.3: Focused Area to be Observed during SBE

| Semester / Phase | Component | Example Course (Focused Area to be Observed during SBE) |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 1 | Professional Education | Philosophy and Education in Malaysia |
| 2 | Major | ELT Methodology / English Phonetics and Phonology |
| 3 | Elective 1 | Songs and Poetry for Young Learners |

| | | |
|---|------------|---|
| 4 | Elective 2 | Any courses offered in Semester 4 (see Appendix B) |
|---|------------|---|

In Year 3 and 4 student teachers attend the practicum. The role of the practicum on the Bachelor of Teaching programme is to help student teachers to understand the experiences of teacher practice and to develop complex professional knowledge in becoming successful future teachers. During the practicum, student teachers learn by observing other more experienced teachers at work, prepare lesson plans and instructional materials such as tasksheets and teaching aids for the pupils whom they then teach with or without the help of a supervising teacher. Their lessons will be observed by the supervising teacher and supervising lecturer as part of their teaching practice assessment. They are encouraged to consult with the school and IPG on any matters which need further clarification. They could experiment with ideas and apply the theories they learned from input sessions at the teacher training institute in their classes during teaching practice.

The practicum also gives the opportunity for student teachers to interact with people of different positions in a school such as teachers, pupils, as well as parents. The relationship they develop with the teachers and their peers also promotes collaborative learning among themselves. Some student teachers may find communicating with others rather challenging since they lack the experience, knowledge of practice and sophistication in dealing with various people compared to other more experienced members in the school. However, it is the role of the supervising teacher and teaching practice supervisor to support their development in this area.

The practicum consists of three stages which takes place in semesters 5, 6 and 7 (see Table 2.1). The distinctions between the three practicum phases are: Practicum 1 - Student teachers are expected to show an understanding of the theories of teaching and apply them in teaching. They are required to work closely and co-operate with the subject teachers in lesson planning, preparing teaching aids and managing classrooms. Student teachers are also expected to carry out lessons together with the class teacher. Practicum 2 is a follow-up of Practicum 1 that requires the student teachers to practise the knowledge, skills and teacher values through guidance and collaboration with cooperating teachers, lecturers and peers in practical situations such as the classroom. Practicum 3 is a follow-up of Practicum 2 where student teachers are expected to demonstrate the mastery of the knowledge, skills and teacher values they have acquired

throughout the teaching practice experiences. These practicum phases show that the training of teaching progresses from ‘developing’ an understanding of the teaching experiences to ‘practising’ the knowledge and experience to further develop their teaching skills and later ‘master’ the knowledge and skills of teaching. However, to achieve a ‘mastery’ level in Practicum 3 seems rather ambitious, especially for student teachers who are still in training. For each of the practicum phase, student teachers are required to write reflections based on their teaching practice experiences. From the descriptions above, it seems that student teachers could write their reflections on many different areas such as on socio-cultural issues or communication and not limited to teaching. Therefore, their reflections could discuss a range of things. These reflections are assessed together with the teaching practice portfolio. This is a concern as it could result in examining on one area more than the other (discussed further in 2.10). Despite this, the practicum (particularly Practicum 3) is the best setting for my investigation as this is where student teachers are supposed to produce their written reflections the most for a longer period of time compared to SBE and Internship, which enables me to examine the practice of writing reflections in greater detail.

Table 2.4: Summary of Practicum 1, 2 and 3

| Practicum | Date | Purpose | Description |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | 3-28 February 2014 (4 weeks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide student teachers the opportunity to observe and evaluate teaching-learning practices with guidance from the supervising teacher and lecturer • to plan lessons and apply the theories that they have learnt in the institute with guidance from the supervising teacher and lecturer | Practicum 1 provides the opportunity for student teachers to practise knowledge, skills and teacher values in a guided and real-life situation. Student teachers are required to co-operate with the subject teachers in lesson planning, preparing teaching aids and classroom management. Student teachers are also expected to carry out lessons together with the class teacher. |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to practise teaching lessons individually or in collaboration with cooperating teachers, lecturers and peers in a variety of situations | |
| 2 | 30 June – 22 August 2014 (8 weeks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to provide student teachers the opportunity to enquire and enhance the implementation skills based on the teaching learning theories they have learnt in the institute in a variety of situations | Practicum 2 is a follow-up of Practicum 1 which enables student teachers to practise knowledge, skills and teacher values through guidance and collaboration with cooperating teachers, lecturers and peers in a real-life situation. |
| 3 | 2 February – 24 April 2015 (12 weeks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to consolidate teaching and learning skills based on the teaching learning theories they have learnt in the institute in a variety of situations | Practicum 3 is a follow-up of Practicum 2 which enables student teachers to master the knowledge, skills and teacher values through guidance and collaboration with cooperating teachers, lecturers and peers in a real-life situation. |

In Year 4 (in the final semester of the teacher education programme), student teachers attend internship; another element in the professional practice component. The purpose of this course is to link student teachers' experience of the professional practice with the responsibility as beginning teachers. In this phase, student teachers spend a month (4 weeks) in school planning, implementing and evaluating activities related to teaching and learning inside and outside the classroom, and immersing themselves gradually into the school system and culture. Thus, this phase will develop student teachers who are confident, possess stable self-esteem and endurance as they prepare themselves for taking the job as qualified teachers. During this time, student teachers also collect data for their action research project which they must complete at the end of the Bachelor of Teaching course. This would involve mainly observations and writing

reflections throughout the internship period. Student teachers could also teach lessons 2 to 4 periods or 1 hour to 2 hours a week.

The reflections student teachers write during their internship serve two purposes: i) as a record to learn from the school-based experiences, and ii) as data for their action research project. The written reflections are also assessed together with the internship portfolio like in the Practicum. Both the portfolio and reflections encompass 20% from the overall internship mark. As translated from the Professional Practice Handbook: 'Reflection during internship allows student teachers to appreciate and improve their professionalism' (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia*, 2016, p. 144). This shows the importance of reflection at every stage of the teacher training programme where it is used as a tool with which to develop student teachers' understanding of their practice, especially at the final stage of the teacher training when student teachers begin to apply the knowledge they have acquired and self-evaluate their practice to determine their progress. Now, student teachers have more teaching experience compared to the Practicum, their reflections are supposed to have deeper thoughts and clearer links between their experiences and theories of teaching.

A common feature of the SBE between the practicum and internship is these preliminary courses allow student teachers to carry out preparations in terms of knowledge and skills for actual teaching. The differences between SBE, the practicum and internship are that for SBE student teachers learn how to teach mainly through observations. They examine the school culture and the everyday teaching routines of the teachers. Student teachers are encouraged to teach lessons with their teacher mentor to familiarise themselves with the practice. At this stage, supervision is closely guided by the teacher mentor. The lecturer is not involved directly in supervising the student teachers at this point. Student teachers are not being assessed during SBE.

As for the practicum, the approach of training is mainly via practical teaching. At this stage, student teachers are supposed to plan and teach whole lessons, applying and experimenting in real classroom situations the teaching theories and skills they acquired on the course. The process of learning to teach is guided by the teacher and lecturer supervisors. They are responsible in supporting and facilitating student teachers in developing their teaching skills. One striking feature of the practicum that is different from SBE and internship is that student teachers are given the empowerment to plan, execute and improve their lessons based on what they think is best for them. Thus, this

is where reflection is crucial as it helps student teachers to think and develop their understanding and skills of teaching accordingly. In addition, student teachers will be assessed during the practicum mainly on their teaching.

An aspect of the internship that is different from the SBE and the practicum that it consolidates student teachers' knowledge and skills of teaching so that they become more solid as they begin to formulate an overall understanding of the teaching profession. This is the stage where everything about teaching comes to light as they become novice teachers.

The teacher education programme for TESL student teachers has a strict policy regarding the use of English. The main language for all communication during teaching practice should be in English. This includes the writing of the lesson plans, teaching the lessons, and writing the reflections. Student teachers are also encouraged to use English when interacting with their colleagues and supervisors. The rationale behind this is to give as much opportunity as possible for student teachers to practise using English.

2.6 Training Student Teachers to Write Reflections in the Bachelor of Teaching TESL Programme during the Practicum

One of the ways in training student teachers to write reflections is through the practice of writing reflections during the practicum. Each of these student teachers are given one teacher mentor/supervising teacher and a supervising lecturer to guide them during the teaching practice process. The practicum supervisors play an important role in facilitating student teachers in learning how to teach as well as 'to check and guide student teachers in writing their reflections on teaching, their weekly written reflections and building their teaching practice portfolio using a checklist provided' (*Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia*, 2014, p. 27). Appendix C shows the required content of the teaching practice portfolio. The supervising teacher will check the student teachers' written reflections every week and the supervising lecturers will examine the written reflections together with the teaching practice portfolio each time they go for observation. Table 2.5 shows the number of observations for each practicum phase for each specialised subject or course.

Table 2.5: Practicum Observation Distribution

| Phase (duration) | Subject / Course | *Pre- Observation | ITE / Supervising Lecturer | School / Teacher Mentor | Joint / Final Observation | Total |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| Practicum 1 (4 weeks) | Major | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Practicum 2 (8 weeks) | Major | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| | Elective 1 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Practicum 3 (12 weeks) | Major | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 9 |
| | Elective 2 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |

*In some cases, pre-observation could be combined with the first observation.

In general, there is no specific approach used by individual lecturers in ‘teaching’ student teachers to write reflections. Teacher educators do not use any specific module in their training and if any framework is used at all, there is variation among the teaching teams across the different courses. Teacher educators could use any format in guiding student teachers to write their reflections. However, a set of course documents such as the format for weekly reflections, guidelines for writing daily and weekly reflections and a sample reflection (see 2.7, 2.8, 2.9 and 3.6) are provided to the student teachers to write their reflections during the practicum. Teacher educators could also use these course documents in training reflective writing. Further explanation about these documents is given in the next section.

2.7 Daily and Weekly Reflections

An examination into the course documents such as student teachers’ written reflections, reflective writing format and sample reflection informs the process and support that student teachers received in writing their reflections, which forms part of the answer to RQ5. There are two types of reflections: the ‘daily reflections’ which student teachers write after every lesson they taught which are written in their teaching practice record book and ‘weekly reflections’. The differences between these reflections are rather uncertain apart from one to be written every day after every lesson taught and the other once a week discussing a specific area. It is difficult to determine what each type of reflection is since both reflections seem to have similar elements and the descriptions of these elements are rather vague. However, a closer examination into other

documentary evidence such as Format of Weekly Reflection for Week 1 only (Appendix D), Format for Weekly Reflection for Week 2 and later (Appendix E), Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F), Guidelines for Reflective Journal (Appendix G), and Weekly Reflective Journal Writing (Appendix H) revealed that there are a number of conceptual differences between these reflections.

For example, the curricular document 'Weekly Reflective Journal Writing' (Appendix H) begins with a short paragraph headed 'Concept' which attempts to explain the notion of weekly reflective journal that is 'a form of a academic writing' containing descriptions of 'event, problem, accomplishment or an area that needs attention by the student teachers' based on 'their experience during teaching practice'. The statements in 'Concept' also refer to 'accomplishments' and not just 'problems' as being a valid trigger for reflection. The emphasis on 'future actions' seems to suggest a longer-term, strategic approach to improving teaching through reflection than the more immediate problem-solving approach suggested by the word 'Action' under the heading Daily Written Reflections in the 'Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F). In addition, the phrase 'set targets' (in Appendix H) and 'When to take future action' under the heading 'Weekly Written Reflection' (in Appendix F) suggests that there is a 'timeframe' in which student teachers should work within when rectifying the problem for their weekly reflection, whilst for 'Daily Written Reflection' it is unclear when the 'action' should be taken as it is not explicitly stated. Thus, 'action' in the daily reflection could refer to the action that had taken place during the lesson or an action that will be taken in the next lesson. However, having 'set goals' encourages student teachers to evaluate their teaching experiences thoroughly and could also measure the outcome as well as indicating their achievement clearly.

In the Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F), another striking element of the 'Weekly Written Reflection' is that the student teachers only need to identify and write one or two issues identified in their teaching. This places a restriction on how much student teachers could write in their reflections. The implication of this is that student teachers must be 'selective' in choosing the issues they discuss in their reflective journals. However, the limitation imposed by the weekly reflection could help the student teachers to focus on dealing with one teaching problem at a time before moving on to the next one. This could help them develop a deeper understanding of the issue and make the process of reflecting on teaching more

organised. As for the daily reflection, it is not mentioned in the guidelines how many issues should be discussed in the reflections.

After further analysis I realised that the elements in the daily and weekly reflections are not equally unclear. The categories in the weekly reflection tend to be clearer than the categories in the daily reflections as evident in the documents as can be seen in Appendix D, E, F and H. Thus, at this point I could summarise that the conceptual features of the Daily Written Reflections and Weekly Written Reflections as follows:

Table 2.6: Conceptual Features of Daily and Weekly Written Reflections

| Daily Written Reflection | Weekly Written Reflection |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written after every lesson taught • focus on one or more issues • short term approach • action could be taken immediately during the lesson or later in another lesson(s) • specific goal(s)/target(s) for improvement is/are not necessarily stated • the time in which the action should be taken is not necessarily stated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written once a week • focus on one or two issues • long term approach • action is taken in the future lesson(s) • goal(s)/target(s) for improvement stated • the time in which the action should be taken is stated clearly |

2.8 Sample Written Reflection

A sample of written reflection is provided in the Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F). However, it is not specified whether this sample is for daily or weekly reflection. Thus, it is assumed that this sample is for both since there is no separate sample for each type of reflection provided in the documents. If there is only one sample for two types of reflection, it will not provide an accurate example of how the different reflections should be written based on the elements of daily written reflection and the format of the weekly reflections stated in Nos. 1 and 2 in the guidelines (Appendix F). Thus, it will be difficult to differentiate between the two reflections. As can be seen in Table 2.7, the analysis shows that there is a mixture of elements from both type of reflections in the sample. In fact, there seems to be one new element in Line 6 that is ‘contemplation’ which in both type of reflections this element does not exist. So, this could be rather confusing if this sample is used as the only sample for student teachers to write their reflections.

Table 2.7: Analysis of Sample Reflection

| Elements in Daily Reflection | Line | Elements in Weekly Reflection |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| issue | 1. My pupils look tired and sleepy. | problem |
| feelings | 2. However, I am worried that they will not understand what I have taught them in my lesson. | |
| realisation | 3. Apparently, all of their English classes are in the afternoon. | analysis |
| action | 4. I tried to keep them awake by asking questions. | |
| problem | 5. But they are still not interested in my lesson. | issue |
| | 6. What should I do? (contemplation) | |
| | 7. I think I will ask the pupils to work collaboratively in groups in my next lesson. | future action |

In addition, this brief sample is simplistic and lacking depth. This may, in consequence lead the student teachers to be influenced to write short reflections and limit their discussion to only identifying a teaching problem and stating the actions to solving the problem all of which could result in student teachers' written reflections being 'superficial'. For example, although the sample attempts to show an 'analysis' of the problem (the class is conducted in the afternoon therefore the pupils are tired and sleepy) the analysis is too simplistic. Other factors (e.g. activities pupils were involved in prior to the class, choice of tasks and materials) were not explored, resulting in a straightforward assumption of the cause of the problem. Depending on this sample alone is inadequate to help develop student teachers' reflective thinking skills since it does not portray a thorough investigation process of the problem that covers all possibilities of the cause and effect of the problem in different perspectives. However, one of the objectives of writing weekly reflective journals for student teachers is to 'increase the level of reflection' (Appendix H, item 2.6). If this is the case, then this sample is insufficient in providing the help that the student teachers need to develop their reflective writing skills. Another objective states that student teachers should 'use their reflective journals as a source for discussions with lecturer supervisor or teacher mentor to develop as professional teacher' (Appendix H, item 2.5). Thus, this suggests that it is important for the supervising lecturers and teacher mentors to provide additional support and guidance to student teachers in writing their reflections such as through reflective dialogues and providing examples of reflections that contain clearer discussions of best practices so that student teachers could learn to write reflections more effectively.

There are two formats for writing the weekly reflections: i) Format for Weekly Reflections for week 1 only (Appendix D) and ii) Format for Weekly Reflections for Week 2 and later (Appendix E). These formats are similar except for the first one being less guided and the second one guided. I feel it is unnecessary to have two separate formats for the same type of reflection. Instead, a format for daily reflection is not given when there should also be a format for this type of reflection. Despite this, the format in the 'Weekly Reflection for Week 2 and later' contains the elements as stated in the 'Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections' (Appendix F). The sample reflection seems to follow the format for 'Weekly Reflections for Week 1 only' as there are no specific elements for this format.

2.9 Guidelines for Reflective Journal

Appendix G shows the Guidelines for Reflective Journal. It is one of the documents student teachers need to put in their teaching practice portfolio. They use this form to guide them when writing their reflections. However, it is not specified which type of reflection this is for. Student teachers can either write short comments in the 'Note' section of the form or put a 'tick' next to the items they have included in their reflections. A potential problem with the guideline is that student teachers may use it as a 'checklist' in order to ensure that all items are included in the reflections, instead of a 'framework' to structure and compose their reflections. As with all documents that are assessed, it is common to have a standardised list of items in the document, especially in this case where student teachers' written reflections are assessed together with the teaching practice portfolio. Furthermore, when student teachers write their reflections according to the items in the list, this ensures consistency. In particular, the format and the items should be included in the reflections. In addition, this guideline (Appendix G) could be very helpful as it provides a step-by-step procedure in writing the reflections as can be seen in Table 2.8 below. However, the word 'identifying' suggests an approach that requires student teachers to 'select' and 'locate' which reasons, causes, weaknesses and strengths they need to write in their reflections. This could explain the nature of the sample provided (Appendix F and Table 2.7) that seems lacking in in-depth discussion of a teaching problem and only mentioning on the surface the events that took place.

Table 2.8: Guidelines for Reflective Journal

| No. | Item | Note |
|-----|--|------|
| 3. | Thorough analysis of the issue/event/problem | |
| | i) identifying the reasons for the issue/event/problem | |
| | ii) identifying the possible causes of the issue/event/problem | |
| | iii) identifying the weaknesses of the issue/event/problem | |
| | iv) identifying the strengths of the issue/event/problem | |
| | v) possible effect of the issue/event/problem | |

Having these documents, for example the Format of Weekly Reflection for Week 1 only (Appendix D), Format for Weekly Reflection for Week 2 and later (Appendix E), Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F), Guidelines for Reflective Journal (Appendix G), and Weekly Reflective Journal Writing (Appendix H), also suggest that student teachers will approach writing the reflections in a standardised way as these are the documents they refer to when they write their reflections. They may also focus their reflections on identifying the strengths and/or weaknesses of their teaching, providing suggestions and ideas to solve the problems in their teaching, since these are the main elements of the written reflection as portrayed by these documents. For example, in Guidelines for Reflective Journal (Appendix G and Table 2.8) it is clearly stated that student teachers are required to ‘identify the strengths and weaknesses’ in their teaching, words such as ‘issue’ and ‘problem’ in Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F) as well as ‘an area that needs attention’ in Weekly Reflective Journal Writing (Appendix H) suggest ‘weaknesses’. While ‘accomplishment’ and ‘achievement’ in Weekly Reflective Journal Writing (Appendix H) could also refer to strengths. Elements of ‘identifying the strengths, weaknesses and improvement in teaching’ will also become apparent in the findings of this research (see Chapter 7) which are dominant characteristics of the student teachers’ written reflections. These characteristics constitute a somewhat narrow, restricted interpretation and application of reflection, focusing heavily on teacher performance in the classroom.

In addition, based on the support and guidance that the documentation has provided, student teachers’ reflections are moving towards a ‘teaching-centric’ nature of the reflections (more about this in 3.7 and 8.2.1). For example, objective 2.4, ‘develop student teachers’ awareness of their roles as professional teachers, who are constantly developing their teaching and learning’ (in Appendix H) suggests the stress on reflecting

on teaching is essential as this helps student teachers to develop their professional skills. Thus, it is assumed that the characteristics of reflection found in these documents will later be evident in student teachers' written reflections which I have collected as well as in the interviews that I have conducted with the teacher educators and student teachers in this study (see Chapters 5 & 7). Thus, this would explain the topics that student teachers wrote in their reflections later in the data analysis section (in 6.3).

Throughout the three practicum phases, student teachers are expected to write both the daily and weekly reflections. It is expected that student teachers will develop their reflective writing skills accordingly from Practicum 1 to Practicum 3. Thus, the practicum provides the space and time, the 'training' and 'practice' that student teachers need to develop their reflective skills in real classroom situations. However, the practice of writing reflections is also incorporated in other parts of the curriculum apart from the practicum such as Literature in English, Curriculum Studies and Action Research. For example, for Literature in English course student teachers are encouraged to keep a reflective diary and write reflections about the things they learned on the course, or teacher educators may also ask their student teachers to write short reflective notes at the end of the semester as feedback on the course. These are informal tasks given to the student teachers during tutorials as an initiative to prepare them for the more formal task of writing reflections for the practicum. Often, these tasks are in the form of free writing where no guidelines are given except for a few guiding questions. These exercises can be rather tentative, depending on how far the lecturers feel the student teachers need to develop their reflective writing skills and continue with this exercise in their classrooms. Another example is that Curriculum Studies student teachers may be required to write a short reflection (e.g. within 400 words) at the end of a course as part of their final assignment. These written reflections are assessed according to the assessment criteria set for that particular course (separate from the assessment criteria for the practicum). Often, the mark for the written reflection contributes to a small percentage to the overall coursework mark. Integrating these reflective writing tasks in other courses suggests that the programme is providing additional support in developing the practice of writing reflections to the student teachers. This also means that 'reflection' is an important element since it can be found in many different courses in the teacher education programme.

2.10 Assessing Student Teachers' Written Reflections

During the practicum, student teachers are assessed in four areas which are Lesson Planning, Lesson Implementation, Reflection, and Attitude & Attributes. Table 2.9 shows the weightage for each assessment component. 'Reflection' contributes a small percentage to the overall practicum mark, which is only 10%. Less percentage in the assessment mark suggests that 'reflection' has been under-valued compared to the complexity of the task and the amount of written reflections student teachers must produce during the practicum. 'Reflection' is also assessed together with other documents such as teaching practice portfolio (contains documents such as those related to the school, student profiles, scheme of work and timetable), teaching practice record book (contains lesson plans) and the practical aspect of the practicum which is teaching.

Table 2.9: Assessment Components for the Practicum

| Assessment Component | Reference | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|
| a) Lesson Planning | Teaching Practice Portfolio and Teaching Practice Record Book | 30 |
| b) Lesson Implementation | Teaching Practice Portfolio and Teaching Practice Record Book | 40 |
| c) Reflection | Teaching Practice Portfolio and Teaching Practice Record Book | 10 |
| d) Attitude and Attributes | Teaching Practice Portfolio and Feedback Discussion with Teachers/Principle in School | 20 |
| Total | | 100 |

There are three different forms used to assess student teachers during teaching practice: i) PR1/P, ii) PR1, and iii) PR2. The PR1/P form (Appendix I) is only used in Phase 1 practicum while PR1 form (Appendix J) and PR2 form (Appendix K) are used in Phase 2 and Phase 3 practicum. Teacher mentors and teaching practice supervisors use these forms to assess and provide feedback to student teachers on their performance during teaching practice.

For PR1, the assessment is based on four components: A) Lesson Planning, B) Lesson Implementation, C) Reflection, and D) Attitudes and Attributes. For each component there are many different aspects (see Table 2.10) which are marked according to a five-level scale, in which Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 the highest. Table 2.11 shows the marking criteria for PR1 and PR1/P forms for 'Reflection' component.

‘Reflective Writing’ is one of the three aspects assessed under the ‘Reflection’ component. For the ‘Reflective Writing’ aspect, the focus is on student teachers’ ability to write the reflections according to the assessment criteria as stated in Table 2.11. The criteria for evaluating student teachers’ writing skills are very vague. For example, student teachers are expected to produce written reflections that ‘show effort to reflect’, ‘quality’ and ‘maturity’. These phrases are too abstract and difficult to measure. Whereas at Level 4, student teachers who can ‘identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning as well as able to take further actions for improvement’ could be considered to have good reflective writing skills. This is more observable and straightforward than the others.

The ‘Reflective Thinking’ aspect (in Table 2.11) shows the criteria for assessing the depth and breadth of the student teachers’ reflections in terms of the quality of thinking they display. Action verbs such as to ‘evaluate’, ‘make connections’, ‘infer’, and ‘identify’ are used in the evaluation criteria for student teachers’ reflective thinking. The descriptors also suggest that ‘reflective thinking’ involves ‘planning’, ‘taking action’ as well as ‘cause and effect’, which indicates the ‘analysis’ stage of the reflective thinking process.

The ‘Portfolio Building’ aspect evaluates student teachers’ ability to manage and compile relevant documentary evidence of input such as journal articles relating to teaching and learning, as well as their own written reflections. The portfolio act as a ‘record’ of the things student teachers did during teaching practice. From the portfolio, particularly the written reflections, teacher educators could evaluate student teachers’ progress in terms of teaching skills and reflective writing skills, student teachers have made during their teaching practice.

Table 2.10: Aspects Assessed in PR1 and PR1P Forms for Component C - Reflection

| Component | Aspect | Level | Comment |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| (C) REFLECTION | a. Reflective writing | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | b. Reflective thinking | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | c. Portfolio building | 1 2 3 4 5 | |

Table 2.11: Criteria for Assessing Component C – Reflection for PR1/PR1P Forms

| Component | Aspect | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| (C) REFLECTION | a. Reflective Writing | Produces written reflections without any effort to reflect. Produces written reflections without quality. | Produces written reflections but with minimal effort to reflect. Produces written reflections but lacking in quality. | Produces written reflections but made very little effort to take further actions or display self-improvement. | Able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning as well as able to take further actions for improvement. | Demonstrates maturity in producing critical reflections and self-evaluation. Able to take further actions to improve lessons. Demonstrates the ability to develop and improve personal quality. |
| | b. Reflective Thinking | No effort to evaluate oneself. Unable to make connections between cause and effect of an action taken during teaching. No effort to plan and take further action on teaching problem. | Limited attempt to evaluate oneself. Limited ability to make connections between cause and effect of an action taken during teaching. Demonstrates minimal effort to plan and take further action on teaching problem. | Some effort in evaluating own strengths and weaknesses but unable to make connections between cause and effect of an action taken during teaching. Little attempt to infer between situation and experience. | Always make effort to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses. Able to make connections between cause and effect of an action taken during teaching. Able to make inference between situation and experience. | Able to identify and evaluate own strengths and weaknesses clearly. Able to make connections between cause and effect of an action taken during teaching. Able to make inference between situation and experience. Able to anticipate the effect of an action and take action based on evidence and plan the next course of action using HOTS. |
| | c. Portfolio Building | Does not complete the portfolio as required. No effort to add information and compile relevant documents. Does not continuously write reflections. | Limited effort to update portfolio with new information and documents. The information contained in the portfolio is somewhat irrelevant to the practicum objectives. Reflective writing does not really identify the teaching issues | New information and documents have been added to the portfolio and are relevant to the practicum objectives. But, the portfolio is untidy, lacks creativity and disorganised. Able to identify issues in the reflective journals but unable to explain and find the | Demonstrates lots of effort in building the portfolio – the documents and information are relevant. Continuously writes reflective journals which show clear practice of reflecting on teaching. Preparation of the portfolio is neat, creative and well organised in line with the | Demonstrates lots of effort in building the portfolio – the documents and information are very relevant. Writes very clear reflections which indicates good practice of reflecting on teaching. Preparation of the portfolio is neat, creative and well organised relevant with |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| | | | and steps for solutions. | solution to the problems. | objectives of portfolio building during the practicum. | the objectives of portfolio building during the practicum. |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|

The assessment grid found in PR1 and PR1/P (see Table 2.10) is used in all the practicum phases (Practicum 1, 2 and 3) before the final observation with the supervising teacher. No marks are given but the levels (e.g. Level 1,2,3,4,5) is to indicate the progression and areas that needed improvements in the reflections such as reflective writing skills, reflective thinking skills and portfolio building in which the written reflections contain, before determining the final practicum marks using PR2 form.

The PR2 form (Appendix K) is used only in the final observation at the end of practicum phase 2 and phase 3. The supervisors or the examiners write their report about the student teachers' performance and decide on the final teaching practice mark in this form. The PR2 form is kept as a record and the comments are not shared with the student teachers. However, the Practicum Unit could show the comments to the student teachers if they ask for it.

As can be seen in the PR2 form (see Table 2.12), the elements in assessing student teachers' written reflections such as lesson planning, lesson implementation, reflection, and attitudes and attributes are combined under one aspect which is 'C. Principle and Practice of Teaching and Learning' component of the assessment. Consequently, it is unclear whether the examiners will examine each element equally. Moreover, an overall mark of 30 marks is allocated for this component. Since there is no division provided, it is hard to determine the fraction of the marks allocated for each element, so as a result there is a possibility of an unequal distribution. Perhaps, putting 'reflection' as a separate category could ensure that reflection is assessed, and marks are given accordingly (a suggestion I made in 9.3.2).

Table 2.12: PR2 Form Component C - Principle and Practice of Teaching and Learning

| Aspect | Level | Comment |
|--|--|---------|
| C. PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (Refer to PR1 Form) - Lesson planning - Lesson implementation - Reflection - Attitudes and attributes (30 marks) | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks C = <input type="text"/> | |

Like the assessment criteria for PR1 (Table 2.11), each element in the criterion for PR2 is assessed based on a 5-level scale. Table 2.13 shows the descriptors for each level of the assessment criteria. They indicate that the criteria for ‘Reflection’ is combined with the other elements under the ‘Principles and Practice of Teaching and Learning’ component. This suggests the primary focus is on assessing the practical aspect of ‘teaching’ rather than the ‘reflection’ itself which is secondary. This may cause examiners to ‘forget’ that ‘reflection’ is also part of the assessment. This could also explain my previous comment about the tendency of the examiners to focus on examining the practical aspects more than the reflection. This could also influence teacher educators’ focus in training of reflective writing on ‘teaching’ (as can be seen later in student teachers’ written reflections in 6.3).

Table 2.13: Assessment Criteria for Component C - Principle and Practice of Teaching and Learning

| Component | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (C) Principle and Practice of Teaching and Learning | Inadequate preparation for teaching, unaware of pupils’ needs, unsuitable teaching strategy, and lack of teaching and learning resources. | Inadequate preparation for teaching, aware of pupils’ needs, suitable teaching strategy was used, unsuitable/inadequate teaching and learning resources, teaching was weak. | Lesson was taught according to the lesson plan, realistic pupil expectation. Tasks given were suitable. Suitable use of teaching strategy, effective use of resources. Development in teaching rather weak. | Lesson was planned according to pupils’ needs and abilities. Content of the lesson was delivered clearly and effectively. The lesson was well organised. Teaching and learning resources were suitable and used appropriately. Pupils’ attention and interests were maintained throughout the lesson. | Lesson was original, it was well planned and used a variety of teaching and learning resources. Used of many different teaching strategies. Met pupils’ needs. The lesson was fun and successful in developing pupils’ interests in learning. |

Table 2.14 shows Component F - Evaluation, which evaluates student teachers’ performance based on their ability to check and give feedback on pupils’ work, keep records and be aware of their pupils’ progress, and to be able to evaluate their own learning and teaching. Although it is not explicitly stated that ‘reflection’ is involved in this evaluation process, it is common to find instances about pupils’ and teachers’

progress and achievements in reflections. Furthermore, the descriptor in the assessment criteria (Table 2.15) for example, ‘ability to reflect’ indicates that the focus of the assessment here is on ‘reflection’. This is confusing when the criteria do not match with the aspects as indicated in the PR2 form. Again, there could be a tendency that the examination would be more focused on the process of ‘evaluation’ such as checking and giving feedback to learners’ work, rather than on ‘reflecting’ on the approach of checking and giving feedback to learners. Thus, the descriptors need to be constructed more clearly and should match with the items stated in the assessment form if ‘reflection’ is to be assessed accurately.

Table 2.14: PR2 Form Component F - Evaluation

| Aspect | Level | Comment |
|--|---|---------|
| F. EVALUATION (Refer to PR1 Form, teaching practice record book, and portfolio) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks and gives feedback to learners’ work - Keeps records of learners’ progress - Aware of learners’ progress - Evaluation on learning - Evaluation on teaching (10 marks) | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks = <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | |

Table 2.15: Assessment Criteria for Component F - Evaluation

| Component | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| (F) Evaluation | Unable to reflect. | Limited ability to reflect. | Some ability to reflect. | Able to reflect adequately. Limited use of some higher-order questions. | Able to reflect and use higher-order questions when reflecting. |

I have the summary of the discussion above on the training and assessing of student teachers’ reflective journals during the practicum in a diagram which can be found in Appendix L.

2.11 Chapter Summary

Currently, the education system in Malaysia is undergoing a rapid change in developing future citizens who can think critically and able to function effectively at their workplace especially as teachers. The aim of the transformed education system is to produce quality teachers and raise the standards of education in Malaysia as a whole. In the teacher education programme in Malaysia, 'reflection' is included as one of the elements during teaching practice. It is believed that 'reflection' could promote and develop 'reflective' and 'critical' thinking skills among student teachers. It is also found that the training and teaching of 'reflection' in the teacher education programme is through the writing of the daily and weekly reflections. Course documents such as the format of reflection, guidelines to write daily and weekly reflections and the sample reflection are helpful in providing the support student teachers need in writing their reflections. However, a closer examination into these documents revealed that certain explanation and instruction is unclear. The documents such as the PR1 and PR2 forms are also vague in informing which element, either the practical or the reflection, is the main component to be assessed. In addition, the support (through the guidelines and sample reflection given on how to write the reflections – in 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9) that was given to student teachers may not be enough to develop student teachers' reflective writing skills (RQ5). These findings are crucial in improving and developing clearer reflective writing instructions and assessment in the future. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail the conceptual underpinning of the term 'reflection' as it is applied in general education and teacher education. I will also review previous studies and identify the gaps in the issues relating to 'reflection' in teacher training in Malaysia as well as other countries.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this review is to provide insights into the concepts of ‘reflection’ in the literature and to structure the foundation for this study. There are many meanings of the term ‘reflection’ as presented by many different scholars and this is a problem for teacher education research since they are ambiguous and confusing (Rodgers, 2002; Akbari, 2007; Clara, 2015). Thus, it is crucial for me to first clarify what ‘reflection’ entails in the literature before I could explore my participants’ perceptions of this term especially in the context of teacher education. This chapter also highlights some of the issues concerning reflection as it is currently debated as well as reveal any gaps that exist in the literature. I have organised my discussion in this review around four themes which I have identified as a result of my reading, and which have particular relevance to the aims and context of my study. These themes will shed light on what ‘reflection’ is, how reflection is integrated and develops professional practice, how reflection helps to shape student teachers’ thinking in becoming reflective teachers, and how reflective writing is taught and assessed on teacher education programmes. The final section of this chapter presents a discussion on areas that are lacking in the published studies which I had reviewed.

3.2 ‘Reflection’ as a Questioning Activity

This section explores the concepts of ‘reflection’ in the literature that emphasise its importance in questioning and challenging received opinions and accepted practices. The focus on ‘reflection’ as a questioning activity is relevant to this study since reflection is one of the tools used by student teachers to interrogate their classroom practices during the practicum to find their weaknesses to improve their teaching in the process of learning to teach. This section includes a discussion on i) Dewey’s conception of reflective thinking to question, understand and change existing individual professional practices and routines, ii) the connection between reflective thinking and critical thinking, iii) the conception of reflection that includes social and political aspects and the way they impact on professional practice, and iv) reflection as both an individual and social activity.

3.2.1 John Dewey's Reflective Thought

John Dewey was one of the earliest philosophers who explored reflective thinking processes and his work contributed significantly to the development of educational thinking in various educational settings. In his book *How We Think* (1933) Dewey identified several modes of thought such as belief, imagination, and stream of consciousness. However, the mode Dewey was most interested in was 'reflection'. Rodgers (2002) distilled from Dewey's writings four criteria to conceptualise 'reflection'. I will use Rodgers' criteria to organise my discussion on reflection in this section. Rodgers' criteria for reflection are as follows:

- i. Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationship with and connections to other experiences and ideas.
- ii. Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry.
- iii. Reflection needs to happen in community, in interaction with others.
- iv. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others.

For the first criterion, Rodgers began by explaining how the concept of 'reflection' is formulated to be 'a meaning-making process'. Extracting from Dewey's writing, he explained that 'reflection' is made up of many smaller components which later is formulated into a complex whole. To understand what the first criterion means and to arrive at the centrality of reflection, Rodgers asserted that it is essential to examine the pieces of the components separately. From both Dewey and Rodgers, I extracted one main component and two sub-components which are important in formulating 'reflection'. The main component is 'experience'. According to Dewey (1938) experience is more than simply a matter of direct participation in events either solitarily or with others such as reading a book or discussing a matter with a friend. What is important here is experience must involve 'interaction' between the person and his or her environment. This makes 'interaction' as one of the sub-components of 'experience'. Dewey pointed out that through interaction with the world there is change not only in the self but also in the environment. This means that through interaction we can 'make

sense' of things through exchanges of information and knowledge acquired from the various elements and perspectives. However, for our understanding to develop further, there must be 'continuity'. This is the second sub-component for experience. Rodgers (2002, p. 846) explained that continuity means 'we make sense of each new experience based on the meaning gleaned from our own past experiences, as well as other prior knowledge we have about the world – what we have heard and read of others' experiences and ideas'. Rodgers (2002) added that experience exists in time and therefore linked to the past and future. This means we need to look into our past and present experiences and make connections between the previous and new knowledge to make clear of the matter in question, e.g. our teaching. Thus, this shows the role of 'reflection' that is to 'make meaning' which involves formulating relationships and continuities among the components of an experience, between that experience and other experiences, between ones' knowledge and the knowledge of others (Rodgers, 2002). In relation to the current study, student teachers wrote reflections on their teaching practice to make meaning of their experiences while interacting with one's environment. By reflecting on their experiences, it is hoped that student teachers will not only start to develop their understanding of their teaching but will continue do so as they become qualified teachers.

The second criterion 'reflection as a rigorous way of thinking' perceives reflection as a process of thinking which requires the reflector to think actively and carefully from many different angles before one could make sense of things. Dewey (1933) conceived reflection as a particular way of thinking and cannot be regarded similar to the mere 'mulling over' something which regarded as undisciplined which is a contrast to reflection. Dewey (1933) made a distinction between reflective thought and three other types of thought which do not have the characteristics of 'reflection'. These are i) stream of consciousness – 'uncontrolled coursing of ideas through our heads' (p. 4), ii) invention or imagination, and iii) believing – 'prejudgments, not conclusions reached as the result of personal mental activity, such as observing, collecting, and examining evidence' (1938, p. 7). These thoughts are different to what Dewey (1933) defined as 'reflection' which constitutes 'active, persistent, and careful considerations of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' (p. 9). Dewey demonstrated that thinking can turn into reflection in two phases: i) when we are in 'a state of doubt, hesitation,

perplexity, mental difficulty in which thinking originates’, and ii) when we are in ‘an act of searching, hunting and inquiring to find material that will resolve the doubt and settle and dispose of the perplexity’ (Dewey, 1933, p. 12). Thus, this triggers the need for one to ‘inquire’ and investigate further to gain understanding of the matter or problem in hand.

In his book *How We Think*, Dewey (1933) identified five steps to demonstrate the process of reflection. They are stated below:

Step 1: a felt difficulty

Step 2: its location and definition

Step 3: suggestion of possible solution

Step 4: development by reasoning of the suggestion

Step 5: further experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection.

Dewey noted that frequently Step 1 and Step 2 are fused into one. He explained that when we are faced with a difficult situation, we may feel uneasy at first then leading us to find out what is the matter. It is a phase when we start to recognise or become aware of a problem and try to identify the problem as it leaps to our mind (Rodgers, 2002). Dewey cautioned that the interpretation of the experience at this stage is spontaneous and may not always be thoughtful. Thus, this is when the distinction between novice and veteran teachers could be made (Rodgers, 2002). For example, teachers with more teaching experience will move between thought and action more quickly since their skills to respond to the problem have broadened over time as compared to beginning teachers with limited teaching experiences (Rodgers, 2002). This is very much of relevance since the participants in this study are pre-service student teachers with limited teaching experience so my investigation into their engagement in reflection aims to reveal their reflective thoughts and abilities on their teaching.

Step 3 is ‘suggestion’. At this stage the reflector will begin to start analysing the problem which involves ‘the selection and arrangement of the particular facts upon perception of which suggestion issues’ (Dewey, 1933, p. 75). Here, possible connections between the problem and understanding is beginning to take shape. However, Dewey cautioned that the ‘suggestion’ of the possible meaning is tentative as they may require further evidence.

So, the process proceeds to Step 4 that is ‘reasoning’. Here the process is more intense and focused. The idea that was formed from the experience in the previous stage

is reconstructed and reorganised based on solid evidence (Rodgers, 2002). Thus, the reflector may acquire full knowledge of the problem through a series of inquiries to develop clearer understanding of the experience.

The final step of the process of reflection is ‘corroboration of an idea and formation of a concluding belief’ (Dewey, 1933). This is when ‘action’ is taken by the reflector and ‘experimented’ to test the hypothesis or theory developed from the other stages in the reflection process (Rodgers, 2002). However, the process does not end here. Certainly, when one has tested his or her theory in action, more questions, problems and ideas arise. Therefore, the process continues and cyclical. As Dewey (1933, p. 4) described that reflection ‘happens in a chain, a consequence of ideas, a stream of thoughts that are linked together where there is a sustained movement to a common end’.

Dewey (1933) recognised that having to ‘interact’ with others so that they would understand one’s ideas reveals both the strengths and weaknesses in one’s thinking. The implication of reflection is the act of sharing ideas with another person could broaden the field of understanding and knowledge. Rodgers (2002) identified this as the third criteria labelled as ‘reflection in community’. He explained that teachers and students need the support from the community and the ability to act independently since this is important in promoting life-long learning. I will return to this point in 3.2.4 Reflection as an Individual and Social Activity.

Dewey (1933) also stated that ‘attitudes’ are important in the act of reflection as they could either open the way to learning or block it. He argued that awareness of our attitudes and emotions, and the discipline to harness them and use them to our advantage, is part of the work of a good thinker (Rodgers, 2002). This makes ‘attitudes’ as the fourth criteria of reflection. Dewey (1933) identified four kinds of attitudes: ‘wholeheartedness’, ‘directness’, ‘open-mindedness’, and ‘responsibility’. These attitudes are important in shaping learners or teachers to be effective thinkers. This also relates to the process of forming student teachers’ ‘teacher identity’ (in 3.4) as they reflect on their experiences and interact with others.

Firstly, ‘whole-heartedness’ means that teachers show genuine interests in something, indicating that they are ‘curious’ about and enthusiastic for a certain subject matter which are essential in good teaching (Rodgers, 2002). It is believed that ‘curiosity’ drives teachers to investigate and inquire further about a problem and this contributes to better understanding of the subject matter.

‘Directness’ indicates that a teacher is ‘confident’ about his or her own beliefs and experiences without worrying about the judgement of others (Rodgers, 2002). In fact, this is what most student teachers in this study lack as can be seen in their responses in the interviews and written reflections. For example, there are very few instances that discuss and relate theories to teaching (see 5.3 and 6.3) and there are a number of student teachers unwilling to let their peers read their reflections (see 5.4.1). Consequently, when these student teachers are too focused on the content and their teaching, they often fail to notice what is going on around them, such as their learners and their learning. Perhaps, this is the reason many researchers (e.g. Jay & Johnson, 2002; Larrivee, 2000) found as to why pre-service teachers’ reflections lacked depth.

The third attitude is ‘open-mindedness’. Dewey (1933) described it as ‘hospitality’ to new ways of seeing and understanding. Rodgers (2002) further elaborated that open-mindedness does not mean to accept all ideas blindly without intelligent critique, but it also involves the willingness to consider different perspectives. It is ‘to accept possibilities of errors even in the beliefs that are dearest to us’ (Dewey, 1933, p. 30) and to acknowledge the limitations of one’s own perspective.

‘Responsibility’ is perhaps the most important attitude for a person to be able to reflect effectively (Dewey, 1933). Being ‘responsible’ means acknowledging that the meaning we are acting on is our meaning, and not a disembodied meaning that is ‘out there’ (Rodgers, 2002). It also means taking appropriate action and changing the ways we perceived the world and our experiences (Dewey, 1933). Thus, student teachers not only should have the skills to reflect, they also need these attitudes for them to be effective ‘reflective practitioners’ that is to have the ability to reflect on one’s actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning (Schön, 1983).

Clearly, from the discussion above reflective thinking is a cognitive process that is complex and made up of many different elements. When teachers reflect, they begin to question their teaching. The reflections made by these teachers will help them to see things in a different light. Reflection moves teachers away from teaching as ‘routine action’ and this is important if teachers want to be active participants who could contribute and professionally improve their practice. Comparing the perceptions of reflection as perceived by the student teachers and teacher educators in my study and Dewey’s reflective thought will shed light on the differences and similarities of the concepts of reflection.

3.2.2 Critical Thinking and Reflective Thinking

As is evident from the previous section, ‘reflection’ as a questioning activity involves all sorts of cognitive activities which are often associated with ‘critical thinking’. Psychologists, philosophers and educationists have proposed many definitions for the term ‘critical thinking’. For instance, critical thinking is used to describe the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome; thinking that is purposeful, reasoned and goal directed, involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions when the thinker is using skills that are thoughtful and effective for the particular context and type of thinking task (Ennis, 1991; Sternberg, 1985; Halpern, 1999). On the other hand, reflective thinking is a part of the critical thinking process referring specifically to the processes of analysing and making judgments about what has happened (Moon, 1999; Yost, Sentner & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000). Both critical and reflective thinking are important for learners to acquire because this would enable them to see things in better perspective and empower them to improve their learning.

Critical thinking skills are sometimes described as ‘higher order’ skills that is, skills requiring ways of thinking that are deeper and more complex than the ‘everyday’ thinking such as cooking a meal or driving a car. A framework that describes different levels of thinking is helpful in explaining the concept of critical thinking. An example of the framework is Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning Objectives, which is ‘a multi-tiered model of classifying thinking according to six cognitive levels of complexity’ (Anderson et al., 2014). The former Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956) featured ‘knowledge’, ‘comprehension’, ‘application’, ‘analysis’, ‘synthesis’, and ‘evaluation’ as the elements in the thinking skills. In the revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (2001) the skills are referred to as ‘remembering’, ‘understanding’, ‘applying’, ‘analysing’, ‘evaluating’, and ‘creating’. This framework suggests that remembering, understanding, and even applying facts, figures, concepts, or other learning are ‘lower order’ skills. Certainly, these skills are important, but they are just a beginning. Learners need to be able to ‘analyse’ and ‘evaluate’ the information that they encounter, then make ‘inferences’ or draw conclusions based on analysis and evaluation. These three key higher order skills are core to critical thinking (Anderson & Sosniak, 1994; Halpern, 1999).

A closer look at these types of thinking shows that ‘critical thinking’ involves a wide range of thinking skills which leads toward desirable outcomes, and so does ‘reflective thinking’ which focuses on the process of making judgments and suggesting possible solutions as can be seen in Step 3 of Dewey’s reflective framework in 3.2.1. It enables learning to take place and be prompted during complex problem-solving situations because reflective thinking provides learners with an opportunity to step back and think about how they actually solve problems and how a particular set of problem-solving strategies is appropriated for achieving their goal.

It is argued that it would be difficult to develop expertise in any area without engaging in the effortful processes of thinking (Halpern, 1999; Ennis, 1991). Having the ability to think critically and reflectively is important especially for teachers since they are constantly faced with classroom situations that require them to solve problems, make decisions and take actions which will affect the entire teaching process. Applying critical and reflective thinking in everyday teaching will transform teachers’ ‘routine action’ to ‘active action’ (Dewey, 1933) where teaching is no longer a mechanical process but involves different kinds of activities. It is also believed that teachers of the future must have the intellectual, moral and critical thinking abilities to meet the challenges of 21st century schools (Yost et al., 2000). Particularly in a technological, multicultural and multiliterate society today, teachers must be able to sift through and process large amounts of data to make intelligent decisions. Thus, it is necessary for teachers to develop critical thinking skills to function effectively in today’s challenging society.

3.2.3 Social and Political Dimensions of Reflection

Reflection as a questioning activity may also involve questioning the wider social and political context in which one’s professional lives are enacted. Zeichner (2008) argued that teachers should pay more considerations to the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching. He explained that previously teacher training was about preparing teachers to behave in a certain way which were assumed to be effective in raising students’ standards based on test scores. He said that there was a lack of discussion about ‘teacher thinking’ and ‘understanding the rationales’ of using different teaching strategies or helping teachers to ‘use their judgement’ in the classrooms to meet the needs of their students. Zeichner saw teaching in this way as a ‘technical process’ where teachers are only following directions from the school. Thus, he suggested that ‘reflection’ can be a

reaction against the view of ‘teachers as technicians’ who merely carry out what others, removed from the classroom, want them to do, and top-down approaches to educational reform that only involve teachers as passive participants (Zeichner, 2008). Thus, this suggests that teachers need to question not only on things related to their classrooms but also outside the classrooms if they were to develop clearer understanding of the situations happening in their teaching.

In addition, Kelchtermans (2009) asserted that a reflection can be considered critical when it includes moral and political agendas in the work context and goes beyond the level of action to the level of underlying beliefs, ideas, knowledge, and goals. This resonates with the earlier argument by Zeichner on the importance of reflection that incorporates a criterion relating to social, moral, and ethical values into considerations for actions. Without this deep and critical character, reflection may become nothing more than a procedure or ‘a method or coping strategy that confirms and continues the status quo’ (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 269).

Colley, Bilics & Lerch (2012) asserted that citizens in a democracy must be able to adapt to changes as presented and this can be accomplished through the development of reflective skills. This means that individuals are empowered by reflection as they can develop their own ideas and their understanding of things from many different perspectives. Applying this into the teacher training context, this also means that when teachers are reflecting and examining their teaching experience, they do not necessarily confine their analysis to the classroom. They could consider other dimensions such as culture, social practices or language as contributing factors that could be the cause to the teaching problem. Thus, reflection that examines things beyond the classroom will develop our mind and see things in a wider perspective. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this is one of the reasons for integrating reflection in teacher education programmes across the world as well as in this current study. If this is the case, to what extent is this evident in student teachers’ reflection? Perhaps, this can be seen in student teachers’ reflective journals through the topics of their reflections, which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

3.2.4 Reflection as an Individual and Social Activity

Reflection as a questioning activity could also involve reflection as an individual and social activity. Dewey (1933) identified ‘interaction’ as one of the important elements in reflection. He argued that by expressing oneself with others, (so that others

could understand one's ideas), reveals both the strengths and the weaknesses in one's thinking. This helps to broaden ones' understanding of their own practice and improve it.

Often in teacher training, student teachers are encouraged to share their reflective insights with others as a way of helping them to develop ideas about teaching from different perspectives. For teachers, exchanging reflective thoughts with colleagues is considered a useful practice in professional development. For instance, Bolton (2010, p. 13) described that 'reflection is learning and developing through examining what we think happened on any occasion, and how we think others perceived the event and us, opening our practice to scrutiny by others, and studying data and texts from the wider sphere'. This suggests that reflection does not limit our learning to just examining our own thoughts but also involves listening to what other people say about our ideas. This allows for a wide range of data to be transmitted and exchanged between the self and others and could enhance ones' professional practice.

Jay & Johnson (2002, p. 76) described reflection as 'a process both individual and collaborative, involving experience and uncertainty'. This comprises the act of having a dialogue with oneself and with others through questions on matters that are significant or problematic. This implies that reflection is also a process that allows exchanges between the student teachers, and their peers as well as the instructors which makes it possible for these individuals to learn from one another in a socially supported environment. Furthermore, K rkk , Kyr - mm l  & Turunen (2016) also argued that the knowledge teachers gained from the reflective process or 'dialogue' helps formulate their views about 'teacher identity', which is one of the implications of reflection as discussed in section 3.4.

Jay & Johnson (2002) added that reflection is a continuous process since 'questions naturally arise, and the process spirals onward'. Thus, additional perspectives of the larger context could be further developed within which the questions are raised which also resonates with Dewey's concept of 'continuity' in reflection. Teachers' values and beliefs in teaching could be shaped or changed as a result of the new input or experiences they gained from the reflective process. In addition, reflection could also help to clarify any issues teachers faced within their classrooms as they analyse and find solutions to the teaching problem. As a result, learners and teachers could reach

newfound clarity of the issues based on the questions they asked and the answers they found through the reflection.

3.3 Reflection in Professional Practice

3.3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to show how reflection is conceived as part of a structured process of professional development. This will be demonstrated through discussions on how reflection is integrated into teaching, how Schön's idea of reflection -on and -in action are transferred into the education context, what is 'reflective practice' and the notion of the 'reflective practitioner', and integration of 'reflection' in models of professional learning. This section will add to the previous discussion on reflection as a questioning activity that is closely related to reflection in professional educational settings since teachers are required to reflect on their practice to improve their teaching. This is particularly relevant to the context of my research because the student teachers on the teacher education programme are also required to write reflections as part of their training to become professional teachers.

3.3.2 Reflecting on Experience

Reflecting on experience is a common practice in the education field particularly in teaching, where it is expected. Knapp (1992) described reflection as 'a means for reliving and recapturing experience in order to make sense of it, to learn from it, and to develop new understandings and appreciations'.

In doing what Knapp described, teachers may 'step back' from their experiences; looking at things retrospectively. However, reflecting on experience is also a 'connective process' (Wade & Yarbrough, 1996, p. 64). This means that reflection allows the learners or the teachers to draw upon and make connections between what they already know with the new experiences and form new knowledge. They get to make sense of the teaching theory as they applied it in actual classroom settings. This is important since the new knowledge they gained can be applied to their future activities, thus improve their practice. Furthermore, the combination of the existing and new knowledge could transform the way teachers think about their practice which allow for better understanding of the issues in their teaching.

The process of reflecting on teaching experiences ‘helps teachers to think about what happened, why it happened, and what else could have been done to reach their goals’ (Cruickshank & Applegate, 1981, p. 553). This indicates that reflection is ‘goal-oriented’. Often, teachers and student teachers believe that when they reflect on their teaching, they would expect to suggest or find a solution to the teaching problem that they are reflecting on and develop a certain kind of plan to improve their teaching. This implies that reflection is about ‘achievement’, which could also relate to ‘self-assessment’ as teachers or student teachers look into their performance and determine how much they have actually achieved in their teaching.

In addition to the concepts of reflection presented above, one element which seems to be missing and less acknowledged when talking about reflection is the relationship between ‘emotion or feelings and reflection’. For example, Boyd and False (1983) characterised the process of reflection with ‘an automatic inclusion of feelings or emotions’. Others may say that emotion is probably involved in all learning and not exclusively in reflection. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1996) also argued that when reflecting on an event it is important ‘to recall how one felt at the time’. They emphasised that ‘attending to feelings’ is one of the important elements in a reflective process. They explained that ‘utilizing positive feelings and removing obstructing feelings allow the teachers to examine the experiences clearly so to reach a rational consideration of the events’ (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1996, p. 41).

In addition, Moon (2004, p. 45) established three categorisations of the relationships between emotion and learning. They are: i) emotional intelligence, ii) feelings as the subject matter of learning, and iii) feelings and their involvement in the learning process. She believes that being aware of our emotions also helps us to learn something valuable from the experiences. The suggestions made by Moon and other scholars to consider the emotional aspect in the learning process will arguably enhance student teachers’ and teachers’ learning and in particular their ‘reflection’ on the learning experiences thus making the process holistic. For example, teachers or student teachers not only reflect on their teaching events *per se* but the process also exposes any contradictions, doubts, dilemmas and possibilities about the teaching experiences that the teacher or student teacher had encountered. Reflecting on one’s emotional and affective responses to teaching experiences (e.g. events in a lesson one has just taught) can lead to a deeper and richer understanding of teachers’ values and beliefs in the

teaching experiences. In relation to my study, my investigation involved an analysis of student teachers' reflective journals which revealed instances of their emotional reactions towards their teaching practice experiences (see 6.3).

3.3.3 Schön's Notion of Reflection-in-Action

Schön has proven influential in areas of professional education where he developed the theory of professional expertise. One of his great contributions was to bring 'reflection' into the centre of an understanding of what professionals do (Smith, 2001; Adler, 1990). While Schön's concept of 'reflection' refers to 'professionals' in non-educational setting, teachers relied heavily on Schön's framework as a foundation and formulate their reflections. In his book *The Reflective Practitioner*, Schön (1983, p. 21) talked about 'technical rationality' that is a positivist view of professional practice where 'rigorous professional practitioners solve well-formed instrumental problems by applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge' (Schön, 1987, pp. 3-4). However, he realised that technical rationality has put a gap between thought and action which was troublesome and intended to break this tradition. He argued that 'we ought to look to the competency and artistry already embedded in skilful practice' (Schön, 1987, p. xi). Thus, he introduced the concepts of 'reflection-in-action' to describe the process of 'reflection'.

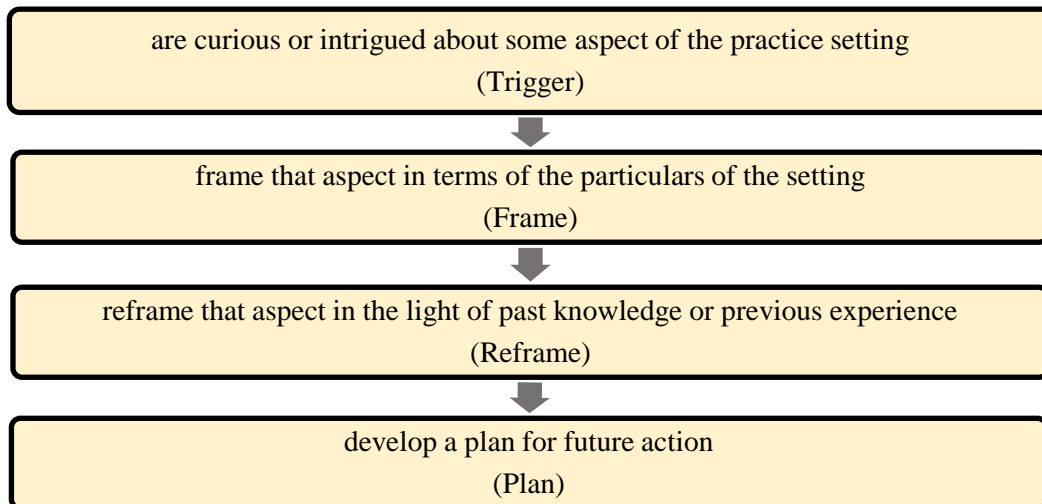
'Reflection-in-action' allows the professional to respond to the variables of the immediate context (Schön, 1983). For example, reflection-in-action can take place in the midst of action that occurs spontaneously during the act of teaching caused by a surprise or a sense of uneasiness about a situation where it fails to meet their expectations. It triggers instantaneous 'on-the-spot reflection' which involves 'thinking on your feet'. Crucial to the process of reflection-in-action is the ability to recognise the problematic, to 'name' the problem and to 'frame' the context in which we will attend to (Schön, 1983, p. 40). He called this process 'problem setting' which is central to reflection.

Schön felt that 'professionals should learn to frame and reframe the often complex and ambiguous problems they are facing, test out various interpretations, then modify their actions as a result' (Hatton & Smith, 1994). Thus, the process of framing and reframing the problems suggests that reflection is closely bounded-up with action. In order to explain how the process of 'frame and reframe' works, I have translated

Schön's (1983, 1987) description of the process of reflection into a diagram (Figure 3.1) which was adapted from Clarke (1995, p. 246).

Figure 3.1: Schön's Process of Reflection

Practitioners are reflective when they:



(Clarke, 1995, p. 246)

Schön (1983) explained that sometimes, while reflection-in-action is taking place, one might choose to ignore the inquiries, thus reflection occurs momentarily then disappears. Other times, one may attempt to make sense of the experience. The puzzling moments allow professionals to 'pause for thought' or 'stop-and-think' while the action is in progress and consider a more deliberative way of what action should be taken next (Schön, 1983; Eraut, 1994, Van Manen, 1995). This process is shaped by the professional's thinking and doing, accompanied by explicit self-awareness (Schön, 1992; Van Manen, 1995, Bolton, 2014). Schön identified reflection-in-action as 'the essence of expertise, making it a desired goal in professional practice especially in education' (Roberts, 1998, p.51).

Schön (1983) argued that 'reflection-in-action' is actually present in both novice and expert teachers. However, he also said that not many novice teachers could reflect 'in-action' since they need more time to become aware and act on the teaching problem compared to more experienced teachers. Their lack in knowledge and depth of experience on teaching also could impact the process of reflection-in-action among

beginning teachers. In fact, it is believed that the differences between experienced and inexperienced teachers is their ‘wisdom’ acquired through their practice which can be seen through their reflective writing (Schön, 1983). The participants in this study are pre-service student teachers and they do not have many teaching experiences apart from the practicum. Thus, from this it is assumed that there will be less instances of reflection-in-action in student teachers’ reflective journal which will be revealed later in Chapter 6.

Schön distinguished ‘reflection-in-action’ from ‘reflection-on-action’ which involves reflecting on how practice can be developed or changed after the event. ‘Practitioners reflect on action, thinking back on what they have done - a post-mortem, in order to discover how their reflection may have contributed to an unexpected outcome, in a deliberate effort to prepare themselves for future cases’ (Schön, 1983, p. 61). For example, we reflect after the event, thinking about how our knowledge and experiences of previous similar events may have led to the unexpected incident, then we need to consider what changes could be made for the future. In my study, I examined student teachers’ reflective journals. Therefore, it is my interest here to see whether there are examples of reflection-in-action and how distinct are they from the more predictable ‘post-hoc’ reflections (reflection-on-action) that occur after the lesson.

Table 3.1 summarises the concepts of the two types of reflections: reflection in-action and reflection on-action.

Table 3.1: Types of Reflection

| Reflection-in-Action | Reflection-on-Action |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the midst of action • Thinking on your feet • Thinking what to do next • Acting straight away | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking about something that has happened • Thinking about what could be done differently next time • Taking your time |

Ideally, there must be interconnection between the different types of reflections and actions. Reflection-on-action should refer to what was in our mind during reflection-in-action, while the next time we engage in our practice, another reflection-in-action should draw on the previous reflection-on-action. These links are important where ‘the ability to anticipate difficulties and plan ahead can make for a very effective use of time; an important aspect of professional practice’ (Thompson & Thompson, 2008, p.17).

3.3.4 Reflection and Reflective Practice

In the literature, it shows that the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’ carry the potential to hold different meanings which in most cases show a marginal difference. For example, ‘reflective practice’ in professional development as described by Schön (1983) would be that the professionals having the ability to reflect on their actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning of reflection. This description suggests that ‘reflective practice’ involves a process of thinking about the action that had taken place and making changes to it. As a result of this process is that the reflector will make some changes to his/her practice (whatever the profession might be) and gain some new knowledge or experiences from it. Similarly, applying this concept in teaching, Farrell (2015, p. 123) also described reflective practice as ‘a cognitive process’. However, he added to this definition stating that the process is ‘accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect information about their practice and, while engaging in dialogue with others use the information to make informed decisions about their practice’. This suggests that ‘reflective practice’ works as a systematic process where the information is gathered and analysed, while the teachers’ engagement with others or exchange of ideas could be used to improve the lessons.

Calderhead & Gates (1993) identified reflective practice which incorporates the development of problem solving and reflecting on events to improve decision-making and judgements. They also felt that reflective practice supports growth in professional knowledge as reflective practitioners become more aware of their actions; become more skilled in the use of evidence; more knowledgeable both in teaching and about teaching; and more able to identify and analyse consequences of their actions. This shows that engagement in reflective practice involves a variety of activities, especially those that relate to critical thinking, a skill that enables student teachers to understand the logical connections between all aspects of teaching and using this skill in making adjustments to their teaching.

Moon (1999, p. 58) saw reflective practice as ‘a set of abilities and skills to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind’. This implies that a lot of strategies and approaches are being used in evaluating and reviewing practice or experiences before any new learning could actually be achieved.

And, the process does not stop there. Once new knowledge is acquired, it can be used to improve and develop other parts of learning. Thus, the process is cyclical.

Blackburn, Holden, and Burrell (2014, p. 391) stated that reflective practice is ‘thinking about how new knowledge and skills might be used in future activities’. Their appreciation of reflective practice appears to focus on planning and using teachers’ reasoning capabilities to decide on possible solutions to their teaching problems. Like all the descriptions above, the aim of reflective practice is for improvement. Thus, reflective practice involves the process of change, which inevitably shapes the outcome of the future actions.

From the above discussion, the key point which most writers agree on is that ‘reflective practice’ is the systematic application of ‘reflection’ to one’s day-to-day professional practice, as a regular feature of whatever profession one does. It is practice informed by reflection, so that one continually learns from one’s experiences and goes on improving one’s practice and developing one’s understanding. ‘Reflection’ is the crucial element within that process which enables the overall system to work.

In relation to ‘reflective practice’ is the term ‘reflective practitioner’. Schön (1983, 1987) defined reflective practitioners as ‘those who can think while acting and thus can respond to the uncertainty, uniqueness, and conflict involved in the situations in which professionals practice’. In other words, ‘reflective practitioners’ are people who look back at their work regularly. They should ‘pay critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively, which leads to developmental insights’ (Bolton, 2010). They must be responsible, open-minded, whole-hearted, confident and ready to explore situations and take action in order to improve themselves, their practices and their learners (Dewey, 1933; Rodgers, 2002). These characteristics are helpful in giving clear guidance for teacher training courses to focus on in developing ‘reflective practitioners’. Although the term ‘reflective practitioner’ was originally defined more precisely by Schön, it has become widely used in the teaching profession to refer to teachers who engage systematically in reflective practice as a way to developing themselves professionally. This term is particularly relevant since the teacher education programme in this research aims to prepare student teachers to become ‘reflective practitioners’ (see Appendix H in the Objectives).

3.3.5 Reflection in Models of Professional Learning

There are many models that contain ‘experience’ and ‘reflection’ as key components of a learning process (e.g. experiential learning model, reflective model, teacher training framework). In these models, ‘experience’ is essential for ‘reflection’ to occur. More importantly, these models suggest that ‘reflection’ is conceived as part of a structured process of professional development. A discussion on the different models of professional learning is particularly relevant to my research since it will show the different ways ‘reflection’ is integrated in teacher training, as in this study ‘reflection’ is integrated through the practicum.

For example, in Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model, the process begins with ‘concrete experience’ followed by ‘reflective observation’, then ‘abstract conceptualisation’ and ‘active experimentation’ before returning to ‘experience’ again at the end of the process. Although in this model, ‘immediate personal experience’ is the focal point for learning, ‘reflection’ acts as a bridge between the experience and theoretical conceptualisation which contributes to better understanding of the experience and leads to the formation of learning (Kolb, 1984). For example, on teacher education programmes, teaching practice provides student teachers with concrete experiences they need to understand what teaching is about. When student teachers reflect on their teaching experiences, they are attempting to make sense of the practical by relating them to the theories of teaching. From this process, learning about teaching is heightened in terms of understanding, knowledge and skills of teaching. Thus, the relationship between ‘reflection’ and ‘experience’ is a significant one as it will further enrich learning among the learners and fills the gap between theory and practice (Kolb, 1984).

Kolb also asserted that learning involves not only the mastery of static content but also on the construction of meaning within a collaborative environment. For example, when teachers ‘reflect and think, either alone or in the company of other people’ (Beard & Wilson, 2006, p. 15) this becomes an active process which allows for exchange of ideas among the individuals involved in the process. Student teachers or teachers could use the information gathered from the reflection to plan future lessons. The exchange of ideas through receiving and giving feedback or through dialogues with the self or others could enhance student teachers’ learning as they have the opportunity to discuss and rethink the issues again (Kolb, 1984).

Another model that uses ‘reflection’ as a tool in linking theory and practice is Wallace’s (1991) reflective model. Wallace’s model is designed specifically for pre-service training of language teachers, and therefore particularly relevant to my own study. It consists of three stages: i) ‘pre-training’, ii) professional education/development’, and iii) ‘professional competence’. In this model experience also plays a crucial role in reflection on teaching. It is assumed that upon entering a teacher training course, student teachers would already be familiar with the concepts of language teaching and learning such as the communicative approach, which they acquired from school or training courses as language learners, trainees, teachers or observers in the classroom. Wallace calls this type of professional knowledge ‘received knowledge’, contrasting it to ‘experiential knowledge’ which is the professional’s ongoing experience which involves observation of practice and reflection (p. 15). ‘Received knowledge’ and ‘experiential knowledge’ are the primary factors that influence their conceptions of teaching (Powell, 1992; Wright & Bolitho, 2007). So, when student teachers ‘reflect’ on their ‘received knowledge’ and ‘experiences’, it allows them to develop a clearer understanding of the concepts of teaching that they ‘received’ as they connect them to the ongoing experiences during practice. This process helps them to make decisions and take actions accordingly to improve their teaching. Thus, in the context of my study, the most significant feature of Wallace’s model would seem to be the role of reflection in making connections between ‘experiential’ and ‘received knowledge’ especially the findings in my own study suggest that this was an area under-developed in the participants’ written reflections (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Wright & Bolitho’s (2007) teacher training framework also includes experience and reflection as the key elements in the learning process. The training process proposed by Wright & Bolitho (2007) also begins with the assumption that student teachers embodied some experiential knowledge prior to their training (like Wallace’s reflective model). After going through some awareness-raising activities, student teachers move to the stage which is ‘reviewing’ their experience or shared training experiences. Thus, this is where the student teachers start to reflect on their experiences. Wright & Bolitho (2007, p. 22) argued that ‘in order to learn from experience, student teachers must move into a ‘thinking’ mode before embarking on new activity’. The process of ‘thinking’ about something will eventually ‘transform’ student teachers’ perspectives on things. As a result, new understanding is developed.

The learning models above are particularly chosen for their common grounds of experience and reflection being the key elements for learning. In all the models, 'experience' either past or present is a stimulating factor that enhances the thinking process while 'reflection' is the driving force that enables teachers and student teachers to learn something from the experience. By inserting 'reflection' in the learning cycle, it is believed that student teachers and teachers would gain better understanding of their pedagogical knowledge thus developing into 'competent professionals', one of the aims in most teacher development programmes.

Similarly, a reflective writing process entails the same elements as in the professional learning models as mentioned above. For example, before student teachers could write their reflections, they need to have the practical experience of their practice. They could begin by describing the event that happened, then providing evidence or examples to illustrate their thoughts and feelings towards the event. The writing should also develop a perspective and analytical reasoning, making links between their experience of teaching and their reading. An action plan is required so that improvements to the event could be made. Thus, the process repeats as student teachers write another reflection on the action that was taken based on the previous reflection.

While the academic and educational literature had a great deal to say about the notion of reflection and its importance in professional practice, there seems to be a dearth of studies into how the notion is perceived and understood by student teachers and their supervisors on teacher education courses which are purportedly preparing trainees to become 'reflective practitioners'. This seems to be a gap. The studies that have been conducted focus on student teachers' and teachers' engagement with the process of reflection through their reflective journals, which I will discuss in later sections. In my study, I will explore student teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions of reflection through the use of interviews. This will shed light not only on what reflection is perceived to be by the student teachers and teacher educators but also the process that was involved in developing their understanding of the concept of reflection.

3.4 Reflection, Teacher Identity and Cognition

Research in education identified that one of the issues that could be extracted from student teachers' reflective journals is one concerning 'teacher identity' and 'teacher cognition' (e.g. Farrell, 2011; Borg, 2006; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite,

2010). In the context of language teacher education, Borg (2006) used ‘teacher cognition’ to mean a way to illustrate the ‘complexity of teachers’ mental lives’ which involves an examination into ‘what teachers at any stage of their careers think, know or believe in relation to any aspect of their work, and which additionally but not necessarily, also entail the study of actual classroom practices and of the relationships between cognitions and these practices’ (p. 50). This relates very much to what others such as Dewey (1933), Schön (1983), Jay & Johnson (2002) and Farrell (2007) were saying about ‘reflection’; that it is a process where teachers think about and discuss their experiences in the classroom. Through ‘reflection’, a ‘self-report instrument’ (Borg, 2006), the teachers’ thinking processes of their experiences on their practices, their beliefs and identity as teachers become apparent.

It is argued that from a ‘dialogical perspective’ (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä & Turunen, 2016) ‘teacher identity’ is formed and influenced by dialogues with oneself and individuals in different contexts and relationships. When reflecting on practice, the interaction between oneself and/or with others develops deeper thinking in tackling the issue at hand. This view is relevant to my own research because the student teachers in my context will inevitably engage in a dialogue with their peers and supervisors during the practicum and may well exhibit similar individual dialogues with themselves in their reflective journals. Therefore, I would expect some evidence of their developing identities as teachers in their reflective writing. Thus, this would resonate with Borg’s argument on ‘teacher identity’ and ‘teacher cognition’ through ‘dialogue’ since my investigation into student teachers’ reflections reveals student teachers’ thinking process while they are engaged in ‘reflection’ (see 6.3 and 6.5).

Borg (2006) found that there are four factors which influence the development of pre-service language teachers’ professional identity and cognition: a) prior language learning experience, b) pre-service teachers’ beliefs about language teaching, c) practicum experiences, and d) pre-service teachers’ instructional decision-making and practical knowledge. It is expected that student teachers’ in this study would discuss in their written reflections issues along similar lines as those suggested by Borg. For example, student teachers begin the teacher training course and enter the profession with some background knowledge about teaching and learning based on their past experiences and observations of being in a classroom either as learners or student teachers. This is a similar conception to the models of professional learning as discussed

in 3.3.5. From the experiences, student teachers begin to form their own ‘professional identity’, their ‘self-perception of being a teacher and on how they are seen by others as teachers’ (Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite, 2010, p. 456). Each student teacher has prior knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning which are different from each other. Student teachers’ backgrounds act as a filter for interpretation of their experiences. Thus, the characteristics of, relationships among, and coherence of the identities will be unique to each individual student teacher (Borg, 2006).

Another factor that develops student teachers’ professional identity and cognition derives from the curriculum of the programme that the student teachers receive during their teacher training (Borg, 2006). In Chapter 2, I explained how the teacher training programme is designed and structured to follow a set of aims and aspirations based on the ‘Blueprint’. The training is heavily dependent on the guidelines contained in the course documentation such as how to write and what to include in the written reflections as in Appendix F, G and H. This shows how the development of the practice of reflection is dictated by the curriculum and influences the development of teacher identity among student teachers.

However, it is also argued that as student teachers enter the community of teaching, they will experience ‘identity shift’ as part of their learning process (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). Identities are shaped and reshaped with new experiences and relationships (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä & Turunen, 2016). This resonates with the comment that the process of teacher identity formation is not stable but rather a changing one (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Student teachers’ beliefs on their identity may shift as they ‘reflect’ on their experiences and gain more knowledge from their teacher training course. For example, during the practicum when student teachers ‘reflect’ on their experiences, they may change what they think about themselves at the beginning, then become teachers with better characteristics by the end of the course. Shifts may occur many times and this is a normal process in developing student teachers’ identity.

3.5 Reflection as a Writing Activity

This section explores some of the issues relating to the process of writing reflection which is arguably very challenging especially for second language learners (Moon, 2006; Farrell, 2013). Their lack of proficiency in reflective writing skills may put student teachers’ reflections at risk of being considered as non-reflective or less

critical. Despite this, it is crucial for courses to state clearly the criteria (e.g. the level of reflection) and descriptions of what the reflections should entail. The criteria could be used to guide the student teachers to write their reflections (see 2.6).

3.5.1 The Process of Writing Reflections

Starting to write reflections reflectively is difficult. As Farrell (2013, p. 57) explained ‘the process of writing our thoughts is not as easy as saying something spontaneously to writing spontaneously’. This is because ‘when writing, a person must pause for a short time in order to organise thoughts and to find the words to express them on paper’ (Farrell, 2013, p. 57). This suggests that writing reflections requires some complex thinking processes to digest the information gathered and produce it later on paper. He referred to this as ‘pausing’, the first step in reflective writing which act as a launching pad for what is to follow in the process. Despite this difficulty, Rushton & Suter (2012, p. 20) believe that writing reflections ‘is an ability that develops over time’.

Similarly, Moon (2006) introduced the concept of ‘time-space’ whereby the process of writing the reflections provides the opportunity for student teachers to collect their thoughts which enable them to relate the new learning materials to their own experiences or previous knowledge. This resonates with Schön’s (1983) comment that student teachers may need more time to become aware and act on the teaching problem compared to more experienced teachers as they lack the practical experience and knowledge. Thus, student teachers may act more slowly than experienced teachers. However, adopting a structured approach or using frameworks to reflective writing in the early stages may help student teachers to develop their confidence and fluency in writing their reflections. In fact, this is one of the strategies used by the teacher education programme in Malaysia to teach student teachers to write reflections as I discussed in 2.6. Perhaps, this way of training is also practiced in teacher education programmes in other parts of the world.

In most cases, as Rushton & Suter (2012, p.19) argued ‘writing down reflections is helpful as it is a record that can be referred back to, useful if the teacher is dealing with a number of issues’. This is an ideal approach to help teachers organise their thoughts about the teaching issues. They further added that this is would be a particularly an important action for teachers to take especially when the experiences that occurred in the classroom are still fresh in the mind.

In addition, writing reflections is also considered helpful to make connections between what student teachers learned from lectures and their practical learning experiences, thus enhancing their reflective skills (Yost, Sentner, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000; Moon, 1999). Indeed, there are other benefits of reflective writing, for example to promote ‘self-reflection’ (e.g. Lew & Schmidt, 2011; Schön, 1983); to facilitate ‘critical thought’ (e.g. Thompson & Pascal, 2012), and to enhance learning (e.g. Loughran, 1996; Walker, 1985) which also resonates with the purpose of reflective writing on the teacher education course in Malaysia in developing teachers who are reflective and critical.

3.5.2 Determining the Level of Reflection through Reflective Writing

Researchers and writers of reflection often use a framework as a guideline in writing and assessing reflections. The frameworks are indicators to the type and quality of reflections student teachers and teachers write. Student teachers’ ‘reflection’ is measured by analysing the content and determining how much reflective thought is evident in the written reflections. The extensive range of meanings of reflection have led to the formation of various distinctive levels of reflection, some hierarchically and others categorically. In order to show clearly the different frameworks, some researchers interpreted them in terms of two dimensions or approaches to reflection (e.g. Valli, 1993; Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999). These two dimensions are referred to as ‘breadth’ and ‘depth’. Breadth is the focus or the content of the reflection, which often is influenced by the reflector’s teaching experience or the nature of the context (Lane, McMaster, Adnum, & Cavanagh, 2014; Russell, 2005; Kember, 1999). The depth refers to the depth of thinking portrayed through the reflection (Lane, McMaster, Adnum, & Cavanagh, 2014; Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999; Bain, Mills, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2002).

Murphy & Ermeling (2016, p. 321) explained that ‘the levels of reflection typically range from three to five’ (although sometimes the level can be up to seven). Here, ‘level’ refers to the ‘depth’ of the reflection. The levels of reflection are determined based on a set of criteria. Generally, the initial level focuses on examining isolated teaching skills and decisions, or the individual teaching events. A more advanced level of reflection commonly contains pedagogical theory, and sometimes the reflector will make some attempts to make connections between the theoretical beliefs and the current practice. The highest level of reflection usually relates to higher order thinking skills and

focuses on the impact of teaching on practice. This level is often referred to as ‘critical reflection’ as I discussed in 3.2.2 since it consists of elements of ‘critical thinking’.

I have put together five frameworks to show how different authors categorised the levels of reflection. Appendix AR shows the descriptions of the reflective elements in each level. The frameworks are from Van Manen (1977), Valli (1990), Bain, Ballantyne, Packer & Mills (1999), Jay & Johnson (2002), and Farrell (2015). Often, a framework is used in determining the quality of reflective writing. Usually, ‘critical reflection’ is one of the elements in the framework and used to describe a reflection that has reached the highest level of reflection (e.g. Van Manen, 1977; Jay & Johnson, 2002). Table 3.2 shows the different elements of critical reflection as defined in different frameworks.

Table 3.2: Description of Critical Reflection from different Authors

| Author | Description of Reflective Element |
|---|---|
| Van Manen (1977) | Level 3: Critical – examining the influence of structural and societal constraints and how personal values may conflict with those constraints; questioning the moral and ethical dimensions of decisions related directly or indirectly to the classroom situation |
| Valli (1993a) | Critical reflection – considering social and political influences on teaching practices Content: ways in which schools and teachers contribute to social injustices and inequality and ways in which they can help overcome these inequities. Quality: determined by the teacher’s ability to apply ethical criteria to the goals and processes of schooling |
| Bain, Ballantyne, Packer & Mills (1999) | Level 5: Reconstructing - The student displays a high level of abstract thinking to generalise and/or apply learning; The student draws an original conclusion from their reflections, generalises from their experience, extracts general principles, formulates a personal theory of teaching or takes a position on an issue; The student extracts and internalises the personal significance of their learning and/or plans their own further learning on the basis of their reflections |
| Jay & Johnson (2002) | Critical – posing questions pertaining to the public democratic purposes of schooling and the moral and political dimensions of schooling; having considered the implications of the matter, establish a renewed perspective; making a judgement, making a decision through careful deliberation |
| Farrell (2015) | Beyond practice – sociocultural dimension to teaching and learning; critical reflection |

Van Manen (1977) is amongst the earliest to develop a framework of reflection derived from Habermas (1974). He developed a hierarchy representation of reflection involving three distinct levels. The first level, ‘technical reflection’, is concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness in the application of skills and technical knowledge in the classroom setting, the educational theory and basic curriculum principles in order to

achieve certain ends. At this stage, reflection is confined to analysing the effect of strategies used, which are not open to criticism or modification. The second level is 'practical reflection'. This involves 'pragmatic analysis and clarification of practices and processes employed towards reaching a goal' (Van Manen, 1977). This implies that teachers assess the educational implications of their actions and beliefs. In contrast to the technical form, practical reflection recognises that meanings are not absolute, but are embedded in, and negotiated through language. The third level is 'critical reflection' which includes an emphasis on the previous two, as well as considers the moral and ethical dimensions of decisions related, directly or indirectly, to the classroom situation. This means that at this level the reflections demonstrate teachers can make connections between situations they had encountered to the broader social, political, and economic forces that influences those events.

In some respects, Van Manen's classification appears to confuse the 'focus' of reflection e.g. the issue or 'event' that student teachers reflect upon, with the 'level' of reflection e.g. the level of cognitive sophistication (LaBoskey, 1993; Valli, 1993a). In order to resolve the conflict, LaBoskey (1993) suggested that the 'focus' and 'level' of reflection should be treated as two separate dimensions, the breadth and depth respectively, as discussed earlier. This can be seen in Bain, Packer & Mills' (1999) framework which examines the 'focus' and 'level' of reflection in two ways: 'depth' and 'breadth' of the reflection. They explained that the most important factor influencing the 'depth' of reflection is whether or not the reflection was of one's own teaching. Bain et al. stressed that neither the time spent on writing nor the length of writing would have any effect on the quality of student teachers' reflections. These factors do not influence the depth of the reflection because they do not refer to the style of the reflections in which the thinking process is portrayed. They further explained that the depth dimension is more teachable, open to improvement, and less dependent on context compared to the breadth dimension. In determining the depth of the reflections, Bain et al. proposed that the scale ranges from 'reporting' (the lowest level of reflection – Level 1), 'responding', 'relating', 'reasoning', and 'reconstructing' (the highest level of reflection – Level 5). In contrast, the 'breadth' or the content of student teachers' reflections are influenced by their teaching experience and by the nature of the context (Lane et al., 2014, p. 484). This means that student teachers need to be familiar with the background and context of their teaching in order to write journals that focused on breadth. They suggested four

different foci of reflection that includes focus on ‘teaching’, ‘self’, ‘professional issues’, and ‘students’ or ‘class’.

This approach to categorising the foci of reflection is a useful guide to my own analysis of the breadth and depth of my participants’ own reflective writing. In my research, I have used the term ‘topics’ to describe the different foci that the participants write about, and the term ‘features’ of reflection to provide information about the depth or level of their reflections. In addition, I used the ‘patterns of flow’ (in 6.5) to illustrate the movement among the features in student teachers’ reflections within the ‘topic’ areas they wrote about.

Valli (1990, 1993b, 1997) investigated teacher education programmes with regards to how they helped student teachers to develop reflective capacities and dispositions. She concluded that there are five different types of reflection. She calls these five orientations as ‘technical reflection’, ‘reflection on- and in-action’, ‘deliberative reflection’, ‘personalistic reflection’, and ‘critical reflection’. One of the critiques of these components is that the reflective quality is too loose, the criteria for critical reflection can be too absolute (Valli, 1993b). Thus, Valli suggested that they should be used in combination with each other so to balance the approaches. This suggests a classification approach that is more flexible and not as hierarchical as Van Manen’s framework.

Jay & Johnson (2002) developed a typology of reflection involving three dimensions of reflective thought: descriptive, comparative, and critical. In the ‘descriptive dimension’, the teachers describe the area for reflection such as ‘What is happening?’, ‘Is this working, and for whom?’, ‘How do I know?’, and ‘How am I feeling?’ The typology of reflection provides a framework for discussion and action that enables deep levels of reflection, and that provides opportunities for deconstructing a dilemma, feeling, or teaching practice (Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 82). This stage involves the intellectual process of ‘setting the problem’ Schön (1983). This condition as Schön described (in 3.3.2) is a typical situation for the practitioners to experience at the beginning of the reflection process. Then, the stage moves into the ‘comparative dimension’ in which the teachers reframe the reflection in light of alternative views, others’ perspectives and research. At this stage, teachers could establish new perspectives after considering the implications of the things that have been discussed in

the reflection. This model recognises the different levels of reflection and they are useful when applied to different learners' needs.

The most recent classification of the levels of reflection is proposed by Farrell (2015) called framework for reflecting on practice. The framework has five different stages of reflection: 'philosophy', 'principles', 'theory', 'practice', and 'beyond practice'. According to Farrell, 'philosophy' is the window to the roots of teachers' practice because having a philosophy of practice means each observable behaviour has a reason that guides it even if the teachers do not articulate this reason. While 'principles' refers to teachers' assumptions, beliefs and conceptions of teaching and learning. He describes 'theory' as the different ways how teachers can put theories into practice and 'practice' is the observable behaviours of what teachers do and what actually happens in the classroom. The final stage in Farrell's framework is 'beyond practice' which takes on a sociocultural dimension to teaching and learning, exploring and examining the moral, political and social issues that impact the teachers' practice. 'Beyond practice' can also be called 'critical reflection'. While others clearly describe reflection hierarchically, Farrell has treated each stage as separate. Despite this, they are linked, and each stage builds on the other. Farrell emphasised that all stages must be considered as a whole to give a holistic dimension to the practice of reflection.

Of course, it could be argued that it is quite impossible to measure student teachers' 'thinking' and their 'reflection' on things. However, these different levels of reflection as suggested above are helpful in indicating the type of reflections student teachers are writing. They also show that there are many terminologies used in the literature to differentiate between the different levels of reflection. This is useful particularly for the textual analysis in my own research which seeks to determine the breadth and depth of reflections student teachers wrote during the practicum. In addition, in contexts where student teachers' written reflections are assessed, the levels could serve as an indicator for progression and growth as student teachers develop their reflective thinking and reflective writing skills to enhance their reflection on practice.

All the frameworks above seem to place 'critical reflection' at the highest level. For example, Valli (1990) believe that 'critical reflection' should consider the social and political influences on teaching practice, and Van Manen's (1977) 'critical reflection' to question the moral and ethical dimensions of decisions made during classroom practice. It seems that both scholars have included a set of different criteria or elements in defining

‘critical reflection’. The criteria may not accurately define what ‘critical reflection’ means in a particular context. Therefore, course developers may want to consider using the frameworks as guidelines and to formulate their own criteria which could be more relevant in determining the different levels and types of reflections in their own context.

From the discussion above it seems reasonable that ‘critical reflection’ is positioned at the highest level of reflection as it involves sophisticated intellectual processes and considerations of many elements which all together is a complex process. Clearly, critical reflection is considered an important component and key competency in many teacher education programmes (Brookfield, 1995; Howard, 2003). In fact, critical reflection is regarded as an integral element in education professional practice (Brookfield, 1995; Dewey, 1933). Thus, this is why teachers and student teachers are expected to critically reflect on their experiences and practices, so they are able to analyse and improve on their teaching (Callens & Elen, 2011).

3.5.3 Assessing Reflective Writing

The requirement for student teachers to write and submit reflective journals for assessment is a common practice in most teacher education programmes across the world such as Hong Kong (Luk, 2008), United Kingdom (Hobbs, 2007), Singapore (Lew & Schmidt, 2011) and Malaysia (Hussin, 2004; Min, Mansor & Samsudin, 2016). Assessment of written reflections is usually achieved through requiring student teachers to write reflections as part of their practicum. For example, in the context of my study student teachers are required to write daily and weekly reflections (see 2.7) after every lesson they taught and compile the reflections in their teaching practice portfolio. These reflections are evaluated by the teaching practice supervisors when they come for observations during the practicum (see 2.10).

However, some education researchers have reservations about student teachers’ written reflections being assessed on the grounds that it has undesirable impact on student teachers’ written reflections such as being ‘superficial’ (Hobbs, 2007). Haslee Shahril & Abd. Majid (2010) found that the quality of the reflections is ‘superficial’ because student teachers were only describing their actions and their lessons without sufficient attempt to synthesise relevant literature and evaluate them. In her study, Hobbs provided leading and repetitive prompts in helping the student teachers to write their reflections. However, this resulted in student teachers writing strategic responses in their

reflections. Student teachers might speculate what their assessors wanted to see rather than writing about something they have truly reflected on (Luk, 2008). Since student teachers are 'forced' to write the reflections to fulfil the course requirement and for assessment purposes, Hobbs (2007) also reported that student teachers in her own study had negative attitudes towards the teaching practice journal such as resentment in engaging in reflection about their teaching and felt that it is 'a waste of time' (p. 406) especially for those who had no teaching experience.

In addition, Norton (1997) argued that the impact of assessment on student teachers' reflections resulted in the reflective journals only being assessed for student teachers' 'writing' abilities rather than their 'reflective' abilities. Norton explained that it is common for student teachers who are in the English and Social Studies courses to emphasise the development of expert compositional skills. However, this kind of writing may not be appropriate for writing personal reflections and may be considered as 'unreflective'. Thus, student teachers might seem more adept at 'writing' than 'reflecting'. Furthermore, other factors such as a low level of proficiency in English, challenges of deductive reasoning, and the absence of productive feedback (Roux, Mora & Tamez, 2012) impede the process of producing highly reflective reflections among second language student teachers. Deficiency in the English language hinders the student teachers in generating, organising, and expressing their thoughts professionally and personally in their reflective diaries (Hussein, 2007). The 'inadequate skills of English' (Rarieya, 2005) may also discourage some student teachers from engaging in reflective practice effectively. In addition, Yaacob et al. (2014) also reported that language is one of the factors for student teachers' reflections to be categorised at a lower level because when the reflections are written in English, which is either the student teachers' second or third language, they may not have the vocabulary to express their emotional and critical thoughts clearly.

Some researchers question the value of assessing personal professional development contained in reflective journals because of their subjective and impressionistic judgements (Sumsion & Fleet, 1996; Moon, 2006) which raise complex issues of consistency and equity in marking the reflections (Luk, 2008). As Stewart & Richardson (2000) argue the abstract and personal nature of the reflections would make it difficult for assessors to make sensible judgements about the level of the reflection if the aspect of reflection being marked is not clear. Furthermore, if assessing student

teachers' written reflections also depends on the ability to write in a reflective manner (as discussed earlier), it would be challenging to ensure consistency and fair evaluation of the reflections when the grades are influenced by the assessors' perceptions of reflectivity. Many researchers have debated whether reflection should be assessed especially when it is integrated with practice or with other documents such as the teaching practice portfolio (e.g. Boud, 1999; Woodward, 1998). If so, assessors need to be clear on what aspects in the reflections should be assessed and ensure fair weightage of marks allocated for either the practice, portfolio or reflection.

Educators who support the need to assess reflections believe that with the provisions of assessment criteria, student teachers could be more aware of what makes effective reflections and bring more structure and discipline to their reflective writing (Luk, 2008). This links with the current study since a sample reflection and guidelines in writing reflections are provided to student teachers (in 2.6) which direct and support them to write the reflections accordingly. Drawing student teachers' attention to the discourse features (e.g. in the sample reflection) of the genre may enable them to come to grips more effectively with what reflective writing entails (Luk, 2008). The purpose of the reflection, and the assessment criteria must be presented clearly so that both the student teachers and teacher educators know exactly the type of reflection that should be produced.

These are some of the current issues surrounding assessment and reflection as presented in the literature. These issues are most relevant to my own study as reflection is assessed in the teacher education programme in Malaysia. Comparisons could be made between the findings from previous research and the current study to reveal the impact of assessment on student teachers' reflective writing. Further discussion on the findings on student teachers' written reflection with regards to assessment can be found in Chapter 6.

3.6 Research Studies into Reflective Writing on Teacher Education Programmes

This section examines a number of studies conducted in other countries and in Malaysia with regards to reflective writing on teacher education programmes. The discussion highlights some of the issues reported in the studies which have some similarities with my own study.

3.6.1 Recent Studies on ‘Reflection’ in Other Countries

Empirical studies on ‘reflection’ have been conducted in many different countries including Malaysia. In this section, I will begin my exploration of studies from Pakistan (Rarieya, 2005), Canada (McCabe, Walsh, Wideman & Winter, 2009), Turkey (Kayaoglu, Erbay & Saglamel, 2016) and United States of America, (Yagata, 2017; Harland & Wondra, 2011). These studies shed light on a number of common themes, one of which is forming the ‘habit’ of reflecting on practice. Harland & Wondra (2011) examined and coded the depth of pre-service student teachers’ reflections on their teaching experiences written for their end of semester reflective papers and reflective blogs using a four-level depth of reflection (DoR) assessment tool: Level 1 – Non-Reflection / Descriptive (lowest), Level 2 – Understanding, Level 3 – Reflection, Level 4 – Critical Reflection (highest). Harland & Wondra found and explained that pre-service student teachers reached greater DoR in reflective blogging as it gives them the opportunity to reflect as many times as possible on their experiences and things that they have learned compared to writing the reflections on paper as a one-off end of the course assignment. This resonates with Hatton & Smith’s (1994) view that teacher trainees can learn the habit of reflecting on practice, despite the widespread belief that they are slow to understand and value the benefits of reflection. This suggests that repeating the writing process for reflection over time will help to develop the student teachers’ ability and skill to write reflection. A similar outcome can be observed in my own study since student teachers wrote reflections in all three practicum phases which gave enough opportunities for student teachers to develop their reflective writing abilities.

In another instance, Rarieya (2005) conducted a study that investigated practicing teachers who were undergoing a Master’s degree in Education programme in Pakistan. One of the problems in this course is that although these teachers have been teaching for many years, the development of reflective practice and the recognition that teachers need to be reflective practitioners is generally non-existent. Thus, most teachers on the various teacher education programme in this country are unaware and unfamiliar with the term ‘reflective practice’. Rarieya strongly believes that this should not be the case since in her view ‘reflection’ is closely linked to good practice and effective education. Besides, for the teachers in Rarieya’s study, it is not the first time that they have experienced ‘reflective practice’ since they had enrolled on other modules which

require for them to reflect on their practice prior to this one. So, Rarieya developed an alternative approach in developing her teachers' 'reflective practice' that is having them to engage in 'reflection' at three levels: i) writing reflections on a regular basis in their reflective journals and sharing the entries with the tutors, ii) creating time either at the start of the day or end of the day for teachers to quietly reflect on sessions, and iii) sharing the written reflections with the whole class. As a result of this approach, the teachers' 'reflections' developed a visible 'reflective' stance. There were changes in how the teachers thought about their teaching with more talk of 'possibilities and adaptations' than 'this cannot work'. This suggests that reflection can be enhanced through structured support. More importantly, Rarieya argued that the 'habit' of reflection inculcated through the alternative approach had changed the teachers' attitude towards reflective practice and their writing had become more reflective and lengthier. In my study, student teachers are required to write reflections immediately after their class. This could also be one of the ways to develop the 'habit' of reflecting on teaching just like in Rarieya's study.

Another theme that is sharing reflections with others enhances deeper reflection. As stated earlier, the student teachers in Harland & Wondra's (2011) study wrote their reflections in blogs. These reflective blogs are read by others especially their peers since they are in public domain. A blog is an effective tool for sharing since it is interactive which allows readers and writers to interact with each other which provide the opportunity for exchanges of ideas through instant responses (Richardson, 2010). The results of the study indicated that sharing reflections with others contributes to student teachers' improvement in their reflection although none of them reached the highest level of reflection. In fact, when student teachers know that their reflections are read by their peers or tutors, such 'external audience, that can profoundly shape what and how student teachers may allow themselves to consider writing' (Boud, 2001, p. 15), encourages student teachers to be cautious and filter what they need to say in their reflections. On the other hand, some student teachers may find sharing reflections with others discouraging as reported in a study conducted by Kayaoglu, Erbay & Saglamel (2016). They found that novice teachers tend to be descriptive and general in their reflections because it was challenging because they did not have the confidence to challenge the views of others at the early stage of teacher development when their teaching experience is less than their peers. Despite these findings, the studies show that

sharing reflections with others have some impact on the type or quality of the reflection student teachers write. Furthermore, Dewey (1933) also mentioned that the act of sharing ideas with another person could broaden the field of understanding and knowledge which is a positive outcome of reflection.

Another important theme is the perceived roles of reflection on the teacher training programme. McCabe, Walsh, Wideman & Winter (2009) examined the process of 'critical reflective practice' (CRP) in a pre-service teacher education programme in Ontario, Canada. They made a comparison between the responses from interviews given by the student teachers and the faculty on the benefits of writing critical reflections and the effect of student teachers' reflections being assessed. McCabe et al. (2009) discovered that the interpretations of critical reflective practice between the two groups are different. For example, the student teachers perceived 'critical reflective practice' as a tool to assist them in teaching. Their reflections contained more discussions about 'improvement in teaching' rather than understanding the 'self', 'lived experiences', and the 'impact of the practitioner on classroom teaching' which were the faculty's concerns. Secondly, the student teachers felt that the purpose of critical reflection was to meet the assessment criteria of the programme. This resulted in the student teachers reflecting at surface level as a strategy for obtaining a pass on the module, a similar finding in Hobbs' study. On the other hand, the faculty viewed critical reflective practice as a 'tool for empowerment' and a means to understanding oneself as a teacher. Thirdly, the student teachers expressed their need to not only write their reflections, but also gain opportunities for conference with peers, teachers, and faculty members, which they felt would give more breadth in their reflections like Harland & Wondra's (2011) study. The faculty also believe and understood the importance of discussing verbally the teaching experiences with others. As for the benefits of critical reflective practice, the perceptions between the student teachers and the faculty were different. Student teachers had a pragmatic view while the faculty offered a more professionally idealistic view of the benefits of critical reflection. In my research, the interviews with student teachers and teacher educators revealed somewhat similar findings (see Chapter 6).

From McCabe, Walsh, Wideman & Winter's (2009) study, there is a gap between the student teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions of the role of critical reflective practice on the programme. In relation to this, Brooker & O'Donoghue (1993) investigated reflection in a teacher education programme and they discovered that

reflective practice had a clear objective in the programme official documents, but there was no agreement among the lectures or students about what reflection meant. They cautioned that ‘the notion of reflection is in danger of being brought into disrepute if the rhetoric in teacher education course documents is not matched by the reality of practices aimed at its promotion amongst student teachers’ (Brooker & O’Donoghue, 1993, no page). This is also directly relevant to my own research which investigates the meaning of ‘reflection’ on the teacher education programme through the way it is defined and presented in the course documentation (in 2.6) as well as how it is perceived by student teachers and tutors on the programme (in Chapters 5 and 7).

The final theme is the importance of ‘genuine dialogue’ between supervisor and student teacher that encourages reflective thought among the participants. Yagata (2017) recently wrote a paper sharing his critical reflection on a post-observation reflective session with his student teacher. The purpose of his paper was to reflect on the use of dialogue as a teacher trainer and more generally on the function of dialogue as a tool for scaffolding pre-service teachers’ reflective practice. He found that although he was reflectively engaging with his student teacher, he realised that he had also neglected to ‘listen generously’ to his student teacher so that he missed many distress signals that the student teacher was sending him. He was also insufficiently unaware of the ‘power gap’ between himself and his student teacher that made his voice authoritative and made it difficult for the student teacher to offer counterargument to his suggestions. While other studies mainly focused on student teachers’ reflection on their learning, Yagata was particularly interested on how he as a teaching practice supervisor could help student teachers to reflect more effectively and critically on their teaching. His reflection on his experiences guiding his student teacher during teaching practice provided another dimension to the study on ‘reflection’ which the previous studies did not mention. This was also something that I investigated in my research through student teachers’ engagement in reflective writing (in Chapter 6) and the support they received from their peers and supervisors (see 5.4.1 and 7.5.1) on reflecting on their teaching as an approach to improve my training.

Harland & Wondra (2011) and Rarieya (2005) adopted a quantitative approach in conducting their study. They analysed student teachers’ reflective writing and coded them based on a set of criteria to determine the level of reflection in student teachers’ reflective journals. However, McCabe, Walsh, Wideman & Winter (2009), and

Kayaoglu, Erbay & Saglamel (2016) applied a qualitative approach to their investigation by interviewing the participants of their reflective writing practices. In contrast, my research adopted a mixed method approach with qualitative being the main approach in analysing student teachers' and teacher educators' interviews and student teachers' written reflection to investigate their perceptions of reflection and reveal the features of reflective writing. I also conducted a quantitative analysis to identify the topics student teachers write most in their reflections. On the other hand, Yagata (2017) shared his supervision experience which emphasised the importance of 'genuine dialogue' between supervisors and student teachers to enhance effective reflection.

Despite these different approaches in the investigations, what seems to be most interesting and important about these studies are the findings and the recommendations that they make for enhancing engagement with reflection. They are directly relevant to my research since I am also interested in finding ways to improve the pre-service teacher education programme in Malaysia based on the findings, just like the studies I reviewed above. This would answer RQ6.

3.6.2 Recent Studies on 'Reflection' in Malaysia

In Malaysia, a number of studies have been conducted to examine 'reflection' in teacher education programmes across the country. These studies had similar findings to those conducted overseas. For example, Hussin (2004) used a 'second order action research method'⁵ to investigate how her student teachers at a teacher training college in Malaysia develop critical reflection and analytical ability in learning to teach. She developed a structured framework as well as providing coaching and scaffolding particularly in helping her student teachers to write their reflections critically.

In the first month of Cycle 1 of her action research, Hussin noticed that despite providing a framework to help student teachers write their reflection she still failed to observe a growth in the content of teaching knowledge and lack of dialogical and critical reflection in the student teachers' journals as she reported that student teachers' 'reasoning was not clearly apparent' in their reflective journals (Hussin, 2004, p. 88).

⁵ Second order action research has two levels of action. As a process, the researcher's actions and the students' actions have reciprocal relationships. They help each other in order to improve action. As a result, the researcher had the data and the student teachers had the experiences in practicum. As explained in Hussin (2004, p. 84).

This was an unexpected outcome since her student teachers had been writing reflections for 4 weeks, so she felt they should have made some progress. Thus, it was necessary for Hussin to repeat her briefing for those student teachers who did not seem to understand the task. She also provided coaching to these student teachers more frequently. At the end of her two-cycle action research, Hussin's strategy in using the framework, coaching, and scaffolding, resulted in the student teachers reflecting critically. She reported that 'they were able to identify critical incidents, evaluate, and clarify situations using both their rational and emotional mind; demonstrated the cognitive skills and feelings in order to gain meaning from reflection; used the knowledge they had about teaching and learning in the reflective process' (Hussin, 2004, p. 201).

Despite the success in developing student teachers who are critically reflective, the study raises the question to what extent student teachers were writing the truth about the learning process they have experienced in their reflections. This is a similar concern which Hobbs had mentioned in her paper as discussed in the previous section.

Kabilan (2007) investigated pre-service and in-service student teachers on the Bachelor of Education TESOL programme. The aim was to examine how teaching student teachers to engage in more rigorous reflection could contribute to student teachers' professional development. Kabilan used a two-level reflection process: the first level is reflecting on practices, and the second level is reflecting on the first level, which help student teachers understand their own and others' abilities and beliefs about classroom practices. The findings show that writing critical reflections on student teachers' own practices and others' reflections: i) enhanced the student teachers' fundamental pedagogical knowledge and understanding, ii) heightened their awareness of meaningful and effective classroom practices, iii) improved their linguistic capabilities, iv) elevated their readiness to practice positive attitudes toward teaching and learning, and v) provided them with relevant skills. Kabilan believes that these aspects are important in developing student teachers to become effective future English teachers.

Haslee Shahril & Abd. Majid (2010) conducted a research study with final year TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) student teachers and analysed aspects in their reflective journals to identify the attributes of the student teachers as they reflected on their practice. This was based on Colton & Sparks-Langer's (1993) key attributes of reflective decision makers: efficacy, flexibility, social responsibility, and

consciousness. As Dewey (1933) stressed that appropriate attributes or attitudes are important in shaping learners or teachers to be effective thinkers. However, the findings in Haslee Shahril's et al. study shows that student teachers' reflections did not satisfactorily present all attributes. This is a similar issue mentioned in both Hobbs' and Hussin's studies.

Choy & Oo (2012) conducted a research with 60 teachers from institutions of higher learning throughout Malaysia. They investigated how the teachers were practicing reflective thinking in their teaching as well as how they think of themselves and their teaching practices. They used a set of questionnaires focusing on four areas of development: i) ability to self-express, ii) awareness of how one learns, iii) developing long life learning skills, and iv) influence of belief about self and self-efficacy. The results show that reflection is not a common practice for the majority of teachers, and it is only done to ensure that they were doing their jobs properly. Only a few teachers were interested to self-assess their practice. There was no evidence in the teachers' responses that they wanted to improve their performance to enhance and enrich their students' learning. This suggests that these teachers probably lack the understanding of the purpose of reflection and the ability to make connections between theory and practice. This defeats the purpose of reflection in the first place as suggested by many scholars (e.g. Boud et al., 1996; Calderhead 1989; Larrivee, 2000). The teachers also believe that receiving feedback from their students is like being judged, which contradicts with the findings from other studies (e.g. Harland & Wondra, 2011). The findings in this study also imply that the teachers do not have high metacognitive awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Based on these findings, Choy & Oo made an overall conclusion that these teachers are not critically reflective.

More recently, Yaacob, Walters, Md Ali, Shaik Abdullah, and Walters (2014) conducted an action research project to determine whether journals kept during fieldwork in primary schools allowed the ELT (English Language Teaching) teacher trainees to reflect on their beliefs and behaviours in the classroom. They used Van Manen's (1977) three-stage model: practical, technical and critical to determine the issues raised and measured the level of critical reflection in the reflective journals. It was found that the teacher trainees mostly demonstrated reflection at the 'practical' and 'technical level' and very little at the critical level. They also identified that the nature of the teacher trainees' writing in their reflective journals consist of three elements which

are 'evaluation', 'problem solving', and 'consciousness'. Similar findings are also noted in Isoglu's (2007) and Kemmis & McTaggart's (1988) studies.

A study conducted by Min, Mansor, and Samsudin (2016) showed that a critical reflection manual (CRM) could promote critical reflection among student teachers during teacher clinical experience (TCE). They claimed that this manual answered the call of other research that 'student teachers lack the structured opportunities or approaches to reflect' (Boon & Wee, 2005). Most student teachers in this study stated that CRM was an effective tool in providing structure and guiding them to write their reflections. It was also effective in providing immediate support. As such, student teachers became more conscious about their teaching and learning process. The student teachers claimed that they were able to critically analyse and solve problems that arise in their teaching. They began to question and critique their teaching based on considerations of different aspects such as the moral and ethical dimensions (areas often not observed in student teachers' reflections), to improve their teaching. Thus, the findings in this study support the earlier claims (e.g. Hatton & Smith, 1994; LaBoskey, 1993; Thorpe, 2000) that frameworks help guide and develop reflective skills among student teachers.

The case studies which I have presented above were mainly conducted to examine the quality of the written reflections and shows the impact of support provided to the student teachers or teachers on their reflection. The studies which were conducted in Malaysia show a number of common findings which were not far from those found in studies in other parts of the world. These studies which I had reviewed above add to our understanding of the issues regarding reflecting on teaching and the impact of writing reflections as a requirement of a course. The studies showed that they were mainly concerned in measuring the level of reflection. They did this by comparing the data against a set of frameworks to indicate whether the reflections had reached a certain level of criticality and reflectivity. My study was also interested in finding out how critically and deeply the student teachers were reflecting, but I did not start out with a pre-set list of criteria to evaluate the reflections. However, a closer look into these studies did not show how they examine the process that was involved in developing student teachers' reflection which is an area lacking in most of these published studies. Although they indicated that supporting student teachers to write reflections by providing structure helped them to write reflections, this information is insufficient to explain student

teachers' engagement in the process of reflection. It is important to understand the process that takes place in developing student teachers' reflective skills so that more effective training can be designed to support student teachers' reflective writing, which my study intends to do.

3.7 'Teaching-Centric' Reflection

Based on the discussions in the literature, I could summarise that in some cases, especially in the case of trainee teachers, written reflections tend to be 'teaching-centric'. I am using the term 'teaching-centric' to refer to the reflections that focus primarily on what the student teacher or teacher is doing in the classroom (e.g. the way she uses the material she has prepared, the way she gives instructions, the way she explains a language point, etc.). The discussion in the reflections would not include other things that might be going on in the lesson, such as the learners' use of English, learners' behaviour, or group dynamics (e.g. Choy & Oo, 2012; Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 1999). There would also be no engagement with 'critical' approaches to reflection, as defined, for example, by Valli (1993), Jay and Johnson (2002) and Farrell (2015), which look beyond practice to the sociocultural and political dimensions of schooling and teaching English (see Table 3.2). Thus, in 'teaching-centric' reflection, the content of the reflections is based entirely on what actually happens in the classroom and this is analysed almost exclusively in terms of the actions of the teacher and the activities she has planned.

In my study, I discovered from the analysis of student teachers' written reflections that the reflections are also 'teaching-centric'. It is found that the reflections focused on three things which are the technical aspects of teaching, teaching for self-development, and identifying the strengths, weaknesses and improvement in teaching (see 6.3). This perception of 'teaching-centric' reflection resonates with some of the findings reported in research studies into student teachers' written reflections (see sections 3.6.1 and 3.6.2). For example, the study by Harland & Wondra (2011), Hussin (2004), Yaacob, Walters, Md Ali, Shaik Abdullah & Walters (2014), and Min, Mansor & Samsudin (2016), found a predominance of 'technical and practical' issues in student teachers' reflective journals. Perhaps, this is a common thing since there is a tendency for novice teachers to reflect on areas pertaining to their practice.

In addition, the way student teachers' reflections are being assessed could also result in the reflections being 'teaching-centric'. For example, during the practicum 70% of the assessment component is focused on lesson planning and lesson implementation (see Table 2.9 in 2.10) which clearly suggest that it is very likely that student teachers wrote more about their teaching experiences and processes particularly things they did in the classroom rather than on professional issues like the teachers' concern on how to integrate content, pedagogy in an ESL context with technology in the classroom or teacher's responsibilities for lifelong learning. Furthermore, as discussed in 2.10, the criteria for assessing 'reflection' is combined with the other elements of 'principles and practice of teaching and learning' component. This shows that the primary focus is on assessing the practical aspect of 'teaching' rather than the 'reflection' itself which seems to take a backseat.

In general, 'teaching-centric' reflection seems to limit student teachers' thoughts on only one thing that is 'teaching'. However, through 'reflection' student teachers are supposed to 'develop meaning' of their practice by making connections to other experiences and ideas (Rodgers, 2002; Dewey, 1933). This is an aspect lacking in 'teaching-centric' reflection. Student teachers should be encouraged to explore other dimensions such as the learning process, the learners or the learning environment. This would make student teachers' 'reflection' broader and deeper in their process of making sense of their teaching practice.

3.8 Conclusion

There are several key issues that have been highlighted in this review. The chapter begins with a description of the theoretical background that underpins 'reflection' in teacher education. There are a number of competing views and arguments from different scholars on how reflection is perceived especially when it is applied in teaching. Drawing from the discussions of the concepts of reflection (in 3.2 & 3.3) it could be summarised that reflection is a rigorous way of thinking which involves questioning and challenging received opinions and accepted practices in order to make sense of things. Reflection is associated with the activity of identifying strengths, weaknesses and suggesting improvements in teaching (SWIS) and reflection is mainly a writing activity (see 5.2 and RQ1). The combination of the different concepts and

perceptions of reflection helps to give a different dimension to the meaning of 'reflection' in the context of teaching.

This review also identified some of the benefits of reflection (RQ2) such as sharing reflections with others helps to develop ideas about teaching from different perspectives (in 3.2.4). This is one of the areas being investigated in this study and through the interviews with the student teachers (see 5.4), they perceived that sharing written reflections with peers encourage positive exchanges of ideas that help to solve teaching problems collaboratively.

Critical reflection as presented in the frameworks (see 3.5.2) is positioned at the highest level of reflection. Sometimes critical reflection is synonymous with critical thinking since both involve complex cognitive abilities to solve problems and make decisions. Critical reflection also emphasises considering the broader social, political, and economic dimensions when examining and solving teaching issues. These are the dimensions expected to be seen in student teachers' written reflections which are 'critical'. However, this is not entirely the case especially when the student teachers lack teaching experience and are still in training (see Chapter 8). There are studies (in 3.6) that examined student teachers' reflective journals and found that the focus of the reflection is mainly on teaching. These 'features' have guided me in analysing the written reflections student teachers wrote in this study. It revealed similar findings as can be seen in the topics of the reflections (RQ3) and I have used the term 'teaching-centric' (see 3.7, 6.3 and 8.2.1) to refer to student teachers' written reflections that predominantly focused their discussions on teaching.

Usually, the level of reflection is used to indicate the quality of reflection. The literature also seems to suggest that the criteria for the level of reflections are used to define what reflective writing is (see 3.5.2). This would seem to be inappropriate since the criteria for assessment and defining what 'reflection' is are two different things. In addition, some of the criteria or levels of reflection as suggested in the different frameworks may not be suitable to assess some of the reflections especially when they are written in different contexts, e.g. the criteria in the frameworks are used with experienced teachers but the same criteria are also used with student teachers whose English is their second language. So, I believe that the criteria for evaluating reflective writing should be context specific. In this study, I collected and examined student teachers' reflective journals and as a result five features of reflective writing were found

(see 6.5 and RQ4). These features could be used as guidelines to help student teachers structure their reflections during teaching practice.

The review in Chapter 2 provides the contextual background to this research and discusses the support that student teachers received in reflective writing (RQ5). For example, a sample reflection and guidelines in writing daily and weekly reflections were given to student teachers to guide them to write their reflections. Encouraging student teachers to share their reflections with others could develop their understanding of their teaching practice further (in 5.4). In addition, there are studies (e.g. Hussin, 2004; Min, Mansor, and Samsudin, 2016) that found frameworks of reflective writing are particularly helpful in providing structure and develop student teachers' reflective skills. Despite this, close guidelines and frameworks used to aid student teachers' reflective writing resulted in student teachers' reflections being 'structured' and 'narrow' as the findings show in this study (see 9.2).

The issues highlighted in this review relate directly to my own study since they concern the various ways of reflection is conceptualised, its role in developing student teachers' thinking and the impact it has on teacher education programmes. My study not only investigated student teachers' engagement with the process of reflective writing, but also explored how the participants in my research themselves conceptualise the notion of 'reflection' as it is a relatively under-explored area in the literature, yet an essential starting point for developing improvements (RQ6) to current teacher education programmes in the practice of reflection (see 8.2 and 9.2).

More importantly, the methods used to investigate these issues have influenced the design, the construction of the interview questions and the methodology used in my research. For example, the studies which I have reviewed investigated student teachers' reflective process via level of reflection to determine the quality of the reflections student teachers wrote. They mainly adopted either a qualitative or quantitative approach in analysing the level of reflection based on pre-determined framework or criteria. As for my research, I adopted a mixed method approach in analysing student teachers' reflective journals starting with a quantitative analysis to identify the topics student teachers wrote most in their reflections and open coding to categorise the topics. I then conducted a close textual analysis of student teachers' written reflections and interviews, approaching it from bottom up, to investigate what student teachers' 'see' (their perceptions of reflection) and how they 'engage' in the reflective process, which I

demonstrated through ‘patterns of flow’ (see 6.5). These are the areas which other studies have paid little attention to. In addition, I used the gaps that I found from the previous studies to formulate the interview questions (see Appendix U, V, W, X and Y) and develop the ‘interview schedule’ (see 4.8.2) so that I could investigate student teachers’ engagement in reflection further and suggest possible improvements to develop better training in reflective writing (RQ6). Further discussion about analysing the interviews and written reflections can be found in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In Chapters 1 and 2, I have provided descriptions of the contextual background of this research. Chapter 3 discussed the development of the concept of ‘reflection’ in education especially in developing professional teachers. Now, in this chapter I will describe the methodology for my research. It begins with the stating of the research questions. Next, a description and justification of the qualitative approach as the main approach in a mixed methods research is presented with discussions on issues of research process relating to the researcher’s position, research reliability and validity, as well as minimising bias in the study. This is followed by a description of the data collection methods and data analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

4.2 Research Questions

As discussed in the previous chapters, the background of the study has resulted in the formulation of six research questions. They are articulated as below:

RQ 1 : What does ‘reflection’ mean to the pre-service student teachers and teacher educators on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme in Malaysia?

RQ 2 : What do they perceive to be the benefits of ‘reflection’?

RQ 3 : What do the pre-service student teachers focus on in their written reflections?

RQ 4 : What features of reflective writing can be found in the student teachers’ written reflections?

RQ 5 : What support currently exists to guide student teachers in their reflective writing during the practicum and how adequate is it?

RQ 6 : Based on the analysis of the answers to the above questions, what improvements can be made in the provision of pre-service teacher education in the training context of this study?

It was clear to me that ‘research questions are the vital first steps in any research’ (Lewis & Munn, 2004, p. 5). Their function is ‘to explain specifically’ what my study is intended for, that is ‘to learn or understand’ (Maxwell, 2013, p. 75). They also serve other vital functions such as helping me to stay focused on the problems that I wanted to investigate as well as defining and clarifying the limits of my study, and to guide me on

how to conduct my research. There are many ways in which questions about research are formulated. Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 16) stated that:

‘In qualitative inquiry, initial questions for research often come from real-world observations, dilemmas, and questions and have emerged from the interplay of the researcher’s direct experience, tacit theories, and growing scholarly interests. At other times, the topic of interest derives from theoretical traditions and their attendant empirical research.’

(Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.16)

As for me, I began the process of constructing my research questions when I noticed that there was a gap between what was required of ‘reflection’ on the Bachelor of Teaching programme and its practice. The problem also came to light when I realised many of us (myself and my colleagues) had trouble defining what ‘reflection’ is and what it entails (as I stated in 1.3).

The initial process of constructing my research questions took several rounds of reconstructions. I refined the questions many times and arrived at six final central questions as stated above. These questions precisely addressed the issues that I wanted to investigate which to me were ‘essentially important since they determine the success of the research’ (Flick, 2014, p. 146).

My research questions reflected the concerns that have arisen from my own practice and the importance of what ‘reflection’ really means to me, my colleagues, and my student teachers. Furthermore, given the importance attached to the practice of reflection on the Bachelor of Teaching curriculum and course documentation (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), I wanted to know what the term means to the participants of the course, and how well-developed their understanding of the term seems to be. It is also important to explore the concepts behind this term as written in the literature and the extent to which the participants’ understanding converges with or diverges from the way the term is used in the extensive literature on the subject. Hence, the first research question was formulated to clarify the main issue of the meaning of ‘reflection’. This is followed by the second research question which focuses on finding out how student teachers perceived the value of ‘reflection’ in the teacher education programme that is what they learned from the process of ‘reflection’ during teaching practice. It is

important to find this out in order to determine what sort of improvements might be necessary to the support and guidance provided on the course. Thus, having a clear idea of what ‘reflection’ is and what to do with it is key in ensuring an effective teacher education. In addition, as my literature review has shown, there are few published research studies into the perceptions that pre-service student teachers have about the meaning and value of reflection. My study helps to fill this gap.

Both research questions three and four focused specifically on the student teachers’ written reflections. Research question three was constructed to find out the topics and the issues student teachers often discuss in their written reflections. This will help to shed further light on what the student teachers understand by the term ‘reflection’, and what they consider to be important to reflect on. The fourth research question sought to identify the different features of student teachers’ reflective writing (e.g. description, evaluation, reasoning, self-realisation and problem-solving) through a close textual analysis of their writing and explores how they combine these different features into identifiable patterns of reflective discourse. This will shed important light on their level of engagement in the process of reflection.

Research question five was to identify the support and guidance given to student teachers in helping them to write their reflections during the practicum. It also investigated whether the help provided was enough to develop student teachers’ reflective writing skills.

The final research question focused on identifying the improvements that can be made to the pre-service teacher education in Malaysia based on the findings from the other research questions.

4.3 My Research Methodology

There are two types of investigation employed in the social sciences: quantitative research and qualitative research. Generally, quantitative research starts with certain assumptions or hypotheses and looks for data that supports or denies them (Gorman & Clayton, 2005). It mainly adopts a ‘scientific’ approach to data collection and analysis, that falls in the ‘positivist paradigm’ (Creswell, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). Quantitative researchers view the world as a collection of observable events and facts which are measured typically using statistical procedures. On the other hand, qualitative research lies within the ‘interpretivist paradigm’

(Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It focuses on ‘social constructs’ and ‘individual meanings’ which are complex and always evolving, which makes qualitative research less amenable to precise measurement or numerical interpretation. Those who engage in this inquiry often look at research in an ‘inductive’ style.

After exploring the two types of research above, I decided that the best way to conduct my research was via the mixed methods approach, employing both the qualitative and quantitative methods in my investigation. The reason for this was that I have two main data sources in my study: the interviews and the written reflections. I analysed the interview data mainly using a qualitative method. I used both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse the written reflections. I only used quantitative method to find out which topic areas were most and least frequently discussed by the participants in their journal entries. My overall aim of this research was to understand the meanings of ‘reflection’ as perceived by the student teachers and teacher educators who are involved in the teacher training programme in Malaysia (as stated in 4.2). Thus, a qualitative data analysis would help me explore the meanings this term carries. However, while I was analysing student teachers’ written reflections, I realised that I also need to apply quantitative analysis to support my qualitative findings. Thus, my study now falls into the third type of research which is mixed methods since I incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods in analysing the data. Each research methodology is explored and discussed in the following sections.

4.3.1 Mixed Methods Research

Creswell & Plano Clark (2011, p.5) considered mixed methods research as:

‘a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone’.

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.5)

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) further explained that some writers use it as a research 'methodology' that is a framework that relates to the entire process of research and focus on the philosophical assumptions. For example, Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, p.17) explained that mixed methods studies combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or multi-phased study. They added that researchers could collect both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study, which clearly shows them applying a mixed methods research (e.g. in my study). However, researchers could also collect data in many phases for example, quantitative data are collected in Phase 1, followed by qualitative data in Phase 2, followed by quantitative data in the Phase 3. Each project is reported separately as a distinct study, but the overall inquiry of the programme could also be called mixed methods research.

Creswell & Plano Clark (2011, p.5) stated that mixed methods research also emphasises the 'techniques' or 'methods of collecting and analysing data'. They explained that 'there are three ways in which mixing occurs: i) merging or converging the two datasets by actually bringing them together, ii) connecting the two datasets by having one build on the other, or iii) embedding one data set within the other so that one type of data provides a supportive role for the other dataset' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.7). They argued that sometimes, there is a need to mix the quantitative and qualitative data so that they form a more complete picture of the problem since collecting and analysing either data alone may not be enough.

Mixed methods design use 'triangulation techniques' to make connections between the data, investigators/observers, theory, measure, or method within the research (Neuman, 2011, p. 164). In my study, I used triangulation to combine and connect between the qualitative data and quantitative data in student teachers' written reflections. For example, I made a 'triangulation of methods' (Neuman, 2011, p. 164) by mixing the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data. I collected data using interviews and written reflections. I analysed student teachers' written reflections in two ways: i) using a qualitative method by applying 'thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and ii) quantitative analysis by counting the frequency of 'instances' in student teachers' written reflections to determine the focus and the frequency of the topics student teachers discussed in their written reflections. Another example of the triangulation process I used is 'triangulation of measures' (Neuman, 2011, p. 164) that

is by taking multiple measures of the same phenomenon. In this research I interviewed the student teachers and teacher educators on their perceptions of ‘reflection’ on the teacher education programme during practicum. I also collected student teachers’ written reflections to examine whether what had been said in the interviews relate to what had been written in reflections. Also, from the interviews I triangulated the findings from student teachers and compare that with teacher educators in order to determine the similarities or differences in their perceptions of ‘reflection’. A detailed description of the triangulation procedures of the data can be found in the analysis section of this chapter (in 4.9).

Although my research lies within the mixed methods methodology, my investigation predominantly follows a qualitative approach with a small component of the overall study that integrates a quantitative method. Thus, the study utilises a ‘qualitative priority’ where a greater emphasis is placed on the qualitative methods and the quantitative methods are used in a secondary role (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

4.3.2 Qualitative Research

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011, p. 3) qualitative research is:

‘a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of presentations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them’.

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3)

This definition illuminates the richness and complexity of qualitative research from which a number of key features can be extracted from this description. The first one, qualitative research takes place in a ‘natural setting’. This means that researchers draw data from the context or setting as they ‘naturally occur’ without any attempt to

manipulate the situation under study (Richards, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Miles & Huberman, 1994, Silverman, 2014; Crotty, 1998). For example, I particularly carried out my investigation when the student teachers were having their practicum since this was the best time to capture student teachers' thoughts and experiences as they were involved in the process of reflection through their daily teaching practice routine.

Another feature of qualitative research is 'researcher is key instrument' (Creswell, 2013, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for data collection and analysis. The main goal of qualitative research is understanding, thus the researcher who is able to respond and adapt to the situations under study immediately, would be an ideal instrument in collecting and analysing the data. I was involved in every step of the data collection process, organising and conducting interviews on site (e.g. at the ITE) where I was able to collect first-hand data from student teachers and teacher educators. I 'immersed' myself in the research setting, remaining close to the events to capture sufficient and detailed accounts of the situation under study.

Qualitative research works with a wide range of data rather than on a single data source. As I mentioned previously, I have two sources of data which are the interviews and student teachers' written reflections. The interviews and the written reflections provide evidence that cuts across all the different data sources available in this study.

Qualitative research is also concerned with the meanings that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meanings that the researchers bring or write about from the literature. The reason is that only the actual participants themselves can reveal the meanings and interpretations of their experiences and actions (Richards, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Gorman & Clayton, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam, 2002; Gray, 2009) which are diverse and in multiple perspectives. This suggests that qualitative research values the opinions, experiences, and feelings of the participants. This is also why qualitative researchers put in strenuous efforts to view social phenomena from the perspectives of the 'others' (Richards, 2005; Creswell, 2013). For instance, I spent prolonged contact with the participants collecting student teachers' written reflections as well as interviewing them throughout their practicum which allowed me to uncover my participants' views about 'reflection' as they share their experiences with me through the written reflections and interviews. I was very careful in transcribing and interpreting

the interviews I had with the student teachers and teacher educators so that every detail and information are recorded as close to the original as possible.

Often, qualitative researchers collect evidence and use this to develop an explanation of the events or establish a theory based on the observed phenomenon. This is done primarily by the process of ‘induction’ or using a ‘bottom-up’ approach (Gorman & Clayton, 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), organising the data inductively, developing from the particular to the general aspect of the practice, combining and ordering into larger themes. So, when I analysed the interview transcripts and the written reflections, I was able to build the concepts of ‘reflection’ from the participants’ perspective in the form of themes and topics.

The process of a qualitative research is ‘emergent and flexible’ (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2013). This means that the initial plan of research may shift or change at any stage of the study after the researchers enter the field and begin collecting the data. Thus, qualitative research follows a ‘non-linear’ research path in which ‘researchers could make successive passes through the steps’ (Neuman, 2011, p. 167). Neuman further explained that researchers may move forward, backward, and sideways before advancing again. In each phase or cycle of the research, new data can be collected, or new insights can be developed. The process can be slow and less direct. For example, in my research, while I was analysing student teachers’ written reflections qualitatively, that is to determine the topics in student teachers’ reflections, I realised that I also need to analyse this data using quantitative analysis in order to develop better understanding of the different findings. By ‘quantifying’ the topics the student teachers wrote in their reflections, I was able to determine which topics seemed to be of most concern to the participants and which were of lesser concern. My decision of integrating a quantitative method in analysing my data shows I was responsive towards the changing conditions of my study which was at that time, in progress. The flexibility in qualitative research had allowed me to engage in the best practices to obtain understanding of the issues under study.

4.3.3 Quantitative Research

Although, there is only a small part of my study that involves a quantitative method, I feel that it is still necessary to give a brief overview of the distinctive features of this method. Dörnyei (2007, p. 24) explained that ‘quantitative research involves data

collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods'. He placed quantitative research within the 'natural sciences' and adopts a 'scientific method' to the research process which consists of three key stages: a) observing a phenomenon or identifying a problem, b) generating an initial hypothesis, and c) testing the hypothesis by collecting and analysing empirical data using standardised procedure.

There are three characteristics of quantitative research that are a contrast to qualitative research as explained by Neuman (2011) and Dörnyei (2007). The first difference is that using numbers is the most important feature of quantitative research. Quantitative researchers rely more on 'positivist principles' and 'emphasis on precisely measuring variables and testing hypotheses'. They define the variables they work with prior to the actual study and assign a logical scale of values to them, which can be expressed in numbers. This opens a range of possibilities and sets some limitations for researchers.

The data that is collected in both quantitative and qualitative research is related to people. However, people differ from each other in the way they perceive, interpret, or remember things. Thus, their accounts will show considerable variation across individuals. Dörnyei (2007) explained that for quantitative researchers, they regard the sample-related variation as a problem that needs to be fixed. Thus, they take a large enough sample in which the idiosyncratic differences associated with the particular individuals are ironed out by the sample size and therefore the pooled results largely reflect commonalities that exist in the data, which is a 'meaning in the general' strategy or 'meaning in numbers' as opposed to 'meaning in the particular' for qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 27).

Quantitative study employs a logic that is 'systematic and follows a linear research path' (Neuman, 2011, p. 167). This means that quantitative researchers apply 'standardised procedures to assess objective reality, eliminating any individual-based subjectivity from various phases of the research process by developing systematic canons and rules for every facet of data collection and analysis' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 34). For example, statistical analytical tools add systematicity to the data analysis phase rather than having to rely on researcher's subjective interpretations. Numbers, variables, standardised procedures, statistics, and scientific reasoning are all part of the ultimate

quantitative quest for facts that are generalisable beyond the particular and add up to wide-ranging, ideally universal laws.

When I included quantitative analysis in analysing part of my data, I was measuring the topics in student teachers' written reflections to see which ones were most and least popular. This shows the commonalities in the topics student teachers discussed in their reflections. I used a standardised system in calculating the percentage of each different topics (explained in 4.8.4). The quantitative analysis helps to explain and adds meaning to the complex phenomenon of 'reflection' among student teachers.

4.3.4 Interpretive Paradigm

Fundamentally, qualitative research is situated in the 'interpretative paradigm'. The philosophy behind interpretive qualitative research is that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world (Merriam, 2002; Gray, 2009). The world or realities are not fixed or single. They are 'apprehensible in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110-111). Holliday (2007, p. 6) maintained that 'the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research'. He further explained that researchers 'can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate, and then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is far as we can go' (Holliday, 2007, p. 6).

Crocker (2009, p. 6) explained that the multiple constructions and multiple interpretations of the world 'change, depending upon time and circumstances, so reality is not universal but person-, context-, and time-bound'. They are influenced by 'historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives' (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Thus, the research outcome tends to be subjective based on the researchers' interpretation of the data. Researchers work in and through their own interpretations and others to make meaning from the context they observe. They also construct meanings from many different aspects of their lives (their personal, cultural, and historical experiences). Thus, qualitative researchers do not rely on one absolute answer but rather from various interpretations. Also, interpretive studies are 'typically inductive in nature

and often associated with qualitative approaches to data gathering and analysis' (Gray, 2009, p. 36).

4.3.5 Justification for Adopting Mainly an Interpretive Qualitative Approach in Investigating 'Reflection'

Here, I would like to restate the reasons for adopting a mainly qualitative interpretive approach in conducting my research. According to Merriam (2009, p. 23) qualitative researchers who conduct a basic qualitative research would be interested in i) how people interpret their experiences, ii) how they construct their worlds, and iii) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. This resonates with the aims of conducting this research which were to explore the meaning of 'reflection' from the point of views of student teachers and teacher educators on a teacher education programme in Malaysia. My research participants had various experiences from their teaching practice, embedded within themselves, and recorded in their written reflections. Although the participants and the setting may seem to be well-acquainted to me, it is a major tenet of a qualitative researcher to consider. Because 'all scenarios, even the most familiar, should be seen as strange, with layers of mystery that are always beyond the control of the researcher, which always need to be discovered' (Holliday, 2007, p. 4).

One way to establish a complex detailed understanding of the issues of 'reflection' is by talking directly with the people who are involved with the situation whom were the student teachers and teacher educators. This would 'empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and the participants' (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). I allowed the participants to express matters that they feel equally important to them as to me. For instance, when I asked about something they like or dislike in the lesson they taught, they excitedly shared what they did in class for that day. Hence, it is my task as a qualitative researcher to interpret what they say and build my understanding of the issues based on this.

4.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is 'a concept of research which refers to acknowledging the input of the researchers in actively co-constructing the situation which they want to study' (Flick,

2014, p. 542). This means that as a researcher it is important for me to ‘position’ (Creswell, 2013) myself in my writing to show the biases, values, and the experiences that I bring with me on my study. For example, in Chapter 1 I shared my background and some of my experiences on reflection with the readers. I expressed my doubts and confusions of the meaning of ‘reflection’ and questioned the purpose of writing them on the teacher education programme. This information informs the readers of how my knowledge and experiences may shape my interpretation of the phenomenon being studied. Reflexivity helps the researcher to make sense of things especially in the process of interpreting the data (Flick, 2014). For instance, analysing the data with ‘rigour’ and ‘showing the workings’ (Holliday, 2007, p. 8) in detail show my awareness and realisation of the things that were happening in the data.

4.5 Positioning Myself in this Research

I took on a range of roles as I began my empirical study, one of which I applied was the overt role of ‘participant-as-observer’ (Adler & Adler, 1987). My relationship with the participants developed even before I started this research. They were my former students and colleagues, hence it was quick and easy for me to be given a ‘membership’ (they allowed me to be the researcher and access the setting) since I was someone whom they already knew and were very familiar with me (as a lecturer who used to teach the student teachers on the course and as a staff who worked with other colleagues in the same department). However, I was careful not get closely involved and maintained my ‘outsider’ status because I wanted to avoid being trapped in my ‘teacher educator’s shoes’ which could cloud my judgements. Furthermore, my ‘insider’ status which I felt was an automatic membership that I had not had to develop was an advantage for me in developing a basic insight and gaining further entrée into the setting.

The goal of most research is to learn from the data. However, ‘researchers do not have empty minds, will likely have strong values and commitment to their topics’ (Richards, 2005, p. 25). I faced great difficulty detaching myself from being an educator and maintaining the ‘outsider’ perspective on my research. The area that I was investigating was something that affected me when I was a teacher educator. At the beginning of the data collection phase, I struggled to focus on my role as a researcher. I was working in a very familiar environment and this had taken me back to my previous position as a teacher educator especially when I discussed the issue of reflection during

practicum with my student teachers and colleagues. However, to ensure the validity and reliability of the research some measures were taken to minimise the subjectivity of my perspectives on the concerning issues. I conducted interviews with the student teachers, teacher educators and a staff member from the practicum unit to identify the various perspectives they have on the issue. I collected and studied documents such as the course handbook, practicum handbook, and written reflections to explain further the area of investigation. (Note: the course handbook and the practicum only provide background information and do not form part of the data). The information gathered from these different sources presented the issues, not the interpretations, from various angles. This allowed me to interpret the data I gathered about these issues with a greater degree of objectivity than if the data had come from only one source.

In addition to the main roles above, as a qualitative researcher I would also be willing to do the following as suggested by Creswell (2013, p. 49):

‘Commit an extensive time in the field, engage in complex, time-consuming process of data analysis through the ambitious task of sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to a few themes or categories, write long passages where the evidence must substantiate claims and the writer needs to show multiple perspectives, and participate in a form of social and human science research that does not have firm guidelines or specific procedures and is evolving and constantly changing’.

(Creswell, 2013, p. 49)

These are important roles which I had to take to ensure the success of my research.

4.6 Issues in the Research Process

Before presenting the analysis of the data in the next three chapters, in this section I will discuss some of the issues and concerns that may have an impact on the trustworthiness of this research.

4.6.1 Validity

In qualitative research, one of the main concerns that relates to the issue of validity is the factual accuracy of the account in the research (Maxwell, 2002, p. 45), or

in other words the ‘truth’ of what is in the research (Silverman, 2014, p. 21). This relates to how I present the account in my research ensuring that the statements the participants made are correct, true, and undistorted. For example, I transcribed the interviews in vivo and took extracts from the student teachers’ written reflections exactly as they were, providing a valid description of the events, reporting and inferring to the account as closely as I possibly can. Maxwell (2002) calls this as ‘descriptive validity’.

However, providing a valid description of the events is not the only concern. The meaning behind these events, and what the participants say about the events in their perspective are also important. Maxwell (2002, p. 48) explains that ‘interpretive validity’ which is more central to interpretive research, ‘seeks to comprehend phenomena not on the researchers’ perspectives and categories but from those of the participants in the situation studied’. Thus, in presenting my data it is necessary for me to accurately construct the meanings through ‘rigour’, interpreting the words and actions of the participants in the study (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7).

4.6.2 Reliability

Hammersley (1992, p. 67) referred to reliability as ‘the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.’ Thus, in order to ensure that my overall research is reliable I made the research process transparent by describing the research strategy used (in 4.3) and the data analysis methods (in 4.9) in as much detail as possible. I made explicit the theoretical stance where the interpretation of the data takes place in the analysis (in the data chapters). In analysing the data, I used a standard coding system amongst the different data types and participant group (in 4.9). The transcription of the interview transcripts also followed a standard convention as explained in 4.8.2.

4.6.3 Bias

Maxwell (2013) explained that:

‘Traditionally, what you bring to the research from your background and identity has been treated as bias, something whose influence needs to be eliminated from design, rather than a valuable component of it. Separating your

research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks.’

(Maxwell, 2013, p.44-45)

This explanation has put me in a dilemma as it seems that I should at all times eliminate all the things that I know, my beliefs, and my values when conducting my research. However, this would not be entirely possible because in qualitative research it is a primary concern ‘to understand how a particular researcher’s values and expectations may have influenced the conduct and conclusion of the study’ (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). Thus, the best way to deal with bias is to explain the possible biases and how I will deal with these by describing my position in this research (as stated in 4.5) and my background such as work experience as indicated in 1.2.

Furthermore, since I collected information from a diverse range of individuals (student teachers and teacher educators), using a variety of methods in collecting my data (interviews and written reflections) I applied ‘triangulation’ of data as can be seen in the discussion chapter later. As Maxwell (2013, p. 128) explained ‘this strategy reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops.’

4.7 Data Gathering

This section explains how the data was gathered, following specific procedures while conducting this research.

4.7.1 Research Setting

The setting of this study is at one of the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) or *Institut Pendidikan Guru* (IPG) in Malaysia. The institution provides many teacher training courses to pre-service and in-service student teachers. One of those programmes is the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme or *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Pendidikan* (PISMP) TESL. This is the programme which I investigated. As I explained in Chapter 2, the programme has three curriculum components: compulsory, core, and elective, which for each component consists of several sub-components as illustrated in Table 2.1. The component that I observed was the professional practice where

'reflection' is supposed to be integrated into the course since student teachers have to produce written reflections after every lesson during the practicum.

I researched student teachers in Practicum 3 (see Table 2.2) since this was the final practicum and supposedly these student teachers had received training and experience in writing reflections in Practicum 1 and 2. Student teachers attend Practicum 3 for 12 weeks, while for Practicum 2 it is for 8 weeks and Practicum 1 just 4 weeks. Thus, Practicum 3 would be the most appropriate phase to observe and determine student teachers' reflective abilities as it is the last and longest phase, which gives ample time for me to conduct my field work and investigate 'reflection' as it occurred in its natural setting to address the research questions of my study (see 4.2).

Also, my decision to conduct this research at my former workplace was the best option for me since it was the most 'convenient' (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002; Flick, 2009), practical, and easiest setting to access. I would have to travel a reasonable distance of about 40km (1-hour drive) each way to the site. My experiences of working here and my familiarity with the work routine helped me to plan and organise my research accordingly.

4.7.2 Research Participants

This study consists of two groups of participants: student teachers and teacher educators. The general criteria for determining the group of student teachers as participants were: i) they had to be a current student at the ITE, ii) in Semester 7 of the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme at the time data was collected, and iii) in school on practicum. This information was disseminated to the participants prior to data collection in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix M). I 'purposely selected' (Flick, 2009, p. 122) student teachers at this stage of their programme because this was a crucial moment for me to capture student teachers' lived experiences of reflecting and writing reflections on their teaching. 'Purposeful sampling' is the 'information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of research' (Patton, 2002, p. 46). The reason for 'purposely selected' sampling is it permits inquiry into and understanding of phenomena in depth, in which for my own study student teachers in their final practicum could provide.

The teaching practice was for three months, from February 2015 until April 2015 which gave plenty of time for me to observe the development of student teachers'

reflections. There were 37 student teachers on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme for cohort 2012 that fulfilled the general criteria for participant selection. From the total, I selected 10 student teachers to represent the group in my research as indicated in Table 4.1 with each student teacher given a pseudonym to maintain the confidentiality of their identity.

Table 4.1: Student Teachers Participants

| No. | Name |
|-----|---------|
| 1 | Gan |
| 2 | Ai Ling |
| 3 | Azrul |
| 4 | Dollah |
| 5 | Fatin |
| 6 | Devi |
| 7 | Wee Mee |
| 8 | Hendon |
| 9 | Suguna |
| 10 | Jega |

The second group of participants were the teacher educators. I selected 11 of my colleagues to be the participants in my research. They come from 2 different departments: Department of Languages (10 participants) and Practicum Unit (1 participant). I included one colleague from the Practicum Unit particularly for his experience in managing practicum at the ITE for many years. His valuable opinions added to the various perspectives of 'reflection' especially from a management point of view. The participant selection for teacher educators was made based on three general criteria. First, the participants have to be an academic staff member at the ITE at the time of my data collection. Second, they must be teaching on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme, with an exception to the participant from the Practicum Unit. Third, they must have experience supervising student teachers on practicums. I also informed the teacher educators of this information in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix M). In addition, one criterion that is important among the teacher educator participants is that they must be the teaching practice supervisors to the student teacher participants in my research. Having supervision experience would mean that the teacher educators have the skills and knowledge in teaching and writing reflections. All except the practicum head of unit, were English teachers in schools prior to becoming teacher educators at the ITE.

Table 4.2 contains the details concerning the participants for the teacher educator group. As with the other group, I assigned each teacher educator a pseudonym in order ‘to protect the anonymity of the informants’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 174) and to maintain confidentiality.

Table 4.2: Teacher Educator Participants

| No. | Name |
|-----|-----------|
| 1 | Leong |
| 2 | Shamini |
| 3 | Harminder |
| 4 | Suresh |
| 5 | Azizah |
| 6 | Nurul |
| 7 | Dahlan |
| 8 | Hasnah |
| 9 | Izati |
| 10 | Ramlah |
| 11 | Zamri |

The student teachers and teacher educators made ‘good informants’ (Morse, 1998, p. 73) since they have the knowledge and experience of the issues investigated in my research which enabled me to explore ‘reflection’ in depth.

4.7.3 Research Ethics

Weber (1946) in Silverman (2014, p. 140) pointed out that ‘all research is influenced to some extent by the values of the researcher’. He further stated that ‘only through those values do certain problems get identified and studied in particular ways’. Weber also emphasised that even being ‘rigorous’ in the way we conducted our research, the conclusions and implications drawn from the study are ‘largely grounded in the moral and political beliefs of the researcher’ (Silverman, 2014, p. 140). Thus, it is my responsibility to treat the ethical issues that may arise from my research with care, since this will also indicate my values and my own integrity as a researcher.

Before I began my data collection process, I had to obtain permission from several authorised bodies such as the Educational Planning and Research Department (EPRD) in Malaysia, *Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia* (IPGM) or the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia (ITEM), *Institut Pendidikan Guru* (IPG) or Institute of Teacher Education (ITE), and school authorities. Once the permission was granted, I had

access to the official documents published by the Ministry of Education Malaysia and was allowed to be on the premises to conduct interviews with the participants. The documents required to get permission to conduct research in Malaysia are included in Appendix M, N, O and P. As a researcher at university, I must also comply with the university's Code of Research Conduct where my application was reviewed and passed by the university's Ethics Committee (Appendix Q).

It was also necessary for me to get an 'informed consent' (Ryen, 2011; Silverman, 2014; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Israel, 2015) from the participants involved in my study. Before I started interviewing the participants, I emailed all participants a 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix M). This sheet contains information such as the background of the study, the role of the participant, the research procedures, and confidentiality of data. In the sheet, I made it clear that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. Then, before I begin with the first interview, I explained again the purpose and the procedures of the research to the participants to ensure that they understood the process that would take place in the research. After that, I asked each participant to read and sign the Consent Form (Appendix R). By signing the form, it indicated that the participants agreed to the participation, they knew they were being researched, they were clear of the nature and aims of the research, and the participation was voluntary.

As a researcher, I should always protect my participants by making it clear that their names will not be disclosed, and the information obtained from them will be used only by me and only in particular ways. It is important for me to make the comments and behaviour of my participants confidential. When the participants regard the information as private, they are more likely to offer to participate voluntarily to the researcher with confidence (Israel, 2015). As I mentioned before, I assigned aliases to each of my participants to maintain the anonymity of my participants' identity (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2). I also did not mention the names of the schools the student teachers had their practicum where I conducted my observation prior to my data collection (in Table 4.3). These steps were necessary for me to take to ensure the credibility of my research.

4.8 Instruments in Gathering Data

I used two main data gathering methods in my research that were interviews and documents (student teachers written reflections). These methods ‘triangulate’ and help to ensure consistency of the findings in my data (Patton, 2002, p. 556) offering opportunities for ‘deeper insight into the relationship between the inquiry approach and the phenomenon’. In addition to these methods, I also conducted preliminary observations at three schools. However, the observations were only for familiarisation of the background to the context in which the student teachers had their practicum and not a source for data.

4.8.1 Pilot Interview

Before conducting my interviews in Malaysia, I carried out a pilot interview here at the university in the United Kingdom with two PhD students and one lecturer. Clough & Nutbrown (2012, p. 142) asserted that ‘it is always a good practice to pilot your interview ideas first with a small number of people who are similar to your sample’. This was an important step to take because it allowed me to prepare for the next stage in my research. The main focus of the pilot interview was to test out the interview questions with the participants in terms of question structure and meaning, questioning technique, and technical aspects such as the functioning of the recording equipment. The pilot interview questions were constructed based on my experiences and my reading of the literature on reflection. Although the participants for the pilot study were not pre-service student teachers, they are familiar with ‘reflection’. Two of them wrote reflections during the teaching practice when they were student teachers on a teacher training programme while the lecturer taught pre-service student teachers hence had the experience of teaching ‘reflection’ to his student teachers. These were very similar aspects to the participants in my research.

I discovered several issues during the pilot interviews. Firstly, I realised that prompting and probing were very important in keeping the focus of the interviews. They also helped in clarifying the meaning of the questions. Secondly, the pre-determined questions were helpful in guiding me through the interview sessions. They acted as a checklist of all the areas that I needed to ask in the interviews. Thirdly, I noticed the different ways the participants responded to the same question. At first, this worried me

a little as to whether the questions I asked did not make sense to the participants. However, this showed that each participant had different experiences with 'reflection'. Hence, based on their backgrounds, their responses, and their perceptions would be different. This taught me to be more receptive and open towards the responses I get from the participants. Appendix S shows the pilot interview questions for the student teachers and Appendix T for teacher educators.

4.8.2 Interview

One of the widely used methods of data generation in qualitative research is the interview. It is 'a versatile approach to doing research' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 3) and 'the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings' (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 361). The conversations that happens between the researcher and the participant during an interview uncover how people feel about the world and make sense of their lives from their perspectives. It is a tool of research used to learn about people's thoughts and experiences; and 'individual attitudes and values which cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated' (Byrne, 2004, p. 182) such as in formal questionnaire.

To collect data relating to research questions one and two, I choose interviews with the individual participants as the most suitable method due to their being helpful in 'uncovering' student teachers' and teacher educators' perceptions and understandings of the term 'reflection'. The interviews will reveal the participants' beliefs and values of reflection as they share and discuss their experiences of writing reflections with me. I decided to interview the participants individually as opposed to other interview methods such as group interviews because it allowed me to talk to one individual at a time and discuss topics in detail. I was able to give my participant my full attention and adjust my interviewing style to the participant's needs. In addition, I do not have to worry about group dynamics or participants hesitant in sharing their views in the presence of other more dominant members if I were to use group interviews.

In qualitative research, open or unstructured interview is commonly used to provide the possibility of deep insights into the participants' understanding of the world (Kvale, 1996; Creswell, 2008; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). However, 'when we need to explore particular lines of inquiry or find out how different people view the same things, a more structured approach may be called for' (Richards, 2003, p.64). Thus, in my

research the design of the interview questions begins with structured questions and later developed to semi-structured questions. The structured questions were questions I wanted to ask the participants which I pre-planned and constructed before I carried out the interviews. Some of the interview questions were taken from the pilot interview while others derived from the gaps that I found in the literature of recent studies which I reviewed (in 3.6). The questions were constructed and organised according to the themes and areas that I wanted to investigate. Although, these pre-determined questions seem to indicate highly structured interview protocols and undermine a strongly thematic analysis approach (see 4.9.1), structured questions are used to ensure that I could make ‘reasonable and valid comparisons’ between the participants’ responses, particularly when I wanted to develop an understanding and determine the meaning of ‘reflection’ in the context of teacher education in Malaysia as well as what has been discussed in the literature. As Johnson & Weller (2002) in Richards (2003, p. 64) asserted that ‘to make comparisons across people and to summarise the results in a meaningful way, the researcher must ask all informants the same questions’.

Example 1 below shows the pre-planned structured interview questions I constructed for Phase 1 interview with the student teachers:

Example 1:

How to Reflect

How do you write your reflections?

How do you choose what to write in your reflections?

If I found the responses given were lacking in depth and I wanted to go deeper into the issue, then I extended my questions as such:

Why?

Can you explain further?

Although each interview was structured around a sequence of pre-planned questions which I asked each participant, the questions were used as a springboard to ask other ‘follow-up’ questions, depending on the answers given. This enabled me to be responsive to the participants’ answers, and to develop ‘an atmosphere conducive to

open and undistorted communication between the interviewer and the respondent' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 144). In this respect, the interviews followed a 'semi-structured' format or 'formal interviews' (Richards, 2003) which means that a set of questions were developed based on the research questions (e.g. RQ1, RQ2 and RQ5). The researcher does not necessarily ask all of the questions or touch on them in any particular order, using them instead to guide the conversation during the interview and making the purpose of the interview clear to the participants. The transition from structured question to semi-structured is illustrated in Example 2 below and the full transcription of the interview can be found in Appendix AC:

Example 2:

Student Participant 9, Interview 1

| | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 36 | Me | Did you find it easy or difficult to write the issues you're faced with in your reflections? (Pre-planned question) |
| 37 | Suguna | Because that's what I'm going through so I just put my situations into words. So it's quite easy. Maybe sometimes its hard to put the blame 100% on ourselves. Sometimes we tend to put the blame on our pupils. The pupils can't do, the pupils are not cooperating. Maybe that's where people face problem. Other than that, it's quite easy to write. |
| 38 | Me | How about in terms of language, aren't you concerned about writing your reflections in English? (Follow-up question) |
| 39 | Suguna | Maybe because my major is TESL so I don't find difficulties in writing in English. For Moral I have to write my reflections in *BM that's where the problem starts where I have to translate every word into BM and then I will ask my friend what is this in BM and then I will start to write it. If in English I don't find it difficult. |
| 40 | Me | Do you feel that it is more effective to write your reflections in English rather than in BM because you're more confident in English? (Follow-up question) |
| 41 | Suguna | Ya.. I prefer writing in English than in BM. |

*BM = *Bahasa Melayu* / Malay Language

In addition, during the interviews I used the interview questions rather flexibly depending on the participants' emotional state. I had to empathise especially with the student teachers since all the interviews had to take place after they had come back from school in the afternoons. I expected that at this time, student teachers would be tired or hungry. Sometimes they might feel distracted, especially when they had observations that day. Thus, I had to be considerate and sensitive with the questions and how I asked the questions in order to get the most out of the participants.

I tried conducting the interviews in a relaxed, less formal manner so to put the participants at ease and in a less pressured state during the interviews. During the

interviews, the participants were given time to elaborate on their answers. 'Interviewing involves a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee that imposes obligations on both sides' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 2). So, especially for the teacher educator participants, I allowed them space to express their opinions freely, setting up appointments, and keeping to time. By allowing this, I was able to learn about a situation and use the information in the first interview to formulate questions for subsequent interviews. For the interviews, I had chosen participants who are knowledgeable and have experiences about the subject of 'reflection' and I interviewed them until what I heard provided an overall sense of the meaning of the concept and the process of 'reflection', which Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 73) called this process as 'completeness'. Furthermore, 'the aim of the qualitative interview, however structured, is not merely to accumulate information but to deepen understanding, and to do this the interviewer must be responsive to nuance and opportunity as the interview progress' (Richards, 2003, p. 64). So, it was important for me to be patient, at the same time alert and to listen carefully during the interviews to capture the participants' thoughts about 'reflection' and ask extended questions to dig deeper into the issues.

The samples of the interview questions can be found in Appendix U (Interview Questions Phase 1 – Student Teachers), Appendix V (Interview Questions Phase 2 – Student Teachers), Appendix W (Interview Questions Phase 1 – Teacher Educators), Appendix X (Interview Questions Phase 2 – Teacher Educators), and Appendix Y (Interview Questions for Staff). The interviews had enabled active verbal communications between me and my participants. This is essential as the interviews produced rich data while allowing me to expand my understanding, process the information I had gathered, interpret them, and explore further the issues that emerged.

In addition, before I begin with the first interview, I visited 3 out of 7 schools where the student teachers attended their teaching practice. The purpose of the visit was to re-familiarise me to the setting in which the student teachers had their practicum. During the visit, I met the school administrators and they shared some information about the general background of the school and their expectations of the practicum trainees during teaching practice. The information I gathered at this stage also helped me to formulate preliminary interview questions for the pilot interview. Table 4.3 contains the general profile for each of the schools I visited. I 'shadowed' student teachers as they went about their daily teaching practice routine. The school visit was helpful in preparing

myself for the interviews as it enabled me to ‘break the ice’ between myself and the student teachers so to gain trust and confidence from my participants.

Table 4.3: School Profile

| School | Information |
|--------|--|
| A | Enrolment: Approximately more than 1000 pupils Gender: Male and Female Session: Morning and Afternoon School type: Malay-medium National Primary School |
| B | Enrolment: Approximately more than 1000 pupils Gender: Male and Female Session: Morning School type: Malay-medium National Primary School |
| C | Enrolment: 1145 pupils (2015) Gender: Male and Female Session: Morning and Afternoon School type: Malay-medium National Primary School |

In my research, I conducted 34 interviews with 11 participants which took place in two phases (see Table 4.4 and Table 4.5). The interview questions were designed to elicit from the participants their perceptions and experiences of ‘reflection’. Most of the interview questions I asked were similar between the student teacher participants and teacher educator participants (see Appendix U, V, W, X and Y). For the student teacher participants, the focus of first interview was on their understanding of the term ‘reflection’ and how they develop the skills of writing reflection. This relates to the first research question of my research. The second interview focused on the effect or the benefits of ‘reflection’ during teaching practice, in relation to the second research question. I also asked follow-up questions to clarify some of the issues that were not clear in the first interview. I interviewed all student teacher participants twice. During the second interview, I realised that most of the responses student teachers gave were repeated from the first interview. So, this indicated that it was not necessary for me to have a third interview since it had reached ‘saturation’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

For the teacher educator participants, the first phase interview also focused on their understanding of ‘reflection’ (relates to the first research question). However, I also asked questions relating to assessing student teachers’ written reflections, teaching student teachers how to write reflections, and the value of ‘reflection’ in teaching practice. By focusing on these areas, they will help to answer the second research

question in this research. In addition, for the Head of Practicum Unit, the interview also focused on the unit's roles in preparing student teachers to write reflections during the practicum. The second phase interview for the teacher educator participants, I only interviewed three teacher educators from eleven of them since I realised that the participants added little to what I have already learned from the first interview, so I stopped interviewing other teacher educators. This confirmed that the interview with the teacher educators also had reached 'saturation' (Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Rubin & Rubin, 1995), thus the interview need not be carried out further.

All interviews were approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour in length. Table 4.4 also shows the chronology of the interviews. I developed the interview schedule based on the time that was available for me to conduct the interviews, namely while student teachers were attending teaching practice, during which they write their reflections. Rubin & Rubin (1995, p. 2) stated that 'the process of understanding in qualitative interviewing is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms'. In doing so, I gave the freedom and allowed my participants to speak in *Bahasa Melayu* if they feel more comfortable using this language instead of English. Despite this, all interviews were conducted in English except for one where the participant requested for the interview to be conducted in Malay. For this interview (the one conducted in the Malay language), only relevant data extracts used in this thesis were translated into English. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed accordingly.

Table 4.4: Interview Schedule

| Month | Week | Date | Activity | Participants | | |
|------------------|------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|--------------|----------|--|
| | | | | Student | Lecturer | |
| February 2015 | 1 (2/2-6/2) | | Briefing & Setting Up Appointments | | | |
| | | 4/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | | 2 | |
| | | 5/2/15 | Observation School 1 | | | |
| | | 6/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | | 1 | |
| | 2 (9/2-13/2) | 9/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | | 4 | |
| | | 10/2/15 | Observation School 2 | | | |
| | | 11/2/15 | Observation School 3 | | | |
| | | 11/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | | 1 | |
| | | 12/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | | 2 | |
| | 3 (16/2-20/2) | | Chinese New Year | | | |
| | 4 (23/2-27/2) | 25/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 1 | | |
| | | 26/2/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 1 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|---|---|--|
| March 2015 | 5 (2/3-6/3) | 3/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 2 | | |
| | | 4/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 1 | | |
| | | 5/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 1 | | |
| | | 6/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 1 | | |
| | 6 (9/3-13/3) | 9/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 2 | | |
| | | 10/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | 1 | | |
| | | 11/3/15 | Interview Phase 1 | | 1 | |
| | | | Mid-Semester Break | | | |
| | 7 (23/3-27/3) | | Interval 1 | | | |
| | 8 (30/3-3/4) | 30/3/15 | Interview Phase 2 | 1 | | |
| | | 31/3/15 | Interview Phase 2 | 2 | | |
| | | 2/4/15 | Interview Phase 2 | 1 | | |
| April 2015 | 9 (6/4-10/4) | 7/4/15 | Interview Phase 2 | 2 | | |
| | | 8/4/15 | Interview Phase 2 | 2 | | |
| | | 9/4/15 | Interview Phase 2 | 2 | | |
| | 10 (13/4-17/4) | | Interval 2 | | | |
| | 11 (20/4-24/4) | 20/4/15 | Interview Phase 2 | | 1 | |
| | | 21/4/15 | Interview Phase 2 | | 2 | |
| 12 (27/4-1/5) | | End | | | | |

Table 4.5: Total Number of Interviews

| Participant | Interview Phase 1 | Interview Phase 2 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Student Teachers | 10 | 10 |
| Teacher Educators / Staff | 11 | 3 |
| Total number of Interviews | 21 | 13 |

4.8.3 Documents

In qualitative research, most settings are ‘documented’ in various ways. In my research, student teachers’ experiences of learning to teach and the process of writing reflections are contained in documents such as the written reflections and programme official documents. Written reflections, reflective journals, reflective diaries, learning logs, are terms that refer to reflections in the written form that the student teachers produced during teaching practice. In this research, I used ‘written reflections’ and ‘reflective journals’ interchangeably. They make up a significant proportion of the data in this research compared to other sources such as the interviews.

In addition, there are official documents such as Format for Weekly Reflection for Week 1 only (Appendix D), Format for Weekly Reflection for Week 2 and later (Appendix E), Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections (Appendix F), Guidelines for Reflective Journal (Appendix G), Weekly Reflective Journal Writing

(Appendix H), PR1/P form (Appendix I), PR1 form (Appendix J), PR2 form (Appendix K), and the marking criteria for each of the forms (see Table 2.11, Table 2.13, and Table 2.15 in section 2.10). These documents form part of the data and serve as a ‘resource’ or ‘background material’ (Silverman, 2006; Patton, 2002) that contain information about ‘reflection’ during the practicum. The information from these documents will help to explain the type of support provided to the student teachers in writing their reflections and whether they were adequate which directly relates to RQ5 (in 4.2). It is hoped that in analysing these documents closely (written reflections and official documents) will reveal how ‘reflection’ is constructed, integrated, and implemented in the programme and give a deeper understanding of ‘reflection’ as a whole.

4.8.4 Analysing Written Reflections

My approach to the textual analysis of the written reflections was guided by Coffey (2013) and Atkinson and Coffey (2004) who argued that documents provide the mechanism and vehicle for understanding and making sense of social and organisation practices. Thus, student teachers’ written reflections are an important source of data. The textual analysis revealed the content of student teachers’ written reflections such as the topics student teachers discussed in their reflections, their experiences, feelings, doubts, problems, and ideas in teaching (in 6.3). Through the reflections I was also able to identify the features of reflective writing, which could enhance my understanding of student teachers’ practice and process of reflecting on teaching (in 6.5).

Before I proceed with the explanation of document analysis of the written reflections, let me recap the types of written reflections used in this study. There are two types of written reflections that the student teachers write during teaching practice; namely the ‘daily written reflections’ and ‘weekly written reflections’, (of which I have explained the feature and format of each type in 2.7). The sample of a daily reflection written by the student teacher is given in Appendix Z and Appendix AA shows an example of the weekly reflection. I collected 265 written reflections from 10 student teachers in the duration of 13 weeks (see Table 4.6 and Appendix AB). I asked the student teachers to scan and email the reflections they have written at the end of every week. Although all participants agreed to share their written reflections with me, not all participants submitted the entire collection of their written reflections to me. The inventory in Table 4.6 shows that the number of written reflections sent varied between

7 and 52, while Appendix AB shows the number of daily and weekly written reflections student teachers wrote and sent every week.

Table 4.6: Student Teachers' Written Reflection Inventory

| Participant | Reflections |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Azrul | 41 |
| Ai Ling | 27 |
| Gan | 7 |
| Dollah | 9 |
| Fatin | 52 |
| Devi | 5 |
| Wee Mee | 42 |
| Hendon | 32 |
| Suguna | 11 |
| Jega | 39 |
| Total | 265 |

According to Coffey (2013, p. 5) 'documents can tell us a lot about a social setting or an individual life'. She believes that it is essential to pay attention to the knowledge that the documents contain about a setting, their roles, the culture and values attached to them, their distinctive types and forms to understand the lived lives and experiences in relation to social contexts. This requires using 'analytical strategies' to make sense of the content and bring out the issues contained in the documents.

In the case of the reflective journals, it seems to me that this involves taking into account the purpose and the audience the journals were written for. For example, the purpose of writing the reflections is to help student teachers develop an understanding of their practice and as part of a requirement for the practicum. Thus, the student teachers were not just writing for themselves but also for their teaching practice supervisors who were also assessing them. Consequently, student teachers may be writing their reflections to 'please' their examiners (discussed in 5.3). Student teachers' written reflections show (in Chapter 6) that they follow a convention that was suggested in the official documents such as the guidelines, format and the sample reflection provided to the student teachers to help them write their reflections (see 2.6, 2.7 and 8.5). A closer look at the structure and content in the reflections revealed that the reflections were structured based on SWIS (identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses and Suggesting Improvements) – in Chapter 6. This relates to the ways of training and perceptions of the teacher educators (from the interviews in Chapter 7) regarding 'reflection' that it

should be about recognising what went well and did not go well in teaching and how to improve it (see 7.3.1). Thus, this also indicates that the reflection in the reflective journals may very well be influenced by the student teachers' perceptions of what the supervisors, who are the assessors, expect the journals to contain, and may not entirely be genuine pieces of self-reflection. These perceptions will be largely formed by the written guidelines (see 2.7) and the sample reflection (see 2.8) that they had been given. These guidelines may therefore have a significant impact on the way the student teachers structure and write their reflections – possibly in a 'highly stylised way' (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). There seems to be clear evidence of this in my findings.

Therefore, analysing student teachers' written reflections will shed light on the conventional formats and the structure of the written reflections in this study guided by these research questions: RQ3 What do the pre-service student teachers focus on in their written reflections?; RQ4 What features of reflective writing can be found in the student teachers' written reflections?; RQ6 Based on the analysis of the answers to the above questions, what improvements can be made in the provision of pre-service teacher education in the training context of this study? These issues are crucial and relate to the support and guidance which were given through official documentation as I have discussed in Chapter 2.

4.9 Data Analysis Procedures

In this section, I will explain briefly the general approaches to my data analysis. Later in this chapter, I will describe the details of the different stages for each data analysis process since there are two types of data (interviews and written reflections) and two groups of participants (student teachers and teacher educators) in this study.

4.9.1 Thematic Analysis

I analysed the interview data using 'thematic analysis'. Thematic analysis is a methodology used to identify, analyse, and report patterns within a data set, allowing for the descriptive organisation of the data in a way that facilitates interpretation of various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). In this process the researcher takes an active role in selecting and categorising the data into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive thematic analysis is when the themes are viewed to emerge from the data

(Patton, 1990). The researcher is careful to be explicit about their ontological and epistemological assumptions in relation to thematic analysis. This congruence makes the research more credible (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015, p. 75).

Thematic analysis helped me to identify, analyse and report the themes which I have found within the data. It also allowed me to be 'flexible' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) since it does not limit or put a constraint on myself when making active choices in my data analysis process. I was able to organise and describe my data in 'rich detail' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, Boyatzis, 1998) as I make my way through the data, analysing, and interpreting them rigorously.

In analysing the interview data in my research, I adapted Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Their step-by-step procedure was easy to follow and provided a helpful guideline for me to start off my data analysis process. Table 4.7 shows the summary of the different phases of analysis. Braun and Clarke also stressed that qualitative analysis guidelines are not rules, and, following the basic precepts, will need to be applied flexibly to fit the research questions and data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990). They further added that:

'analysis is not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead, it is more recursive process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases. It is also a process that develops over time and should not be rushed.'

(Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 86)

However, while analysing the interview data, I realised that I had to make some adjustments to the analysis process. Thus, I had to adapt and not follow closely with what Braun and Clarke (2006) advocated in their thematic analysis procedures. Some of the terminology I used in classifying the codes in the interview data is similar to the terminology used by Braun and Clarke (e.g. sub-theme and theme). The following sections demonstrate how I adapted Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis to my own data analysis procedures.

Table 4.7: Phases of Thematic Analysis

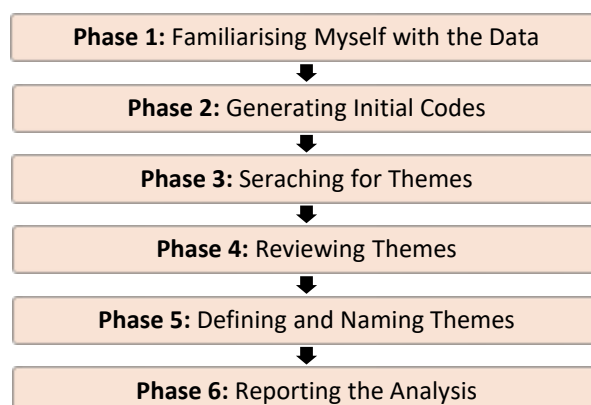
| Phase | Description of the Process |
|--|---|
| 1. Familiarising yourself with your data | Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. |
| 2. Generating initial codes | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. |
| 3. Searching for themes | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |
| 4. Reviewing themes | Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis. |
| 5. Defining and naming themes | Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |
| 6. Producing the report | The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research questions and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis. |

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

4.9.1.1 Thematic Analysis for Analysing Student Teachers' and Teacher Educators' Interviews

In this section, I will discuss the procedure for analysing the interview data, using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis as guidelines. There are 6 phases to this data analysis process illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Thematic Analysis Process for Interviews



Phase 1: Familiarising Myself with the Data

a) Transcribing the Interviews

I audio recorded all the interviews that I conducted with my participants. I used a computer programme called MAXQDA to transcribe and analyse the interview data. MAXQDA is a professional computer software for systematising, organising, and analysing qualitative data (Anon, 2016). I began the transcribing process with student teachers' interviews followed by teacher educators' interviews. I transcribed all the interviews verbatim, translating the verbal accounts into orthographic transcript, retaining the information I needed and keeping close to their original nature as possible. There are 34 interview transcripts in total: 20 transcripts from the student teachers and 14 transcripts from the teacher educators. The duration for each recording is between thirty minutes and one hour long across two interview phases (see Table 4.4 for the interview schedule and Table 4.5 for number of interviews with each participant group). I labelled all interviews with an index. For example, for student teachers' interview: Ai Ling (150226_0023, Student Participant 2, Interview 1) and for teacher educators' interview: Azizah (150209_0014, Lecturer Participant 5, Interview 1).

Transcribing the interviews was a very slow and time-consuming process. I took time to listen to and transcribe each interview. My decision to transcribe the interviews personally was an excellent way to start familiarising myself with the data. This was a crucial phase for me since spending time to transcribe these interviews allowed me to become more 'familiar with the depth and breadth of the content' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). It is an 'interpretive act' (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999) because I do not merely transfer words onto paper, but I also begin to construct my understanding of the things that the participants shared with me through our interviews. While transcribing, I began to notice some of the things student teachers say about 'reflection' on the programme. I made notes of these early findings and listed the key ideas in a memo.

However, as I progressed through this phase, I also encountered several problems in transcribing audiotaped interviews into textual form. For instance, sometimes I found it difficult to make sense of the responses given by the participants. I mistook words or phrases for others when they spoke too fast, slurred or pronounced words with Malay, Chinese or Indian accents. It was also difficult to construct sentences accordingly especially with run-on sentences where inserting commas or full stops, using appropriate

discourse markers such as applying omissions or pauses can be confusing. However, I indicated the pauses using dots such as two dots to indicate short pauses [...] and three dots to show long pauses [...]. If the dots appear at the beginning (e.g. ...They were noisy.) or at the end of the extract (e.g. They were noisy...), this shows that the extract is a section taken from a paragraph. There might be a sentence before or after the quoted extract. In general, I did not include non-verbal utterances such as laughter or sighing. I retained the information I needed from the verbal account into written texts as my interest was on the content and not interaction analysis. Even so, I was rigorous in my transcriptions as I stayed close to the original nature of the conversations while producing the transcripts which I transcribed verbatim.

In addition, I conducted and transcribed one interview from the teacher educator group in *Bahasa Melayu*. I only translated into English the segments of the interview which I used in my thesis. To ensure reliability and in keeping to the meaning of the translated extracts, I sought the help of a professional translator to check the translation. Examples of the interview transcripts are given in Appendix AC (Interview Transcript for Student Teacher), Appendix AD (Interview Transcript for Teacher Educator), and Appendix AE (Interview Transcript for Head of Practicum Unit).

As I mentioned previously, my research consists of two groups of participants: the student teachers and the teacher educators. In order to differentiate between these two groups of participants, I labelled each of them with initials. For example, I used **ST** to indicate the participant as a 'student teacher' and **TE** for 'teacher educator'.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The analysis and coding process for the interview transcripts and the written reflections were conducted separately between each data type and participant group. The following sections will explain the different stages of the coding process for each type of data and group of participants.

a) Coding Student Teachers' Interviews

After completing transcribing all the interviews, I read through all the interview transcripts again. This time, I immersed myself more deeply in the data as I searched for meanings and repeated patterns within the data to generate initial codes. The process helped me to recognise the codable moments as I 'sense themes' (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 11)

in the transcripts. I highlighted any words, phrases, or sentences that seemed to give meaning to ‘what reflection is’ and ‘what reflection involves’ to the student teachers or anything that seemed interesting. The focus of the data analysis process was to identify the concepts of ‘reflection’ as portrayed by the student teachers to address the first research question. I coded the interviews with different colours across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code. For example, I used **fuchsia** for ‘self-directed learning’ and **red** for ‘SWIS’ as indicated in Figure 4.2. These codes were taken from the data as ‘in vivo’ codes. Table 4.8 shows an example of how the codes were applied to a short segment of data.

My early attempt to identify the themes resulted in a large amount of different codes across the data set. I managed to identify 39 initial codes. Appendix AF shows the list of the initial codes and the number of coded segments which emerged from the interviews with the student teachers. The codes were ‘data-driven’ as they emerged from items formed from repeated patterns across all transcripts. I could see that there was consistency in the responses given by the participants. In constructing these codes, I was open to all information that were in the data (things that I can see) as well as things which I expected to see but were not there.

Figure 4.2: Data Extract for Interview with Colour Codes

| | |
|----|--|
| 34 | How did reflections help you to think about your teaching independently? |
| 35 | Because I think reflection mostly we think about we reflect on our own lesson and we come up with our own.. which means we need to think ourself where is our weaknesses and strengths because not many people can give us feedback on our own strengths and weaknesses so we have to always reflect on ourselves so I guess yes |

ST Self-directed learn

ST SWIS

Table 4.8: Number Index, Initial Code and Interview Extract for Student Teachers

| Number Index | Initial Code | Extract |
|--------------|------------------------------------|---|
| ST1Gan16 | Self-development | I understand the term reflection by giving yourself an unaltered and truthful judgement of what you have done so.. it basically on that. |
| ST2Azrul73 | Comparing and learning from others | Yes. Sometimes because for example you know the motivation you know the spirit is high for you to teach using teaching aids everything and to look good in front of the lecturer of course you know. Then if something goes wrong because you feel a little bit disappointed and then you saw your friend.. ⁶ <i>ehh budak kelas aku tadi time observe</i> , those things you reflect and you said those are reflections you know. |

In order to differentiate between the extracts, I labelled each one of them with a number index. Each part of the number index refers to different information about the extract from the interview transcript. For example, **ST1Gan16**: **ST** in the index means that the interview extract is taken from the student teacher group, **1** is the phase in which the interview took place, **Gan** is the participant's alias name, and **16** indicates the line where the extract is found and begins in the interview transcript. Table 4.8 demonstrates examples of the interview extracts with the number index in the first column, the initial code in the second column, and the extract in the third column.

b) Coding Teacher Educators' Interviews

For the teacher educator group, the data analysis followed a similar process as the student teachers. The main focus of the analysis was to identify teacher educators' perceptions of 'reflection'. When I read the transcripts, I could see some of the issues repeating throughout the interviews thus forming a pattern. I coded these with different colours and these form the initial codes for the teacher educators. Table 4.9 shows an example of a code given to an extract from the teacher educators' interview transcript. I labelled the extracts from the teacher educators' interviews the same way as the student teachers' group.

⁶ *ehh budak kelas aku tadi time observe* = ehh my classmates during observation

Table 4.9: Number Index, Initial Code and Interview Extract for Teacher Educators

| Number Index | Initial Code | Extract |
|--------------|-------------------------|---|
| TE1Dahlan45 | Improvement in teaching | Yes, I agree. Writing reflection of course would affect their teaching. At least we are hoping that they are, they improve their pedagogical skill. |

As I explained previously, extracts were given a number index to differentiate the extracts among the participants. For example, **TE1Dahlan45** means that the interview extract is taken from the **Teacher Educators** group, interview phase **1**, the participant's alias name is Dahlan, and the extract is taken from line number **45** from the interview transcript. At the beginning, I have a collection of 45 codes for teacher educators in which some codes are similar to the student teacher group. The full list of these initial codes is given in Appendix AI.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

The next stage of the data analysis process involved sorting the initial codes and developing them into potential themes. I looked through the initial codes again and 'questioned the data' further, re-reading the extracts for each initial code and considered how they may combine to form an 'overarching' theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

a) Developing Potential Themes from Student Teachers' Interviews

While I was sorting the codes, I asked questions to guide me in forming the themes. They are shown below:

1. What is reflection to the student teachers? – student teachers' **perceptions** of reflection on the course during the practicum
2. Why do they do it? – the **reasons** for student teachers to reflect and write reflections on the course
3. How do they get help on reflection? – The **support** student teachers get on reflecting and writing reflections
4. What are the benefits and limitations of reflection? – the **benefits and value** of reflection for student teachers on teaching practice

In this stage I managed to reduce from 39 to 21 initial codes, which then I eliminated further and clustered them together into four manageable potential themes (see Appendix AG).

While I was analysing the interview transcripts, I used memos to record comments on things that were particularly interesting and relevant, to express my thoughts of the responses. I wrote the memos electronically using MAXQDA (Appendix AH).

b) Developing Potential Themes from Teacher Educators' Interviews

The next stage of the data analysis process for teacher educators' interviews followed a similar process to the student teachers'. I sorted the initial codes further, from 45 to 29 initial codes, clustering and reducing them into potential themes. I asked these following questions to help me sort out the codes accordingly:

1. What is reflection to the teacher educators? – teacher educators' **perceptions** of reflection on the course during practicum
2. Why do student teachers and/or teacher educators reflect? – the **reasons** for student teachers and/or teacher educators reflect and write reflections
3. How do teacher educators help student teachers to reflect and write reflections? – the **support** given to student teachers by teacher educators
4. What are the benefits and limitations of reflection? – the **value** of reflection as well as the shortcomings of reflection on the programme

Appendix AJ shows the four potential themes which I have clustered together with initial codes for each theme. The potential themes were also determined to a large extent by the questions I asked during the interviews.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The next stage of the process was to 'review' and 'refine' the potential themes. I re-examined the list of initial codes and looked for similarities or differences between the codes, ensuring that they were related to the potential theme. The initial codes which

did not fit or were irrelevant were discarded, recreated into new initial codes or worked into the existing initial codes. I re-labelled the potential theme as ‘theme’ and initial code as ‘sub-theme’ (see Appendix AK and Appendix AL). Now I have 4 themes and 10 subthemes for student teachers’ interviews as well as 4 themes and 8 sub-themes for interviews with the teacher educators.

At this stage of analysing the interview data, I approached reviewing the themes in student teachers’ and teacher educators’ interviews differently from Braun and Clarke’s (2006) procedure. Braun and Clarke’s reviewing process involves two levels: Level 1 – reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts, and Level 2 – reviewing at the level of the entire data set. For my study, I reviewed the themes against the coded data extracts and the entire data all at once. The purpose of this stage is ‘to ensure that themes work with the dataset and to code any additional data within themes that has been missed in earlier coding stages’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). After the reviewing process, the number of the themes for both student teachers’ and teacher educators’ interviews were reduced. I re-labelled the theme again, this time naming it ‘topic’ and the sub-themes as ‘theme’. ‘Topics’ guided the design of the interviews (the questions I asked the participants) while ‘themes’ are what emerged in my analysis of the participants’ responses to my questions. The list of the final reviewed themes for each topic can be seen in Table 5.1.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

This stage involved defining and refining further the themes which I found in the interviews. The purpose was to determine the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about. I did this by going back to the collated data extracts for each theme and organising them into coherent and consistent accounts, accompanied by detailed narrative (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). Since I have two sets of interview data, I cross-checked the list of themes and the topics in the student teachers’ interviews with the teacher educators’ interviews, identifying similarities or differences between the two groups. During the process, I realised that one of the topics and themes I had earlier, which was ‘benefit and value’, could be combined and re-categorised under the topic about ‘the reasons for writing reflections on the course’. So now the number of topics for both interviews had reduced to three topics. The themes were also reduced: six themes for student teachers’ interviews and five themes for teacher educators’ interviews. Table 5.1 and Table 7.1

depict the final topics and themes of the student teachers' and teacher educators' interviews. These themes represent the views of the student teachers and teacher educators about the topic areas of 'reflection'. Also, I would like to note here that since the questions I asked the teacher educators during the interviews were very similar to those I asked the student teachers, the themes in the teacher educators' interviews will inevitably tend to mirror the themes I have discussed in my data analysis of the student teachers.

Phase 6: Reporting the Analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 93):

'It is important that the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes. Your write-up must provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data – ie, enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme'.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 93)

My experience of writing the analysis report was a very challenging one. I had to write clearly every detail of the extract, interpreting the data to the best of my ability as possible. The list of themes helped me to organise my thoughts and develop the flow of the 'story' which I wanted to 'tell' the readers. I chose extracts which were as vivid as possible to capture the essence of the point that I wanted to demonstrate in the analysis. On a few occasions, the participants used Malay language in the interviews. For these extracts, I translated the phrases in Malay to English and noted them in the footnote. The analysis of student teachers' and teacher educators' interviews can be found in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 of this thesis.

4.9.2 Open Coding

For the student teachers' written reflections, I approached analysing the data differently from the interviews. I adopted Strauss and Corbin's (1998) 'open coding' as the first step in analysing student teachers' written reflections. Open coding is 'the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 101).

There are a number of ways of approaching analysing the data via ‘open coding’. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, p. 516) explained that ‘it could be performed on a line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph or unit-of-text-by-unit-of-text basis’. Then, the codes can be grouped into categories and the researcher gives a title or name to the categories, based on a criterion that was decided by the researcher (e.g. concerning a specific theme, based on similar words, similar concepts, or similar meanings). The title of the category should be more abstract than the specific concepts or contents of the codes that it subsumes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 116). In undertaking such grouping, it is important that all the data fit into the group consistently, that there are no negative cases (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

4.9.2.1 Analysing Student Teachers’ Written Reflections using ‘Open Coding’

Keeping the concept of ‘open coding’ in mind, I began reading student teachers’ written reflection carefully. I noticed that there were two threads emerging from the data which were relevant to my research interests. The first thread concerns my interest at the level of ‘product’ or the ‘what’, that is the topics student teachers write about in their reflections. The other concerns my interests at the ‘process’ level or the ‘how’, the evidence in student teachers’ journals which shows the level of engagement in their reflection process, for example, evidence of them analysing classroom incidents, drawing inferences and generalisations from particular incidents, and linking theory to practice. I considered these as the features of reflective writing. Thus, I took the decision to analyse the student teachers’ written reflections further in two stages.

a) Stage 1 Analysis: Topics of Student Teachers’ Written Reflections

I read each journal entry to ‘break open’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser, 1992) the sentences in the paragraphs to identify the issues being discussed in the reflections. I gave each issue an appropriate code, labelling the codes to describe as accurately as possible the issues found in student teachers’ written reflections. I coded the issues by highlighting and colour coding the sentences in student teachers’ written reflections (see Figure 4.4). I coded the issues found in both student teachers’ weekly and daily written reflections.

Stage 1 analysis was where I applied the quantitative analysis to the data. I wanted to identify the topic areas of the issues discussed in student teachers’ reflections

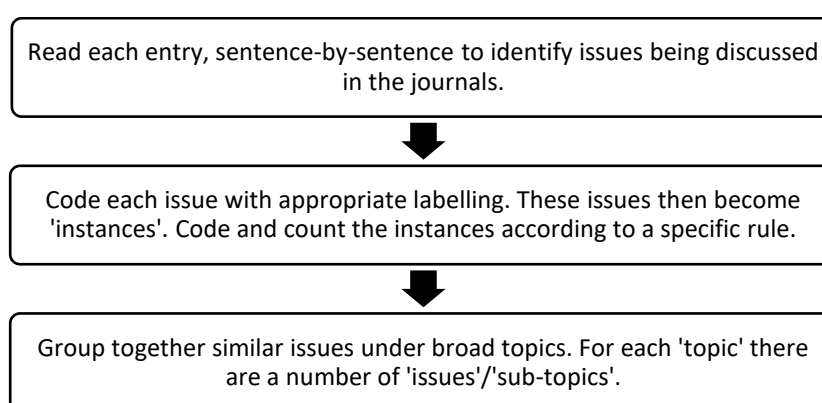
and which topics student teachers write about most and least in their written reflections. During this process, I noticed that the issues could be found in different parts of the written reflections. For example, 'classroom discipline' would be an example of an issue that some of these student teachers wrote about in their reflections. This issue was later grouped under the larger 'topic' of 'Classroom Management', together with other identified issues such as 'time management' and 'giving instructions'. Each issue can either be the subject of one sentence or a sequence of two, three or more sentences. Since I needed to determine which 'topics' were the most frequent and least frequent discussed in the written reflections, I had to find a way to code and calculate the issues systematically and consistently to validate the quantitative analysis. So, I decided to use the term 'instance' to indicate an occurrence of an issue in student teachers' written reflections which was contained in one sentence or over an unbroken sequence of two or more sentences. Then, I used the following rule to code and count the instances: i) if the issue was found in the subsequent sentences in the same paragraph I counted them as one instance; ii) if the issue was found in two sentences but separated by another sentence (or more) discussing a different issue(s), I counted the sentences as two instances of the same issue (see Table 4.10).

Next, I grouped together the similar issues under broad topics areas according to my interpretation of these issues. For example, I grouped together issues such as 'discipline', 'time management', and 'giving instructions' under the topic 'Classroom Management', and issues such as 'pupils' participation and behaviour' under the topic 'Focus on Learning'. Then, I reviewed the issues for each topic to check that I was satisfied with my categorisations. The process of interpretation, however, was not easy or straightforward. Occasionally, it might seem that a sentence could be categorised in two different ways and I would therefore need to make a choice since it would invalidate the quantitative analysis to do so. For example, in the first paragraph in Figure 4.4, the student teacher wrote: '...the class became a bit chaotic during groupwork activity...there were a few passengers in the group and they started talking while their friends were doing work'. Is this an instance of 'discipline' or 'pupils' participation and behaviour'? In each case of this kind I would have to make a judgement. In this case I categorised the sentence as an instance of the issue of 'discipline', because the main concern of the student teachers seemed to me to be one of classroom discipline and of his/her own ability in controlling the 'chaos', rather than one of pupils' participation. So, in the

analysis I had to decide and choose one ‘issue’ in each sentence or sequence of sentences, count that as one instance, and then categorise the issue under one topic. I used my judgement and my interpretation to my best ability to code and classify the issues based on my knowledge and experiences as a teacher and teacher educator.

At the end of this process of analysis, I ended up with thirty issues grouped into seven topics from the student teachers’ written reflections. The seven topics are: i) Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons, ii) Classroom Management, iii) Focus on Learning, iv) School Environment, v) Support, vi) Teacher’s General Attributes, and vii) Teacher’s Use of Language in the Classroom. Figure 4.3 shows the steps of the coding process for analysing student teachers’ written reflections in Stage 1. Table 6.2 in Chapter 6 shows the list of topics and issues of student teachers’ written reflections. I also used ‘sub-topics’ to refer to issues for each broad topic.

Figure 4.3: Stage 1 Analysis for Written Reflections



I used a simple calculation method to find the percentage for each topic to help answer the question of which topic student teachers write most in their reflections. I counted the instances in each issue/sub-topic against the total number of instances in all seven major topics. I then converted the fraction obtained for each topic into a percentage (see Table 6.2 in Chapter 6). Thus, I was able to measure and compare between each topic and see which ones the prominent topics in student teachers’ written reflections are. This analysis was also helpful as it provides a quantitative basis from which the qualitative data is situated, and thus the qualitative data can be seen in perspective.

Figure 4.4: Coding Process for Written Reflections

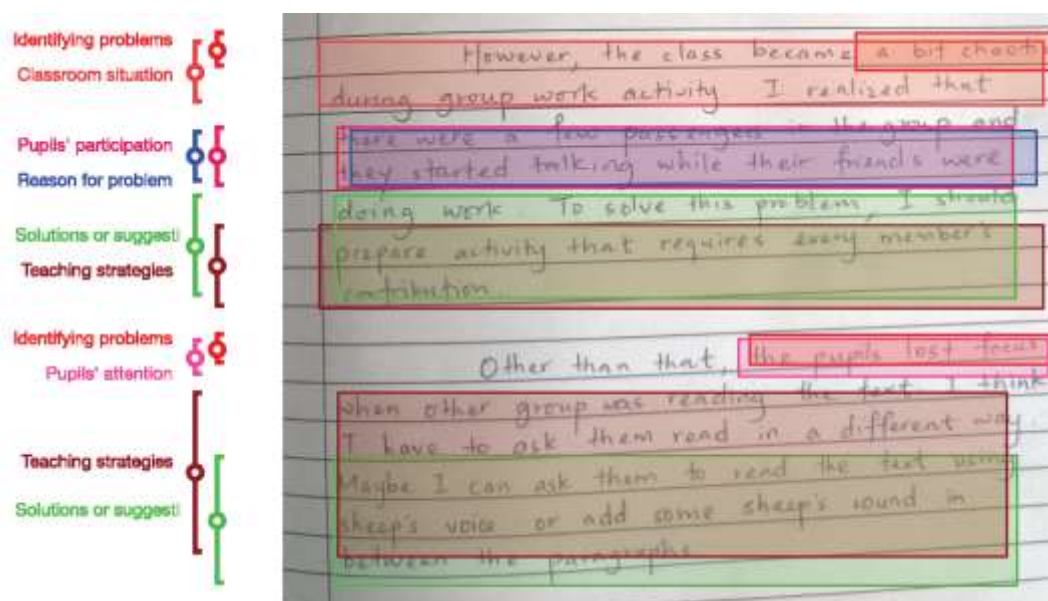


Table 4.10: Grouping Instances into Issues and Topics

| No. | Instance | Issue | Topic |
|-----|--|---|--|
| 1 | However, the class became a bit chaotic during groupwork activity. (1) | Discipline | Classroom Management |
| 2 | I realised that there were a few passengers in the group and they started talking while their friends were doing work. (1) | Pupils' Participation and Behaviour | Focus on Learning |
| 3 | To solve this problem, I should prepare activity that requires every member's contribution. (1) | Language Learning Activities and Strategies | Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons |
| 4 | Other than that, the pupils lost focus (1) when other group was reading the text. | Discipline | Classroom Management |
| 5 | I think I have to ask them read in a different way. (2) | Language Learning Activities and Strategies | Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons |
| 6 | Maybe I can ask them to read the text using sheep's voice or add some sheep's sound in between the paragraph. (2) | | |

b) Stage 2 Analysis: Features of Reflective Writing in Student Teachers' Written Reflections

In the second stage, I analysed the written reflections a second time, again following 'open coding' procedure. I started by reading the journal entries once more to see how student teachers expressed themselves in the reflections. As I was doing this, I noticed that student teachers' written reflections have a number of features. However, in this stage I only applied qualitative analysis to identify the features of student teachers' written reflections. I colour coded the sentences in student teachers' written reflections, giving each one an appropriate label to indicate the possible feature of reflective writing (see Figure 4.4). Then, I examined these codes further, combining them into larger categories. At the end of the process, five main categories emerged from my analysis process. These categories are the features of reflective writing in student teacher' written reflections. These features are: 'Evaluation', 'Reasoning', 'Self-Realisation', 'Problem Solving', and 'Describing Events'. I developed a definition to describe each feature based on the characteristics I found in student teachers' written reflections (see Table 6.3 in Chapter 6) and the expressions student teachers used in writing their written reflections. Figure 4.5 illustrates the second stage of the analysis process of student teachers' written reflections.

Sometimes I could see that there was more than one feature that emerged from the journal entry. For example, in Table 4.11, the student teacher wrote in the first sentence: 'The class became a bit chaotic'. In this sentence, I coded and interpreted it as 'identifying problems' and categorised it as a feature of 'Problem Solving'. Then in the second sentence the student teacher wrote: 'There were a few passengers in the group, and they started talking while their friends were doing work'. I coded and interpreted this sentence as 'reason for problem'. I categorised this sentence as 'Reasoning'. So, one journal entry could contain more than one feature and these features could be different features. However, more than one of the same features could also be found in one journal entry. For example, in the fourth sentence in Table 4.11 the student teacher wrote: 'The pupils lost focus when other group was reading the text'. I coded and interpreted this sentence as 'identifying problems'. I then categorised it under the feature 'Problem Solving'. More explanation about features of reflective writing in Chapter 6.

Figure 4.5: Stage 2 Analysis for Written Reflections

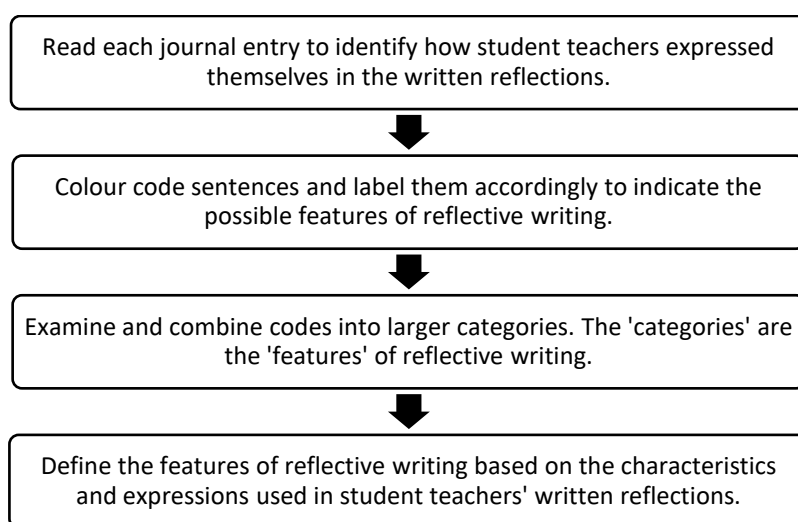


Table 4.11: Coding and Categorising the Features of Reflective Writing

| No. | Instance | Code | Features |
|-----|---|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | However, the class became a bit chaotic during groupwork activity. | Identifying problems | Problem Solving |
| 2 | I realised that there were a few passengers in the group and they started talking while their friends were doing work. | Reason for problem | Reasoning |
| 3 | To solve this problem, I should prepare activity that requires every member's contribution. | Solutions or suggestion | Problem Solving |
| 4 | Other than that, the pupils lost focus when other group was reading the text. | Identifying problems | |
| 5 | I think I have to ask them to read in a different way. | Solutions or suggestion | |
| 6 | Maybe I can ask them to read the text using sheep's voice or add some sheep's sound in between the paragraph. | Solutions or suggestion | |

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the methodology of my research. Considering the main aim of my research that is to gain an understanding of how reflection is conceived by the key participants (trainee teachers and their tutors) on a teacher education programme in Malaysia and to explore what 'reflection' involves, I decided that a mixed methods research would be suitable for my study. In adopting this approach, I used both

qualitative and quantitative procedures in analysing the data in student teachers' and teacher educators' interviews and student teachers' written reflections. This helped me to explore in greater detail and extensively about 'reflection' in this study. For example, through the interviews I investigated what the student teachers and teacher educators understood by the term 'reflection', the benefits, values and roles the reflection plays in developing future teachers, and the adequacy of the support and guidance provided to the student teachers in writing their reflections during teaching practice. From a textual analysis of the written reflections, student teachers' engagement could be explored, and the quality, depth and features of the 'reflection' could be examined. The next three chapters contains the analysis of the data of this research.

CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENT TEACHERS

5.1 Introduction

This is the first of three data chapters in this thesis. This chapter presents the findings from the interview data with student teachers. I conducted interviews with ten student teachers in two phases (see 4.8.2). Thus, I have twenty interviews in total. The focus of the first phase interview was to investigate what student teachers understand by the term ‘reflection’ and what sort of support they received in writing their reflections. In the second phase, I continued eliciting from the student teachers their opinions about the benefits of ‘reflection’ as they gained experiences in writing the reflections during the practicum. The interviews address the three research questions of this study: RQ1, RQ2 and RQ5 (see 4.2). I classified student teachers’ responses into three main topics which I discussed with the participants during the interviews based on the different sets of interview questions (Appendix U and V). For each topic, there are a number of themes that emerged from the data analysis process. This is shown in Table 5.1 below. These themes represent student teachers’ understanding of ‘reflection’, the reasons for writing reflections on the teacher training programme, and how they gained support in writing the reflections during the practicum.

Table 5.1: Topic and Theme for Student Teachers’ Interviews

| Topic | Theme |
|---|--|
| 1. Student teachers’ understanding about what ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’ are | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggesting Improvements in Teaching (SWIS)• Reflection as a writing activity |
| 2. The reasons for writing reflections on the course | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing reflections as course requirement• Reflection as part of assessment• Writing reflections as benefit for teaching |
| 3. Support in writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing reflections with peers |

5.2 Student Teachers’ Understanding about ‘Reflection’

Under this topic, there are two themes that emerged as a result of my coding exercise with student teachers’ interviews regarding their perceptions of ‘reflection’ during the practicum. I labelled these themes as ‘SWIS’ and ‘reflection as a writing activity’. I will present the findings for each of these themes in the sections below.

5.2.1 Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggesting Improvements in Teaching (SWIS)

One of the themes that emerged from the interview data is one that involves the identification of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching as well as providing suggestions on how to improve teaching. I have labelled these elements as SWIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Improvements, Suggestions). For example:

ST1Dollah11

Dollah: Reflection in terms of teaching is.. the way the teacher wants to see, the strengths and weaknesses of his or her own teaching. And.. by that way the teacher will know how to.. be a better.. educator in the next lesson.

In another extract, the process of identifying SWIS is seen as involving a retrospective examination of teaching with a focus on ‘rectifying mistakes’:

ST1Azrul3

Azrul: ...looking back at what we have done.. something that you looking back and then.. you go.. and see what, what went wrong and then.. what you’re going to rectify the mistakes so that’s it.

Certainly, when we reflect, we tend to look into our past actions and experiences. Dewey (1933) once said that experience is one of the important components in formulating reflection and has been demonstrated in many models of professional learning such as Wallace’s Reflective Model (1991) and Kolb’s Experiential Learning Model (1984) as discussed in 3.3.5. Furthermore, Kolb (1984) also asserted that if transformation was to take place, we have to reflect on the experience continuously. This means that reflection is not an isolated process which only involves a mere identification of SWIS as Dollah and Azrul had suggested above. Reflection also takes into account other things beyond SWIS in order to acquire better understanding of practice (see 3.2.3). In addition, Azrul concluded his perception with ‘so that’s it’ which indicates a somewhat superficial approach to the business of reflection.

In another extract, Devi associated identifying SWIS to the process of writing reflections:

ST1Devi3

Devi: Reflection is a write up which I feel that.. important and essential for me to reflect back on what I've done during the.. teaching and learning practice, when I entered the class, and the moment I come outside, that's the time for me to reflect on.. what are the.. my flaws and what are my strengths of my lessons for that day. So I feel that.. basically that is what meant by reflection..

Interestingly, Devi used the word 'flaws' instead of 'weaknesses' to identify her teaching problem. I find this term rather vague as to whether 'flaws' here refers to her teacher persona or the 'flaws' in her teaching. However, I assume that 'flaws' here could still mean the things that did not go well in the lesson. In addition to this, it seems that in her reflections Devi identified her own weaknesses and strengths in teaching and not the weaknesses and strengths of her pupils' learning. Thus, the reflections are centred around 'me' as indicated through the constant use of pronouns 'I' and 'my' in her response, which are also found in other extracts under SWIS.

The many instances of 'identifying SWIS' suggest that student teachers wrote their reflections based on a standard format or framework. They also indicate that student teachers applied a formulaic approach in writing their reflections. For example:

ST1Jega33

Jega: First of all I choose based on my strengths, I highlight my strengths first just to show.. showcase whatever I've done. Let's say today I'm using a new teaching aid, so I will ⁷*puji sendiri la* the teaching aid. And then moving on to my weaknesses, I will not highlight as much as my strengths. I will try to hide my weaknesses. If there is no one observing me.

In this extract, Jega's strategy to writing his reflection was to highlight the strengths first in order to portray his best side to his supervising lecturers, showing his abilities and skills in teaching. This shows that he feels proud of his accomplishments. Jega gave an example of using a fancy teaching aid in his lesson which was probably something that he produced himself that could be associated with 'good' teaching. In contrast, he would not write about his weaknesses or hide his failures in his reflections if he were not being 'observed' during the practicum. This gives the impression that perhaps student teachers

⁷ *puji sendiri la* = praise oneself, proud of own accomplishment

write reflections differently from those when he is not being observed by his supervisor. This raises the question to how truthful the discussions written in the student teachers' reflections are. The comments that student teachers write in their written reflections may not paint the entire picture of the teaching situation. Instead they may represent just a fraction of what is really going on in the classroom or the things that student teachers think about in their teaching. This point resonates with Hobbs' (2007) study about 'forced' reflections and their impact on the authenticity of the reflection student teachers produced (in 3.5 and 3.6).

In the interview, Jega continued to express his concerns about writing his weaknesses in his reflections. He justified this by stating that:

ST1Jega35

Jega: Because let's say I've done the ⁸*buku RPH*, let's say my juniors are reading.. my school teachers they want to read. I don't want to show my weaknesses to them. I want to show my strengths to them. So that they will have more this image of me, so depends on the personality. I don't want people to see my weaknesses, I don't want to show that. So I'll highlight the strengths first.

Clearly, Jega was very cautious about allowing his peers or teachers at school where he attended his teaching practice to read his reflections. He adamantly refused to let them read about his weaknesses but would want them to read about his strengths instead. It seems that Jega was trying to avoid the 'bad' teacher image and tries to maintain a 'good' teacher image, a stereotypical belief often associated with weaknesses and strengths in teaching. Apart from that, exposing his weaknesses would make himself vulnerable to comments or to scrutiny by others, a position which most teachers in training might not be prepared to be in or feel less confident to face. Jega was persistent in highlighting his strengths and hiding his weaknesses in his reflections which may indicate the implication of reflection being a requirement and a part of assessment (as mentioned in 2.5), an area which I will discuss further in the next section of this chapter. In fact, in Jega's case it seems more to do with saving face rather than assessment.

⁸ *buku RPH* = daily teaching record book

In contrast, Ai Ling seems more positive about writing her weaknesses in her reflections as compared to Jega:

ST1AiLing25

Ai Ling: So.. like maybe, when we plan the lesson we thought that we can carry out the lesson, but when.. when we enter the class and.. the things.. don't come out as what, we expected (...) I would think like.. which part is not right which part is.. so that I.. can.. tackle.. something like that..

Here, Ai Ling explained that as she wrote about things that did not turn out well from her initial plans which put her 'in the state of doubt and perplexity' (Dewey, 1933) and led her to reflect on her teaching. It seems that Ai Ling was more receptive towards the weaknesses as she attempted to identify the parts which were not right and fix the problem that occurred in her lesson, as compared to Jega earlier which he seems to avoid.

In the interviews with the student teachers, reflection was seen almost exclusively as a process of looking back on their teaching and identifying the strengths and weaknesses in their lessons, with a view to rectify mistakes and improving future performance. There was no suggestion in the interview that reflection might take account of other matters such as values, the learners and the social political context of learning in order to develop better understanding of the teaching and learning process as discussed in the literature (e.g. Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Moon, 1999). Therefore, these reflections that predominantly focus on 'teaching' and identifying SWIS are what might be termed 'teaching-centric'. The concept of 'teaching-centric' reflection will be examined and discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 7 and in 8.2.1 of this study.

5.2.2 Reflection as a Writing Activity

Student teachers mainly perceived reflection as something they do in writing (as can be seen in the extracts above and in the extracts in the current section). In the interviews, I asked the student teachers about their experiences of writing their reflections in the early stages of the practicum and most of them find it difficult. For example, Gan felt that writing reflections was 'a very hard process' (ST1Gan52). The difficulties in writing the reflections stems from being confined to what was taught and strictly following the instructions given by the lecturers and the guidelines given in the

practicum handbook (see 2.9). The focus of the training seems to focus on the technicalities of writing and not how to reflect. This issue was also raised in Hatton and Smith's (1995) study in which they commented that the focus in writing the reflections is on the construction of the genre and student teachers' lack of familiarity with reflective writing may distort the evidence for reflection (as discussed in 2.6). Thus, student teachers might seem more adept at 'writing' than 'reflecting'. Furthermore, the content area, the organisation of the written reflections, and the structure of the reflection is mainly determined by the trainer. In fact, the trainers themselves (the lecturers) also follow the same structure in writing their reflections (refer to the contextual background in 2.6 and the findings in Chapter 7). Subsequently, student teachers' written reflections mirror what the curriculum expects of their reflective writing. Although guided and structured reflective writing practice may be an acceptable way for beginning teachers to start learning writing their reflections, it is also common in the first year of teaching practice that teacher educators give lots of guidance to help student teachers write their reflections.

However, as Gan gained more experience and practice in writing the reflections and 'as long as we follow what the lecturers teach us' and 'keep their teachings as a Bible' (ST1Gan52) the process of writing the reflections become easier. Eventually, student teachers will shift from being highly dependent on their supervisors to be able to reflect more on their own (as can be seen in the extracts in 5.4.1). It seems that the teaching experience helped student teachers to write better reflections as they progressed through their practicum.

Apart from being challenging, student teachers were unsure of what or how to include in the reflections as Dollah stated in the extract below:

ST2Dollah127

Dollah: I do not know what to write.. for reflection.. and then from time to time I learn to write reflections and I think it is not that.. hard to write reflections.

As the saying goes 'practice makes perfect'. Student teachers who continuously practice reflecting on their teaching and writing their reflections find the task less difficult. Ai Ling shared the same view about having time and practice which made writing reflections easier until she actually 'can write it out on my own' (ST2AiLing53) which indicated that she has become more autonomous in writing her reflections. And 'because

I have gone through two practicums and now in my third practicum, I already know what to write, already know what to identify' (ST2AiLing53). The repeated process has relatively made writing reflections 'easy' because 'I write over and over again' (ST2AiLing109).

Some student teachers can write more easily than others. They have no problem in writing either about their weaknesses or strengths in their reflections as Devi stated here:

ST1Devi39

Devi: Because it is so clear, my weaknesses are so clear I don't have to crack my head to think what are my weaknesses. So that I feel that during my reflection write up I feel that the weaknesses just flow by themselves. So I don't feel that there's any difficulties for me to find out what is my weaknesses and strengths.

From the extract, it can be observed again that Devi approached writing their reflections strategically. She focused more on the weaknesses since they are more obvious and easier to identify. Her thoughts are more fluent concerning weaknesses which indicates that she may be more aware of her weaknesses in teaching than her strengths. Because she was able to do this, Devi seems to 'prefer' to write about this first in her reflections. Devi's preference could also suggest that the process of writing the reflections is shifting from 'trainer-centred' (as I mentioned earlier in this section) to 'trainee-centred', where student teachers determine their own approach of writing their reflections. In writing her reflections, Devi further explained that:

ST1Devi43

Devi: ...let say I have five strengths, I'll just go about three because the number of my weakness are like ten! So given one page I had to write my reflection, I prefer more to write about my weaknesses and I will categorise first whether this weaknesses should it be in the reflection.

Again, this extract shows that Devi has a systematic approach in organising her reflective writing. This is perhaps influenced by how she was taught to write reflections on the programme as I mentioned in the previous section. Devi's approach to only choose a

certain number of issues shows that she was putting a limit to how much she could write in her reflections. This also indicates her ‘decision making’ about how much to write, what to highlight and what to hide in her reflections. This also depends perhaps on what she perceived the impact of the issues she selected would be on the reflection as a written task and what the audience (examiner) might expect from the reflections. Clearly, this is a rather strategic and formulaic approach to writing, similar to the earlier extracts from Jega (ST1Jega33 in 5.2.1 and ST1Jega23 in 5.3.1).

So far, it could be said that student teachers were closely guided and followed a strict order in writing their reflections. However, there were some that approached writing the reflections rather flexibly. For example, in reflecting on his strengths and weaknesses Gan claims that he wrote his reflection based on ‘aspects that I like’ and the ‘good things’ (ST1Gan30) which is also similar to Jega (in 5.2.1). However, the focus of Gan’s reflection may shift when he has ‘more weaknesses or more problems’ (ST1Gan30) in his teaching, he would stress writing on the weaknesses first. What this means is that the focus of writing on the strengths and weaknesses in the reflections is interchangeable, depending on which area needed attention most. Being able to choose the focus of the reflection also indicates a degree of autonomy in Gan’s approach in writing his reflections. This could also suggest that some student teachers may not write their reflections based on what had been suggested to them in the practicum guidelines (in 2.9) or ‘on what the lecturer wants’.

In summary, the extracts above show how pre-service student teachers perceived ‘reflection’ as a written task that needed to be completed during teaching practice. The focus is mainly on the identification of the strengths, weaknesses in teaching and suggesting ways to improve their teaching. Although the student teachers mainly wrote their reflections according to the course requirement, there was one instance in the extract that suggests student teachers can be autonomous in approaching writing their reflections as they can choose and decide on writing areas that are relevant to them in the reflections. Next, I will investigate further the reasons student teachers write their reflections during the practicum as this will inform the expectations student teachers had on reflection.

5.3 The Reasons for Writing Reflections on the Course

This topic indicates that student teachers perceived there are three main reasons for them to write reflections during teaching practice. These reasons are explored in the following sections below.

5.3.1 Writing Reflections as a Course Requirement

Student teachers described writing reflections on the Bachelor of Teaching programme an ‘obligation’ (ST1Azrul54) and ‘compulsory’ (ST1Dollah57). Clearly, these terms indicate that reflection is a task that needs to be fulfilled as part of their teaching practice requirement on the programme (as mentioned in 2.5 and 2.6). For example, when I asked about the reasons for writing reflections on the course, Devi straightforwardly admitted that if writing reflections was not a requirement during the practicum she ‘will not reflect’ (ST1Devi46). This suggests that reflection is a ‘forced’ action and not something that student teachers initiate on their own. Reflections are produced due to the course demands and perhaps just to pass the course rather than as an integral part of student teachers’ professional practice as teachers. This may result in the reflections being ‘ingenuine’ as Hobbs (2007) had argued in her paper. However, Devi also felt that writing reflections this way is ‘vital’ (ST1Devi46) since this informs the supervisors about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching that they were not able to observe. The written reflections are a way of helping the supervisors do their work of evaluating student teachers on their teaching practice. It serves as a record (for the practicum unit and supervising lecturer) of the student teachers’ progress during teaching practice. It facilitates the administration of evaluation of teaching practice and reduces the time for supervisors to observe their trainees during the practicum. In other words, for Devi, writing reflections is primarily for the benefit of the supervisor, not the student teacher.

Writing reflections is a task deemed necessary for the student teachers to complete all the time and the importance is described in the following comment by Hendon:

ST1Hendon3

Hendon: Reflection is.. something that I need to do every time I.. finish with my class. Yes, a compulsory.. because we are asked to.. if we didn't complete then.. we get comments from the lecturers and mentor..

Consequently, failure to write reflections after every lesson will result in student teachers receiving 'comments' from the supervising lecturers or teacher mentors which seems what Hendon was trying to avoid. The connotation behind the term 'comments' seems to imply that student teachers will be criticised for not completing their written reflections rather than receiving constructive feedback on their teaching. The possible consequence of this is to discourage the student teachers from writing genuine reflections as they will be more concerned with the mere completion of the task and compiling the written reflections in their teaching practice portfolio. It is important for student teachers to be cautious since supervising lecturers check student teachers' written reflections regularly and those who do not write their reflections will be issued with an offence letter:

ST1Jega47-48

Jega: The lecturers will come they check the weekly journals. If they don't find it, I think they will issue ⁹*surat salah laku*.

Warnings like this show that writing reflections is a serious matter and completing this task is something that student teachers should not avoid. Thus, making reflection part of the course requirement inevitably forces the student teachers to write reflections and the teacher educators to monitor and examine these written reflections. It would also defeat the purpose of reflecting on teaching because one of the reasons for including reflection in the course is for self-development, the forming of teacher cognition and identity (see 2.5, 3.3 and 3.4). If student teachers are merely writing the reflections out of fear of penalisation, it would be possible that nothing would be learnt from the practice. In fact, there is the danger that student teachers might stop reflecting when they become qualified teachers.

⁹ *surat salah laku* = offence letter

Having to write many reflections during the practicum can be quite challenging and ‘tiring’ (ST1AiLing108). Writing reflections takes time and requires the student teachers to produce many reflections every week (daily and weekly reflections) which can be rather discouraging as the following extract shows:

ST1AiLing110

Ai Ling: When, when there’s no issue to come out with. I have to come out with one. Which mean like this week, the issue still the same with the last week. But, we.. we cannot copy.. we need to come out with a new one. Which means.. quite hard *lah*..

Unlike Devi (ST1Devi39), Ai Ling felt that writing reflections became harder when she had no issue to write about in her reflections. Her statement ‘to come out with one’ suggests that there is a possibility that she may ‘make up’ some of the issues or randomly write the teaching events in her reflections to fulfil the requirement of the task. Ai Ling believes that she was not permitted to ‘copy’ her previous reflections. Perhaps, what she meant here is ‘repeat’ instead of ‘copy’ the same issues that she has in her reflections. Thus, the process of writing reflections becomes difficult because she believes that she has to write about different issues in every entry. Assuming that she writes about new issues all the time, the previous issues may not have been resolved or the action plan for improvement may not have been executed properly.

Since writing the reflections is compulsory and takes a lot of effort, some student teachers expect their supervising lecturer to read and check their reflections that they had prepared for them, to receive feedback and advice on how to improve their weaknesses in teaching. However, when this does not happen, student teachers may feel that it is a ‘waste of time’ writing reflections if ‘no one is checking’ (ST1Jega23). In fact, Jega would modify how he wrote his reflections based on how he saw his supervisor was responding to his work. Jega said that if ‘no one is appreciating my long reflections’ next time ‘I will write shorter’ reflections (ST1Jega23). This highlights the importance of the supervisors’ role in encouraging and helping student teachers to write their reflections effectively. Jega’s comments also indicate that he was being strategic in writing his reflections, choosing to write the reflections to pass the course, or according to what was required by the lecturer, and not reflecting on teaching for lifelong learning (an issue which I have raised previously). Jega uses the word ‘materialistic’ which

perhaps to mean ‘selfish’ because as evident in another extract Jega did admit ‘I have been working for the marks rather than reflecting myself’ (ST1Jega55). Despite this, he wants his reflections to be checked because it makes him ‘feel good’ since his ‘effort is being recognised’ (ST1Jega55).

It seems that the main reason for student teachers to write their reflections is because it is a compulsory task for them to complete during the practicum. For some student teachers, writing reflections is an exercise that could help them to improve their teaching. However, for others the task seems less meaningful because they only do it in order to pass the course. They approach writing the reflections strategically which seems to be one of the impacts of reflection being a required task. Also, student teachers’ written reflections are assessed during the practicum. So, what other impacts would this have on student teachers’ reflections? This is another issue that has been highlighted in student teachers’ interviews which I will discuss in the next section of this chapter.

5.3.2 Reflection as Part of Assessment

Student teachers also had to write reflections because it is part of their assessment (see 2.10). From the interviews, it seems that there are two ways in which reflection is viewed as an assessment. First, when reflection is included in the teacher training curriculum and is thus considered a ‘formalised’ task, it becomes an instrument used by the programme to evaluate student teachers’ performance on the course through the written reflections which the student teachers produced and compiled in their teaching practice portfolio. The supervising lecturers will assess student teachers’ written reflections after every observation and award marks making up 10% of the overall performance score at the end of the practicum (see 2.10). All student teachers are aware of this condition and most of them seem to have an approving view about them being assessed for their written reflections on the programme. For example, Suguna believes that she deserves to be given some marks for her written reflections as she expressed here:

ST1Suguna65

Suguna: Because we have been writing one whole page on our lessons so at least there is a mark, it contributes something towards our marks. So I’m quite happy.

Interestingly, it seems that Suguna is happy and expects her written reflections to be graded especially when she has put a lot of effort in producing lengthy (which has been emphasised in the extract above) and multiple reflections after every lesson she taught (similar to Jega's comments in 5.4.1). For me, this was an unexpected comment to get from a student teacher because I often assumed that being graded for a piece of written work is something that most student teachers would usually not be glad about. However, this shows that grades are important to these student teachers, perhaps because from the grades, student teachers could tell how well they have performed on their teaching. For example, Devi believes that assessing written reflections could contribute to the way that she could 'upgrade' herself and 'go beyond' (ST1Devi66) her current level in teaching. Thus, the marks that she receives is an indicator of her teaching performance. Also, she finds that the feedback or the comments she receives from the assessment are helpful in improving her reflection on teaching:

ST1Devi74

Devi: Because sometimes I might focus on issues that is not so important. So when my reflection is assessed, I would be told that these issues should not be in your writings. So for sure in my upcoming reflections I won't be inserting that kind of issues which are not, not so major, it is just a minor one, you don't have to write it.

Assuming that 'told' in this extract means the feedback or comment from her examiners, Devi uses this to guide her in writing her reflections. Also, 'told' here could suggest that Devi was being instructed by her supervisors on what to write in her reflections as opposed to suggesting to her the ways in which she could write her reflections. This also suggests the type of support and guidance Devi expects from her trainer.

Student teachers also used reflections for self-assessment, as Gan expressed in this extract:

ST1Gan70

Gan: Because.. I think it is fair for me to, for myself to know what is good and what is bad about my teaching.. so even if other people don't come to assess

my teaching I think, I myself need to know my progress of teaching, so from day one, until the last day how much progress have I made..

Here, Gan believes that the written reflections he produced not only benefit the examiners in keeping track of the student teachers' performance (as I commented in 5.3.1) but also to inform his own progress. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

ST1Dollah45

Dollah: Because when I see through my previous reflections I can see that 'oh I did this when I was in this time' and then so right now I'm not doing this anymore so I can see myself being improving...

This comment shows that writing his reflections and referring to them later made Dollah aware of what was going on in his classroom and he could identify the achievements that had occurred through his reflections. Dollah's realisation was reinforced by his reflection which indicates that some aspect of 'critical thinking' has also taken place.

It is also found that one of the perceived impacts of reflection as assessment was that it helped student teachers to become more 'independent' (ST2Suguna59) in analysing and evaluating their own teaching. Suguna explained that she 'knows what's wrong' and she 'knows how to overcome' her teaching problems as she had been through the teaching practice many times. She stated that:

ST2Suguna47

Suguna: I'm able to think on my own. Because you've been.. like two practicums since I've gone through. So I know what I must do during my lesson and after my lessons so that I'm able to write down my reflections.

In fact, being autonomous in reflecting on teaching continues as Suguna stated how she decided on what to write in her reflections:

ST2Suguna35

Suguna: Usually it's on my own. No one helps me because no one is in my class except for myself. I'm the one that teaching the pupils I'm the one that

knows ok what I have planned. Even the pupils don't know. I'm the one in charge 100% on my reflection.

In addition, this personal and individualistic account suggest a sense of 'ownership' in the reflections. Another example can be observed in this statement from Ai Ling that she decided the content of her reflections 'herself' (ST2AiLing26) showing that she was making her own decisions on what to write in her reflections. The instances also suggest student teachers became more confident of their reflective writing as they repeat and write the reflections many times. Perhaps, as they progressed through their teaching practice things became clearer to them and they could see things from a more apt perspective. In the extracts above, Suguna seems to be in control and know what she was doing with her class and her reflections also suggest that she was beginning to detach herself from the help given by her supervisors.

5.3.3 Writing Reflections as Benefit for Teaching

This extract below shows a good example of how Gan perceived written reflections as a record of his teaching experiences and how he could use them to help improve his teaching. He said:

ST1Gan84

Gan: Writing reflection I think is good because.. it helps you.. to improve your practice, compared to when you are having an oral reflections.. you will reflect only when you are giving the reflections orally, so when you have written down a reflection you will, be a permanent reminder when, whenever you need it. So I think that is the benefits of writing a reflection.

Here, Gan is stating his preference and comparing the different ways of reflecting on teaching that are verbally or written. He claimed that writing provided him with the 'time and space' to collect his thoughts. This resonates with Mann and Walsh's (2013) and Moon's (2004) comment about 'wait-time', that after writing the reflections student teachers should leave them for a while to digest the information that they have written and return to them later which could have a positive effect on the reflective process for the student teachers. In addition, reflection is also perceived as a 'permanent reminder'

of the things he did in his lessons which resonates with the points I discussed in the literature e.g. Rushton & Suter (2012) reflection as ‘a record that can be referred back to’ particularly when dealing with many teaching issues (in 3.5.1).

In another extract, Azrul also mentioned that keeping reflective journals as written records enabled him to store all of the data about his teaching experiences in one place and he could refer to these records as he ‘look back in the reflection’ (ST1Azrul123) later to find out about things that may need improvement or to get ideas for his next lessons. From the ‘record’ Azrul can ‘change some of the parts of the lesson’ (ST1Azrul123) which indicates actions were planned and had been taken on the previous teaching problem to design ‘better activities, better lessons’ (ST1Azrul123). This is another perceived benefit of writing reflection.

Besides developing student teachers’ autonomy in writing reflections and improving their teaching (e.g. ST2Suguna47 and ST2Suguna35), the process of writing reflections during the practicum could also help student teachers ‘gain more confidence’ and ‘become more responsible’ (ST2Dollah129) as teachers. Dollah elaborated by stating that:

ST2Dollah129

Dollah: Being a teacher at the school not only to enter the class and teach the students. I also have to mingle around with the teachers at the schools, with the staff, the students. And then there are other things at the school, to train the students for the sports for *unit beruniform*¹⁰.

From the extract we can see that Dollah had begun to critically examine and relate what he knows with his new experiences and had established a perspective which was mediated not only by classroom teaching but also social surroundings. This suggests the shift in focus of the topics in the reflections and development of awareness that is beyond the classroom e.g. from classroom based to roles of a teacher which involves the forming of ‘teacher cognition and identity’ (Borg, 2006). Clearly, this is one of the impacts of reflection on student teachers’ learning.

In this section, there are several things I noticed which are important. Student teachers mainly perceived that writing reflections is a task that they had to do because it

¹⁰ *unit beruniform* = uniform unit

is required by the course and is then assessed together with other elements in the teaching practice. Despite this, the content of the reflections is primarily determined by the student teachers themselves, which indicates the freedom they had in choosing the issues they wanted to discuss in their reflections. In addition, some of the extracts above show that student teachers were actually engaging in the process of ‘reflection’ when they were talking about their teaching practice experiences after the event which indicates ‘reflection-on-action’; although some of these student teachers may not realise they were involved in this process or may not know the concept of this term themselves. It could be argued that these student teachers are unlikely to become effective at reflection on an ongoing basis since ‘reflection’ is essentially a course requirement that student teachers are ‘forced’ to undertake. Student teachers also spoke of writing reflections and how this exercise could help them improve their classroom performance and they see this as another reason for writing their reflections during the practicum. This perception resonates with what have been said in the literature about the rationale for writing reflections during teaching practice as discussed in 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5.

5.4 Support in Writing Reflections

Another topic discussed in the interviews is one related to support in writing reflections. The theme that emerged from the analysis of student teachers’ interviews was ‘sharing reflections with peers’. This is shown in the following extracts in 5.4.1 below.

5.4.1 Sharing Reflections with Peers

Sometimes student teachers share what they write in their reflections with their friends in order to get help or solve a teaching problem. For instance, in this extract Suguna explained that she shares her teaching experiences with her ‘practicum mates’ (ST2Suguna65) and through this way she can find ways to improve her teaching. The following extract describes the process of sharing that went on between Suguna and her peers:

ST2Suguna65

Suguna: After every class we will come and sit in the room and then, 'my students did this today, I did this today'. We use to share with our friends so sometimes they give suggestions, 'you can try that one, you can try...' like maybe 'my teaching aids are small' so I come and tell them, 'the students can't see, they complain they can't see'. 'Maybe you can print it like this, like that.. or maybe you can write and give suggestions also'.

The discussions and exchanges that occurred suggest that student teachers were being 'critical' of their practice as they seek clarification, troubleshooting and finding a solution to their teaching problem. The role of the peers resembles one of an advisor or mentor as in the above extract shows.

Despite this, there are student teachers who are reluctant to share any of their reflections with their peers or other people. For example, Jega was particularly careful with whom he shares his reflections as he firmly stated in the extract below:

ST1Jega91

Jega: I don't share my reflection with people. I don't share because I write my feelings and everything so I don't share. I don't mind if you read but I don't share my reflections.

Perhaps, Jega's refusal to share his reflections could be that he felt embarrassed if his friends read those reflections that may be personal to him or things that may be private or sensitive. In fact, in keeping up with appearances, student teachers may be reluctant to share any teaching weaknesses and past failures with their peers. Thus, perhaps this is why Jega would feel only comfortable sharing with people whom he trusts, such as his lecturer, (referring to 'you' which is me as his lecturer as an example), who could also be the examiner for his practicum (which I am not his examiner in this case).

However, sometimes it is difficult to avoid not sharing reflections with other people as Azrul mentioned here:

ST2Azrul71

Azrul: ...But because sometimes we share lesson plans of course hand them the ¹¹RPH and of course I think they will look at the reflections. So I think indirectly I'm sharing my reflections.

Azrul does not want to share his reflections, but since he shares his lesson plans with his friends, inevitably he is also sharing his thoughts about the lesson that he had taught. However, there are some student teachers who would intentionally look for friends whom they feel they can share their reflections with and potentially learn something from each other's experiences through discussions, as Dollah did here:

ST2Dollah82

Dollah: I will discuss especially with Imran because I think that he was able to control the students psychologically because and then I can say that more than one time he can make the students cry without touching them. So I think that is a very special gift that he has and then I discuss with him how to have this kind of classroom control skill.

It seems that Dollah managed to cleverly seize the opportunity to work closely with Imran who he has identified to have the skill to deal with discipline problems and classroom management issues. Unlike Jega, Dollah is more positive and motivated, trying to make the most out of the opportunity to share reflections with peers.

From the extracts above, we could see that the process of sharing reflections with peers is one of the strategies used to support student teachers' learning to teach as they discuss their experiences in teaching. However, not all student teachers were willing to share their reflections with others. Their reluctance stems from the concerns that they may be judged for their bad teaching and to keep up with their good teaching image. Despite this, the perceived benefit of sharing reflections is to enable knowledge exchange which could help those who struggle with teaching to learn from those who did well, and for those who are already good in their teaching, to help them to enhance their teaching skills further.

¹¹ RPH = *Rancangan Pengajaran Harian* – Daily Lesson Plan

5.5 Chapter Summary

There are three main topics that were discussed in the student teachers' interviews. The first topic focused on student teachers' perceptions of 'reflection' that involves the identification of their strengths, weaknesses, and finding ways to improve their teaching (SWIS) and 'reflection' as a writing activity. SWIS helps to structure and organise student teachers' thoughts when writing their reflections. However, this limits the scope of student teachers' reflection to classroom activities and on 'teaching' which I term 'teaching-centric'. This topic also includes a discussion on reflection as a writing activity which student teachers perceived the process to be 'difficult'. The second topic focuses on the reasons for writing reflections on the course. I extracted three reasons from the interviews: to fulfil the course requirement, for assessment purposes, and to develop better reflective skills from the writing process. Student teachers also perceived that through reflective writing, they begin to develop autonomy and their identity as teachers. Further discussion on this in Chapters 6 and 8. The third topic concerns the support that the student teachers received in writing their reflections especially from their peers. Through collaboration with 'others', engaging in the process of 'reflection' becomes more effective. The next data chapter explores student teachers' written reflections to reveal the content in the reflections.

CHAPTER 6: STUDENT TEACHERS' WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the findings that reveal the content of student teachers' written reflections. As I explained in Chapter 2, there are two types of reflections that student teachers have to write during the practicum which were the 'daily reflections' – reflections that student teachers produce after every lesson they taught, and 'weekly reflections' – reflections that student teachers write at the end of every week that focus on an issue that they would like to discuss further (see 2.7). There are 265 written reflections in total, which I managed to collect from ten student teachers during their 12-week teaching practice that they attended as part of their Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme. Student teachers were required to write their reflections after every lesson they taught and compile them in their teaching practice portfolio. On average, these student teachers taught approximately between 3 to 5 English lessons per week during their practicum.

For my study, I had specifically requested the student teachers to scan and email both of their daily and weekly written reflections at the end of every week of their practicum. I had put all the written reflections together for my data analysis and I treated them the same since there were very little difference between the two reflective commentaries as both types of reflections contain accounts of teaching experiences which look back on teaching (see 2.7). Both reflections follow the same guidelines provided by the practicum unit (see Appendix D, E, and F). However, not every student teacher sent all their written reflections to me. Table 4.6 shows the number of written reflections I received from each student teacher. A table containing the number of reflections student teachers wrote for each week is shown in Appendix AB.

6.2 Analysing the Written Reflections

From the written reflections, I extracted information that relates to the 'activities' and 'procedures' student teachers used in the classroom when reflecting on their teaching. This involves the topics student teachers often wrote in their reflections and features of reflective writing which their journals demonstrated. My analysis attempted to address primarily two of the research questions in my study which are:

RQ 3 : What do the pre-service student teachers focus on in their written reflections?

RQ 4 : What features of reflective writing can be found in the student teachers' written reflections?

My research also involved an investigation into student teachers' quality of reflection. I felt that it was also important to see if the claims made by other researchers (e.g. Dymont & O'Connell, 2011; Lee, 2005) about student teachers producing reflections that were not reflective also applies to the pre-service student teachers in this study.

There are many frameworks (e.g. Van Manen, 1977; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Valli, 1997; Mezirow, 1990; Hatton & Smith, 1994; Bain et al. 1999) that I could use to evaluate the written reflections. However, finding the 'right' one for my research was very difficult. I examined closely each of these frameworks and realised that they were unsuitable to evaluate the written reflections in my context. For example, Jay and Johnson's (2002) typology of reflection consists of three reflective dimensions: descriptive, comparative, and critical. They were developed to help university instructors to teach 'reflection' to pre-service student teachers. Although this may seem relevant, the student teachers in my research were not taught to write their reflections according to this typology. Thus, categorising their written reflections based on these criteria would be inappropriate.

I would like to clarify here that the aim of the research was not to evaluate student teachers' written reflections based on predetermined categories and levels of reflection as found in the literature but to understand what the process of reflecting on teaching involved in the context of pre-service teacher education in Malaysia. It was also to find out how this process influenced reflective thinking among student teachers as they produce their written reflections. Therefore, I felt that it was best to study student teachers' reflective writing from the ground up, 'immersing' myself into the data as I looked closely into it while interpreting every significant detail (Holliday, 2016; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I believe that by analysing my data this way, it can take me to the 'core' element within student teachers' written reflections and give me a clearer view of what 'reflection' really means to my participants.

6.3 Things Student Teachers Write in Their Reflections

Following open coding procedures in 4.9.2, I identified seven main topics which student teachers wrote in their written reflections. The analysis began with a

quantitative analysis of the data in order to determine what the main topics were (see 4.8.4 – I used quantitative analysis to determine the frequency of the topics written in student teachers’ reflective journals). Table 6.1 shows the topics and their frequency of occurrence in percentages. In the table, the first column shows the main topics of the written reflections, the percentage score of the topics in the second column and the third column shows the number of student teachers who wrote about the topics in their written reflections. The topics are arranged in descending order according to the percentage score.

Table 6.1: Topics Student Teachers Write in their Written Reflections

| Topic | % | No. of Student Teachers (10) |
|---|------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons | 57.82 | 10 |
| 2. Classroom Management | 18.50 | 10 |
| 3. Focus on Learning | 15.07 | 9 |
| 4. School Environment | 3.62 | 7 |
| 5. Support | 2.29 | 5 |
| 6. Teacher's General Attributes | 1.90 | 3 |
| 7. Teacher's Use of Language in the Classroom | 0.80 | 1 |
| | 100 | |

I have also included a pie chart to help illustrate the differences in the percentages between the topics. This is shown in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1: Topics Student Teachers Write in their Written Reflections

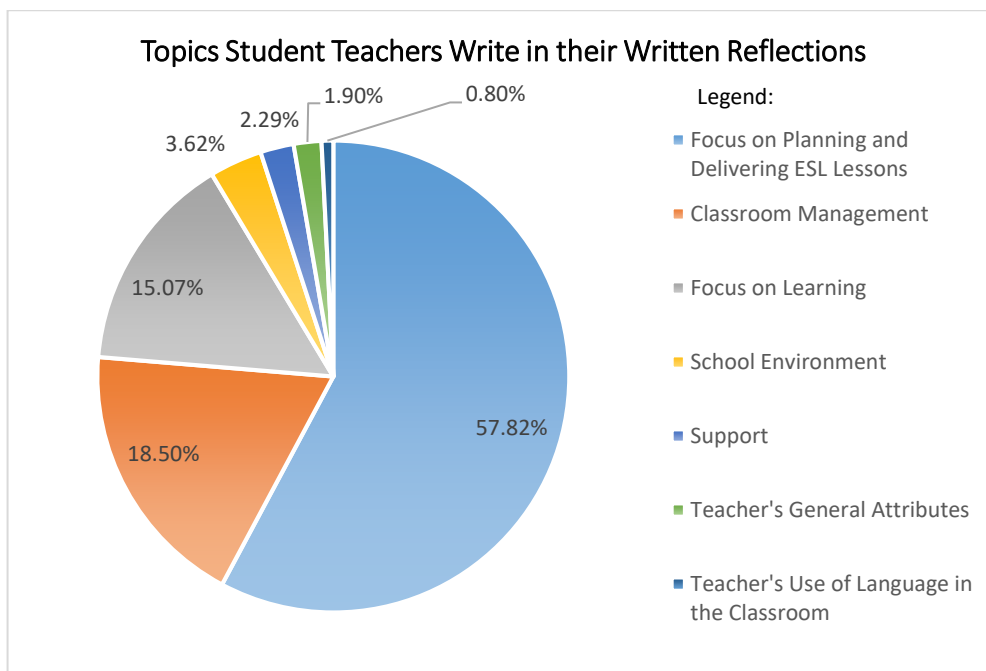


Table 6.2 shows the sub-topics for each of the main topic found in student teachers' written reflections. The first column shows the main topics followed by the sub-topics in the second column. The third column contains the total number of instances for each sub-topic and the percentage of the instances in the fourth column.

Table 6.2: Topics and Sub-topics in Student Teachers' Written Reflections

| Topic | Sub-Topic | Total Number of Instances | % |
|---|--|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons | 1.1 Language learning activities & strategies | 79 | 15.07 |
| | 1.2 Teaching aids & materials | 71 | 13.54 |
| | 1.3 Language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing | 56 | 10.68 |
| | 1.4 Stages in teaching: Presentation, Practice, Production | 18 | 3.45 |
| | 1.5 Language content: Vocabulary & Grammar | 19 | 3.63 |
| | 1.6 Worksheets | 13 | 2.48 |
| | 1.7 Teaching the lesson | 11 | 2.02 |
| | 1.8 Planning the lesson | 9 | 1.75 |
| | 1.9 Moral values | 9 | 1.75 |
| | 1.10 Technological problems | 9 | 1.75 |
| | 1.11 Lesson objectives | 6 | 1.10 |
| | 1.12 Theory of teaching | 3 | 0.60 |
| | | 303 | 57.82 |
| 2. Classroom Management | 2.1 Discipline | 37 | 7.06 |
| | 2.2 Time management | 31 | 5.90 |
| | 2.3 Giving instructions | 25 | 4.74 |
| | 2.4 Classroom environment | 4 | 0.80 |
| | | 97 | 18.50 |
| 3. Focus on Learning | 3.1 Pupils' participation and behaviour | 33 | 6.26 |
| | 3.2 Pupils' language learning abilities | 25 | 4.72 |
| | 3.3 Pupils' language learning difficulties | 12 | 2.29 |
| | 3.4 Pupils' needs | 4 | 0.80 |
| | 3.5 Pupils' motivation and interests | 3 | 0.60 |
| | 3.6 Pupils' language errors | 2 | 0.40 |
| | | 79 | 15.07 |
| 4. School Environment | 4.1 School atmosphere: hectic, busy | 11 | 2.02 |
| | 4.2 School rules and regulations | 4 | 0.80 |
| | 4.3 Staffroom atmosphere: friendly | 4 | 0.80 |
| | | 19 | 3.62 |
| 5. Support | 5.1 Feedback & suggestions from mentor and supervisor | 12 | 2.29 |
| | | 12 | 2.29 |
| 6. Teacher's General Attributes | 6.1 Teacher appearance: healthy, smart | 6 | 1.10 |
| | 6.2 Other roles outside teaching | 3 | 0.60 |
| | 6.3 A role model for others | 1 | 0.20 |
| | | 10 | 1.90 |
| 7. Teacher's Use of Language in the Classroom | 7.1 Teacher own language ability | 4 | 0.80 |
| | | 4 | 0.80 |
| Total | | 524 | 100 |

As seen in Table 6.1 the topic with the greatest percentage is ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ (57.82%) and followed by ‘Classroom Management’ (18.50%) and ‘Focus on Learning’ (15.07%). These three topics account for more than 90% of the coded instances. The high percentage score for the first topic and the large difference between that and the percentage scores for the third topic (42.75%) powerfully reinforce the ‘teaching-centric’ nature of the student teachers’ perceptions of reflection, noted in the interview data (in Chapter 5). The remaining 8.61% of the total percentage scores are for other topics like ‘School Environment’ (3.62%), ‘Support’ (2.29%), ‘Teachers’ General Attributes’ (1.90%), and ‘Teacher’s Use of Language in the Classroom’ (0.80%), which has the least percentage.

‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ is clearly the predominant topic which I found in the student teachers’ written reflections and which all ten student teachers wrote in their reflections. The focus of the extracts in this topic is on the teacher and his/her role in planning and delivering the various ESL teaching activities in the lessons. For example, in the following extract Fatin focused her reflection on teaching materials that she used in her class and how it affected the overall lesson, which I identified under the sub-topic ‘Teaching Aids and Materials’. She wrote:

48Fatin

For today’s lesson, I have taught pupils on contemporary children’s literature, which was poem entitled “At the Playground”. The poem itself had enabled pupils to reflect on their own personal experience in spending time at the playground. Pupils were able to name the playground items and able to show the action respectively. This had shown that pupils learnt better with association of their past experience. The topic too had triggered pupils’ interest and make them more interested in participating in the activities conducted throughout the teaching and learning session.

As can be seen in the extract above, Fatin did not only write about aspects of language teaching pedagogy but also other things such as meeting lesson objectives (e.g. Pupils were able to...) which I could identify under the sub-topic ‘Lesson Objectives’, and linking theory to practice (e.g. pupils learnt better with association of their past

experience) for another sub-topic 'Theory of Teaching', which all are under Topic 1 – 'Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons'.

Jega, in his reflections mentioned different types of activities and materials that he used in his class and how they affected his pupils' behaviour and reaction to the lessons. One of his comments was: 'Using a magic box during the set induction really wakes up the class' (11Jega). While in other cases, choosing teaching materials which the teacher thought could attract the pupils' attention, may not even attract them: 'Some pupils seem to be bored with the 3D map and slides...so they felt a little reluctant to pay attention' (38Jega). Although I categorised these instances under the first topic 'Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons', they could arguably be classified under the topic 'Focus on Learning' because these comments refer to the learning process and the purpose of choosing the teaching materials was to suit the pupils' interests, which is under the sub-topic 'Pupils' Motivation and Interests'. However, I felt that this instance was more appropriately categorised under the topic 'Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons' since I judged that the focus of the issue for the writer was more on selecting teaching materials and how this affected the lesson.

In addition to this, teaching of moral values, which has smaller number of instances, is another area student teachers wrote in their reflections which I classified under the sub-topic 'Moral Values' for Topic 1. For example, a comment such as below shows how Wee Mee was recalling the way she included moral values as part of her teaching and the effect it had on the lesson. Wee Mee wrote:

7WeeMee

During closure stage, I can recall the moral values pupils have learned and remind them to practise the values taught in daily life. I may ask them to give other examples that can show the values taught in that particular lesson.

Student teachers are expected to integrate the teaching of moral values explicitly into the lesson plans as well as in the teaching since this is an element believe that makes the overall lesson 'holistic' (based on the National Education Philosophy in Chapter 2). This comment shows that Wee Mee had made an effort to insert moral values in the lesson.

Student teachers also wrote about their experiences dealing with technology problems, like this comment: 'My audio was quite a let down from previous audio clips

I had prepared. The volume was too low and I had to play it several times' (37Azrul). Although there were not many instances that could be identified under the sub-topic 'Technological Problems' but these comments showed that there were some student teachers who struggled in using technology and who felt they need to improve on this skill.

Sub-topic 1.12 'Theory of Teaching' is an issue which has the least number of instances (see Table 6.2). One example could be found in an extract written by Wee Mee. It reads:

16WeeMee

However, I have to modify my worksheets. The worksheets were too easy and not challenging. A good worksheet must allow pupils to apply knowledge learned in new or different situation. Pupils must be challenged so they will not get bored easily and learned something new.

Here, Wee Mee was trying to make connection between what she knows 'a good worksheet' should do and her 'realisation' that her worksheet was unsuccessful. She identified the cause for the problem was 'the worksheet being too easy' so she needs to modify her worksheet. Her post-lesson reflection made her realise that the worksheets she had before were not challenging enough for her pupils. I would expect the student teachers to write more about this process of making sense between theory and practice since one of the purposes of writing reflections during teaching practice is for student teachers to establish relevant connections of these elements through 'reflection'. Clearly, this was not the case although the literature (e.g. Dewey, 1933; Loughran, 2002; Gore & Zeichner, 1991) repeatedly claim that 'reflection' is the place for student teachers to bridge the gap between their technical and practical knowledge.

'Classroom Management' is the second topic that all ten student teachers wrote in their reflections, which is 18.50%. In Haslee Shahril's et al. (2010) study 'classroom management' is the biggest challenge that student teachers had to face during teaching practice, thus student teachers reflected on this most frequently. However, this is not the case in my study. Although the student teachers discussed about 'classroom management' in their reflections, it is the second most frequent topic, a long way behind 'Planning and Teaching'. Similarly, in Liou's (2001) study that classroom management is one of the seven topics student teachers wrote in their reflections. I have put

‘Classroom Management’ in a separate topic from ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ as it is focusing on managing skills rather than on imparting language skills. Nevertheless, the topic of classroom management inevitably places the focus of the reflections to a large extent on the teacher, and his/her ability to manage the class and maintain discipline and motivation to learn. To that extent, the relatively high frequency of this topic in the written reflections further underlines the ‘teaching-centric’ nature of the student teachers’ reflections as already noted.

Under this broad heading, there are four sub-topics as can be seen in Table 6.2. To the student teachers, some of these topics were a bigger concern than others. For instance, ‘Discipline’ is an area of professional practice that all ten student teachers wrote in their reflective journals (see Table 6.2) which they found challenging and difficult to manage especially for student teachers who are in training. In one example, Hendon described her pupils as being ‘noisy’ because some of them were playing with their friends during group discussion activity (19Hendon) and this had disrupted the timing of the lesson. This was a typical problem that student teachers faced in their classrooms and was evident throughout their reflections. However, a statement such as Devi’s comment ‘I personally feel that it is vital for a teacher to gain the pupils’ attention at the very beginning of the lesson to ensure smooth teaching and learning process’ (2Devi) demonstrates a learning point, realising the importance of good classroom management would have on the lesson.

In the process of reflecting on classroom management issues, student teachers also became aware of some of their managing abilities and skills. For instance, in the analysis section of his weekly reflection Jega clearly stated his weakness in classroom control and that he also realised that he needs to balance between being ‘a friend’ and ‘a teacher’ to his pupils. His reflection on this read:

15Jega

2. Analysis

Based on my analysis, I figured out that I was not stressing much on the discipline of the pupils during the class. I gave them my nice behaviour and let them to be free in class as they only get to meet me once a week. This has turned out to be the worst nightmare for me. Although there is only about 18 pupils in the class still it is big embarrassment for me to not control them as I am a male teacher who should be able to tackle this problem easily. I realise

that the pupils got too comfortable with me making them think that I am their friend. They like to share their problems and feelings to me during the class and this will entirely disrupt the lesson of the class. During the lesson, the pupils love to participate and they tend to make a lot of noise to be included in an activity. If I did not call their name, they will answer automatically just to show that they know the answer. This will turn the classroom situation a chaotic one. Clearly I have not mastered a technique to control the pupil's participation in a class during group activity.

There are a lot of things happening in the extract. Apart from the main issue of discipline, other issues such as 'teacher image' and 'professional roles' (which relate to another topic in 'Teacher's General Attributes' and also the development of 'teacher identity' as discussed in 3.4) were also raised. This means that there could be more than one issues in an extract. Despite this, the extract mainly shows Jega's thoughts and contemplation on balancing between his disciplinary actions and his conscience, which is what reflection should be doing. Thus, I interpreted this as 'Discipline' and categorised it under the topic 'Classroom Management'.

The third topic of reflection in the journals is 'Focus on Learning'. This topic focuses on the learning process of the learners and their thinking, rather than teacher activities. There is a major difference between the frequency score for this topic (15.07%) as compared to the first topic 'Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons' (57.82%). This finding is significantly relevant as it indicates the focus of student teachers' reflections which was mainly 'teaching-centric'.

'Focus on Learning' has six sub-topics identified in the written reflections. These are 'Pupils' Participation and Behaviour', 'Pupils' Language Learning Abilities', 'Pupils' Language Learning Difficulties', 'Pupils' Needs', 'Pupils' Motivation and Interests', and 'Pupils' Language Errors'. For example, this entry shows how Wee Mee was reflecting on dealing with her Pupils' Needs as young learners:

42WeeMee

1. Problem / Case

I realised that I need to be more caring while teaching young children. Young pupils in lower primary need more attention than upper primary pupils.

2. Analysis

I discovered this issue when I reflected on my way of carrying out the lessons. There were some pupils that did not understand the task and I did not find it out. I only realized that when I was checking their work after they had handed in their worksheets.

Although nine out of ten student teachers included entries in their journals which focused on learners and their learning, there was a small percentage that discusses on 'Pupils' Language Errors'. Interestingly, there were only two entries in the journals, comprising only 0.40% of the total which referred to language errors made by pupils. This is surprising because one would expect for teachers of English to focus their discussions on learners' use of language too. The extract below is an example of one of the instances that talked about language error:

19Hendon

During set induction, pupils managed to spell the word 'sympathy' correctly. It is good to have this activity because I found out that there were few of them who could not managed to spell the word correctly. So, I was glad I could correct it.

Other concerns related to pupils' language learning such as 'Pupils' Language Learning Abilities' and 'Pupils' Language Learning Difficulties' were also discussed in student teachers' written reflections and the instances are higher than the previous topic. For example, Fatin wrote that she could see her pupils unable to complete the task given because they were 'quite weak' in their language (37Fatin). It seems that Fatin was having a problem in determining suitable activities to match with her pupils' proficiency level. She further explained that:

33Fatin

...Since the level of the pupils are lower intermediate, sometimes I would face with some difficulties in coming out with a suitable activity. This problem really troubles me as I am worried that pupils will be bored stiff with the techniques and methods that I normally apply in class.

Subsequently, this issue became worse when pupils' first language got in the way and pupils 'barely understood English' as Ai Ling described in one of her entries (11AiLing).

As can be observed in Table 6.1, the percentages fall considerably in the remaining four topics: 'School Environment', 'Support', 'Teacher's General Attributes', and 'Teacher's Use of Language in the Classroom'. One of the topics with very few instances is 'School Environment'. This topic contains student teachers' reflections about their experiences being in the school where they had their practicum, their impressions of the school's atmosphere, the school's general rules and regulations, as well as the staffroom environment. Seven student teachers wrote about this topic particularly in the early stages of the teaching practice. In the reflections, they wrote about their first impressions and described the 'School Atmosphere' as 'hectic' and 'busy' (2WeeMee). They also mentioned about being introduced to the 'School Rules and Regulations' (2Jega) and that they should follow these as long as they are there. Apparently, it is necessary to make clear of this at the beginning of the practicum to maintain discipline so that student teachers are clear of their responsibilities and roles at the school.

Another issue that student teachers talked about in their reflections is 'Staffroom Atmosphere'. It is very interesting that one student teacher described the place as 'friendly' indicating that their presence was welcome by other teachers and perhaps because of this Suguna 'liked' the teachers in that school very much (1Suguna). Suguna further stated that:

1Suguna

They understand our feeling as practicum teachers who are nervous on the first day and they start the conversation first.

This also shows the encouragement and support student teachers received from experienced teachers which are important in developing their confidence. However, there were not many student teachers who chose to comment on this topic in their reflections. In fact, the statistics also show that there are relatively very few comments on student teachers' written reflections about the wider school environment and context on which they were working.

Student teachers also wrote about ‘Teacher’s General Attributes’ in their reflections. ‘Teacher’s General Attributes’ refers to the quality or characteristics of the teacher such as their appearance and demeanour. For instance, Fatin clearly believes that she ‘is the one who holds the responsibility in motivating and guiding the pupils’ (21Fatin). Although it appears that Fatin knows what her responsibilities are as a teacher, it is also normal for student teachers to have mixed feelings and behaviour especially when they are dealing with situations which they were not yet familiar. Student teachers seem to believe that as teachers they should keep up to the ‘Teacher Appearance’ such as being ‘healthy’ and ‘smart’. When a teacher is not healthy, it may affect the productivity of the lesson as Suguna described:

9Suguna

I faced difficulties in managing my class. This is because I had sore throat and was unable to communicate with my pupils and give proper instructions.

Jega wrote about his headmaster who ‘sternly advised’ him about not keeping his long beard as ‘it may influence the pupils’ and told him not to wear black colour necktie as it ‘represents boredom and sadness’ (2Jega). This is a very interesting point of view about teacher appearance demonstrated by the headmaster that he is particularly concerned about teacher image and how he insisted that the student teacher should look presentable, as he saw it. Student teachers also mentioned that they have ‘other roles apart from teaching’ and that they are a ‘role model’ for others. These indicate how student teachers perceive themselves as teachers and how they begin to shape their ‘teacher identity’ (see 3.4) during the teaching practice.

‘Support’ is another topic which five out of ten student teachers wrote in their reflections. ‘Support’ refers to the assistance student teachers receive from their mentor or supervising lecturer on their teaching or their development as a teacher. Often during the practicum, student teachers would receive support in the form of ‘Feedback and Suggestions’ from their teacher mentor or teaching practice supervisor regarding their teaching. Evidently, five student teachers mentioned that they received help from their mentor or supervising lecturer in their reflections. For instance, in his first entry, Gan wrote about his mentor giving him some ‘tips’ (7Gan) on how to teach low proficiency pupils. Another example is found in Hendon’s ninth entry which describes how she

received her mentor's comments, suggesting for her to speak 'louder' (9Hendon) so that the class could hear her better. Although it was not stated in the reflections how helpful the feedback and suggestions were, to me the interaction between the student teacher and the 'knowledgeable other' seems to point student teachers in the direction that would help them cope in their teaching. Besides this, when student teachers made references to the comments made by the mentor or supervisor, this shows that student teachers were considering their suggestions which is an indication of reflection on-action as well as 'decision making' in order to improve their teaching.

The topic with the least reference is 'Teacher's Use of Language in the Classroom'. Only one student teacher referred to this topic. For example, Jega mainly expressed his concerns about his own language proficiency when he talked about language development in his written reflections. He wrote that he was 'making many grammatical errors in speech' and he 'struggled to follow the correct grammar, pronunciation and stress' (1Jega). He stated that he was 'nervous and not well prepared' and that 'it has been a long time' since he 'used English in daily conversations' (1Jega) which show the factors that made him feel less proficient in the English language. In another statement, Jega wrote: 'I must improve my grammar as I am going to teach English and I must ensure that my English is up to the mark' (6Jega). Jega seems determined to improve his language ability and realised the importance of being able to speak correct English in order to provide a good model to his pupils. This is an interesting remark by Jega which others do not seem to talk about in their reflections. However, this does not necessarily mean that the other nine student teachers were not aware of this issue. It may simply mean that they simply do not want to admit it. Instead, they focused on the pedagogical issues as they had been directed to write. Thus, this topic only includes the teacher's concerns about their proficiency in the English language. I classified other teacher's language issues relating to language teaching pedagogy such as 'teacher talk' or 'teacher talking time' in the classroom under 'Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons' and 'Classroom Management' as this relates to issues of instructions in teaching.

6.4 Summary of Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data presented in the above sections provide information about which topics the student teachers chose to write about in their reflections. The analysis

shows that there is a large difference in the percentage frequency scores between the topics. From the data, the topic with easily the highest percentage is ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ which at more 57.82%, is more than half of the overall total percentage point. In this topic, the things student teachers write about in their reflections are mainly related to the practical business of teaching. Since the participants are pre-service student teachers who are in training to become teachers, it is perhaps not surprising that matters relating to the planning and delivery of their lessons take centre-stage in their reflections. Also, this predominant topic is very much related to the findings in the student teachers’ interviews where most of the student teachers perceived ‘reflection’ is mainly focused on teaching as discussed in the qualitative data analysis in Chapter 5. Thus, this indicates the ‘teaching-centric’ nature of reflection among the student teachers. This feature becomes even clearer when the percentage score of the first topic (‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’) is combined with that of the second topic which is ‘Classroom Management’ with 18.50%. Together they have a total frequency of occurrence of 76.32%.

In comparison, the other topics, ‘Focus on Learning’, ‘School Environment’, ‘Support’, ‘Teacher’s General Attributes’, and ‘Teacher’s Use of Language in the Classroom’ have a combined percentage of only 23.68%. This shows that the preoccupation with ‘teaching-centric’ issues of classroom performance means other topics, which are arguably equally important in the learning-teaching process and equally worthy of reflection, are, to a large extent, side-lined. In addition, there is a large difference (42.75%) in percentage points between the first and the third topic. This difference shows that student teachers pay comparatively little attention on issues related to their learners and to learning in their reflections.

6.5 Features of Reflective Writing

The second set of data of this study consists of the features of reflective writing. They demonstrate ‘how’ student teachers write their reflections. I approached analysing the data inductively, a similar way to how I treated my other data (student teachers’ interview transcripts as explained in 4.8.2 and 5.1). At the end of the data analysis process, I was left with five main categories of features of reflective writing which are ‘Evaluation’, ‘Reasoning’, ‘Self-Realisation’, ‘Problem Solving’, and ‘Describing Events’, as can be seen in Table 6.3. In this table, the features are presented in the first

column in no particular order and the descriptions for each feature are given in the second column. The identification of these features is an attempt to break down and describe the elements in the reflective process that student teachers engaged with as they reflected on their teaching experiences during the practicum. The purpose of this analysis is to a certain extent to measure the level of student teachers' reflection and reflective ability, by drawing inferences about the depth of engagement in the reflective process through my analysis. They indicate the different elements involved in the thought process while student teachers reflect on their practice.

Table 6.3: Features of Reflective Writing

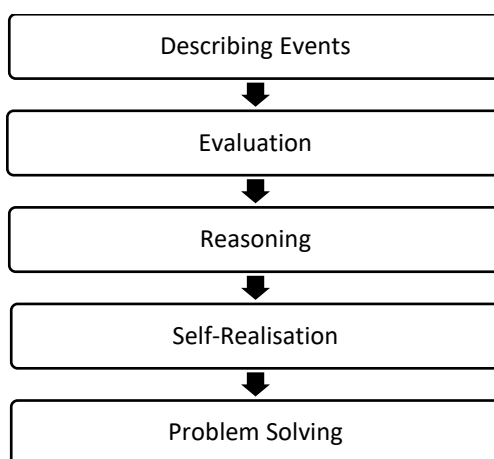
| Feature | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Evaluation | Determining whether a lesson was successful or unsuccessful, whether it went or did not go according to plan, whether the lesson objectives were achieved or not achieved. Analysing own performance in teaching the lesson. Making a judgement of the overall lesson. |
| 2. Reasoning | Examining things that took place in the classroom: before, during, and after the lesson. Justifying and demonstrating an understanding of why certain things happened. Relating teaching with theory. Discussing why things work or did not work. Making sense of things. May also include some form of evaluation onto own teaching. |
| 3. Self-Realisation | Learning from the teaching process. Recognising and expressing personal feelings such as happiness, relief, disappointment, etc. Being aware of the things that are happening in the classroom. Thinking about the effects of the lesson on the learners and learning. |
| 4. Problem Solving | Identifying a problem and finding a possible solution. Thinking about what to do next in the lesson. Deciding on the next steps or action to take. Exploring alternative ways to improve teaching. Planning for action, developing solutions to the problems and suggesting ways to improve the lesson. |
| 5. Describing Events | Simply recording things that happened in the classroom or school. Describing the activities or tasks in the lesson. Retelling, observing, noticing or recalling the events that took place in the classroom. Stating other things apart from teaching. No follow-up, analysis, or evaluation. |

During the analysis of the written reflections, it became evident that some journal extracts may contain more than one feature which could be linked to or separated from another. Thus, it was not always easy to disentangle them. For example, in one paragraph of student teachers' written reflection there may be as many as four features. Further explanation of the process of developing categories for the features of reflective writing can be found in 4.9.2. I also noticed that in some extracts these features were sequentially linked in various ways to one another, while in another extract there may only be one feature in the entire entry. I called these connections

between the features 'patterns'. I used a flow chart to help explain and illustrate how the features are linked and move from one feature to the other in each pattern. I discovered that there are four ways in which the features could shift and form a pattern. I labelled these patterns as 'Linear Flow', 'Random Flow', 'Recursive Flow', and 'Dominant Flow'. These 'flows' could also be used to demonstrate student teachers' 'cognitive processes' that were involved in writing their reflections. I will indicate each time the patterns are found in the extracts as I present the data analysis in this section.

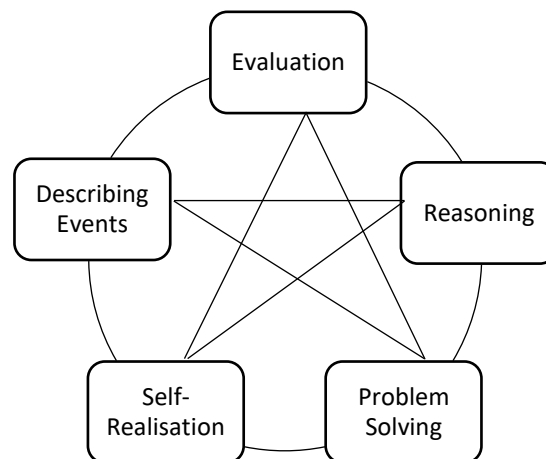
Figure 6.2 shows a diagram of a 'Linear Flow' pattern. It is a typical pattern in which the features are connected to each other and flow in sequence following a linear pattern. For example, in an extract student teachers could start their reflection with 'Describing Events', followed by 'Evaluation', then 'Reasoning', 'Self-Realisation', and ending the reflection with 'Problem Solving'.

Figure 6.2: Linear Flow



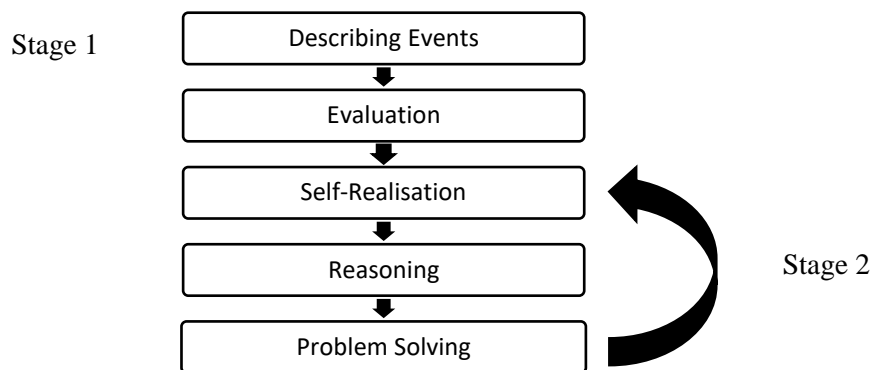
A 'Random Flow' (Figure 6.3) is used to indicate that a number of features or all of the features are found in the written reflections and they move from one feature to the other in all directions randomly. For example, a reflection could begin with 'Problem Solving', then 'Describing Events', next is 'Reasoning', then 'Describing Events' again, and finally 'Self-Realisation'.

Figure 6.3: Random Flow



The pattern of progression of the features in ‘Recursive Flow’ (Figure 6.4) means that the flow of the features could occur in stages or layers. For example, in the first stage, the features follow a sequence pattern (e.g. Stage 1: Describing Events – Evaluation – Self-Realisation – Reasoning – Problem Solving) and the sequence could be repeated in the second stage (e.g. Stage 2: Problem Solving – Self-Realisation – Reasoning – Problem Solving), forming a second layer to the pattern of the flow.

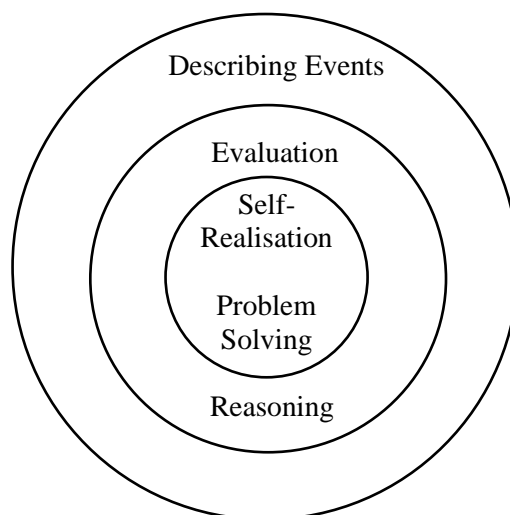
Figure 6.4: Recursive Flow



Another pattern is called ‘Dominant Flow’. Figure 6.5 illustrates that there is an overlapping relationship between the features and that one feature could be more dominant than the others. In my analysis, ‘Describing Events’ is the feature most often found in student teachers’ written reflections. Thus, I have placed ‘Describing Events’ in the first layer of the diagram to indicate that this is most likely the main the feature

found in student teachers' written reflections. The next layer contains 'Evaluation' and 'Reasoning', which covers a smaller area than the previous feature. The inner layer is the smallest which contains features of 'Self-Realisation' and 'Problem Solving'.

Figure 6.5: Dominant Flow



6.5.1 Evaluation

One of the key features of reflective writing found in these written reflections is 'Evaluation'. This category refers to evaluation of experiences or events during teaching without any attempt to suggest alternatives or to solve problems. As I read through the written reflections, my instant reaction to some of the entries was they seem to show that student teachers were making a judgement on their teaching experiences as they determined whether their lesson was successful or unsuccessful. Student teachers used phrases such as 'I can', 'I am able to', 'I was able to', 'I managed', 'They managed' or 'They were able to' to indicate how well the lesson went. The following extract shows an example of how Hendon 'evaluates' her lesson in the first week of practicum:

Hendon

Strengths:

I managed to conduct presentation stage like what I had planned. Pupils' pronunciation had been corrected by me as they read the chapter. In fact, I managed to explain what acrostic poem is to them within a short time. Apart from that, they also managed to answer the questions given in the worksheets.

As an overall, the objectives of the lesson were achieved except for the activity during practice stage.

In this entry, Hendon has made an evaluative judgement as how successful her lesson was for that day. The focus was on ‘herself’ as she uses the pronoun ‘I’ to show that she was able to conduct the presentation stage. In addition to this, Hendon also made judgement on her pupils’ ability, as they were able to answer the questions in the worksheets. She seems satisfied that it did not take much time for her to explain about a poem to her pupils which implies an achievement that perhaps she may not expect. At the end, she summarised her reflection by stating that the objectives of the lesson were ‘achieved’ except for one, which indicates the level of her performance for that day. This reflection that met the ‘objective’ of the lesson resonates with the comments made by the teacher educators which will be seen in Chapter 7. In this particular extract, I noticed that there was no further discussions or reflections about the activities or parts of the lesson that could be considered as successful. It seems that as long as things went according to plan and her pupils were able to complete the activities, the lesson is good. She considered these achievements as the ‘strengths’ in her lesson. I classified this instance as ‘Linear Flow’ as she started with an evaluation of her lesson and then move on to giving reasons for her achievements.

In their reflections, student teachers not only evaluated their successes or strengths in the lessons but also their failures. For example, Jega clearly expresses his weaknesses or unsuccessful teaching with ‘I failed’ as demonstrated in this extract:

1Jega

Problem/Incident

... I failed to manage the time properly. My set induction took a long time whereas my presentation was way too short... The text that I used during my presentation had no use after that stage. I did not maximise my usage of teaching aids properly. It was hanged on the board without any use... I failed to match my activity with the student’s proficiency level. The activities that I gave during production, which is to write a short paragraph with guidance turned out to be difficult for them...

In the extract, Jega identified many things that seems to ‘fail’ in his lesson. Although these failures were clearly stated in the reflection, the way that he approached writing these problems seems simplistic. Jega seems to be listing and picking the things that did not go well as a measurement to his performance in teaching throughout the week. Perhaps, the longer the list goes, the less successful the teaching would be. This suggests a ‘Linear Flow’ in the direction of this reflection took place, which begins with an evaluation followed by reasoning. Also, this is an example a negative self-evaluation on his lesson with no further discussion or investigation into the root of the problems. Besides this, it seems that the focus of the evaluation is on the ‘self’, e.g. on the things that he did not manage to do. However, it could be a common approach for a beginner like Jega to start being reflective by critiquing the ‘self’, as Wee Mee did here when reflecting on the difficulties of teaching moral values in her English classes:

7WeeMee

I think I did not relate the moral values closely to the lesson. That is why it is hard for me to think of instilling moral values while teaching. Besides that, I was paying too much attention on the activities and thus always forget to instil moral values.

I think I have to go through the lesson plan first before entering the class. This is to make sure I am very clear when to instil moral values.

Besides, I can instil moral values at different stages. I may plan simple session that can relate moral values with the lesson, for example asking simple oral questions during practice stage. In case I do not manage to instil moral values at last stage, at least I have mentioned it during early stage.

During closure stage, I can recall the moral values pupils have learned and remind them to practise the values taught in daily life. I may ask them to give other examples that can show the values taught in that particular lesson.

This self-criticism is typical of many entries under this category of ‘evaluation’. Despite this, Wee Mee is doing a lot more than simply evaluating, but is going so far as making a judgement of her lesson. She then gave reasons for her actions. Wee Mee realised what she needed to do and then moved on to solving the problem. Her reflection continued

with another round of reasoning, then going back to problem solving. Thus, this is an example of ‘Recursive Flow’ where the process of reasoning and problem solving repeated in two rounds before the reflection came to an end.

Another example that contains the feature of ‘evaluation’ is this extract from Azrul:

8 Azrul

Weaknesses:

One mistake I did was the explanation process was a bit dry. All I did was used the blackboard. This was largely due to the difficulty of getting a room with proper projector. Secondly, I felt that the task was not challenging enough. A task such as one that requires pupils to do in groups will be of great appeal.

Suggestions for Improvements:

I should make extra efforts to make presentation more exciting. Storytelling, mind map are examples to present information in attracting ways. Moreover, I should find ways to have technology in my class.

It seems that after identifying what they (the student teachers) did wrong in the lesson, it is also up to them to fix the problem through the use of phrases such as ‘I should’, indicating an obligation to correct the mistakes after criticising their action. This could also be classified as ‘problem solving’ since suggestions to improve the lesson was also provided at the end of the reflection. The pattern of progression in this extract is ‘Linear Flow’ as the reflection moves in a single direction.

Student teachers not only evaluated things that they did during teaching but also things they ‘noticed’ or ‘observed’ during the lesson. For instance:

22WeeMee

From my observation, I could see that the pupils enjoyed the lesson very much. They were silent and listened to the song seriously. They were trying to get to the rhythm since there were some of them who never listened to “The Wheels on the Bus” song. Anyway, those who knew the song sang softly together with the audio and from their body actions I could see that they like the song.

Wee Mee considered this part of the lesson successful since she ‘could see’ that her pupils were able to react accordingly to the activity. From their body movements Wee Mee concluded that her pupils ‘enjoyed’ and ‘liked’ the song. It seems that a positive reaction such as this is one way of judging whether the activity in the lesson was successful. Also, Wee Mee felt this was an acceptable way to measure how well a lesson went, making a judgement based on her pupils’ physical reaction. This extract also contains another feature which is ‘self-realisation’ as Wee Mee discovered her pupils’ ability and interests in the lesson. However, it would have been interesting to have found out more about what Wee Mee considered the pupils actually learnt from the activity, in terms of language content or language skills.

Another example taken from Jega shows how he evaluated his lesson based on his pupils’ response to a song. Jega described how he used a song and the effect of this teaching material on his lesson. Jega believed that the song he chose had a positive effect when most of his pupils ‘participated very well’ in his lesson. He wrote:

26 Jega

For today’s lesson, I focused on listening and speaking. As usual the whole class participated very well. For set induction, I used ‘Count on Me’ by Bruno Mars. Although they did not know the song at all, majority of them were able to sing along. It was a good song to highlight the moral value of ‘love others’.

Here we could see that Jega was measuring his pupils’ learning just based on their ability to ‘sing along’ to a song which they ‘did not know’ and regarded this as a ‘successful’ lesson. It seems unclear if there was anything else that the pupils learned from the activity especially in terms of language learning. Despite this, Jega felt that this was a ‘good song’ since it contained a ‘moral value’ which he would like to highlight in his lesson.

Despite the short length, this reflection shows more than ‘describing’ the things that went on in the classroom. Dollah wrote:

8Dollah

The set induction stage was a success. The pupils were attracted to the lesson and they were excited to do the Hangman Game. I was able to introduce a few words related to the topics at this stage.

It contains an element of ‘evaluation’ at the beginning of the lesson followed by ‘reasoning’ based on the pupils’ reactions to the activity. However, there are a lot of missing details in this reflection such as the topic of the lesson, the example of words related to the topic that Dollah was trying to teach, and the connection between these words and the game. This made the reflection seems unfinished. It is unclear if Dollah had actually learned anything from this teaching experience since he did not talk about this in his reflection. This extract could be classified as ‘Recursive Flow’ since the first sentence indicates an ‘evaluation’, followed by ‘reasoning’, and returning to ‘evaluation’ at the end of the paragraph. Alternatively, it could also be classified as ‘Dominant Flow’ whereby ‘describing events’ is the main feature while ‘evaluation’ and ‘reasoning’ are secondary features in this extract.

6.5.2 Reasoning

‘Reasoning’ is the next category that emerged as I analysed student teachers’ written reflections. When student teachers identified a teaching event to write about, they often tried to justify and find reasons for why it happened, attempting to make sense of what is going on in their teaching. For example, ‘Reasoning’ is also found in Bain’s et al. (1999) framework. ‘Reasoning’ is used to indicate the depth of student teachers’ reflections, which is at Level 4. At this level, one of the criteria is for student teachers to demonstrate a deep understanding of why things happened in their lessons by exploring and making links between theory and practice (see Table 6.3 for other criteria descriptions). However, ‘Reasoning’ in this study does not indicate any particular level of reflection but to a certain extent measures the depth of student teachers’ understanding of their teaching experiences as student teachers reflected on their practice.

In their written reflections, student teachers often start their reflection by identifying a teaching event that they considered as either successful or unsuccessful. Then, sometimes they examined this event and tried to make sense why it happened in the way that it did. Extract 17 from Wee Mee’s daily written reflection demonstrates this:

17 WeeMee

...I could see that they enjoyed the singing activity very much. However, I noticed that there was a group of them who was shy while performing. Their voice was soft and they were lacking of confidence. They did not perform as well as when they were singing together as a class. I think maybe they have stage fright or because of the absence of their group members. Hence I think I have to carry out more similar activities so that they can build their self-confidence.

In this extract, Wee Mee was trying to work out the reason for a group of pupils who appeared to be 'shy' during the singing activity. I am not sure here whether at one stage of this lesson or in previous lessons, the pupils had experience singing with friends with whom they were more familiar in smaller groups which could explain the pupils' reactions when they were singing in a bigger group in the current lesson. It seems that Wee Mee was trying to make this connection as she compared this experience and singing as a performance involving the whole class and related this current situation to her pupils having 'stage fright' and lack of confidence. This is therefore a good example of 'Reasoning', even if one might feel that Wee Mee could have investigated the matter further by considering other possible reasons for why the pupils reacted in the way they did. Also, this quick conclusion and finding solution to the problem that Wee Mee had identified can be categorised as 'Problem Solving', which is another feature of reflective writing discussed in 6.5.4. Thus, this extract seems to have two features which are 'Reasoning' as well as 'Problem Solving' and which could have two patters of flow, 'Linear Flow' and 'Dominant Flow'. Sometimes it is difficult to assign an extract to a single feature. In a case where there is more than one feature, I will have to identify whether there is a dominant or less dominant feature in the extract or if the features move from one feature to another. In this extract, since 'Reasoning' seems to be the main feature found here and more dominant than the other features, I would classify this as 'Dominant Flow'.

In their attempt to understand their teaching problem, it is natural for the reasoning process to have some effect on how student teachers felt about what had occurred in their teaching. For instance, Fatin expressed that she felt 'upset' and 'guilty' as she justified the reason for not selecting appropriate activities for her pupils:

33Fatin

This problem (selecting suitable activities for her pupils) continues to exist because I am thinking too much about my practicum duty. This problem really upsets me and I am feeling guilty towards my students as I think that I do not deliver my lesson well. At times, I can see their unenthusiastic face and subtle reluctance to get involved in the activity that has been planned.

In this extract, it seems that Fatin was frustrated that the things that were going on at school and being involved in other activities (as she mentioned in other entries) such as chess competition (26Fatin), monthly test (29Fatin), selling school magazine (29Fatin), and working on her action research assignment (38Fatin) often distracted her. Fatin seems to believe that these activities had caused her to develop lessons that were not effective. Clearly, this was not the only reason, but it seems that her inability to cope with the extra duties also affected her lessons. In this example, it seems that Fatin's realisation of the reasons behind her teaching problems had an unsettling effect on her. However, this process had developed her consciousness and made her aware of her responsibilities as a teacher, which was an experience that she could learn from her teaching practice, which is another feature categorised as 'Self-Realisation' (in 6.5.3). The repeated contemplation between awareness and justification can place this extract in the 'Random Flow' category. The extract shows that the flow moves from Evaluation to Reasoning to Self-Realisation and back to Reasoning then later to Self-Realisation as Figure 6.3 had shown.

In another instance, Hendon was also trying to figure out what had caused her lesson that did not go according to plan. She wrote:

23Hendon

...Even though the lesson plan was carried out like I had planned, the set induction was not conducted and the three stages was a bit rushing when I carried them out. Pupils managed to perform but they could not memorize it well. This is because the practice stage has been shortened and they did not have much time to practice. So I hope I can manage my time better and focus on the learning outcomes, instead of just for the sake of finishing the lesson.

Although I have chosen this extract particularly to indicate ‘Reasoning’, it also contains a combination of several other features. The first two sentences show an example of ‘Evaluation’ followed by ‘Reasoning’ where Hendon looked for an explanation for what went wrong as indicated in the third sentence, which provides a possible guide for future action. The fourth sentence contains the feature of ‘Problem Solving’ or ‘Self-Realisation’ since Hendon managed to come to a conclusion of what she should do in order to improve her lesson. This seems to be a positive effect on student teachers as they learned the values of developing effective lessons when they explored the reasons and consequences for the actions and decisions they made on their teaching. The shift between the different features could be classified as ‘Linear Flow’ since it moved in orderly fashion from one feature to the next.

Apart from reflecting and exploring the reasons for things that did not go well in the lessons, student teachers also looked at the things that went well to explain how the lessons were successful. For instance, Azrul wrote:

13Azrul

Today’s lesson went quite well. This went down to the choice of reading text that I gave them. Spiderman is a well-known superhero so it helped a lot in easing themselves into the reading text. The knowledge they got in their minds helped in visualising what the text is all about.

This extract shows another example of ‘Reasoning’ where Azrul was attempting to explain and make connections between the reading materials he chose for the lesson with his pupils’ interests. The focus here was on the strength of the lesson.

In providing reasons for the things that happened in their classrooms, student teachers occasionally tried to justify their teaching by giving solid evidence through making connections between theory and practice as they encountered them in their classrooms. This is illustrated in one of the extracts taken from Fatin in one of her weekly reflections:

37 Fatin

1. Statement of problem

Throughout the lesson, I have implemented few group activities as to ensure pupils were able to learn collaboratively with their friends. Vygotsky gives

recognition to the existence of the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) in his theory of Social Development, which refers to someone that has better understanding in certain subject than the other. Thus, the seating arrangement plays its own important role in ensuring the collaborative learning could be done successfully. I have to admit that I have overlooked pupils' language proficiency that has resulted me to merely arrange pupils so that misbehaviour would occur less.

Form this extract we could see that Fatin was attempting to use group work so that her pupils learn collaboratively. Afterwards, she backed up her intention by referring to Vygotsky's theory of social development. This extract shows a participant making a connection between theory and practice (received and experiential knowledge), and as such this is a very good example of the 'Reasoning' feature. Interestingly, this is the only example from the written reflection data of a student teacher doing this. Fatin's effort in relating the things she read and learned during her lectures while testing them out herself in her classroom is an indication of active learning process by the student teacher. Even so, it seems that Fatin was only able to focus on one teaching area at a time. She admitted that she had overlooked the consequences of putting pupils in groups without considering their language ability. To me, this shows that Fatin was aware of the various things happening in the lesson that indicated the depth in her thinking as she reflected on her teaching, which I could also classified as 'Self-Realisation'.

Overall, from the extracts we can see that student teachers were attempting to justify and explain the reasons for the things that occurred in the classroom, as they reflected on their teaching. The extracts here are just small examples of the many other instances which provide an insight into student teachers' thought processes as they try to solve problem and improve on their teaching. The examples also show that sometimes more than one feature may be present in one extract and they could shift in many different directions. The next sections give more examples of the other features found in student teachers' written reflections.

6.5.3 Self-Realisation

Another feature that emerged from my analysis is one that I have termed 'Self-Realisation'. This refers to student teachers' awareness of their own personal or

professional development. It is a moment where student teachers made a discovery of things and learned from the experience. This category does not feature in other classifications in the literature (of the five frameworks I referred to in 3.3.5). However, ‘Self-Realisation’ of course is an important element of Schön’s ‘reflection-on-action’ as I discussed in the literature review. ‘Self-Realisation’ in the present study also involves awareness of student teachers’ own emotional responses to aspects of the lessons they had taught, which formed part of the definition of this category as can be seen in Table 6.3. Here I provide an example of a ‘Self-Realisation’ moment in the following extract:

22 Jega

...I learned that being a teacher we need to be very flexible and adjust ourselves to situations that need our service. At the end of the day, I felt satisfied helping the pupils and learning many new things for myself.

This extract demonstrates how Jega began to realise his role as a teacher. This resonates with the issue of ‘teacher identity’ as I discussed in 3.4, that it can be developed through dialogues both with oneself and with other people, particularly when Jega begins to ‘evaluate’ his experiences and realise what he needed to do in order to be a teacher. He used the word ‘flexible’ to describe the manner in which a teacher should be able to adapt to situations while providing ‘service’ to his pupils. To me, Jega seems to develop quite deep thoughts about his responsibilities and this seems to have an impact on how he perceives the teaching profession. The experiences that he learned during teaching practice seems to affect his emotions, which made him felt good with what he did for his pupils and what he learned from the process. So, the moment student teachers realised something, changes in terms of how they approach teaching or their attitude towards teaching begins to take place. This is one of the expectations of using reflection in teacher training, that is to develop awareness among student teachers on their teaching. It is also an example of a student teacher making important generalisation about teaching from specific incidents. There are other examples of this in the data (e.g. 37Fatin, 22WeeMee). This strikes to me as the key element of what reflection is all about – moving from the particular to the general.

Sometimes, student teachers may not realise that something is going on in the classroom instantly until they take time to look at the situation closely. For example,

Azrul knew that he had been facing a problem with time management but was not sure for certain the reasons behind it. Azrul only realised and could confirm this problem after analysing the situation through his written reflections. I will demonstrate this by looking at the different stages in the weekly reflection that Azrul had written. The first section of the entry reads:

17Azrul

Week 2

Issues/situations

Classroom management is of one factors that teacher should be aware of. Apart from that, time management is also crucial for the new teacher to keep the lesson runs smoothly. Once I did group activities to my young learners, I found out that many of my activities took some time for them to complete the task.

Here Azrul began his weekly reflection with a statement that explained the importance of classroom management and described the problem of using group work with young learners. Then, he recalled what he did in his lesson and tried to relate his actions with reasons in the statements, where his realisation of the issue began to formulate.

In the next section, Azrul continued to analyse what had happened in the classroom. He realised some of the reasons that may have caused the problem. The extract mainly contains 'Reasoning' feature. He wrote:

17Azrul

Analysis

As I undergo this problem, the main reason why I always drag the time, was due to my level of the task that I assigned to them. They simply did not suit them. Moreover, four out of my five classes started right after recess. The culture in the school requires you to line up at the assembly site, wait for all the classes to queue and only if all assemble, you can walk into your class.

Then, he went on to the next part of his reflection:

17 Azrul

Suggestions for improvement

For the future reference, I still can do group activities as my young learners had fun in the class, but the level of difficulties should be moderate to suit their level of proficiency. Thus, the group should be balanced as well in terms of the gender. From my observation I had found that, when the group was of one gender, they attempted to talk among themselves and also try to do other things and not the assigned work. Therefore, I should mix the group to ensure that there will be balanced in the group.

As Azrul reached the end of his reflection, he provided suggestions on how to overcome his teaching problem. However, Azrul also discovered another factor that may have caused the group work activity to take a long time. He continued with describing the cause and effect of the problem, which eventually led to the decision on how to solve it. This final part of the journal entry shows that ‘Self-Realisation’ may occur at any time of the reflective writing process. Realising and becoming aware of things takes time to develop. Student teachers go through the process of repeated reasoning and examining the situation closely in order to make sense of what really is going on in their teaching. Also, writing the teaching experiences in the written reflections helped student teachers to collect their thoughts and make sense of their teaching. Azrul went back and forth with ‘Reasoning’ and ‘Self-Realisation’ in his reflections. This then is another example of what I have categorised as ‘Recursive Flow’.

Another key point about ‘Self-Realisation’ is that student teachers made generalisations from one incident which they can apply as a general rule to their teaching, and not just to improve the lesson they had taught. (Also note that this presumably an aspect of ‘Reasoning’ as well). This is what Azrul seems to be doing in the previous extracts, and what Fatin is doing here. In one of her reflections, Fatin wrote:

22 Fatin

During production stage, pupils were only able to complete the mind map provided. I learnt that I need to consider and recheck the worksheet prepared as to ensure pupils were able to complete all the tasks planned within the time given. Due to that, I have asked pupils to do the fill in the blanks task, as

homework. I do realise that they need to be guided properly. Thus, I have briefed pupils on how to complete the particular task given.

Here, Fatin's realisation of things relates to her common sense and logical thinking in teaching. Fatin knew that there were a couple of things she should do to ensure her pupils were able to complete the task effectively but did not seem to do them until a problem occurred during the lesson. Checking worksheets before using them in the lesson and guiding pupils to do the tasks are basic things student teachers should know and do, which perhaps student teachers sometimes take for granted. Despite this, in her reflection Fatin was able to come up with an alternative to solve her teaching problem, which seems to indicate reflection-in-action as it occurred during the lesson.

'Self-Realisation' is also about being honest and coming to terms with one's weaknesses in teaching. This short extract shows that Suguna was admitting to her being unaware of her pupils' learning conditions:

7Suguna

I found out that I was not aware of few pupils who were slow compared to the other pupils at the beginning of the lesson. Later I was able to identify them and gave extra guidance to ensure that they are able to follow my lesson and complete all the tasks that I assign them to do.

Although Suguna did not say how she became aware that some of her pupils were 'slow' compared to others, her awareness that she had to do something also allowed her to decide on the next steps to improve her teaching.

Sometimes, student teachers may need some help from 'others' (e.g. supervising lecturer, teacher mentor, or peers) to draw their attention to the problems in the classroom. For instance, in this extract Ai Ling had some guidance from her teacher mentor about her teaching:

8AiLing

There were some things that I had overlooked which were pointed out by my mentor, Mr. Emer. I should have given more compliments such as 'well done', 'very good', 'I like the answer' to the pupils who answered correctly. Also, I should make sure words that I pronounce in the class are accurate such as

plumber /plʌmer/ instead of /plʌmber/. Furthermore, my writing on the board should follow the rules of writing such as ‘g’, ‘y’ should have written with ‘tails’ under the line.

Here it seems that while reflection is mainly an individual process (self-reflection), the comments which Ai Ling received from Mr. Emer made her realise that she needed to pay attention to other aspects of teaching and made the necessary changes in order for her to teach the lesson more effectively in the future. This shows an example of ‘Self-Realisation’ that derived from a collaborative process between a student teacher and her mentor. This resonates with Bain’s et al. (1999, p. 70) study where they found that ‘in both the reflective dialogue and the self-analysis conditions, student teachers discussed their teaching with others such as supervising teachers and fellow students, and thus, in reality, none of the student teachers was journaling in isolation’. However, Ai Ling may also be repeating what Mr. Emer had told her in his feedback, which could possibly indicate quite superficial aspects of reflection.

6.5.4 Problem Solving

Problem solving refers to a state whereby student teachers were faced with an unexpected teaching challenge during a lesson that required them to think and find a possible solution either immediately or later. Often, problem solving is considered as a complex intellectual process and associated with higher-order thinking skills (e.g. in Bloom’s Taxonomy in 3.2.2). A common first step in the process of problem solving is student teachers would start by identifying the problem and then write about it in their reflections. Then, student teachers work their way through the problem finding the cause which leads to understanding of the problem. During the process student teachers will give suggestions in order to improve or solve the teaching problem. While my textual analysis of the data had identified ‘Problem Solving’ as a feature of reflective writing in the current study, in the literature it is seen as an important element in understanding the nature and purpose of reflection (e.g. Loughran, 2002; Lew & Schmidt, 2011). It is also not a category used to indicate the level of reflection in any of the five frameworks I discussed in 3.3.5 (see Appendix AR for descriptions of the reflective elements in the different frameworks).

Sometimes, student teachers can anticipate a teaching problem before the problem actually occurred in the classroom. For example, Ai Ling had the opportunity to observe a lesson from a class that she will be taking over for her practicum. The following extract demonstrates what happened:

5AiLing

Next, I got the opportunity to enter 2C/2A combined classes to observe pupils while the teacher was teaching Moral Education. I noticed most of the pupils misbehave in the class. They were not paying attention to the teacher.

Today I managed to enter both classes, 3B (English) and 2C/2A (Moral Education). I believe there is a great challenge coming up in handling both classes. I have to think of a way to manage the pupils' behaviour in the classroom to minimise the disruption that might happened in my future lessons.

This extract shows an example of 'Self-Realisation' that developed prior to the actual teaching of the lesson. Ai Ling was already aware of the potential discipline problem which she may face when she takes over the class later based on her initial observation she made before. Her early awareness of the problem allowed her to begin thinking and planning how to manage her pupils' behaviour which was an advantage for her.

As I came to her tenth entry, Ai Ling wrote in her reflections about her pupils 'misbehaving' during her lessons. Thus, she decided to use the 'token system' to help calm the class down as it was getting a little out of hand (10AiLing). The token system is a classroom management strategy used to manage pupils' behaviour who may be disruptive in class. The teacher would reward the pupils with tokens for good behaviour and encourage pupils to perform well in the classroom. Clearly, the observation supported her in preparing herself to face any possible challenges that were coming. Reflecting on these challenges made Ai Ling aware of the classroom situations which helped her to develop an action plan to solve the problem and improve her teaching.

A couple of entries later I found that the token system that was supposed to help control the class had caused another problem:

12AiLing

Although I have reinforced the token system in my classroom, some of the pupils are still speaking in their mother tongue. I noticed most of them are Malay pupils. I have reminded them to speak in the target language in the classroom, but they refused to do so. I deduce that they are either low proficient in English language or they are too worried to make mistakes. I can see some of them who refuse to speak English are quite good in their writing. Perhaps they are worried if they say something wrong and their friends will laugh at them.

It seems that the token system was also intended to encourage pupils to speak in English in the classroom. However, the strategy seems to backfire when pupils were not developing as well as they should. Ai Ling's reflection began with an investigation into one problem. But, in the process of understanding and finding a solution to the first problem, a second problem unfolds. Now, Ai Ling has two problems on her hands. Thus, the 'problem-solving' process continues and for each stage a decision has to be made to find a solution. This extract also shows that Ai Ling was mainly concerned about her pupils' learning instead of only improving her teaching, which indicates a shift in the topics of discussion from 'focus on teaching' to 'focus on learning' (see 6.3). I categorised the patterns of progression in which the features of reflective writing occur in extracts 5AiLing and 12AiLing as 'Recursive Flow'. It started from 'Evaluation' to 'Self-realisation' then 'Reasoning' followed by 'Problem-solving', and then back to 'Self-realisation' then 'Reasoning' and ends with 'Problem-solving'.

One of the stages in the problem-solving process found in student teachers' reflections is to suggest, plan, and implement the solution. Some student teachers may give just one solution to the problem with a little explanation and others may provide more than one suggestion. An example of this can be seen in one of Wee Mee's weekly reflections:

11WeeMee

3. Suggestions

(i) To prevent pupils from getting bored during my lesson, I think I have to make some changes to the materials I have presented. I may edit the text and insert some new vocabularies.

- (ii) I may have to present the input in different ways that are interesting enough and unexpected by them. I may add in sense of humour while giving input.
- (iii) Other than that, maybe I can provide some reinforcement activities that will challenge their thinking. Activity such as replacing the vocabularies in text with their own words can be considered.
- (iv) I can make my lesson more challenging and meaningful by adding in some suitable cross-curriculum elements such as Mathematics and Science.

Here, Wee Mee had provided a list of possible solutions that she can apply in her future lessons in order to maintain pupils' attention and motivation on the lesson. There are a lot of suggestions given in this reflection that mainly involve developing suitable teaching materials. After reading several reflections, I found one extract that may show that Wee Mee had tried to apply the suggestions in her current lesson:

26Wee Mee

The pupils were able to identify and say aloud the names of food from the pictures shown. They could identify all the food and give other examples of food they like to eat. I noticed that they got so excited when they saw the pictures of food. Some of them even sprang out from their chairs when they saw the pictures.

It seems that this particular lesson was successful because Wee Mee used teaching materials (pictures of food) that were attractive and managed to attract the pupils' attention during the lesson. However, after describing this event, no further reflection was observed. Thus, the reflection seems disconnected from the other reflections and it is hard to tell if the problem that the student teachers identified earlier had been resolved. The reflective process that occurred here could be represented similarly as in Figure 6.2 'Linear Flow', where the progression pattern is sequential and one-directional and involves 'Evaluation' and 'Reasoning' before the solution is found.

Often, student teachers may not know that there is a problem with the lesson that they had planned until they actually teach the lesson. When this happens, student teachers may need to start thinking on their feet to find a quick solution to fix the problem. For example, Hendon shared this experience in her reflection:

30 Hendon

During pre-reading stage the library was closed so the pupils could not use the dictionaries to look for the words. So I provided the meanings of the words and let them match the words and their meanings. I also made actions for action verb to make the pupils understand the focused words. Therefore, I should have always provided backup plan in case that kind of situation will happen again.

In this extract, Hendon was faced with an unexpected problem to which she had to respond by making a quick alteration to her lesson. This is a good example of 'reflection-in-action' as she was forced to think quickly to find an alternative solution to the problem at hand in order to proceed with her lesson. This seems to be something good that had occurred in her lesson, a useful learning experience which Hendon failed to acknowledge in her reflection. Instead, she seems to be more concerned with the activity that did not go according to plan. This indicates an approach to writing reflections that focuses on the weaknesses which limits her ability to see things in a wider perspective.

Problem solving also involves decision making. For example, Jega wrote about how he decided to change the way he used the listening text when he realised his pupils could not cope with the listening task:

7 Jega

Moving on to the listening part, I explained the instructions clearly and played the audio. During this particular lesson, I realised that the pupils are not familiar with listening skill whereby 80% of the class struggled to complete the task. I decided to play the audio part by part according to the question and some of the pupils managed to complete the task.

This extract contains another example of reflection-in-action that had taken place as Jega had to reflect and think of how to overcome a teaching problem when the lesson was going on. In fact, this could even be referred to as 'decision-in-action' since the student teacher had to decide on an action to take during teaching. Of course, there is no way of telling if the change in activity or approach would work well or not, but the decision had to be made so that the lesson could continue. However, in this extract it seems that Jega's quick thinking and wise decision made the lesson successful.

From the written reflections, it seems that student teachers could learn many things about teaching through problem solving. The process allows the student teachers to analyse the problem and start thinking of ways to solve it. Sometimes this opens opportunities for student teachers to become aware of things that perhaps they may not fully understand or know before. For example, the following extract shows how experiencing a technical difficulty made Fatin learnt something from using audio recording in class:

42Fatin

I must say that the audio recording itself had become one of the shortcomings of the lesson. The voice and sound of the audio recording was not clear enough. I learnt that I need to put extra attention on this aspect, what more this is the listening and speaking lesson. The quality of the audio recording need to be checked so that the lesson can be carried out smoothly as planned.

Perhaps, Fatin did not expect that there would be any problem with the audio recording. However, based on this incident it seems that Fatin began to realise that it is important to ensure all teaching materials are suitable before using them in the classroom. It also shows that writing reflections can be a way to help student teachers process experiences in the classroom where they have encountered a problem, and to learn from that experience to avoid future problems of a similar nature.

6.5.5 Describing Events

‘Describing Events’ is the fifth feature of reflective writing which I had identified from my analysis of the written reflections. It involves the process of observing and identifying the things that happened in the classroom and presenting the events in a reportative or descriptive manner. Often, student teachers who wrote this type of reflection do not include any further insights and observations into the events they are describing. Although this type of reflection may seem to have very little reflective element, I still considered this as a reflection because describing events is obviously an important part of the reflective process, in the sense that a meaningful reflection needs to be based on an accurate description of what happens. The same term is used in Jay’s and Johnson’s (2002) typology of reflective writing that is ‘descriptive’.

While in both studies this category refers to describing what went on in a classroom, Jay's and Johnson's 'descriptive' feature involves a thorough look at the events, examining the causes and consequences, identifying the significance of the issue in order to change and make things better. However, I had chosen to define 'description' in a much narrower way (see Table 6.3) than Jay and Johnson's definition since most of the student teachers' written reflections mainly reported events related to teaching and structured to SWIS.

In this feature I have included examples of student teachers mainly describing or reporting classroom events with little or no follow-up reflective commentary. An example of this can be seen in the following extract:

41 WeeMee

I am glad that the pupils were able to learn new vocabularies today, for example postcard, hopscotch, and badges. There were also some vocabularies that they were able to say aloud but unable to spell them out. However, they managed to spell the vocabularies aloud at the end of the lesson.

Anyway, I would like to do better for the interview activity. The pupils were not able to understand the task and ask more questions in the interview. They only wrote down their friend's (interviewees) hobbies based on the guidelines. Nobody had written extra questions other than those written in the guidelines.

As I mentioned in 6.5, some extracts may contain several features and one feature may be more dominant than then other. For example, in this particular extract I have classified as 'Describing Events' because this is the main thing that Wee Mee was doing. However, it also contains another feature that is 'Evaluation' as she evaluated the activity that she did with her pupils and rated the activity as successful. Wee Mee continued by stating her intention to improve on the activity in her future lessons. She backed this up with reasons that describe what the pupils did which Wee Mee seems not so pleased about. She expected better responses from the pupils. Despite the other elements in this reflection, the main feature is 'Describing Events' which has a 'Dominant Flow' in the reflection.

For the next extract, I have provided the entire reflection to show an example of a reflection that mainly contains a description of events. Ai Ling wrote:

20AiLing

For today's lesson, I had conducted a grammar lesson. Last week, I focused on the use of demonstrative pronouns such as 'this', 'that', 'these', and 'those' – when the object is near or far. So today, I focused on plural and singular form of demonstrative pronouns such as when to use 'is' and 'are'.

Pupils were able to identify the differences of the plural and singular form after I put up the examples on the board. I was able to elicit pupils' response and they were able to pick up the message that I wanted to convey.

For practice stage, pupils were able to do the task with my guidance. Also, I could see some of the good pupils were helping me to teach the weak pupils when they were doing the task. Furthermore, they were trying to do the task as fast as possible in order to gain a star for their group.

For today's lesson, it was good and I could control the classroom well. They were very cooperative and disciplined after I reinforced the token system.

Clearly, one of the things that this writer was doing was telling the readers what she did during the lesson. She was also telling us how the pupils responded, as a result of how she evaluated the activity positively. After this, there were no explanations or justifications to the things that were described in the reflection. Thus, this made the reflection seems almost like a record of things, showing evidence that the activities were done, and the lesson was taught, indicating the task was overall accomplished and successful. On the other hand, the phrases such as 'pupils were able' and 'it was good' could also indicate the 'Evaluation' feature. Thus, this reflection could be classified both as 'Descriptive Events' and 'Evaluation'. However, there are more instances that describe the events. Therefore, 'Dominant Flow' would be best to illustrate the thinking process behind this reflection.

This next example was taken from a reflection that was written a few weeks before the end of the practicum period. Although in her previous reflections, Hendon tends to be quite elaborative, in this one her writing seems very surfaced-level:

27Hendon

We did not have the lesson for the first 30 minutes as we had assembly. So, my lesson cannot be carried out exactly just like what I had planned. I did not conduct the set induction. Within 30 minutes, I conducted the presentation and practice stages. The production stage could not be carry out so I gave the task as their homework. Therefore, next time I need to have Plan B in case things like this would happen again.

Although this description may seem to be a mere mention of what happened at the time, there seems to be an act of ‘Decision Making’ when Hendon had to adapt the lesson that she planned earlier to the current situation. Hendon ended the paragraph with a possible solution that is to have ‘Plan B’ but it was unclear what this could involve. The lack of follow-up discussions and elaboration in this reflection makes it essentially descriptive. Thus, I labelled this extract ‘Describing Events’ and categorise it under ‘Dominant Flow’.

Often, student teachers’ written reflections become descriptive because they used a lot of descriptions to explain the events that were taking place in the lesson. For example, Gan here gave a detailed description of how he used the word cards which his pupils produced to teach a grammar item:

6 Gan

For the presentation stage, I believed that I had drilled the focused grammar items enough for the class to understand. However, I do believe that I need to manage my whiteboard and cards arrangement better. This is because the word cards and picture cards that I asked the pupils to paste did not seem like proper sentences as the cards were all over the whiteboard. I improvised on my lesson as I borrowed the word cards “This is...”, “That is...”, “These are...”, and “Those are...” and used them in the lesson instead of writing them on the whiteboard.

Here other features such as ‘Evaluation’ and ‘Reasoning’ could also be found in the first three sentences in this extract apart from the main feature ‘Describing Events’. Again, this indicates that a journal entry could have multi-features of reflective writing and one feature could be more dominant than the other. This also means that these features interact with one another in ways which I have described in 6.5 of this chapter.

6.6 Chapter Summary

Based on my analysis from student teachers' written reflections I found that there are seven main topics that student teachers often wrote in their written reflections. A majority of the student teachers wrote reflections that were particularly concerned on issues that related to teaching. Student teachers wrote less on topics that examine their learners' learning processes. The student teachers' written reflections can therefore be characterised as being 'teaching-centric' in their approach to reflection. This resonates with how student teachers perceived 'reflection' during the practicum as indicated through the interview data. Student teachers approached writing their reflections focusing on identifying SWIS (see Chapter 5), which provided structure to the reflection that these student teachers wrote. In addition to this, my analysis of student teachers' written reflections also revealed that there are five features of reflective writing. They are 'Evaluation', 'Reasoning', 'Self-Realisation', 'Problem Solving', and 'Describing Events'. In each written reflection, I found that it could contain more than one feature and that these features could be linked with one another. Diagrams are used to show the patterns of the features as student teachers engage in reflective writing. These patterns could also be used to demonstrate the 'thinking' process that occurred when student teachers were writing their reflections and therefore have great potential as frameworks for developing reflective writing skills. I will return to this in Chapter 8. The next chapter looks at the findings from the teacher educators' interviews. The aim is to explore how 'reflection' is perceived by the trainers of the teacher education programme.

CHAPTER 7: INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHER EDUCATORS

7.1 Introduction

This third data chapter presents the findings based on interviews with the teacher educators on their views of ‘reflection’ on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme during teaching practice. It seeks to address three research questions (RQ1, RQ2 and RQ5 – see 4.2) that investigate how teacher educators perceived the meaning, the benefits of ‘reflection’ during the practicum and the support they gave student teachers in writing reflections. The analysis of teacher educators’ interviews will also reveal to what extent the support provided was adequate in helping student teachers with reflective writing. This question is directly related to one of the topics that derived from the responses in the interviews about ‘teacher educators’ and practicum unit’s support in helping student teachers to write reflections’ (see Table 7.1). This chapter also highlights any significant similarities or differences between the perceptions and practices of teacher educators and the student teachers as well as in the literature review.

7.2 Teacher Educators’ Interviews

For the teacher educator group, the data analysis followed a similar process as the student teachers (see 4.9). I used ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the interviews with the teacher educators which shows the faculty’s perspectives of ‘reflection’ on the course. I interviewed ten teacher educators and one staff from the Practicum Unit. I conducted the interviews in two phases. In the first phase, I interviewed all eleven participants. The focus of the first phase was to investigate how teacher educators perceived ‘reflection’ on the teacher education programme during the practicum, which relates to RQ1 and RQ2 (in 4.2). In addition, the findings from the interviews with the teacher educators is also related to RQ5, which explored the support that currently exists in developing pre-service student teachers’ reflective writing. The second phase was a follow-up to the first phase interview. I interviewed only three participants in the second phase since I noticed that the participants gave similar responses to the questions I asked during phase one interview. This indicated that the interview had reached saturation. Thus, in total I had fourteen interviews from the teacher educator participants. The duration of each interview was between thirty minutes

and one hour. All interviews were conducted in English except for one (the interview with the head of practicum unit) which was conducted in *Bahasa Melayu*. As a result of the data analysis process, five themes emerged that represent the views of the teacher educators about the topic areas of ‘reflection’ on the teacher education course. Since the questions I asked the teacher educators were very similar to those I asked the student teachers, these themes will inevitably mirror the themes that I had discussed in my data analysis of the student teachers’ interviews in Chapter 5.

The topics in teacher educators’ interviews are i) teacher educators’ opinions about what ‘reflection’ is, ii) the reasons for writing reflections on the course, and iii) teacher educators’ and practicum unit’s support in helping student teachers to write reflections. The themes for each topic are presented in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Topics and Themes for Teacher Educators’ Interviews

| Topic | Theme |
|--|--|
| 1. Teacher educators’ opinions about what ‘reflection’ is | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection as identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggesting Improvements in teaching (SWIS) |
| 2. The reasons for writing reflections on the course | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing reflections as part of assessment • Writing reflections and the ‘self’ • Writing reflections to make sense between theory and practice |
| 3. Teacher educators’ & practicum unit’s support in helping student teachers to write reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance from Trainers |

7.3 Teacher Educators’ Opinions about ‘Reflection’

My analysis on teacher educators’ interviews revealed that there is one central theme for this topic. Overall teacher educators perceived that ‘reflection’ involved the process of identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and suggesting improvements in teaching. SWIS was also the strategy that teacher educators used both in training student teachers to reflect on their teaching and on teacher educator’s own practice. Further discussion about this can be found in the following section.

7.3.1 Reflection as Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggesting Improvements in Teaching (SWIS)

My interviews with the teacher educators shed light on how they perceived 'reflection' on the teacher education programme. Apparently, all teacher educators seemed to have similar views with the student teachers about what constitutes 'reflection' and these views were influenced by their own professional practice of reflecting on teaching. For example, although it was important for student teachers to reflect, to think about what happened, why it happened, and what they could do to improve their teaching, it was equally as important for teacher educators to reflect on their practice too. Thus, teacher educators held the key role when incorporating reflection into teacher education programmes. They were responsible for providing environments in which student teachers can look at their experiences and reflect on them. In order to help student teachers to be reflective, both teacher educators and teacher mentors need to be 'reflective' themselves. For example, referring to her own experiences of reflecting on teaching, Leong described 'reflection' in the professional context as 'looking back' on her own practices while 'reflective practice' involved looking forward to the teaching process as well as back (1Leong3). She also claimed that she reflected 'in- and on-action', which are the two types of reflection that could occur during and after teaching, as promoted by Schön (1983). This perception was similar to what the student teachers were saying about reflection in their interviews (in 5.2). This indicates some commonalities in how both groups of participants perceived 'reflection' and 'reflective practice'.

As professional teachers, teacher educators were also concerned about delivering 'good lessons'. For instance, Dahlan expressed that 'as a trainer, I might be thinking about my presentation, my delivery maybe not really interesting, maybe I have to change a little bit' (1Dahlan11). This shows Dahlan's expectation and belief that reflection could help him to think about and develop his teaching. In another extract Dahlan stated that:

1Dahlan17

Dahlan: I would say that this (writing reflections) is the best way for you to find out whether you are doing your job or not and then whether the job you have done you know is successful or not. And whether the objectives are achieved or not...

Clearly, Dahlan was particularly concerned about his performance in delivering his lesson effectively to his student teachers. This extract shows how Dahlan used reflection as a tool to assess his teaching. It also indicates the importance of achieving lesson 'objectives' which links to the way 'reflection' is conceived in the documentation such as the Weekly Reflective Journal Writing (Appendix H). This refers to 'set targets' and 'accomplishments' when reflecting on teaching (see 2.7). Shamini shared the same view about the practice of writing reflections among teachers. She said that:

1Sahmini3

Shamini: Reflection means after we do something we reflect upon it whether the procedure was right, how was the response, do we have to do something if the procedure was done incorrectly, so how to rectify it, how to do better in the future, and then we will know our strength and weakness about that procedure.

Again, just like the responses in student teachers' interviews, Shamini described 'reflection' as a process that involved identifying SWIS. The focus of the reflection was also similar that it was on 'teaching' and specifically on teaching 'procedure' (in 5.2 and 6.3).

Reflecting on their own practices teacher educators believed that reflection is important since it leads to the improvement of their teaching. For instance, Harminder said that:

2Harminder15

Harminder: ...If you don't reflect, meaning that's the end... If you don't reflect that means you don't improve yourself. And you are not bothered about whether the students did achieve the objective... You know you need to look at your weaknesses as well.. because from your weakness, you tend to overcome and you tend to repair it to make it better. To become a better teacher actually.

This extract indicates that through reflection teachers became 'responsible' in developing their teaching. This is one of the attributes of a reflective teacher as Dewey mentioned in his paper as I discussed in 3.2. I noticed that the term 'objective' was used

again which indicates that ‘reflection’ involved thinking about what was achieved or not achieved in the lesson. This could also explain the importance of the ‘evaluation’ feature that was apparent in student teachers’ written reflections (in 6.4).

I also interviewed the head of practicum unit Zamri in order to find out about his views on ‘reflection’ during teaching practice. He gave rather a conventional description of what ‘reflection’ should be that is looking back on teaching and how to improve it. He said:

1Zamri3

Zamri: ...when student teachers teach, sometimes within that teaching period they may find there is something lacking or unsatisfactory in their teaching, so they will reflect on this. So a reflection is a process that aims to improve their teaching in the future.

The expectation of ‘reflection’ as it occurred during teaching practice as explained by Zamri seemed almost similar to Jay’s & Johnson’s (2002) concept of reflection that when student teachers were faced with ‘uncertainty’ during teaching, they began to reflect in order to find ‘clarity’ and change their future actions. Zamri’s perception of reflection also seems to reinforce the predominantly ‘teaching-centric’ nature of the student teachers’ written reflections, discussed in Chapter 6, and also reflects the way that the student teachers themselves talked about reflection in their interviews (in Chapter 5).

Similar comment can be seen in the extract by another teacher educator Azizah, when she asked her student teachers to reflect on activities they did during their lessons. This is shown below:

1Azizah45

Azizah: I will ask my students to reflect on the activities.. For example, the activity in the classroom, ok we just take one activity and ask them to write a reflection based on the activity. That would be enough. Because when we meet them again, we will do the same thing, actually they will learn a lot at the end of the day.

Here, ‘activities’ refer to classroom-based activities such as using games to teach nouns or organising group work for a speaking activity. This limits the scope of the reflection since it only covers issues the area of ‘planning and delivering ESL lesson’ and this is one of the main topics student teachers wrote in their reflections (see 6.3). Apparently, Azizah believed that this was the best way to teach how to write reflections to teachers who were still in training and do not have much teaching experience. The focus on classroom-based activities could also explain the structured nature of student teachers’ written reflections based on the SWIS framework and the achievement of lesson objectives (see 5.2).

Another example of teacher educators instructing student teachers to reflect on ‘teaching’ can be seen in this extract from Harminder:

1Harminder29

Harminder: ...I tell the students ‘you need to know.. ok how was your class today? Is it successful? Some pupils are passive, what about them? So, I ask them are there anything else? Do you feel that it’s the pupils’ fault or your fault?’ That’s when I question the students and the students understand that writing reflection is not merely summarising or writing a report of what they have taught but actually to reflect on their teaching to improve themselves.

One thing that struck me in one of the questions Harminder asked her student teachers was the word ‘fault’. Perhaps, what Harminder meant by this was ‘failure’; that was the teacher’s failure in delivering the lesson successfully or the pupils’ failure in understanding the lesson. By identifying and analysing the problem or ‘fault’, student teachers could plan the next action either to improve their teaching or how to develop further their pupils’ learning. Thus, this was what Harminder expected from her student teachers to write in their reflections, which was the thinking and learning process of teaching, and not only descriptive accounts of the lesson. This also explains the ‘evaluation’ feature that emerged from student teachers’ written reflection (see 6.5).

However, using reflection as a tool to deliberate on teaching does not necessarily mean that student teachers should only reflect on teaching problems. Teacher educators also believed that student teachers should also look at their strengths when reflecting on their practice. For instance, another extract from Harminder’s interview explained the importance of reflecting on what was good and used this to develop future lessons:

1Harminder5

Harminder: ...That's a must for an educator [to reflect] so that we improve ourselves at the same time. That's the reason for us to write reflections is to improve our teaching. And to look at our strengths, whatever activities that are interesting or the strategies that are good we can apply for other lessons as well.

In this extract, Harminder showed a firm belief about the teachers' role and responsibility to reflect on their teaching. This also suggests how training to write 'reflection' shapes student teachers' identity of a reflective teacher. For Harminder reflection is an 'obligation' (a 'must') for teachers if they wanted to improve themselves professionally. This point also relates to my earlier comments about 'reflection as a professional practice'. This is a contrast to student teachers' interviews where their responses about writing reflections on the course did not come across as part of their role in becoming a professional teacher but a 'requirement' to fulfil during teaching practice. Despite this, the process of reflecting on teaching is the same in that it involves SWIS. Another teacher educator shared the same view when she talked about emphasising the strengths and building on them as illustrated in the following extract:

1Izati39

Izati: If it is during practicum supervision, I will tell them to.. 'ok after the lesson you just sit down and think about what you have done just now, the methods and approaches and activities. Try to identify the strength, what you manage to achieve and not. And if not, why? You need to find ways how to make the pupils understand or achieve the objective of lesson'.

Nevertheless, Izati felt that all these elements (strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement – SWIS) are important as this helped to structure student teachers' reflections on their teaching experiences. Reflecting and writing reflections based on SWIS is a reoccurring phenomenon that I had observed throughout this research whether among the teacher educators or the student teachers seen in the interviews (in 5.2.1) and student teachers' written reflections (in 6.3). In addition to this, from Izati's point of view, I could sense that the process of reflecting on teaching was one that required time and should not be done with haste. This relates to what Moon (2004) had said about

applying ‘wait time’ for student teachers to digest and make sense of the teaching problem before coming out with a solution which aids them in the effective writing of their reflections. In this extract, meeting the lesson ‘objective’ was mentioned again which teacher educators seem to perceive as an essential element in the reflection.

Referring back to student teachers’ written reflections, there were instances where student teachers are constantly evaluating themselves and their pupils through the learning stages and tasks that they did in the lesson, whether it went well or not. This trails back to how the teacher educators seemed to perceive reflection as it also involved evaluating one’s teaching performance. This was reinforced in Dahlan’s comments below in which reflection was a process of evaluating whether the lesson had been successful in terms of achievement of the stated learning outcomes. He said that:

1Dahlan3

Dahlan: Reflection means to basically to look back on whatever you have been doing previously. And then in terms of teaching, it is to find out whether your teaching and learning process that you have conducted in the classroom is successful or not. So in that sense, the learning outcomes (personally for me) is a good indicator whether the lesson is successful or not. So reflection basically is to enable you to get all this view. Because the most important thing is whether you achieve the lesson learning outcome or not. That is the most important thing whenever you are doing your teaching in the classroom.

For Dahlan, reflection is linked to the extent the learning objectives had been achieved rather than what had happened in the classroom to make the lesson successful. Looking at what he did or what the pupils did during the lesson, which actually were the things that he could learn from, was not the primary focus in measuring the success of his lesson. Instead, a yes/no approach (almost like a checklist approach) for identifying which lesson objectives were met seemed to be suggested here, and used for evaluating the success, or otherwise, of the lesson. I have raised this point in 5.3.2 about student teachers evaluating their teaching and about ‘self-assessment’ through reflection. It seemed both the teacher educators and student teachers shared the same view which could have been transmitted and influenced from training. This also seemed to explain the evaluative nature of student teachers’ written reflections as can be seen in 6.5.1.

Based on what the teacher educators are saying so far, reflection on the teacher education programme is perceived to be one that relates to the process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and improving on them. Most of what the teacher educators said about ‘reflection’ seemed to resonate with the earlier findings from student teachers’ interviews that ‘reflection’ is primarily ‘teaching-centric’ and teacher educators were particularly concerned with assessing the achievement of the lesson objectives in the reflections. The next section continues with exploration on teacher educators’ perceptions of the reasons for student teachers to write reflections during the practicum.

7.4 Reasons for Writing Reflections

My interviews with the teacher educators had led me to identify three main reasons for student teachers and even themselves to write reflections. The reasons are: i) student teachers’ written reflections are assessed during practicum, ii) writing reflections is for developing the ‘self’, and iii) writing reflections helped student teachers make connections between theory and practice. I will discuss each of these themes in the sections below.

7.4.1 Reflection as part of Assessment

Student teachers write reflections because their written reflections are assessed during teaching practice. Teacher educators also have to write reflections as one of their professional duties. Thus, for this reason writing reflective journals is a mandatory act and ‘forced’ upon the student teachers (and teacher educators) to oblige them to reflect on their teaching. In fact, teacher educators’ understanding of reflection and their views about assessing it were very much linked to the contents of the course documents (see 3.5).

In explaining the reason for assessing reflection on the course Zamri, the head of the practicum unit clarified that it is compulsory for student teachers to write reflections during the practicum and they are given marks for it. Zamri said:

1Zamri15&13

Zamri: Reflection is part of assessment, yes. ...it is very important because every time student teachers produce their reflections, they will put this in their teaching practice portfolio and this portfolio will be checked thoroughly by the lecturer supervisor and teacher mentor and this reflection is compulsory to be written not only once a week but every time after a lesson was taught.

Here, writing reflections is obviously a task that is compulsory to do. The pressure to write reflections which Zamri refers to could also mean that student teachers may not have had enough time to think carefully about the teaching issues and merely wrote the reflections to fulfil the course requirement. Thus, this may also explain the descriptive accounts of some of the student teachers' reflections (identified as 'Describing Events' as one of the features of reflective writing as can be seen in 6.5.5) and the structured nature in writing their reflections by identifying the strengths, weaknesses in teaching and suggesting improvements (in 5.2.1 and 6.3).

Writing reflections is also a mandatory practice for teacher educators. Harminder backed this up by stating that it is 'a must under ISO and also MQA' (1Harminder9) standards and Izati added by saying that if they do not write reflections 'we will be penalised' (1Izati33). This indicates that for these teacher educators writing reflections was also a practice that was 'forced' upon them. It seems that the practices in teacher training were replicated as in the professional setting whereby 'reflection' was a formal task that needed to be completed both by the student teachers and teacher educators. This shows how teacher education in Malaysia adopted a centralised approach that was shaped by a common system throughout the country as discussed in Chapter 2. This may also explain the replication in many of the comments made by the student teachers and teacher educators as well as in the documentary evidence such as in the interviews with the student teachers, their reflective journals and course documents found throughout this thesis.

It stands to reason that because reflective writing is a task required by the course, it should be evaluated, and this is clearly indicated in course documents such as PR1 and PR2 forms (Appendix J and K). Teacher educators approached the checking of their student teachers' written reflections in many ways in order to acknowledge their work. Nurul explained:

1Nurul55

Nurul: Because they know I'm going to read it, and each time I go and visit them I will just browse through and sometimes read and underline I will put question marks I will put exclamation mark and a big one and they are afraid of that so they will write properly.

From the extract, rather than constructive feedback on the reflection, student teachers' written reflections were marked with symbols which may be unclear and do not explain what were lacking in the reflections. This also seems forceful and intimidating. Although reflective writing needs to be assessed (as indicated in the course document such as PR1 and PR2 forms and discussed in 2.10) it is also important for teacher educators to give meaningful feedback through 'genuine dialogue' Yagata (2017) with their student teachers since this will encourage reflective thoughts rather than 'scaring' and 'forcing' the student teachers to write the reflections for the sake of assessment.

Assessing student teachers' written reflections is problematic and one of the factors is student teachers' writing ability. For example, Ramlah stated that:

1Ramlah39

Ramlah: Because some people are not able to write more not because they don't have experience... But because they are lacking in the skill of writing...

It might be inferred from this comment that poor writing skill will cause student teachers' reflections to be considered less reflective when they are assessed. This is an important issue to consider which Norton (1997) and Hatton & Smith (1995) also argued and which was discussed in 3.5.3.

In order to clarify the issue of 'reflection and assessment' further, I asked the head of the practicum unit to share his views again and explain the position of reflection as part of assessment particularly during the practicum. His response was simply 'the reflections are assessed together with the portfolio' and 'no marks were given for the reflection' (1Zamri17). This indicates that the written reflections are just one of the items to be assessed together with the other elements in teaching practice which tells me that the focus of the assessment is on the 'practice' and less on 'reflection'. This resonates with the earlier comments (in 7.3) the teacher educators made about reflecting on classroom activities which is mainly about teaching. It seems that the purpose of these

written reflections is fundamentally as a means to help student teachers identify what needs improving in their teaching, and the student teachers are assessed by how effectively they can demonstrate improvements in their observed lessons. This presumably reinforces and perhaps even explains the teaching-centred or SWIS-oriented approach that student teachers seemed to adopt in their reflections.

Teacher educators believe that integrating ‘reflection’ with assessment during the practicum has many benefits and is helpful in developing ‘reflective practitioners’. For example, Leong expressed her concern that if ‘there is no need’ to assess written reflections, the student teachers would become mere ‘robots’ and ‘stop reflecting’ (1Leong52). This is backed up by Devi (a student teacher) who stated in her interview that ‘if they are not asking us to reflect on, for sure I’m sure I will not reflect... I will not be writing on this reflection...’ (ST1Devi46 in 5.3). Furthermore, when teachers do not reflect on their teaching, it is inevitable that teaching becomes a mechanical process or ‘routine action’ (Dewey, 1933), a situation which teaching as a professional practice is trying to avoid. And this view was also shared by Ramlah when she commented that ‘if they (student teachers) don’t write their reflection, they become mechanical’ (1Ramlah33) which implies that if student teachers do not reflect on their teaching, their minds would be closed from the things that could enrich their teaching. Thus, this would then defeat the purpose of having reflection on the programme in the first place, that is to open the minds and develop teachers who are reflective and critical thinkers (in 3.2.2).

7.4.2 Reflection and the ‘Self’

When reflecting on their own practice, teacher educators tend to focus more on developing ‘themselves’ as professional teacher trainers and less on ‘others’. In my interview with Azizah, she explained that:

1Azizah3

Azizah: ...because I’m a lecturer, a lecturer will look at her teaching practice, this is done after the lesson is carried out, whereby I will look at my objectives and my activities, to look at my strengths and weaknesses and it’s how to overcome it and to make it better in the next lesson.

Just like her student teachers, Azizah was mainly concerned about how well she did in her teaching. Clearly, the focus was on ‘herself’ and the aim was to improve ‘her’ teaching. This view had been repeated consistently among teacher educators and mirrored by the student teachers in Chapters 5 and 6.

So far, reflection mainly focuses on the ‘self’. However, it could also go beyond the self and into other dimensions as Leong explained:

1Leong26

Leong: ...reflection if it is in education field its reflecting on your behaviour, your attitudes. Even when we interact with human beings. We must constantly reflect on ourselves, when things go right with relationship with people. We have to constantly reflect. Are we the one in the wrong? So we can build stronger relationship with other people. I feel a lot of relationship fail because people do not reflect. People always felt that the fault is on other people. But when we reflect, we are not perfect as well. So then we can foster closer relationship.

In this extract, Leong extended the focus of reflecting on the ‘self’ by looking into relationships with others which meant that reflecting on oneself involves reflecting on other people and their surroundings, such as their colleagues, pupils or community. This was another dimension of reflection which other participants did not mention in their interviews.

Reflecting on the ‘self’ also involves expressing feelings and emotions. This was an aspect that some teacher educators seemed to encourage their student teachers to include in their reflections. For example:

1Hasnah51

Hasnah: I look for thoughts I will look for feelings. Where are the thoughts? How do you explain the thoughts? Where are your feelings? ‘Ok, I’m very happy with the class today’, some students will write like that. Why are you happy? What are the events that make you happy? And what other events that support your happiness? Or ‘I feel sad, I regret what I have done’, ‘Yes. I can identify that’.

Examining one's feelings or emotional reactions towards a teaching event seem to suggest that reflection is a process that involved the whole person cognitively and emotionally, and this could also help facilitate learning and nurture educational development among student teachers as stated by Moon (2006). In fact, this is related to the concept of developing a balanced individual as stated in the National Education Philosophy (in 2.2) and mentioned in Hasnah's comment here:

2Hasnah9

Hasnah: Holistic individual when you look at the National Education Philosophy there are elements of they have the JERI – *jasmani, emosi, rohani, intelektual*¹²... So reflective thinking is one element that supposed to be instilled into the generation nowadays because we want to build a holistic human being.

However, in expressing feelings in the reflections, it was important for student teachers to write them clearly, because:

1Ramlah59

Ramlah: ...If not, then it's like ok just say 'I'm happy today' and that's all. But at least how they feel and think are put on paper and if they feel bad they get to see it again next day 'ok I could have done better this time'. So at least that is the benefit of writing it even though it's not that insightful or deep.. Just tell you what happen but at least they know that 'I should have done better in the previous class.. So I will try to do better this time'.

It seems that the concern if student teachers failed to describe their feelings clearly, their reflections would be lacking in depth. However, the perceptions related to the emotional dimension as described in this section did not tally with the perceptions of the student teachers as they did not make any comments about their feelings in the interviews (see Chapters 4 and 5).

I also included here a religious perspective on 'reflection and the self' because in Islam every Muslim is encouraged to reflect on ourselves and on everyday events so that we learn something from this and appreciate what we have in life. Hasnah mentioned

¹² *jasmani* = physical, *emosi* = emotional, *rohani* = spiritual, *intelektual* = intellectual

the word *muhasabah* (meaning reflection) and said that ‘because in Islam, you have to love yourself, you have to look into yourself, you must be the *khalifah*¹³’ (2Hasnah3) which indicates the value of reflecting on the ‘self’ and the importance of taking care and improving oneself, especially for the student teachers as they are the future teachers who will become the *caliph* or leaders, so they should have this characteristic of a reflector. This is also one of the roles of reflection and the effort teacher educators can make in shaping students’ ‘teacher identity’.

Teacher educators teaching the PISMP programme are expected to read and examine their student teachers’ written reflections especially when they are assessed. Teacher educators claimed that by reading the reflective journals student teachers wrote, they ‘can learn from them’ (1Azizah39) and develop new perspectives on things. This indicates that there was a two-way learning process that was happening between the teacher educators and the student teachers where both parties could learn from each other. Reading each other’s reflections contributed to exchange in knowledge and experiences that could lead to improvement in teaching.

In addition, when student teachers disagree with the teacher educator’s opinion on things that they discussed during the feedback sessions, this was a sign that they were becoming independent in questioning and forming their own views. For example, Harminder commented:

2Harminder38

Harminder: It doesn’t matter if he disagrees. That will be good because at least he has got his own views and opinions and if it’s accepted, why not? Ya, we have to be open about it because probably they have more critical and creative thinking mind, better than ours and they are you know they are the future generation so probably they are more creative than us. Ya, why not if they do.

In this comment, Harminder accepted the fact that some student teachers may have better ideas than hers and she seemed ‘willing’ to also consider their suggestions. If there is an acceptance among some of the teacher educators that student teachers have ‘more creative and critical minds than ours’, they would presumably be willing to use examples of their written reflections as frameworks for developing the reflective writing skills,

¹³ *khalifah* = caliph

which I will discuss further in Chapter 9. The ‘open-minded’ attitude among the teacher educators might lead to effective training of reflective writing through good examples.

7.4.3 Writing Reflections to Make Sense of Theory and Practice

Writing reflections during the practicum gave the opportunity for student teachers to collect their thoughts while making connections between received knowledge and practical experiences. This was an area which I would expect many teacher educators to discuss in the interviews since many literature suggested that reflective tasks such as the writing of reflections provides the platform for student teachers to establish the connection between theory and practice for student teachers to shape their understanding of teaching in becoming a ‘reflective practitioner’ (Schön, 1987; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Calderhead, 1989). Surprisingly, from eleven participants in the teacher educator group, I found only one participant that talked about linking theory to practice in her interviews.

Ramlah strongly believes that it was crucial for student teachers to discuss the theory of teaching in their reflections, ‘otherwise it is just like answering questions, trying to understand what’s going on and that’s it and they won’t think about it anymore’ (2Ramlah3). This would show the depth and substance in student teachers’ reflection on their practice. Perhaps, this was also the way in which Ramlah could identify whether her students were reflecting critically on their teaching.

However, Ramlah also realises that student teachers made less reference to theory and practice in their reflections because ‘they cannot articulate what they have thought (about theory and practice) because they are not really taught on how to articulate them and write those things on paper’ (2Ramlah47). She also said that ‘these students have the ability to think about it but they are not really taught on how to go about it. How to spell it out’ (2Ramlah49). Evidently, this shows that not many teacher trainers actually taught their student teachers how to reflect on their teaching and the training of reflective writing was perhaps not done effectively. If proper training, clear instructions and adequate support were provided, student teachers would perform better in their reflective writing. This was consistent with the evidence found in student teachers’ written reflections when only one student teacher wrote about theory of teaching in his reflection and the topics in the written reflections were central on teaching (see 6.3).

The limited discussion on theory and practice of teaching among teacher educators does not mean that other lecturers were not concerned about this area in the reflections. Perhaps, more lecturers were focused on identifying SWIS in teaching because this was what the programme documents were ‘telling’ to do (see 2.6). As discussed in Chapter 2, the purpose of the courses on the Bachelor of Teaching programme was for student teachers to gain ‘hands-on’ experience, knowledge, and skills in teaching in real classroom situations (see 2.5). In doing so, the trainers might be too focused on encouraging student teachers to reflect on the practical more than the theories of teaching. Thus, this could also explain the lack of discussion on theory and practice in the interviews with the lecturers.

7.5 Teacher Educators’ and Practicum Unit’s Support in Helping Student Teachers to Write Reflections

This final section looks at the support the teacher educators and the practicum unit provided to the student teachers in writing their reflective journals during teaching practice which addresses the fifth research question (see 4.2). In training student teachers to become reflective practitioners, good teacher educators should be able to provide student teachers an atmosphere which is conducive, have the ability to assist, and also demonstrate a willingness to support the student teachers in developing reflection (Calderhead, 1989; Larrivee, 2000; Wallace, 1991). This is another issue which teacher educators discussed in their interviews and is presented in the following section.

7.5.1 Guidance from the Trainers

As I did before, I turned to Zamri, the head of the practicum unit for some clarification on how information on ways to write reflections was delivered to those who were involved in the practicum. His response was short and simple:

1Zamri25

Zamri: During the (practicum) briefing we do give the format and one example of a reflective writing. But, in terms of providing training or workshops, we don’t in large groups like during the briefing. It can be done in smaller groups (within departments).

Zamri's response shows that the teaching of reflective writing was unclear and simplistic. The process very much depended on examples and replication, e.g. based on 'samples of a good reflection writing' (1Leong38), which was consistent with the sample reflection in Appendix F and discussed in 2.6. Thus, training to write reflections did not develop based on student teachers' understanding of the process of writing reflection. Instead, it was closely guided by the course documentation. Although this might seem an appropriate way of training reflective writing, in terms of adequacy, perhaps it is not sufficient to learn writing reflection via merely sampling and following instructions.

In addition, the responsibility of training reflective writing was left to the different departments (as Zamri mentioned above) to decide how to teach their student teachers to write their reflections. This arrangement in training may affect the consistency in quality and style of the written reflections produced by the student teachers, depending on how the departments perceive reflective writing. It seems the practicum unit played very little role in developing student teachers' skills in writing reflections. It was up to the teacher educators to teach the skills of writing reflections to the student teachers.

There are many strategies and approaches teacher educators could use to support student teachers in writing their reflections. The most common one, as can be seen in this study, was through 'comments and feedback'. For example, Harminder said that:

1Harminder43

Harminder: Normally I will write the comment. I will say that this is not a reflection, you are not reflecting, its merely summarising what you have taught. So I put a few questions there for them to refer to when they're writing reflections that's when the students improve themselves.

I see this as teaching student teachers to write reflections by 'telling', which is a common approach used by university lecturers to teach undergraduates as the transmission of authoritative content or the demonstration of procedures (Ramsden, 2003, p.108). However, the disadvantage of this is student teachers could end up being too dependent on the teacher educators' prompts and instructions, that they simply write the reflections unthinkingly, resulting perhaps in low level or 'superficial' reflections. Furthermore, in relation to the student teachers' earlier comments about writing their reflections

‘according to what the lecturer wants’ (in 5.3), student teachers would be selective and strategic in writing their reflections.

However, teaching student teachers to write reflections via ‘telling’ does not necessarily mean that this approach is ineffective. In fact, some teacher educators claim that they could see improvements in student teachers’ reflections, for example in terms of their reflective thinking:

1Hasnah43

Hasnah: For my first visit, when I read their reflections.. I will tell them, these are the things that I’m not satisfied. You are not deep, you should write about this. Should be more detail and you have lots of space in your book. Then after that for this particular students, I have four students. So in the next visit, I’ll go deeper into the reflection. Normally they will improve a little bit.

In this extract, the constant and consistent ‘directive intervention’ (Freeman, 1990) by Hasnah seems to help her student teachers to improve on how they think and reflect on their teaching. Also, this shows the commitment teacher educators had towards developing student teachers’ reflective skills. By ‘telling’ directly to her student teachers about what was good and bad in their reflections, Hasnah was directly clarifying her expectations, setting standards for her student teachers’ reflections.

Some teacher educators feel that the support they provided in developing student teachers’ reflective writing not only affected their thinking skills but also their language skills. For example, Harminder mentioned that her student teachers ‘towards the end of the practicum... are able to write better’ (2Harminder27). Sometimes it was natural for language teachers to check their learners’ language as Ramlah claimed that she ‘corrected her student teachers’ grammar’ (2Ramlah38) as she read their reflections. Although correcting grammar errors in student teachers’ reflections might be helpful, but it is not enough to develop student teachers’ reflective thinking and writing skills. Perhaps, help in other areas of language such as ways to express themselves in writing and to develop ideas would provide more adequate support rather than only focussing on grammar errors.

In addition to improvements in language skills, not much could be said about the effect of teacher educators’ comments on student teachers’ attitudes or behaviour because as Nurul commented she ‘cannot see much change’ (1Nurul79). However, in

terms of motivation, a few teacher educators claimed that they could see their comments were useful and encouraging since they could see student teachers were ‘really practicing whatever that they have written in their reflections’ (1Shamini91) and ‘that is something positive’ (1Shamini69).

Some teacher educators attempted to scaffold their students’ reflective writing by sharing their own reflections with them. For example, Azizah explained that ‘sometimes [I] discuss with them, after the class... touch on a little bit about my reflections for the day so that they will be able to write when they do their practicum’ (1Azizah15). Azizah’s willingness to share some of her experiences of reflecting on teaching indicated a ‘modelling’ approach (Loughran, 1996) in teaching student teachers to write their reflections which might allowed student teachers to better understand the process of reflection based on the teacher educators’ experiences which they could use in their own practice.

In the course documents, it was clearly stated that student teachers’ written reflections are assessed during teaching practice (see 2.10). However, there was a gap between training student teachers to write reflections and assessing written reflections as part of the course requirement. It seems that there is a mismatch between what is required by the programme and what is actually done during training. For instance, Ramlah strongly believes:

2Ramlah9

Ramlah: ... there should be a course, for example, or an allocation of hours where the students are exposed on what to think and how to go about it... It is only fair when you want to assess them, when you have taught on how to go about it. And that is lacking...

The expectation of written reflections being assessed on a course was that clear guidelines should be provided in the syllabus so that what was taught and what was being assessed are in agreement. However, the lack of information on how to go about reflecting on teaching in the curriculum had put teacher educators in an uncertain position about how far ‘reflection’ should be taught on the programme. The impact of this was that some teacher educators may ask their student teachers to reflect beyond what was necessary or maybe just to focus on teaching (as evident across all student teachers’ written reflections in Chapter 6). Either way, the fact that the documents did

not give them clear indication of what to do seemed to be a problem for teacher educators, which Ramlah seems quite unhappy about.

The different support (e.g. the sample reflection, feedback and comment, scaffolding and correcting language errors) could be seen as being sufficient to meet the requirement of the course, given that all student teachers did complete their reflective journals. However, what I find inadequate here is the support in terms of clear instructions and guidance in writing the reflections from the teacher educators. The training of writing reflections as the interviews suggest was closely guided by the course documents such as the Format for Weekly Reflection and Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflection as discussed in 2.6. However, no further explanation was given on how student teachers should go about writing their reflections, expressing and analysing their thoughts. Therefore, my overall conclusion is that the support in training reflective writing is actually unsatisfactory and in need of improvement.

7.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I found that most teacher educators had similar perceptions of 'reflection' to the student teachers. One of the similarities was that reflecting on teaching also involved the identification of the strengths, weaknesses, and giving suggestions to improve teaching (SWIS). From the responses, the teacher educators commented substantially on writing reflections that focus on teaching and less on other aspects such as linking theory to practice. Thus, this could be the reason why student teachers also wrote less on this area in their written reflections (in Chapter 6). There were instances where teacher educators discussed the importance of evaluating the success of a lesson via the achievement of its 'objectives' which resonates with the view that reflection is a 'goal oriented' process as stated in the literature (e.g. Cruickshank & Appelgate, 1981). This then would explain the 'evaluative' feature in student teachers' written reflections as discussed in Chapter 6. It can also be seen that the teacher educators' and student teachers' understanding of reflection and their views on assessing reflection seem to have been very much influenced by the course documents. In fact, even the support given to the student teachers in writing their reflections were dependent on documentation such as sample of reflections and guidelines on how to write reflection. Although these documents may be helpful and supposed to give a step by step guide on reflective writing, this is still not enough. As I discussed in 7.5.1, the instructions and sample

reflection in these documents were too simple. In addition, the approach in training reflective writing among the teacher educators via comments and feedback encouraged student teachers to be dependent on the teacher educators' prompts and instructions. Student teachers may be simply writing their reflections on what the 'lecturers want' and this may also result in the reflections to be 'superficial'. Further discussion on this issue and other main findings of this research in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the key findings which address the five research questions in my research and as they emerged from the data. I will discuss the sixth research question in Chapter 9 as RQ6 focuses on making improvements in the provision of pre-service teacher education, I will address this in the final chapter in which recommendations for professional practice arising from the research will be discussed. The discussion in this chapter is organised into four themes. The first theme explores the meaning of reflection as perceived by the student teachers and teacher educators as well as the focus of student teachers reflection. This includes a discussion on ‘teaching-centric’ reflection, a type of reflection that mainly involves reflecting on teaching which is determined by three characteristics: technical skills of teaching, teaching for ‘self-development’, and identifying SWIS in teaching. The theme also discusses ‘learner-centric’ reflection and reflection as part of assessment. The second theme examines the student teachers’ and teacher educators’ perception of the benefits of reflection. The participants of this research perceived that the SWIS framework could assist pre-service student teachers in writing their reflections which in turn gave the time and space for student teachers to collect and organised their thoughts. The third theme explores the key features of reflective writing: evaluation, reasoning, self-realisation, problem solving, and describing events. This is followed by the fourth theme that discusses the support that currently exists on the course to guide student teachers in writing reflections.

8.2. The Perceived Meaning of ‘Reflection’ by the Student Teachers and Teacher Educators and the Focus of Student Teachers’ Written Reflections

This first theme is to answer the first and third research questions in this research. It is mainly to determine what ‘reflection’ meant to the student teachers and teacher educators as they were involved in the practice of writing reflections and reflecting on their teaching experiences during the practicum. The perceived meaning of reflection also derived from the topics discussed in the student teachers’ written reflections. The research questions are:

RQ1: What does ‘reflection’ mean to the pre-service student teachers and teacher educators on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme in Malaysia?

RQ3: What do the pre-service student teachers focus on in their written reflections?

8.2.1 ‘Teaching-Centric’ Reflection

The predominant theme that emerged through the analysis of both the interview and journal data showed that ‘reflection’ for student teachers was predominantly about reflecting on their classroom teaching skills as demonstrated through their performance on teaching practice. Therefore, student teachers and teacher educators perceived ‘reflection’ as being ‘teaching-centric’. I used the term ‘teaching-centric’ reflection to describe a reflection that examined student teachers’ experiences during teaching practice and this had the three characteristics: technical skills of teaching, teaching for ‘self-development’, and identifying SWIS in teaching.

From student teachers’ reflective journals, most of them focused their reflection on the ‘technical’ aspects of teaching and this was the first characteristic of a ‘teaching-centric’ reflection that emerged from the data. ‘Technical’ here refers to the means or procedures for delivering the lessons, that is the pedagogical aspects of teaching such as language teaching strategies or lesson planning, and these form the contents of my student teachers’ written reflections. For example, Table 6.1 showed that there were seven main topics that student teachers talked about in their reflections and most of them were related to the practice of teaching. The quantitative analysis in 6.3 showed that the most prominent topics were ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ and ‘Classroom Management’ which constituted more than 73% of student teachers’ written reflections; a large percentage to be represented by only two topics. However, this might not seem particularly surprising, in the light of other studies that had revealed similar results (e.g. Bain et al., 1999; Liou, 2001; McCabe et al., 2009; Haslee Shahril et al., 2010; Kaur Sidhu & Kaur, 2010).

Consequently, reflecting only on the ‘technical’ aspect of teaching made the area of discussion in student teachers’ written reflections somewhat narrow and confined to things that were related to teaching pedagogy. There was little discussion in their reflections of some of the other dimensions of their professional lives, noted in the literature, such as ‘subject knowledge’, ‘curriculum knowledge’, ‘pedagogic

knowledge', and 'educational values' (McGregor, 2011; Roberts, 1998; Shulman, 1987; Higgins & Leat, 2001) so that the reflections would be less bounded and expanded to wider perspectives. The reason could simply be that during teaching practice student teachers were only expected to show that they were able to deliver a lesson as effectively as possible using the teaching skills they had learned from their lectures during the practicum (in 2.6). Furthermore, the demands of the course such as assessment (in 2.10) seemed to influence the student teachers to reflect on pedagogic skills more than others. It was also not evident in the journals that student teachers were reflecting on things related to the social aspect of learning, such as how pupils' interaction with their peers could influence learning behaviour or how pupils with different racial backgrounds interact in group work activities (in 6.3).

The second feature of 'teaching-centric' reflection was the student teachers were more inclined to direct their reflections towards discussing developing the 'self'. This meant that student teachers were mainly concerned with improving 'themselves' in terms of their teaching skills and teaching knowledge as part of their self-development process in becoming 'qualified' teachers (see 5.3.3). Student teachers were constantly self-evaluating their teaching and keeping track of their progress. This was shown through their written reflections when they wrote about identifying the things they did successfully or unsuccessfully in their teaching and later suggested ways to improve themselves (see 6.3) rather than reflecting on their pupils' learning processes and finding ways to rectify the learning problems. This indicated the 'evaluative' feature in student teachers' written reflections as discussed in 6.4.1. Furthermore, in one of my interviews with the student teacher, Azrul talked about using the reflection to re-examine what he did previously in his lesson and using the information he gathered to decide on a new activity in order to make his future lessons better (in 5.3.3). The focus was on improving his lesson which related to the 'self' and not exploring other factors (such as problems related to his pupils' language) that might have caused his lesson to be less successful. A similar result was obtained in a recent case study conducted by Kayaoglu, Erbay & Saglamel (2016, p. 176) whereby novice teachers talked about their 'own classroom practices' than other issues.

When developing the 'self' as a professional, some writers referred to the development of 'voice' (Moon, 2006; Canning, 1991). In my research, it was difficult to determine whether the student teachers did have their own 'voice' in their reflections

since they followed a framework (SWIS) to write their reflections (in 5.2.1). Canning (1991) observed that ‘student teachers’ voice is often subdued by their training to please, to defer to professors and supervisors for good grades and positive evaluations’. A similar attitude was observed in my student teachers when they explained in the interviews, they wrote the reflections ‘according to what the lecturers want’ (in 5.3.1) and adhering to the course requirement (see 2.5) which was a constraint on the student teachers to express their views extensively. Thus, this might have influenced how student teachers perceived reflection on the teacher education programme which followed a mechanistic and structured approach of writing and reflecting on teaching and this tended to result in ‘teaching-centric’ reflection.

However, in my interviews with Ai Ling (in 5.3), it was clear that she can choose her own topic or area to reflect on in her written reflections. This indicated that to a certain extent, student teachers had the opportunity to have their own ‘voice’ to explore and discuss issues that were relevant to them. The reflections that focused on the ‘self’ gave a sense of individuality to the writing. Therefore, student teachers who wrote their reflections within a provided framework did not entirely mean that student teachers’ reflections had ‘no voice’. Perhaps, their ‘voice’ was ‘less personal’ (as the idea of writing a journal mostly implies an activity that is personal and solitary) since there were constraints in writing their reflections due to the writers having to adhere to the course requirements.

The third characteristic of ‘teaching-centric’ reflection involved the identification of the strengths, weaknesses, and providing suggestions to improve teaching, which I call the SWIS framework. The framework was helpful for pre-service student teachers who have limited teaching experiences to structure and start writing their reflections as well as to develop their reflective thinking skills. Rodgers (2002, p. 231) valued the structured process of reflection because it enabled teachers ‘to see student learning: to discern, differentiate, and describe the elements of that learning, to analyse that learning and to respond’. However, the framework could also unduly influence certain ways student teachers perceived and talked about the issues in their reflections. They might accept this as the only ‘right’ way to reflect. Another effect of this framework seemed that much of the student teachers’ reflective writing became relatively simplistic and somewhat descriptive. For example, student teachers identified a teaching event that went well or went wrong, described the effects of the teaching

event, then provided a quick solution or suggestion to improve the teaching event without added observation or insights. I illustrated this process through the features of reflective writing and ‘flow’ as discussed in 6.5.

Clearly, a framework inevitably had some influence on how student teachers wrote their reflections (such as SWIS in the current study). In fact, in Hoban’s (2000) study many of the student teachers’ reflections were very descriptive when they started using a framework to write their reflections, but with further guidance the student teachers began to reflect deeply. As for my own research, although some teacher educators also claimed that they provided assistance to their student teachers to write their reflections (see 7.5.1), student teachers still tended to limit their reflection to identifying SWIS (when supposedly in Phase 3 practicum student teachers should be producing reflections beyond SWIS – see also 5.2.1 and 6.3). The reason for this lies within the training system and the curriculum which I will discuss further in 8.5 of this chapter.

8.2.2 What ‘Teaching-Centric’ Reflection is not

In the previous section, ‘teaching-centric’ reflection had been characterised as a reflection which on the whole focused narrowly on activities related to the pedagogical aspects of teaching, the ‘self’, and examining the performance of teaching. This made ‘teaching-centric’ reflection somewhat one dimensional as it tends to ignore the other dimensions such as learning, the ‘learner’ as a group or an individual, and sociocultural context of learning. By contrast, reflection that considered these other dimensions could be termed ‘learning-centric’.

If a ‘teaching-centric’ reflection focused on the student teachers’ experiences of teaching then, a ‘learning-centric’ reflection should examine the learners’ experiences of learning something (which in the current research context would be learning English as Second Language) either in or outside the classroom. For instance, I would expect my student teachers to reflect on issues related to learners’ learning strategies (e.g. ways in which pupils learn new words), learning abilities and/or difficulties (e.g. problem in pronouncing ‘th’ sound), or learning styles (e.g. working individually, in pairs, or in groups). However, discussions on these areas were largely absent from the student teachers’ written reflections and interviews.

'Learning-centric' reflection involves a shift away from centring on the 'self' towards a view that emphasises examining things that concern the 'learning' and the pupils as 'learners'. Richards & Lockhart (1994, p. 52) pointed out that 'learners too bring to learning their own beliefs, goals, attitudes, and decisions, which in turn influence how they approach their learning'. Exploring these areas could explain some of the expectations or issues learners have about ESL learning. However, this dimension which focuses on the 'learning' and 'learners' was not the main part of the student teachers' discussions in the interviews and their written reflections.

Another area which appeared to be lacking in student teachers' reflections and interviews was discussion about the influence of sociocultural contexts on learning. Although it was only natural for pre-service student teachers who were still in training to be discussing and writing about issues relating to the practical teaching knowledge and the 'self' (see 5.3 and 6.3), it was arguably important for them to be aware of other aspects because teaching involves the larger economic, social and political context (Larrivee, 2008; Zeichner, 2008). Furthermore, the diversity in culture and language that exists among pupils in Malaysia meant that it was also important for student teachers to reflect on their learners in their social contexts. Taking notice of these areas would mean student teachers were reflecting critically, reflecting on events beyond the confines of the classroom and this would help develop their understanding of the teaching and learning process even more.

Since they were in training to become English language teachers, one might also expect student teachers to reflect more on issues related to difficulties, either for themselves or for their pupils, with learning English as a second language. However, discussions centred on language learning were very few in student teachers' reflections (see 6.3). The only noticeable language-related issue that student teachers seemed to address was on language proficiency. For instance, student teachers commented that it was difficult teaching English to pupils who were weak in the language and who mixed their first language with English (in 6.3). Student teachers did not discuss their difficulties in providing clear task instructions or coherent explanations of language points, which one might expect to be one of the common areas of difficulty when teaching English to second language learners.

One might also expect writing reflections in the second language to have some impact on student teachers' own language development particularly in writing.

However, the only issue related to language development that the student teachers mentioned in their written reflections was about their fear of making grammatical errors when teaching English. To me this seemed to be more of a confidence issue with language use rather than a problem in using the language. There was neither mention in the interviews with the student teachers nor in their written reflections about student teachers improving their English as a result of writing reflections. Issues relating to student teachers' linguistic competence and language development seemed to have taken a back seat since now the priority of these student teachers was on developing teaching skills.

These gaps in the contents of student teachers' written reflections implied that support in reflective writing (although it is arguably 'adequate' to the course standards as discussed in 7.5.1) should be improved. This support may take the form of a checklist of aspects that the student teachers could think about when they reflect on their classroom experience, or models of reflective writing that include commentaries on some of these aspects. I will explore this further in Chapter 9 when I discuss my recommendations on improving the ways in teaching reflective writing to pre-service student teachers with limited teaching experience.

8.2.3 Reflection as part of Assessment

Based on the interviews, both the student teachers and teacher educators perceived that 'reflection' is related to assessment and written reflections must be checked by the teaching practice supervisors during observation sessions. One of the impacts of integrating reflection with assessment was that the process of writing reflection tended to become 'formulaic' (see 5.3.2). The structure of the reflections changed only marginally as student teachers used the same framework for every phase of the practicum (see 2.6). This may also explain the apparently little improvement in student teachers' reflective writing on which some of the teacher educators commented in the interviews (see 7.4.1).

Some teacher educators perceived that since 'reflection' was made part of the teaching practice curriculum, it needed to be assessed. Writing and completing this task was obligatory, thus producing reflections that were arguably 'forced' (Hobbs, 2007) upon the student teachers. Assessment demanded student teachers to present their best work for judgement. Therefore, student teachers were interested in portraying

themselves in the best light possible (in 6.3). Student teachers tended to write their reflections strategically including only those elements that were required in order to pass the practicum. Consequently, writing reflections in this manner could compromise the reliability of the reflections due to the ‘superficial content’ (Hobbs, 2007) student teachers produced in their reflections for assessment. Furthermore, ‘when one is asked to reflect on his/her strengths and weaknesses as part of a required, graded course assignment, it seems, then, that genuine examination of self is already a lost cause’ (Roberts, 1998). If this was the case, what could be the best way to assess student teachers’ reflections without impacting their authenticity and reliability?

Although many student teachers and teacher educators were aware that the student teachers’ written reflections formed part of the teaching practice assessment, they were unclear what aspects in the written reflections were the focus of the assessment: the teaching skills or reflective thinking skills (see 2.10 and 7.4.1). Despite forming part of the assessment, in the current context, the only ‘training’ given to the teacher educators on how to teach and assess student teachers’ reflections went as far as the briefing the practicum unit gave before the start of the teaching practice. The practicum briefing focused more on the conduct of teaching practice supervision reflection simply constituting one of the tasks that needed to be completed during teaching practice (see 2.5). In fact, teacher educators relied more on their past experiences of being a teacher and their knowledge of reflection as a means to teach the current student teachers to write and assess their reflections (in 7.4). Insufficient training and unclear instructions by the practicum unit had left teacher educators to interpret the practicum documents and identify the best way to assess student teachers’ reflections themselves.

8.3 The Perceived Benefits of ‘Reflection’ by the Student Teachers and Teacher Educators

The second research question is:

RQ 2: What do they perceive to be the benefits of ‘reflection’?

There are two benefits of writing reflections on the teacher education programme during the practicum as perceived by the student teachers and teacher educators: i) using SWIS

as a framework helped pre-service student teachers to write their reflections, and ii) writing reflections gave the time and space for student teachers to collect and organise their thoughts.

Writing reflections by identifying the strengths, weaknesses and suggesting improvements for teaching (SWIS) was perceived to be one of the helpful ways in helping student teachers to write their reflections (in 5.2.1) and this perception was similar to the perception of the teacher educators (in 7.3.1). The framework developed as a result of the training and the requirement of the course (in 5.3.1 and 7.4) where the main aim was on improving teaching. The framework provided the basic structure for these student teachers with limited teaching experiences to start writing their reflections during teaching practice. In addition, a sample written reflection was provided as a 'guide' for the student teachers to follow when writing their reflections (see 2.6). The format of the sample reflection was simple and short which made it easy for student teachers to replicate especially for student teachers who were writing the reflections for their first practicum. However, student teachers could also write their reflections beyond the suggested guidelines. This would enable the student teachers to expand their thoughts and encourage them to reflect more widely.

Another benefit of reflection as perceived by the student teachers was that it provided them with the 'time' and 'space' to collect their thoughts and reflect on their teaching experiences (in 5.3.3). It was believed that after writing the reflections student teachers should leave them for a while so that the student teachers could digest the information that they had written. Sometimes, student teachers will have a clearer perspective on things when they return to the reflections later and this could have a positive effect on the reflection process for the student teachers (Mann & Walsh, 2013; Moon, 2004).

However, when student teachers wanted to relate the teaching experiences to the theory of teaching that they learned, they may need more time and space to rethink and make sense of things. Developing an understanding of the teaching theories and connecting them to the practical is a difficult task especially when the student teachers have not had much teaching experiences. I came across only one instance where a student teacher talked about a teaching theory and related it to her experience (see 6.3 – 37 Fatin). This could be that student teachers had not been encouraged to reflect on theories of teaching by their lecturers. I would expect student teachers in their final year

of their Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme to write more about this in their reflections. In fact, in studies conducted by Ho & Richards (1993) and Liou (2001) theories of teaching is one of the most frequent topics student teachers write about in their reflections. However, it was not the case in my study. Another reason could be that student teachers were not aware of the importance of formally making connections between theory and practice. This was perhaps due to the way in which the instruction and training in writing reflections were developed on the course (see 2.6) which did not allow enough encouragement and ‘space’ for student teachers to explore the relationships between the received knowledge and the teaching experience in depth. To me, this was an opportunity missed by the teacher educators which they could have stressed on in their training. In fact, the expectation of the teacher education curriculum itself (in 2.6) is that theory to practice should be integrated especially during the practicum. The area of discussion in student teachers’ reflections indicated an imbalance or rather an absence of explicit connections being made between theory and practice and vice versa. If one of the purposes of reflective writing was to do this, then this absence suggested a failure at the heart of the exercise, as carried out in the setting of my research. This resonated with Wallace’s (1991, p. 55) argument that ‘the relationship between received knowledge and experiential learning should be reciprocal, not one-way, so that the trainee can reflect on the received knowledge in the light of classroom experience, and so that classroom experience can feed back into the received knowledge sessions’.

Although some student teachers claimed that they benefited from writing reflections because it provided the ‘time’ and ‘space’ for them to reflect on their teaching experiences (in 5.3.3), the process of understanding theories and linking them to practice clearly takes ‘time’ and student teachers need to be given the ‘opportunity’ to do so in their reflections. As a result, there were fewer reflections that discussed the process of understanding theory and linking it to practice than reflections that focused on ‘teaching’.

Other perceived benefits of reflection as mentioned by the student teachers were that keeping reflective journals as written records enabled them to store all of the data about the teaching experiences in one place (in 5.3.3). Student teachers could refer to these records to plan and improve their future lessons. Besides this, writing reflections could also develop student teachers’ autonomy in developing their teaching skills as they reflected on their teaching. The process of writing reflections during the practicum could

also help student teachers ‘gain more confidence’ and ‘become more responsible’ as teachers, which indicates that ‘teacher identity’ (Borg, 2006) could also be developed through reflection.

8.4 Features of Reflective Writing

In this section, I will discuss the findings relevant to addressing the fourth research question:

RQ4: What features of reflective writing can be found in the student teachers’ written reflections?

From the student teachers’ written reflections, I managed to identify five features of reflective writing which I classified as evaluation, reasoning, self-realisation, problem solving, and describing events (in 6.5). They represented the types of reflection student teachers wrote (which presumably were acceptable pieces of work by the standards of the programme) and the cognitive process of reflecting on teaching. These features are also related to ‘flow’ - a term I used to illustrate the dynamic interplay between the features and how the student teachers engaged in the process of reflection by navigating their own way between the features. In doing so, I conducted a textual analysis of the student teachers’ written reflections and from there I discovered how student teachers reflected on their work, and how the features can be interconnected in a variety of different ways. This provides a much more realistic and dynamic insight into the ‘processes’ of reflection than the hierarchical lists of features found in the various frameworks in the literature, can ever hope to do. It seems to me that such frameworks are essentially product-oriented – in other words, they are describing the different levels of reflection as criteria against which reflective writing can be evaluated for its depth and criticality. My study, on the other hand, is looking at the reflection more as a process and one that involves different ‘patterns of flow’ from one feature to another. More discussion on this in 9.3.1 as I make my recommendations for improving the way in which student teachers can be supported and guided in their reflective writing.

Comparing the five features of reflective writing in this research to the reflective elements in the frameworks of other scholars revealed that they adopt some similar features but with some modifications. For example, I described the feature ‘describing

events' in my context as 'recording events that happened in and outside the classroom with very minimal insights' (in 6.3). 'Descriptive' reflection in Jay & Johnson's (2002) typology involved the intellectual process of 'setting the problem' on matters related to classroom concerns, recognised bias, interesting theory, or feelings. It also involved examining the causes and consequences of the problem and applying changes to situations to improve things. Therefore, 'description' based on Jay & Johnson's framework went beyond than reporting the facts and was more extensive. However, the feature of 'describing events' in the present study seemed to be simple and very much at the surface level since from the student teachers' reflections they discussed very briefly and recorded very few insights about their teaching problems (see 6.5.5). The reflective process seemed to end halfway for these student teachers who were merely 'describing events' in their reflections and not extending the descriptions to include a thorough examination into the teaching problem.

It can be argued that 'describing events' indicated that these student teachers were 'not reflective' if this feature was compared against Boud's et al. (1985) classification of 'non-reflectors'. In their paper, Boud and colleagues classified the non-reflectors by four characteristics: i) descriptive - they tend to report on the happening, rather than re-visiting the experience and analysing it, ii) make assumptions without trying to test them out for their validity, iii) adopt a relatively straightforward way of viewing the situation with little awareness of the contextual factors, and iv) impersonal - they wrote reflective papers like any other academic paper. However, in the context of the current study, the descriptive nature in student teachers' reflections is still considered as student teachers having some 'reflective thought'. Perhaps, the reflections could be labelled as 'less reflective' since student teachers did not thoroughly analyse and evaluate the teaching events as they should be.

The analysis in the present study indicated that all student teachers' written reflections seemed to perform an 'evaluation' of the lesson they taught. In the journal entries, student teachers were generally self-judgemental with their analysis, especially with regards to their teaching skills. Bloom (2001) positioned 'evaluation' at the top of the taxonomy of learning as it was a more demanding skill which required the individual to appraise, critique, justify, or interpret the information, ideas, or experiences, based on internal and external evidence. In the current study, student teachers did not seem to apply these other evaluative skills. Instead, they limited their evaluation to analysing

their teaching performance and deciding whether it was successful or unsuccessful (see 5.2.1 and 6.3). This appears to be similar to Van Manen (1977) and Valli's (1993) concept of 'technical' reflection that examined the effectiveness of the application of skills and pedagogical knowledge in the classrooms. Valli's technical reflection also involved student teachers matching their practical teaching performance to the knowledge of teaching (as discussed in 8.2) to support and explain the teaching event that occurred in the classroom (in 6.3). I do not consider such examples as merely fitting and matching knowledge to experience. Instead, I classified a piece of reflective writing that examined classroom events, justified and related them to relevant theories as 'reasoning' (see 6.5.2).

Looking through the five features of reflective writing, it was difficult to determine whether the written reflections student teachers wrote were truly 'critical' because most of the writings were mainly short and descriptive. However, these features: evaluation, reasoning, self-realisation, problem solving, and describing events, indicated that to a certain extent student teachers do reflect critically on their teaching. In their framework, Van Manen (1977) and Valli (1990) rated 'critical' as the highest level of reflection, while for Jay & Johnson (2002) and Farrell (2015) 'critical' or 'beyond practice' was one of the stages of the reflective process. To these scholars, critical reflection shared a common ground which involved examining the structural, societal, cultural, and political dimensions to teaching and learning. It also took into account the personal values of the teacher or learner and considering how this might conflict with those values of the institution, society, culture, and nation. Critical reflection also posed questions on the moral and ethical dimensions of decisions related directly or indirectly to the classroom situation. These elements were not part of 'critical' reflection perceived in the current study.

In this study, 'critical' reflection involved an analysis onto one's experiences of teaching, questioning how and why certain things happened in the classroom, making sense of these experiences by relating them to theories of teaching, as well as planning and taking action to improve teaching. However, it did not include the structural, societal, cultural, and political connotations which are present in the works of others as stated above. This was due to the fact that reflection was approached based on a structure that is confined to the identification of SWIS in teaching. Consequently, other aspects

outside the boundaries of SWIS and teaching were left unexplored and had become secondary.

Education in Malaysia is one that aims to promote harmony among its people (see 2.2, National Education Philosophy). Issues related to the political and cultural dimensions of teaching were often sensitive and should be approached with care. Also, one would not expect student teachers to question or challenge what had been set especially in the curriculum. Perhaps, this was another reason why these aspects were not discussed in the student teachers' reflections, so as to avoid any tensions and being biased towards a group of people or society. Despite this, it did not mean that student teachers' reflective writing was not critical, but the scope of their critically was limited to the school and teaching.

Bringing together how 'critical reflection' is defined in the literature (in 3.2.2) and the meaning in the Malaysian teacher education context seems to suggest that the term is 'culturally specific'. In some countries, social and political debate is a normal practice in societies which encourage more open discussions on different perspectives and dimensions. In democratic societies, discussions that challenge authority are well established in educational discourse. Student teachers are expected to make an inquiry into matters outside the boundaries of the classroom, expanding their thoughts into the wider political establishment. However, this does not mean that Malaysian student teachers were not thinking and reflecting critically as can be seen in extracts from student teachers' written reflections (in 6.3). It is just that in parts of the world, such as Malaysia, challenging authorities is not encouraged, and the government is less tolerant of this. A definition of critical reflection that involves this dimension is inappropriate in the Malaysian context or in parts of the world where challenges to authority are discouraged. Due to it not being the tradition to critique the social norms and to disturb the delicate issues that may upset the inter-racial harmony, it would have been surprising to see in student teachers' reflections that discuss the wider societal issue such as comparing how English was taught and learned in different types of schools in Malaysia (e.g. Malay medium National schools, Mandarin medium National-type schools, Tamil medium National-type schools). This was unhelpful in a multicultural society such as Malaysia where open debate is discouraged. In fact, this seems to defeat the purpose of the new transformation of education (see 2.2) 'to develop young Malaysians who are knowledgeable, think critically and creatively, have leadership skills and are able to

communicate with the rest of the world' as expressed by the Minister of Education Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Hence, we need to look for other ways to define 'reflection'. For that reason, definitions of critical reflection which specifically refers to the socio-political dimension may not be appropriate to all parts of the world.

8.5 Supporting Reflective Writing

This section discusses the perceptions student teachers and teacher educators had about the support that was provided on the course with regards to reflective writing and whether it was helpful in assisting the student teachers to write their reflections effectively. Research question five reads:

RQ5: What support currently exists to guide student teachers in their reflective writing during the practicum and how adequate is it?

There were many course documents used to guide teacher educators and student teachers in writing reflections during the practicum (see 2.6). For instance, the sample reflection and guidelines on how to write daily and weekly reflections (Appendix F) were helpful in providing the necessary guidance of what to expect and contain in a reflection. The format of the sample reflection was simple and short which made it easy for student teachers to replicate especially for student teachers who were writing reflections for their first practicum. Certainly, student teachers could also write their reflections beyond the suggested guidelines which would enable the student teachers to expand their writing and to reflect more effectively.

However, a closer examination revealed that some of the descriptions and terms contained in the documents were vague. For example, the sample of written reflection did not specify whether it was for daily or weekly reflection (in 2.7). The inaccurate example of how the two types of reflections should be written resulted in the production of written reflections that were almost similar even though they were supposed to be different. As for documents used for assessment purposes, it was found that the descriptions in the marking criteria (e.g. for PR1 form) were too abstract and difficult to measure (see 2.10). Clearly, this is problematic since it might affect the reliability of the assessment.

The written reflections showed that student teachers wrote their reflections based on the SWIS framework. From the interviews with the teacher educators and student teachers they perceived that reflection involved the identifying of the strengths, weaknesses in teaching and suggesting improvements (in 5.2.1 and 6.3). This perception derives from the programme curriculum itself (see 2.5). As Moon (2006, p. 52) stated, ‘any journal that will be overseen by another in authority is likely to be structured in accordance with the perceived expectations of the overseer’. Clearly, student teachers’ written reflections seem to mirror the structure that was suggested and taught by the course. Consequently, there were ‘uniformity’ and ‘standardisation’ in the reflective journals the student teachers wrote. However, this could also suggest the ‘bureaucratic’ nature of the institution (Atkinson & Coffey, 1999) had shaped and strongly influenced the practice of reflective writing among student teachers on the course.

Therefore, an expectation of reflection as a formal aspect of the course means that there should be training given to student teachers to help them write their reflections and reflect on their teaching. Although this may not always be the case, Dewey (1933) reiterated that reflective habits of the mind must be taught. Furthermore, O’Connell & Dymont (2011) suggested that ‘in order for journal writing to be effective, student teachers must be provided with sufficient training’. Through the interviews, teacher educators as teaching practice supervisors claimed that they helped and facilitated student teachers to reflect and write their reflections (in 7.5). However, they taught student teachers to write the reflections by ‘instructing’ and ‘telling’ (in 7.5.1) which arguably was ‘insufficient’ (Russell, 2005; Bean & Stevens, 2002). Reflection should be taught explicitly, scaffolding reflection through clear guidance, directly, thoughtfully, and patiently so that reflection is more productive as student teachers could reflect on their teaching effectively and meaningfully (Russell, 2005; Bean & Stevens, 2002; Thorpe, 2000; Kuit, Relay & Freeman, 2001). The instructive manner of training student teachers how to write their reflections was typical of teacher educators emphasising the importance for student teachers to write the reflections based on a specific structure. Despite this, teaching reflection in this way does not mean asking the student teachers to mimic reflection blindly or limit the opportunities to produce reflections independently. Instead, directing student teachers to write reflections in a specific way would ensure ‘consistency’ in writing and assessing the reflections. The main advantage

of ‘consistency’ and writing to a standard format would allow for ease and transparency in assessment, not just to follow the curricular guidelines.

In addition, the current study also showed that there were things that teacher educators did not do in training the student teachers to write their reflections that would support the process of connecting theory to practice. For example, they did not ‘discuss the qualities of a good reflection’ with their student teachers. In the interviews, a few teacher educators seem to ‘explain’ what reflection was but the explanation was very vague (in 7.3). They claimed to ‘model reflective practice’ but this was not apparent (in 7.4.3). They believed that reflection was about making connections between theory and practice but generally failed to ‘link reflection clearly and directly to professional learning’ (in 7.4.3). As a result, student teachers ‘tend to complete a programme with a limited and negative view of what reflection is and how it might contribute to their professional learning’ (Russell, 2013, p. 87). These were the areas (e.g. discuss qualities of a good reflection, clear explanation of what reflection is) lacking when teacher educators were asked about developing the process of reflection among student teachers. Thus, teacher educators need to be more clear about these areas if they want their training to be more meaningful so that it can develop future teachers who are reflective.

Based on my overall analysis of the interviews and written reflections, it could be said that the support provided in helping student teachers to write their reflections is inadequate. Although the SWIS framework was helpful for student teachers with little teaching experience to start writing their reflections, it resulted in student teachers producing ‘narrow’ discussions about their teaching. Despite this, student teachers could still choose to write their discussions on any topic or area that they wish in their reflections. Therefore, this meant that the boundaries of student teachers’ reflection on the teacher education programme could be widened and go beyond SWIS and ‘teaching-centricity’. This depended on how much student teachers wanted to discuss and reveal about their teaching experiences and how teacher educators guide reflective thinking among their student teachers. Some might just choose not to go beyond what was expected because as in the final analysis, student teachers knew what was required of them on the course and what counted in the assessment: they just need to produce ‘reflections’ that contain evidence of teaching.

8.6 Chapter Summary

In summary, the teacher educators and student teachers perceived that 'reflection' on the teacher education programme is primarily about the activities and experiences of 'teaching', and relates to the 'self', and identification of SWIS. I have used the term 'teaching-centric' to describe this conceptualisation of reflection. This conceptualisation implies that other dimensions of reflection (for example those that focus on the processes of 'learning', the 'learners', and on 'language development') receive comparatively little attention, and this was borne out in the findings. I have suggested that if the reflections included a greater focus on learners and their learning, they would be seen as more 'learning-centric', and that this would involve a wider, more balanced perspective.

Student teachers and teacher educators in this research perceived that using SWIS as a framework helped pre-service student teachers with limited teaching experience to write their reflections. They also believe that writing reflections could give the time and space for student teachers to collect and organise their thoughts on their teaching experiences.

The textual analysis of student teachers' written reflections revealed they contain five distinctive features: evaluation, reasoning, self-realisation, problem solving and describing events. These features indicate the different types of reflection student teachers wrote during the practicum. In addition, a close examination of student teachers' reflections also revealed that these features 'move' in discursive 'patterns of flow' (linear, recursive, random, dominant), which indicate the thought processes that was happening while student teachers were reflecting on their teaching experiences. Both the features and flow help to indicate the type of reflection and illustrate student teachers' engagement in reflection, which many of the studies in the literature reviewed did not address. This information is important as it can be used to develop effective framework and guidance to student teachers on reflective writing.

The final part of this chapter discusses the perceptions of student teachers and teacher educators on the support that was provided on the course with regards to reflective writing. In terms of fulfilling the demands of the teacher education programme, arguably the support is adequate based on the fact that reflective journals that the student teachers were completed and showed signs of engagement with the process involved in structuring their reflections in a meaningful, logical way. However,

the support given in the course documentation is inadequate. The explanations in the guidelines are unclear. Teacher educators did not provide clear and satisfactory guidance in explaining the process of reflective writing to the student teachers. Despite this, the quality of student teachers reflections could develop beyond the current standard if clearer guidance and more effective framework are provided to the student teachers in writing their reflections. The next chapter discusses how the implications and recommendations of the process of reflective writing for student teachers' reflections could be further developed and improved. The discussion in Chapter 9 will address the final research question of this study.

CHAPTER 9: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters were concerned with the analysis of the data and discussion of the findings. This final chapter discusses the implications based on the research findings and provides some practical considerations of ‘reflection’ for teacher education in Malaysia and other countries. It will seek to address the last research question which reads:

RQ 6: Based on the analysis of the answers to the above questions, what improvements can be made in the provision of pre-service teacher education in the training context of this study?

This chapter ends with my final thoughts on my experiences of conducting this research.

9.2 Implications for Teacher Education in Malaysia and Other Countries

This study has attempted to add to existing knowledge about what ‘reflection’ was perceived to be in teacher education within the Malaysian setting, particularly during the practicum. I feel that if teacher education in Malaysia aims to promote effective ‘reflection’ and enhance the process of ‘reflection’ among student teachers, then teacher education programmes need to consider some of the issues and new knowledge from the findings of this study in order to meet the overall aim of the transformed education system (see 2.2). The following are some of the implications of the findings from this study.

9.2.1 Identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, and Suggesting Improvements in Teaching: the SWIS Framework

In response to the first research question, my investigation revealed that to the student teachers and teacher educators, ‘reflection’ involved the process of identifying strengths, weaknesses, and suggesting improvements in teaching (SWIS). This was a common framework that the student teachers as well as the teacher educators used as the basis for writing their reflections (in 5.2.1 and 7.3.1). It derived from the guidelines contained in the course documents that were given to the student teachers and teacher educators for teaching practice training. From this, a framework was developed, and the

sample written reflection provided the structure for student teachers to write their reflection since they could easily replicate the format of the sample reflection (in 5.2). Certainly, providing structure or framework to write reflections was helpful, especially for student teachers who were still in training. As Moon & Boullon (1997) argued reflective thinking takes time to develop, needs explicit modelling, and can best be facilitated through closer links with actual classroom practice. Consequently, teaching student teachers to write their reflections with close reference to the framework limited their reflections to SWIS, making the reflections narrow and confined to the structure that was given to them (in 5.3.1). The process of writing reflections became repetitive as student teachers used the same structure throughout the teaching practice phases. Thus, it was easy for student teachers to predict what to include in their reflections in order to meet the expectations of the type of reflections they should write for the practicum.

Despite the limitations of SWIS, incorporating a structured approach to guide student teachers' reflections during the practicum could have the potential to provide them with the support and foundation required to develop their reflective skills and accept 'responsibility' for their own professional development. Furthermore, the structure could stimulate and encourage pre-service student teachers to start thinking critically about their teaching, such as in the recent study by Min, Mansor, and Samsudin (2016) whereby the use of a critical reflection manual (CRM) provided systematic and immediate support for student teachers to become more conscious about their teaching and learning process. However, I feel that as student teachers enter the final stage of the practicum, they need not be confined to identifying SWIS and should be free to explore other frameworks that may further develop student teachers' critical thinking and reflective skills.

English language teacher education programmes throughout Malaysia aim to develop teachers who follow a broadly communicative approach to their teaching, characterised by more interaction among learners and less teacher-centred transmission of knowledge than is typically found in Malaysian school classrooms. Thus, an implication of the findings is that if teacher education programmes are serious about achieving these aims, student teachers should be encouraged to reflect more widely on all aspects of the learning teaching process, moving beyond the 'SWIS' framework to

encompass areas such as the social, moral, and ethical issues of their professional practice. A suggestion of the framework is given in 9.3.1.

9.2.2 ‘Teaching-Centric’ Reflection

One of the key findings in this research is that reflection on the Bachelor of Teaching in Malaysia was heavily ‘teaching-centric’ (in 8.2.1). This means that in their written reflections, student teachers mainly focused on pedagogical aspects of teaching, directing most of their discussions onto themselves, and using the SWIS framework to help them write their reflections. ‘Teaching-centric’ could probably be a common feature in student teachers’ reflections in other parts of the world too.

There were many reasons for student teachers’ written reflections to be ‘teaching-centric’. One could be that these student teachers were still at a developmental stage, and/or there were a range of specific contextual factors that might influence student teachers to write in this way such as the requirements of teaching practice (in 2.4), the guidelines in the course documents (in 2.9), and the support and training given by the teaching practice supervisors (in 7.5).

The fact remained, however, that ‘reflection’ that was predominantly ‘teaching-centric’ limited the subject matter and focus of student teachers’ reflections and diminished or ignored other important aspects such as the ‘learning’ process. For example, I found that more than 70% of the topics in student teachers’ reflective journals were about ‘Focus on Planning and Teaching ESL Lessons’ and ‘Classroom Management’, while other topics such as ‘Focus on Learning’ were less than 30% (in 6.3). As a result, the discussions in student teachers’ reflections become somewhat one-dimensional and covered only a small area from the wider perspectives of teaching and learning.

Another limitation of ‘teaching-centric’ reflection was that ‘reflection’ on the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme did not expand by examining the wider contexts in which learning, and teaching took place. As suggested in some of the literature (e.g. Hatton & Smith, 1994; Farrell, 2015; Moon, 1999; Zeichner & Liston, 2014), a highly reflective and critical reflection should include reflecting on other areas such as the social and political dimensions and not only on teaching and the ‘self’. This is also in line with the Ministry’s aspiration to develop individuals who are ‘intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious’ based on the National

Education Philosophy (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1988) which reflection beyond teaching-centric could achieve.

If teacher training programmes in Malaysia aim to develop student teachers who are able to think critically and holistically (in 2.2), then student teachers should be given the opportunity to reflect 'beyond teaching'. This means teacher educators should encourage student teachers to explore other dimensions of teaching and learning such as their learners, culture and society because education is also made up of these elements. This is particularly relevant for student teachers to be aware and understand the diversity that exists in Malaysia, being a multi-racial and multi-cultural country, in order to plan and provide effective education for all. Furthermore, allowing student teachers to reflect 'beyond teaching' and through the process of reflection and critical reflection or as Farrell calls it as 'beyond practice' may lead to the possibility of 'developing new ideas that can empower them to become transformative intellectuals within societies' (Farrell, 2015, p. 96). This is something most teacher education programmes aspire to achieve.

9.2.3 When Writing Reflection is 'Forced'

On the Bachelor of Teaching programme, writing reflections during the practicum is a 'requirement' and student teachers' written reflections were assessed together with the teaching practice portfolio (in 2.10). Inevitably, this made the task of writing reflection compulsory. This resulted in student teachers being 'forced' to write the reflections during the practicum and provoked student teachers to be strategic in writing their reflections according to 'what the lecturer wants' (see 5.3). This raised the issue of student teachers' written reflections being 'superficial' since the intention of the reflection was to meet the assessment criteria mainly to pass the course and not for genuine self-development. This suggested that writing reflections for the purpose of assessment limits the effectiveness of 'reflection' among student teachers during teaching practice.

Hobbs (2007, p. 415) noted that 'forced reflection evokes a genuine and uninhibited response is a difficult undertaking...it is nearly impossible'. I also believe that it would be challenging for teacher education in Malaysia or in other places to have 'reflection' that is less structured and does not comply entirely with the curriculum. Thus, teacher education programmes have to come to terms with the limitations of 'reflection' when student teachers' written reflections are assessed. However, this does

not mean that teacher education programmes cannot change their curriculum if, based on what this research has shown, that a structured approach to reflection limits student teachers' 'reflection' to mainly on 'teaching'. My suggestion would be for teacher education programmes to make the task of reflecting on teaching more meaningful to the student teachers. For example, giving the student teachers the choice of area or topic for them to write their reflections or provide models of 'reflective' and 'genuine' reflections which they can use as examples.

Another problem of writing reflection during the practicum was that the main purpose of the task was to provide evidence of teaching performance, which was inconsistent with the purpose of reflection-on-action and the development of the 'reflective practitioner'. For that reason, the practice of writing reflections simply by identifying SWIS was of limited value. The problem of student teachers writing this type of reflection was that the reflections tended to be rather descriptive and did not meet the 'quality' or 'standard' of 'critical reflection' as suggested in the literature.

Certainly, the purpose of incorporating 'reflection' on the teacher education programme in Malaysia during the practicum was surely more than identifying SWIS. As Hussein (2007) argued it involved many abilities such as 'analysing', 'evaluating', 'appraising the moral and ethical issues implicit in the classroom', 'examining beliefs', and 'taking responsibilities for professional growth and autonomy'. Therefore, if teacher education programmes in Malaysia are to develop practitioners who are able to function effectively and meet the expectations of 'critically reflective teachers' (see 2.2), then teacher education programme developers should reconsider including reflection as part of assessment. This means that careful planning and implementation of assessed 'reflection' should be considered. It is crucial for the assessment to be clear in its aims and expectations due to the fact that the way that student teachers' reflections are assessed will either limit or expand student teachers' potential in developing their reflective abilities. In addition, support from trainers is also essential as this will enhance the reflective process, developing student teachers to engage in the reflective process for change, both professionally and personally.

9.2.4 Supporting Reflective Writing

In training student teachers to write reflections, the findings showed that teacher educators taught student teachers to write their reflections primarily via 'telling'. Student

teachers wrote reflections that were mainly directed by the supervisors such as focusing the reflections on identifying strengths, weaknesses, and suggesting improvements in teaching (in 5.3 and 7.3). The limitation of training by ‘telling’ was that although student teachers might learn the ways to write the reflections, the process might not result in sufficient understanding of the value of reflection in teaching. This would then defeat the purpose of having ‘reflection’ as part of teaching practice in the first place, which is to develop teachers who are ‘reflective’ and ‘critical thinkers’. This approach to training could also limit the opportunity for student teachers to be ‘open-minded’ and ‘responsible’ (Dewey, 1933) towards their learning, two of the characteristics of reflective practitioners.

Perhaps, it is sometimes difficult for teacher educators to get away from the culture of ‘teaching’ as ‘telling’, hence it persisted in ‘training’. However, if teacher education programmes want to meet their goals in developing student teachers who are able to perform better reflective and critical thinking skills, then teacher educators need to reconsider other training procedures that could develop these skills among student teachers. I will elaborate this point further in 9.3.

Reflection is a challenge not only to teacher educators in Malaysia but also in other countries. In an effort to rise to this challenge of educating and promoting reflection, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and student teachers must recognise the value of ‘reflection’. They need to understand, transfer, and apply the multifaceted concepts of ‘reflection’ and the process of ‘reflection’, which this research had revealed, onto practical settings for improving professional practice in teacher education.

Dewey (1933) identified one of the attributes of a reflective practitioner as being ‘responsible’. If we are ‘responsible’ teacher educators, then we must exercise the knowledge that we have and teach ‘reflection’ the best that we can. Teachers need to be ‘confident’ and ‘open-minded’ in practicing and exploring experiences, learners, context and culture. A change in our attitudes will be helpful in developing our ‘reflective-self’. These attitudes will support our own and our learners’ reflective thinking and writing.

9.3 Recommendations for Teacher Education in Malaysia and Other Countries

Here, I provide some suggestions on how to develop and promote ‘reflection’ for teacher education in Malaysia as well as internationally.

9.3.1 Improving Ways of Teaching Reflective Writing: Developing a Realistic Framework

For various reasons, I felt that identifying SWIS is insufficient in enabling student teachers to write reflections which are highly reflective and critical. It did not seem to fit into some of the criteria of ‘reflection’ as described in some of the other frameworks (e.g. Valli, 1990; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Farrell, 2015). Writing reflections based on SWIS confined the reflections to a standard structure. This seemed to narrow the focus of reflection to the achievement or non-achievement of the stated objectives of the lesson plans. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an appropriate framework which could also encourage student teachers to recognise, analyse, and relate their practical reality of the classrooms with the theoretical aspects learnt on the teacher education programme.

The framework I am proposing is one that is based on the features of reflective writing and the ‘patterns of flow’ which I identified earlier in the findings of student teachers’ written reflections (in Chapter 6). These features could serve as a guideline to how student teachers should begin thinking and writing about their teaching experiences. For example, student teachers could begin by stating a solution to the teaching problem, then discussing the process of solving the problem, and relating the solution to other experiences, while expressing their feelings and thoughts about the overall process.

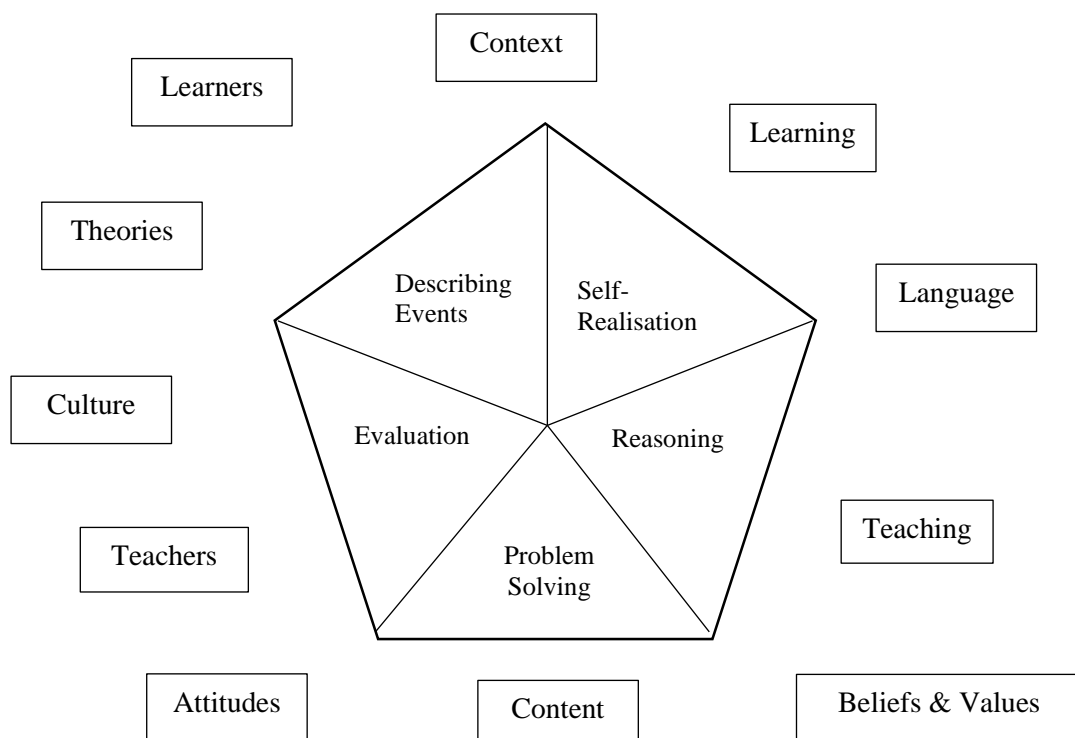
I am also suggesting that the framework should not be hierarchal unlike other frameworks (e.g. Van Manen, 1977; Valli, 1990; Rarieya, 2005). The findings in this research showed that each journal entry contained either one or more reflective features. In some entries, one feature seemed to be more dominant than others (in 6.5). It is on this ‘less dominant’ feature that teacher educators should help student teachers develop. This is why I am suggesting a non-hierarchal framework so that student teachers are free to explore each element in the framework and write their reflections based on their own unique experiences.

The framework could be one in which the elements are flexible, interchangeable, and yet integrated, which could be adjusted according to the needs of the course. It should not be culturally specific so that it could be used in a wide variety of contexts as possible. For example, Figure 9.1 illustrates the Framework for Developing Reflection. The framework has five different elements of reflection: Describing Events, Self-

Realisation, Evaluation, Problem Solving, and Reasoning. Each of these five elements within the framework could either be treated separately or each element could be linked or built onto one another in the case of one element being more dominant than the other.

Figure 9.1 shows eleven aspects positioned outside the pentagon which are ‘Learners’, ‘Learning’, ‘Teachers’, ‘Teaching’, ‘Context’, ‘Content’, ‘Beliefs and Values’, ‘Language’, ‘Theories’, ‘Attitudes’ and ‘Culture’. These are examples of potential areas or topics the student teachers could write about in their reflections. These eleven aspects were selected based on the findings from the quantitative analysis I conducted into the topic areas the participants wrote about in their reflective journals. Note that these aspects form a sort of checklist of topic areas for student teachers to choose from when reflecting on their classroom experience. These topics would challenge pre-service student teachers’ thinking and their conceptions about teaching and learning. They provide the opportunities for student teachers to explore issues in different perspectives and contexts. These aspects would address the issue of ‘teaching-centric’ reflection, where the framework would remind the student teachers to include discussions on other areas apart from ‘teaching’.

Figure 9.1: Framework for Developing ‘Reflection’



Student teachers could start exploring each element on its own in any particular order depending on the different level of teaching experiences they have. For example, pre-service student teachers with limited teaching experience could start by ‘Describing Events’ and/or ‘Self-Realisation’ before moving on to include other elements in their reflections. The framework is flexible which means that student teachers could decide for themselves where they would like to begin their reflections depending on their needs, interests, and experiences. However, as student teachers progress through their practicum, they would be expected to include more challenging elements such as ‘Evaluation’, ‘Problem Solving’ and ‘Reasoning’ in their written reflections. Teacher educators should provide appropriate guidance and strategies to assist student teachers in developing these more demanding elements in their written reflections.

Before student teachers start using the framework, teacher educators could provide an outline or a model of how a reflection should be written based on the framework such as through the different ‘patterns of flow’ (in 6.5). The patterns of flow could illustrate the different elements of the framework as well as being combined in different ways. In addition, probing questions could also be used during post-observation discussions to direct and stimulate reflection on the teaching experiences according to the framework. They should also encourage student teachers to relate their experiences with the knowledge they had acquired from input sessions during lectures, the literature, case studies, or classroom practices in other contexts. The role of the teacher educators is to assist student teachers to start reflecting on their teaching and then provide feedback to develop their reflection further.

Teacher educators could also introduce the framework in phases. For example, during SBE which could be Phase 1 of training student teachers to write reflections, teacher educators could ask the student teachers to focus their reflections on ‘Describing Events’ and/or ‘Self-Realisation’, elaborating and discussing things they observed at school or during ‘teaching’ and the things they learned through the process. At this stage, perhaps the teacher educators could introduce the ‘Linear Flow’ pattern to help student teachers begin writing their reflections since this is more straight forward and the ‘pattern’ or structure is easier to see. Then, in the first practicum, student teachers could develop their reflective writing skills to ‘Evaluation’ and later to ‘Reasoning’ and ‘Problem Solving’ in the next two practicums. At this point, other patterns of flow (e.g.

Random Flow, Recursive Flow and Dominant Flow) could be introduced in order to give variation to how student teachers could develop their reflection. These patterns of flow can be used to model the structure of reflective writing in a variety of ways that are possible. Using this framework should help the student teachers to gradually develop their reflective writing over the periods of SBE and the three practicums. Further discussion on this in 9.3.2.

In addition, samples of reflective writing can be used to illustrate the patterns of flow in the reflection. For example, as part of their training, student teachers could be given sample reflections and asked to identify the pattern of flow that it demonstrates. Other discourse patterns through phrases such as ‘I managed to’ and ‘I realised’ (as I identified in Chapter 6) can be used to train student teachers to write their reflections alongside the sample reflections.

Instead of ‘telling’ student teachers how to write and what to include in their reflections, teacher educators should start ‘listening’ to what student teachers have to say in their reflections. As Yagata (2017, p. 332) found out, his failure to ‘listen generously’ to his supervisee meant that he missed the distress signals his student teacher was giving him with regards to classroom teaching. Student teachers may lose motivation to write their reflections if the supervisor is not reading or listening carefully to student teachers’ teaching problems. Although generally there are feedback sessions after lesson observations, the interaction and communication between the supervisor and the student teacher may not be effective, especially when the supervisor fails to listen and scrutinise the problem carefully. Therefore, I am suggesting that teacher educators should engage in a ‘co-constructive reflective dialogue’ (Yagata, 2017) so that they are more aware of the problems behind student teachers’ teaching experiences and help student teachers to reflect effectively. By listening carefully to what the student teachers had to say and share about the things that happened in the classroom, teacher educators could identify some of the issues the student teachers were experiencing and could discuss the matter together to find solutions to the problem. Through reflective dialogues, teacher educators could also provide the emotional support and practical advice student teachers need in improving their teaching. This could also help develop student teachers’ reflective thinking.

Reflection is not a ‘spontaneous activity’ for practising teachers (Gelter, 2003) which also suggested that student teachers need time to digest and make sense of things.

Perhaps, instead of using the same framework throughout the three practicum phases, the practice of writing reflections should be progressive, gradually shifting from being structured in the first phase of practicum to less structured in the second phase and unstructured (e.g. the student teachers develop their own structure) in the third phase of the practicum. Thus, this would give time and space for student teachers to get used to the practice of writing reflections and making sense of their teaching.

Another way that could help student teachers with 'reflection' is through 'mentoring'. Mentoring offers an opportunity for experienced teachers to guide and cultivate in their younger colleagues the practice of reflecting on their teaching. New teachers may often feel under pressure when undergoing teaching practice in school. They may feel overwhelmed in juggling between planning and organising classroom activities, trying to understand the process, and reflecting on the teaching experiences. Experienced teachers could help these student teachers by 'talking' to them about the new experiences. For example, in helping student teachers with classroom control problems, student teachers and teacher mentors could work together in analysing and finding the solutions to the problems. This is one of the ways in which school-based mentors can encourage reflection among student teachers during teaching practice.

I would also like to suggest here that the training of reflective writing to pre-service student teachers with limited teaching experience could be conducted using a module combining the topics of reflection, the features of reflective writing and the patterns of flow in the framework. For example, in Module 1 which is the first phase of training, student teachers could start by brainstorming the different topics that they attempted to write in their reflections. Then, they could use the 'checklist' in Appendix AN to identify the topics they wrote during SBE or teaching practice. The purpose of the list is to make student teachers aware of the areas they should discuss in their reflections. Student teachers could add other topics to the list if they see fit. A sample reflection should also be included to give practice to student teachers in recognising the topics in the reflections. Module 2 and 3 (Appendix AO and AP) could be given simultaneously. Here the student teachers are introduced to the features of reflective writing which will later determine the type of reflections they write. The different patterns of flow are also explained in this second phase of training. Samples of reflections are also given for student teachers to analyse and identify the different

features and flows of the reflections (the Handout in Appendix AQ). Hopefully, by the end of the training student teachers are able to write their reflections effectively.

9.3.2 Considering Alternative Ways of Assessing Written Reflections

In order to provide an alternative method in assessing student teachers' written reflections, first of all we would have to be clear of the aims and purposes of incorporating written reflections during the practicum. We need to know what exactly should be assessed: either the 'teaching skills' such as lesson planning, using teaching materials, teaching speaking skills; or the 'reflection' of the teaching experiences like the ability to explore and explain the reasons for the choice of activities used in the lesson, to analyse a teaching problem and describe the solution with reference to a particular theory. This would subsequently enable teacher educators to plan and design training courses for student teachers on how to write reflections and develop their reflective skills effectively. This would also eliminate the feeling of confusion and uncertainty among teacher educators of the role of reflection during the practicum, thus making the process of writing reflections during the practicum for student teachers more meaningful.

I feel that it is necessary to assess student teachers' written reflections if it is one of the obligatory components in a teacher education curriculum. In fact, if reflection is not assessed, there is a possibility that student teachers may not even write their reflections and reflect on their teaching. As for the teacher educators, assessing student teachers' written reflections is a way to keep track and be aware of student teachers' progress during teaching practice. The information contained in student teachers' reflection are valuable data which teacher educators could use to improve teacher training programme as a whole.

Nevertheless, Hargreaves (2004) also argued that requiring reflection for assessment purposes may not be a positive learning strategy and that reflections should be 'required' but 'not assessed'. In addition, Hobbs (2007, p. 415) also suggested that reflections should not be assessed in the early stages; only after individuals have had significant experiences of the teacher training course. I disagree with the views expressed by both Hargreaves and Hobbs because, as my findings have shown despite the reflections being assessed, student teachers managed to reflect on their teaching and learned something from the process, e.g. as shown from the various features of reflective

writing (see 6.5). I believe that student teachers could be taught to write reflections at any stage of their teacher training by using the ‘patterns of flow’. However, the assessment process could be improved. My suggestion is that it should be assessed as one separate component within the teaching practice element. In the context of the current study, student teachers’ written reflections were assessed together with the teaching practice portfolio and no separate marks were given to the written reflections. The problem with combining and making the reflective writing part of assessment during the practicum is that it was not clear whether the written reflections were assessed based on student teachers’ performance on teaching or reflection. Certainly, this would add more work to the teacher educators in order to assess student teachers’ written reflections separately from the teaching practice observations. However, if a clear rubric is developed, this would help the teacher educators to mark student teachers’ written reflections relatively easily.

As an example, there could be two sections in the rubric. One section could focus on assessing the lessons or aspects of teaching such as ‘lesson planning’, ‘lesson implementation’, and ‘professional qualities’; while the other section could specifically focus on reflection. Table 9.1 shows an example of how the rubric for reflection might look. The descriptors were developed and built from a number of existing frameworks of reflective writing (e.g. Jay & Johnson, 2002; Farrell, 2015; Hatton & Smith, 1994).

Table 9.1: Suggested Rubric for Assessing Written Reflection

| Reflection | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|--|
| Aspect | Not Yet Reflective | Reflective | Highly Reflective |
| 1. Evaluation | Student teacher was unable to comment on own performance in the lesson taught in any meaningful way. | Student teacher was able to identify issues in the lesson taught but may need some prompting or guidance from the supervisor on the course of action to take in future. | Student teacher was able to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the lesson taught, discussed them in an analytical and critical way, and was able to see the implications for future practice. |
| 2. Describing Events | Student teacher described, reported or retold the experiences with minimal transformation, no | Student teacher described, reported or retold the experiences with some transformation, observations or insights. | Student teacher was able to examine and describe personal classroom actions, showing significance, |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| | added observations or insights. | | recognising salient features, and envision a change. |
| 3. Self-Realisation | Student teacher showed limited awareness of things and showed lack of understanding why something had happened. | Student teacher showed some awareness of things that happened in and outside the classroom. | Student teacher showed an awareness and deep understanding of why something had happened. |
| 4. Problem Solving | Student teacher only identified the teaching problem but did not attempt to solve or give suggestions to the problem. | Student teacher recognised a teaching problem, explored the problem further, asked questions and looked for answers, considered alternatives, speculated about why something was happening. | Student teacher identified a teaching problem, attempted to make sense of the problem, analysed the problem and related it to concepts and experiences. Gave suggestions and showed evidence that the suggestions had been attempted or implemented in the next lesson. |
| 5. Reasoning | Student teacher was unsure of things happening in the classroom. Unable to relate events with previous experiences or theoretical concepts. | Student teacher attempted to examine the different choices a teacher makes about particular skills or activities that were taught and how to put these theories into practice. | Student teacher integrated the theoretical concepts with the teaching experiences, involving a high level of transformation and conceptualisation. |

9.4 Limitations of the Research

In this section I discuss some limitations of the study. They are stated below:

- i. I collected student teachers' reflective journals written during their last practicum Phase 3 which lasted for 12 weeks. This meant that I could only observe any development in their reflective writing during this period. If I collected student teachers' reflections from Phase 1 and Phase 2, perhaps a broader picture of the training and development (particularly the support student teachers received from the teacher educators) that were involved in student teachers' reflections could have been established. Nonetheless, this did not affect the main purpose of the study.

- ii. Another limitation is that this research only looked at one particular teacher training programme in Malaysia. However, the detailed description of the context of the study which I have provided in Chapter 2 could help readers to identify what is similar in their contexts and examine the overlapping situations.
- iii. As a member of the teaching staff at IPG, I have wide experience and background knowledge about the education system in Malaysia. Detaching myself from what is 'familiar' and making the data 'strange' was a constant struggle. However, having acknowledged this in Chapter 1 and stating my position in Chapter 4 would inform the readers that I have taken all necessary precautions to make my interpretation of the data as unbiased as possible.
- iv. This study was conducted by a single researcher (me), which means that the categories of the findings were developed on my own interpretation and analysis of the data. I am aware that this may raise the question of validity of the findings in my research. However, as I have explained in 4.6, I analysed and interpreted the data with 'rigour' of the qualitative and quantitative methodology I used to identify the categories and themes that emerged from my analysis. If the study was conducted with another researcher, perhaps further validation could be achieved within the study.
- v. The participants in this study came from a single teacher education institution. Choosing a wider sample such as taking participants from other teacher education institutions across the country would enhance the study further.

9.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This research, being of an exploratory and interpretive nature, raises a number of opportunities for future research, especially to refine and further elaborate the current findings. The main emerging theme is that 'reflection', to the student teachers and teacher educators in the teacher education programme in Malaysia, is primarily structured on SWIS, characterised as being 'teaching-centric', and consisting of five distinctive features: evaluation, reasoning, self-realisation, problem solving and describing events. These are some of the findings in this research and the outcome of integrating 'reflection' during the practicum. I feel further research will be valuable to explore in greater detail other possible outcomes of 'reflection'.

This study was conducted with pre-service student teachers during the practicum which showed their perception and engagement of ‘reflection’ during teacher training. A follow-up study could investigate further whether student teachers continued to engage in reflective activities, e.g. journal writing, once they are in their schools. The investigation could inform us as to whether the priority of reflecting on their practice has changed among these in-service teachers as they gained more experiences in teaching. As experienced teachers, will they still write reflections which are ‘teaching-centric’ or will their discussions expand to include other issues? What factors would affect the outcome of ‘reflection’ among these practising teachers? More importantly, the investigation could shed some light whether the practice of writing daily and weekly reflections during teaching practice successfully developed effective critical teachers, which many writers had suggested in the literature (e.g. Brookfield, 1995; Schön, 1987; Farrell, 2015).

Similar research could also be conducted and replicated in other contexts. For example, if this study were conducted in a different setting such as with pre-service student teachers from a teacher education programme in the United Kingdom, would this produce similar results? Or if the circumstances of writing the reflections changed (e.g. if it is not compulsory to write reflections during the practicum and/or the written reflections are not assessed) would the student teachers approach writing the reflections differently from the current study?

This study reports on the result of student teachers’ reflections in the last phase of the practicum. Perhaps, a longitudinal study that is carried out over a certain period of time (e.g. throughout the three practicum phases) could allow opportunities for researchers to observe and understand further the process of developing student teachers’ skills of reflection and applying their reflections on their teaching to their pedagogic practice. Researchers could use the information gathered in this study to make comparisons and contrast between participants, in terms of the progression of their reflective skills. More detailed and elaborated findings could be obtained from a study that is carried out for a longer period of time.

My research has presented findings only on one perspective from the many perspectives of ‘reflection’. Other research must continue to examine the concepts of ‘reflection’ and the impact it has on student teachers in other contexts both in the short run and from holistic, multidisciplinary, multicultural perspectives. This information and

knowledge would help those who are involved in developing teacher education programmes either in Malaysia or in other countries to develop teacher training courses that would enhance student teachers' reflective skills.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

This has been a research project driven by a close textual analysis of the interviews with the student teachers and teacher educators and student teachers' written reflections into their perceptions of 'reflection'. The findings in this research revealed that 'reflection' mainly involves identifying SWIS and student teachers used this as a framework to write their reflections. Although, identifying SWIS was helpful in getting student teachers with limited teaching experience to start writing their reflections, I argue that the reflections became 'narrow'. Furthermore, the content of the written reflections also revealed that student teachers tend to focus mainly on issues of 'teaching'. I call these reflections which have such characteristics 'teaching-centric'. As a result, student teachers' written reflections tend to be one-dimensional and 'on the surface', rather than containing in-depth and in-breadth discussions of the teaching experiences as one would expect of reflections that are 'critical'. In addition, student teachers' written reflections are one of the elements being assessed during the practicum. Thus, the student teachers were 'forced' to write the reflections to meet the requirement of the course. In doing so, I argue that these reflections became 'superficial' since student teachers were writing the reflections 'according to what the lecturer wants' instead of 'genuinely' reflecting on teaching issues that were relevant to them to improve their teaching. If student teachers' written reflections were to reach a certain level of 'criticality' that goes 'beyond teaching' which includes exploration on other dimensions such as the moral, social, cultural, ethical, economical and political, I suggest that the training of reflective writing has to include discussions on these other dimensions and that the reflective writing process be more flexible. This will enable the student teachers to acquire better understanding of their teaching experiences and develop more effective reflective writing skills.

In fulfilling the demands of the teacher education programme, arguably the support that was provided to the student teachers in writing their reflections was adequate based on the student teachers' ability to produce the written reflections during the practicum. However, a closer examination into the content of the course documents

such as the guidelines for writing reflection and the sample reflection, reveals the explanations lack clarity. Teacher educators were mainly instructing the student teachers to write in their reflections according to SWIS which limits student teachers' reflection to things in the classroom using a specific format. Therefore, based on these findings, the support in training of reflective writing to student teachers was unsatisfactory.

While other research in the literature investigates 'reflection' in terms of its level comparing them to a set of pre-determined criteria, mine does not. I administered a close textual analysis of student teachers' written reflections approaching them 'bottom-up'. The qualitative analysis revealed seven topics student teachers wrote in their reflections and the quantitative analysis of the topics showed that the main area student teachers talked about in their reflections is 'planning and delivering ESL lessons'. Again, this indicates the 'teaching-centric' nature of student teachers' written reflections.

From the student teachers' reflective journals, I also identified five features of reflective writing: 'Evaluation', 'Reasoning', 'Self-Realisation', 'Problem Solving', and 'Describing Events'. These features describe the elements in the reflective process that student teachers engaged with as they reflected on their teaching experiences during the practicum. To a certain extent these features measure the level of student teachers' reflection and reflective ability, by drawing inferences about the depth of engagement in the reflective process. This key finding is most significant since it indicates the different elements involved in the thought process while student teachers reflect on their practice. This is one area that most of the previous research that I had reviewed did not address.

The textual analysis of student teachers' written reflections also indicates that some journal extracts contain more than one feature which could be linked to or separated from another. I called the connections between the features 'patterns of flow'. I discovered that there are four ways in which the features could shift and form a pattern which I labelled as 'Linear Flow', 'Random Flow', 'Recursive Flow', and 'Dominant Flow' which illustrate student teachers' thought processes that were involved in writing their reflections. The discovery of these 'patterns of flows' is important as they can be used as examples when training student teachers in the skills of structuring their reflective writing. This is another key finding that other research on reflection did not discuss in their findings.

This research has enriched my understanding of 'reflection' in terms of what it has been perceived by the student teachers and teacher educators on the teacher

education programme in Malaysia, how student teachers were trained and the support they received in developing their reflective writing skills. However, the most valuable aspect of this research is my discovery of the many thought processes that 'reflection' entails as can be seen through the topics student teachers wrote in their reflections, the features of reflective writing and the 'patterns of flow' that helped me to visualise 'reflection' in ways that were a revelation to me, and which could have real applications to the training of reflective writing skills both in Malaysia and beyond.

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Appendix A: Major Courses offered for Bachelor of Teaching Programme

| No. | Course |
|------------|--|
| 1 | Malay Language for Primary Education |
| 2 | Arabic for Primary Education |
| 3 | Chinese Language for Primary Education |
| 4 | Tamil for Primary Education |
| 5 | Social Studies for Primary Education |
| 6 | Music Education for Primary Education |
| 7 | Visual Arts Education for Primary Education |
| 8 | Islamic Education for Primary Education |
| 9 | Physical Education for Primary Education |
| 10 | Mathematics for Primary Education |
| 11 | Science for Primary Education |
| 12 | Design and Technology for Primary Education |
| 13 | Pre-school Education |
| 14 | Special Needs Education – Problems in Learning for Primary Education |
| 15 | Special Needs Education – Problems in Hearing for Primary Education |
| 16 | Special Needs Education – Problems in Sight for Primary Education |
| 17 | Pendidikan Pemulihan Pendidikan Rendah |
| 18 | Teaching English as a Second Language for Primary Education |

Appendix B: List of Courses for Each Curriculum Component

1. Compulsory

| No | Course | Semester |
|----|---|----------|
| 1 | Islamic Civilisation and Asia Civilisation | 1 |
| 2 | English Language Proficiency I | 1 |
| 3 | English Language Proficiency II | 2 |
| 4 | Language Literacy | 2 |
| 5 | Numerical Literacy | 2 |
| 6 | Ethnic Relation | 3 |
| 7 | Arts in Education | 4 |
| 8 | Co-Curriculum – Management | 1 |
| 9 | Co-Curriculum – Games | 2 |
| 10 | Co-Curriculum – Uniform Unit I | 3 |
| 11 | Co-Curriculum – Uniform Unit II | 4 |
| 12 | Co-Curriculum – Athletics | 5 |
| 13 | Co-Curriculum – Societies | 6 |
| 14 | Character Building for Teachers – Phase I | 1 |
| | Character Building for Teachers – Phase II | 2 |
| | Character Building for Teachers – Phase III | 3 |
| | Character Building for Teachers – Phase IV | 4 |
| | Character Building for Teachers – Phase V | 5 |
| | Character Building for Teachers – Phase VI | 6 |

2. Core (Professional Education)

| No | Course | Semester |
|----|---|----------|
| 1 | Philosophy and Education in Malaysia | 1 |
| 2 | Child Development | 1 |
| 3 | Learning and the Learner | 2 |
| 4 | Behaviour and Classroom Management | 3 |
| 5 | Technology in Teaching and Learning | 4 |
| 6 | Culture and Learning | 5 |
| 7 | Guidance and Counselling for Children | 7 |
| 8 | Leadership and Teacher Professional Development | 8 |
| 9 | Teacher and Current Challenges | 8 |

3. Core (Professional Practice)

| No | Course | Semester |
|----|--|----------|
| 1 | School Based Experience I – Professional Education | 1 |
| 2 | School Based Experience II – Major Course | 2 |
| 3 | School Based Experience III – Elective Course I | 3 |
| 4 | School Based Experience – Elective Course II | 4 |
| 5 | Practicum Phase I | 5 |
| 6 | Practicum Phase II | 6 |
| 7 | Practicum Phase III | 7 |
| 8 | Internship | 8 |

4. Core (Major Courses for TESL)

| No. | Course | Semester |
|-----|---|----------|
| 1 | Introduction to Linguistics | 1 |
| 2 | Literature in English | 1 |
| 3 | ELT Methodology | 2 |
| 4 | English Phonetics and Phonology | 2 |
| 5 | Teaching Listening & Speaking Skills in the Primary ESL Classroom | 3 |
| 6 | Teaching Reading Skills and Vocabulary in the Primary ESL Classroom | 3 |
| 7 | Teaching Writing Skills in the Primary ESL Classroom | 4 |
| 8 | Teaching Grammar in the Primary ESL Classroom | 4 |
| 9 | Managing the Primary ESL Classroom | 5 |
| 10 | Linking Theory to Practice | 5 |
| 11 | Developing & Using Resources for the Primary ESL Classroom | 6 |
| 12 | Language Assessment | 6 |
| 13 | Action Research I - Methodology | 7 |
| 14 | Curriculum Studies | 7 |
| 15 | Action Research II – Implementation and Reporting | 8 |

5. Elective for TESL

a) Package I

| No. | Elective I | Course | Semester |
|-----|---------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Language Arts | Children's Literature | 2 |
| 2 | | Songs and Poetry for Young Learners | 3 |
| 3 | | Stories for Young Learners | 4 |
| 4 | | Plays and Drama for Young Learners | 5 |

b) Package II

| No. | Elective 2 | Course | Semester |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|----------|
| 1. | Civics and Citizenship Education | Introduction to Civics and Citizenship Education | 3 |
| | | Theory of Learning, Resources and Evaluation in Civics and Citizenship Education | 4 |
| | | Instructional Methodology in Civics and Citizenship Education | 5 |
| | | Service Learning in Civics and Citizenship Education | 6 |
| 2. | Moral Education | Introduction to the Basic of Moral Concepts | 3 |
| | | Moral Education Curriculum and Teaching Methods | 4 |
| | | Evaluation Management of Moral Education in School | 5 |
| | | Moral Issues and Challenges towards Appreciation of Moral Values | 6 |
| 3. | Science | Primary Science Curriculum and Pedagogies | 3 |
| | | Thinking and Working Scientifically | 4 |
| | | Evaluation in Science Teaching | 5 |
| | | Management of the Science Laboratory and Resources | 6 |
| 4. | Mathematics | Mathematics Education Curriculum | 3 |
| | | Planning and Teaching Mathematics | 4 |

| No. | Elective 2 | Course | Semester |
|-----|-----------------------|--|----------|
| | | Teaching of Numbers, Fractions, Decimals and Percentages | 5 |
| | | Assessment Practices in Mathematics | 6 |
| 5. | Visual Arts Education | Curriculum Studies and Management in Visual Arts Education Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools | 3 |
| | | Teaching and Learning of Visual Arts Education | 4 |
| | | Visual Arts Education Pedagogy Integrated Curriculum Primary School | 5 |
| | | Visual Arts Education Evaluation | 6 |
| 6. | Music Education | Foundation of Music Education | 3 |
| | | Keyboard and Singing in the Classroom | 3 |
| | | Music Teaching Education | 4 |
| | | Curriculum and Music Teaching | 5 |
| | | Classroom Musical Activities | 6 |
| 7. | Life Skills | Introduction to Primary Living School Education | 3 |
| | | Design and Technology | 4 |
| | | Business and Entrepreneurship | 5 |
| | | Home Science Technology and Agriculture | 6 |
| 8. | Pre-school Music | The Learning of Music in Preschool Education | 3 |
| | | Music Appreciation and Movements in Preschool | 4 |
| | | Songs and Music Appreciation in Preschool | 5 |
| | | Music Appreciation in Preschool (Musical Instruments) | 6 |
| 9. | Al-Quran Education | Recital and Interpretation of the Al-Quran | 3 |
| | | Ulum Al-Quran and Ulum Hadith | 4 |
| | | Tarannum Al-Quran | 5 |
| | | Hafazan Al-Quran | 6 |

Appendix C: Checklist for Portfolio Content

TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE CAMPUS _____

CHECKLIST FOR PORTFOLIO CONTENT

| Section | | No. | Item | Tick (/)* | |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----|--|-------------|----|
| | | 00 | List of Portfolio Content | SS | ST |
| A | Personal Profile | A01 | Student's biodata | | |
| | | A02 | Identification document | | |
| | | A03 | Professional statement | | |
| B | School Information | B1 | Map of school location, school and classroom layout plan | | |
| | | B2 | School organisational chart | | |
| | | B3 | School vision and mission | | |
| | | B4 | School calendar | | |
| | | B5 | Staff name list (Academic and Management) | | |
| | | B6 | School rules | | |
| C | Job Information | C01 | Appointment letters | | |
| | | C02 | Practicum guidance form (PR1) | | |
| | | C03 | Practicum attendance form | | |
| | | C04 | Pair teaching record | | |
| D | Co-curriculum Information | D01 | Co-curriculum activity plan | | |
| | | D02 | Name list of members and attendance | | |
| | | D03 | Co-curriculum activity report | | |
| | | D04 | Project plan / other roles | | |
| | | D05 | Project report / other roles | | |
| E | Journal | E01 | Format and sample journal | | |
| | | E02 | Weekly journal | | |
| | | E03 | Development of action plan | | |
| F | Others | F01 | Innovation in teaching and learning | | |
| | | F02 | | | |
| | | F03 | | | |
| Signature | | | | | |
| Date | | | | | |

Note: Teaching aids, examination question papers, samples of pupils' work etc. should be kept in a folder or in a separate portfolio. *SS = checked and signed by student teacher; ST = checked and signed by supervising teacher

Appendix D: Format for Weekly Reflection for Week 1 only

Weekly Reflective Journal

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Journal number: | |
| Practicum week: | |
| Date the problem / event occurred: | |
| Title of the journal: | |
| | |

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Checked by supervising teacher: | Checked by supervising lecturer: |
| Signature: | Signature: |
| Name: | Name: |
| Date: | Date: |

Appendix E: Format for Weekly Reflections for Week 2 and later

Weekly Reflective Journal

| | |
|--|--|
| Journal number: | |
| Practicum week: | |
| Date the problem / event occurred: | |
| Title of the journal: | |
| 1. Problem / event: | |
| 2. Analysis: | |
| 3. Suggestions for subsequent actions: | |
| 4. Duration of subsequent actions: | |

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Checked by supervising teacher: | Checked by supervising lecturer: |
| Signature: | Signature: |
| Name: | Name: |
| Date: | Date: |

Appendix F: Guidelines on How to Write Daily and Weekly Reflections

1. Daily Written Reflection

5 elements in written reflection:

- Source (of the problem/teaching event)
- Issue/problem/teaching event
- Feelings
- Realisation
- Action

2. Weekly Written Reflection

Format: Your reflection should focus on only one or two issues.

- Problem / Event
- Analysis
- Suggestions for future action
- When to take future action

3. Sample of written reflection (the format):

My pupils look tired and sleepy. I am worried that they will not understand what I have taught them in my lesson. Apparently, all of their English classes are in the afternoon. I tried to keep them awake by asking questions. But they are still not interested in my lesson. What should I do? I think I will ask the pupils to work collaboratively in groups in my next lesson.

Note:

- This text was originally written in *Bahasa Melayu* and has been translated into English by the researcher.
- This guideline was given to the student teachers during the Practicum Briefing.

Appendix G: Guidelines for Reflective Journal

GUIDELINES FOR REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Topic/focus/issue: _____

| No. | Item | Note |
|-----|--|------|
| 1. | Issue/event/problem | |
| 2. | Development of the issue/event/problem - relevance | |
| 3. | Thorough analysis of the issue/event/problem | |
| | i) identifying the reasons for the issue/event/problem | |
| | ii) identifying the possible causes of the issue/event/problem | |
| | iii) identifying the weaknesses of the issue/event/problem | |
| | iv) identifying the strengths of the issue/event/problem | |
| | v) possible effect of the issue/event/problem | |
| 4. | Literature review that relates to the issue/event/problem | |
| 5. | Suggestions and ideas to solve each weakness | |
| | i) appropriateness and relevance | |
| | ii) critical/creative | |
| 6. | Duration in solving the issue/problem | |
| 7. | Action plan to solve the issue/problem | |
| | i) Action plan/work schedule/checklist | |
| | ii) References – reading/internet search/discussion | |
| 8. | Implementation of improvements | |
| | i) Duration | |
| | ii) Effectiveness of the steps taken | |
| 9. | Conclusion/reflection | |
| | i) Evaluate the effects of the action taken | |
| | ii) Shortcomings | |

Appendix H: Weekly Reflective Journal Writing

1. Concept

A form of academic writing that is ongoing based on an event, problem, accomplishment or an area that needs attention by the student teachers which relates to their experience during teaching practice in school or while undertaking certain tasks. The journal serves as a basis for the student teachers to reflect, assess and help to decide on future actions in order to solve problems or develop effectively according to the set targets.

2. Objectives

Student teachers should be able to:

2.1 use their reflective journal on their experiences during practicum in order to improve their teaching.

2.2 evaluate the effectiveness of their tasks and responsibilities in teaching.

2.3 use reflective journals to guide future actions to solve problems and to increase the effectiveness of teaching through improvements, creativity and innovation.

2.4 develop student teachers' awareness of their roles as professional teachers, who constantly developing their teaching and learning.

2.5 use their reflective journals as a source for discussions with lecturer supervisor or teacher mentor to develop as professional teacher.

2.6 increase the level of reflection and reflective practice in order to develop critical and analytical thinking.

2.7 increase professional skill.

3. Guidelines

3.1 Student teachers are required to write and keep their reflective journals during the entire practicum period.

3.2 The reflection should focus on only one event, issue, achievement or important/critical aspects that student teachers experienced during practicum.

3.3 The focused aspects should be analysed in depth, include views, suggestions and future actions.

3.4 Facts should be supported with literature so that each issue, suggestion and steps taken are more objective and effective.

3.5 Action plan should be determined to implement the suggestions to overcome the teaching problems.

3.6 Student teachers record the data collected of their teaching problems in order to identify the progress they made in their teaching.

3.7 Reflective journals are used to look back on their roles as a professional teacher.

3.8 Student teachers are required to update and keep their reflective journals in order throughout the practicum period.

4. Things That Need to Be Given Attention In The Weekly Reflective Journals

4.1 Support should be given by the lecturer supervisor and teacher mentor to ensure that only relevant and critical matters should contain in student teachers' reflections.

4.5 The content of the reflective journals should be discussed with peers, lecturer supervisor and teacher mentor.

Note:

- This text was originally written in *Bahasa Melayu*.
- Translated into English and adapted from the *Garis Panduan Pelaksanaan Amalan Profesional, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2014*.

Appendix I: PR1/P Form

PRACTICUM EVALUATION FORM PHASE 1 BACHELOR OR TEACHING PROGRAMME

(To be completed together by lecturer supervisor and teacher supervisor)

Name: _____ ID No.: _____

Course: _____ Intake: _____
(month-year)

Major/Elective: _____

School: _____

Subject: _____ Topic: _____

Year/Semester: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

(Note: This form is to be used on the final observation at the end of Practicum 1 only)

Level Indicator

Level 1: There are many weaknesses that need attention.

Level 2: There are a few weaknesses that need attention.

Level 3: Moderate achievement, needs further improvements.

Level 4: Good in many aspects.

Level 5: Very good, excellent in most aspects.

| Level | Percentage 10% | Percentage 20% | Percentage 30% | Percentage 40% |
|-------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | 0.0 – 1.9 | 0.0 – 3.9 | 0.0 – 5.9 | 0.0 – 7.9 |
| 2 | 2.0 – 3.9 | 4.0 – 7.9 | 6.0 – 11.9 | 8.0 – 15.9 |
| 3 | 4.0 – 6.4 | 8.0 – 12.9 | 12.0 – 19.4 | 16.0 – 25.9 |
| 4 | 6.5 – 7.9 | 13.0 – 15.9 | 19.5 – 23.9 | 26.0 – 31.9 |
| 5 | 8.0 – 10.0 | 16.0 – 20.0 | 24.0 – 30.0 | 32.0 – 40.0 |

| Component | Aspect | Level | Comment |
|--|---|--|---------|
| (A) LESSON PLANNING (30 marks) | a. Learning objectives b. Content c. Teaching & learning strategies d. Teaching & learning materials e. Inclusion of moral values f. Thinking skills | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks = <input type="text"/> | |
| (B) LESSON IMPLEMENTATION (40 marks) | a. Set induction b. Lesson development c. Classroom management d. Communication e. Quality of learning f. Closing g. Achievement of learning objectives h. Application of moral values | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks = <input type="text"/> | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| (C) REFLECTION (10 marks) | a. Reflective writing b. Reflective thinking c. Portfolio building | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks = <input type="text"/> | |
| (D) ATTITUDES & ATTRIBUTES (20 marks) | a. Teacher presence b. Sensitivity towards learners and the environment c. Character d. Teacher professionalism | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks = <input type="text"/> | |
| TOTAL MARKS = (A+B+C+D) = | | | |
| OVERALL COMMENT: | | | |

.....
(Signature of Lecturer Supervisor)
Name:

.....
(Signature of Teacher Supervisor)
Name:

Appendix J: PR1 Form

PRACTICUM FEEDBACK FORM

Name: _____ ID No.: _____

Course: _____ Intake: _____
(month-year)

Major/Elective: _____

Practicum (Tick): Practicum Phase 1 Practicum Phase 2 Practicum Phase 3

School: _____

Subject: _____ Topic: _____

Semester: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ Observation No.: _____

| Component | Aspect | Level | Comment |
|---|---|-----------|---------|
| (A) LESSON PLANNING | a. Learning objectives | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | b. Content | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | c. Teaching & learning strategies | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | d. Teaching & learning materials | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | e. Inclusion of moral values | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | f. Thinking skills | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| (B) LESSON IMPLEMENTATION | a. Set induction | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | b. Lesson development | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | c. Classroom management | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | d. Communication | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | e. Quality of learning | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | f. Closing | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | g. Achievement of learning objectives | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | h. Application of moral values | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| (C) REFLECTION | a. Reflective writing | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | b. Reflective thinking | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | c. Portfolio building | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| (D) ATTITUDES & ATTRIBUTES | a. Teacher presence | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | b. Sensitivity towards learners and the environment | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | c. Character | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| | d. Teacher professionalism | 1 2 3 4 5 | |
| (E) OVERALL COMMENT | | | |

.....
(Signature of Lecturer Supervisor/Teacher Supervisor)
Name: _____

.....
(Signature of Student Teacher)
Name: _____

Appendix K: PR2 Form

PRACTICUM EVALUATION FORM

| | |
|--------------|--|
| MAJOR | |
| MINOR | |

IPGK: _____

Name: _____ ID No.: _____

Course: _____ Intake: _____
(month-year)

Major: _____ Minor: _____

School: _____

Summary for Practicum

Marking Criteria according to Level

| Level Indicator |
|--|
| Level 1: There are many weaknesses. |
| Level 2: There are a few weaknesses. |
| Level 3: Moderate achievement. |
| Level 4: Good in many aspects. |
| Level 5: Very good, excellent in most aspects. |

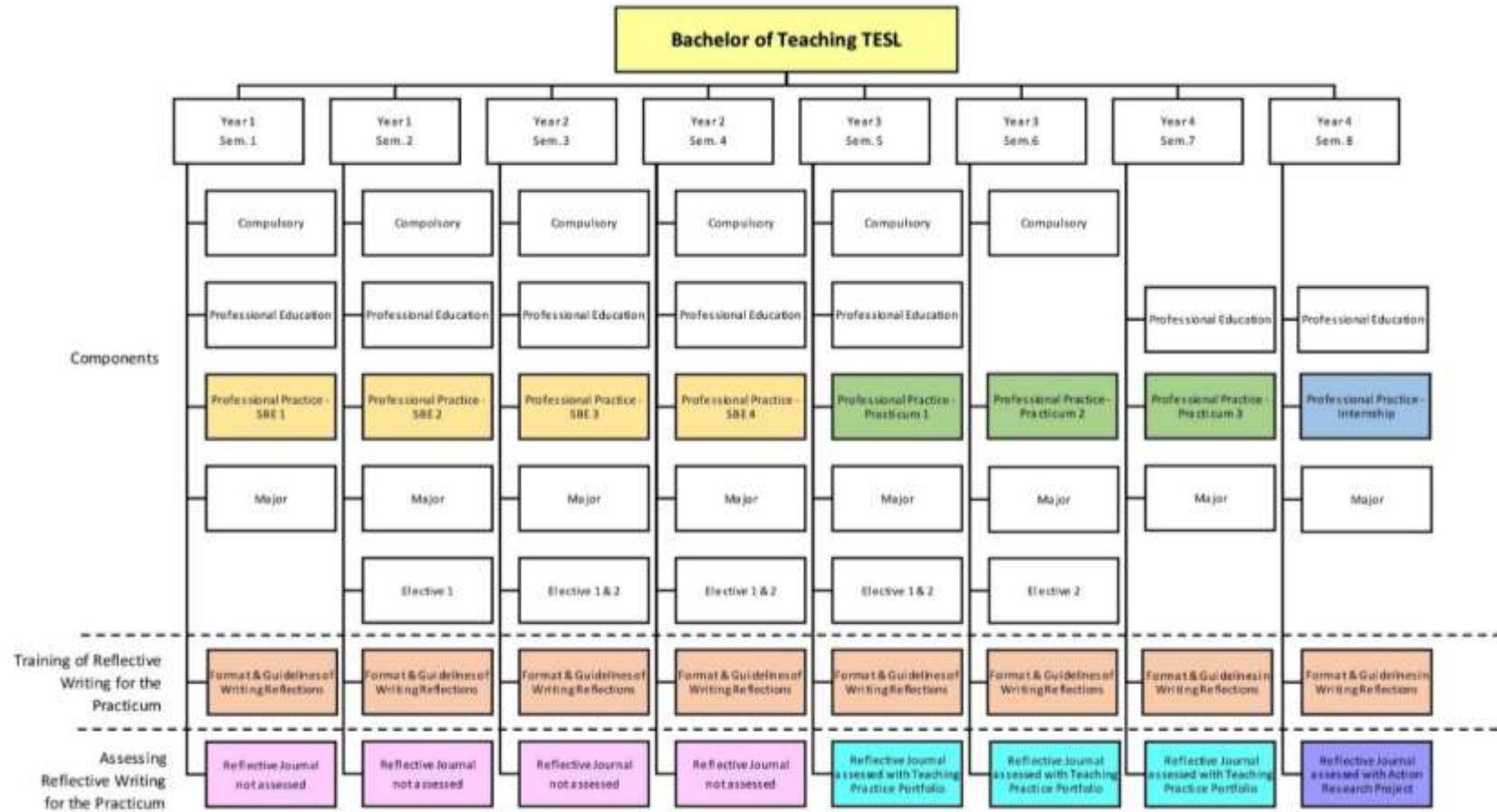
| Level | Percentage 10% | Percentage 30% |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 0.0 – 1.9 | 0.0 – 5.9 |
| 2 | 2.0 – 3.9 | 6.0 – 11.9 |
| 3 | 4.0 – 6.4 | 12.0 – 19.4 |
| 4 | 6.5 – 7.9 | 19.5 – 23.9 |
| 5 | 8.0 – 10.0 | 24.0 -30.0 |

| Aspect | Level | Comment |
|--|--|----------------|
| A. INTERPERSONAL & INTRAPERSONAL (Refer to Portfolio) - Spirit and endurance - Rapport with learners - Collegiality - Rapport with parents and community (10 marks) | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks A = <input type="text"/> | |
| B. CONTENT KNOWLEDGE - Understands the concepts and skills of the content - Understands the needs of the curriculum (10 marks) | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks B = <input type="text"/> | |
| C. PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING & LEARNING (Refer to PR1 Form) - Lesson planning - Lesson implementation - Reflection - Attitudes and attributes (30 marks) | 1 2 3 4 5 Marks C = <input type="text"/> | |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>D. COMMUNICATION (Refer to PR1 Form)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Voice quality - Language clarity and appropriacy - Non-verbal communication - Explanation and demonstration - Friendliness <p style="text-align: right;">(10 marks)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Marks =</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | |
| <p>E. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT (Refer to PR1 Form)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organising the learners - Motivating the learners - Managing learning environment - Classroom control - Reward/punishment <p style="text-align: right;">(10 marks)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Marks =</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | |
| <p>F. EVALUATION (Refer to PR1 Form, teaching practice record book, and portfolio)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks and gives feedback to learners' work - Keeps records of learners' progress - Aware of learners' progress - Evaluation on learning - Evaluation on teaching <p style="text-align: right;">(10 marks)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Marks =</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | |
| <p>G. CO-CURRICULUM (Refer to portfolio)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance - Participation <p style="text-align: right;">(10 marks)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Marks =</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | |
| <p>H. OTHER ROLES (Refer to portfolio)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitator - Involvement with school organisation and management <p style="text-align: right;">(10 marks)</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Marks =</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 50px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> | |
| <p>Total overall marks PR2 = (A+B+C+D+E+F+G+H) = %</p> | | |
| <p>COMMENT (To be completed together by lecturer supervisor and teacher mentor)</p> | | |

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Signature | Signature |
| Name of Teacher Supervisor: | Name of Lecturer Supervisor: |
| Date: | Date: |

Appendix L: Training and Assessing of Reflective Writing during the Practicum



Note: The diagram shows the components for Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme, the training and assessment of reflective journals during the practicum based on 2014 curriculum. In other components apart from Professional Practice, reflective writing can be one of the tasks for student teachers' written assignment and is evaluated based on a different marking criterion.

Appendix M: Participant Information Sheet



Perceptions of Reflective Practice on Pre-Service TESL Programme in an Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by **Munirah Binti Hanafi**.

Background

For many years, reflective practice has been regarded as one of the important elements of an effective teacher education programme. The inclusion of reflective practice is said to contribute towards the improvement of classroom practices and quality of education. Based on this belief, many teacher education programmes across the world adapt their curricula and practices in preparing student teachers to become reflective practitioners. Recently, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia has stressed the importance of 'higher-order thinking skills' in developing citizens who are critical thinkers. In relation to this, the current pre-service teacher education curriculum has been transformed which includes the elements of reflection and critical thinking. In order to understand further the values of reflective practice in teacher education and how they contribute to the process of developing student teachers who are critical and reflective, this study will i) explore the meaning of reflective practice based on the perceptions and experiences of the pre-service student teachers and teacher educators in the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme in Malaysia; ii) examine the ways in which the pre-service student teachers engage themselves in reflective practice in the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme in Malaysia; and iii) investigate how and to what extent reflective practice has developed pre-service student teachers into critical thinkers and reflective practitioners.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to:

- i) Participate in **interviews** – student teachers and teacher educators will be interviewed individually by the researcher in several phases. The date, time and venue of the interviews will be arranged and agreed upon by both the researcher and participants before the interviews take place.

- ii) Write **reflections** – student teachers need to write reflections in their teaching practice record book and submit photocopies of the reflections to the researcher at the end of every week throughout the teaching practice period. Student teachers will also need to make copies of their previous teaching practice reflections from Practicum 1 & Practicum 2 and submit them to the researcher by the end of May 2015.

To participate in this research you must:

- Be a current student at the Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia
- Be in Semester 7 of the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme
- Be currently undergoing teaching practice
- Be a current teacher educator at the Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia
- Be currently teaching the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme
- Have experience as a teaching practice supervisor and have supervised student teachers on practicum before

Procedures

You will be asked to:

- i) State whether you agree or disagree to take part in this study.
- ii) **Interviews**
- a) arrange the date, time and venue for the interview with the researcher which will be convenient for both parties
 - b) take part in individual interviews with the researcher in several phases
 - c) answer interview questions the best that you can
- *This applies to both **student teachers** and **teacher educators**.
- iii) **Reflections**
- a) write reflections in teaching practice record book after every lesson during the teaching practice period
 - b) submit photocopies of the reflections to the researcher at the end of every week
 - c) submit photocopies of previous reflections from Practicum 1 and Practicum 2 to the researcher by the end of May 2015
- *This only applies to **student teachers**.

Feedback

Nil

Confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by **Munirah Binti Hanafi**. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).



Dissemination of results

Parts of the study and/or the result of the study will be published in journals, proceedings, sections of books and presented at conferences or seminars.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Appendix N: Letter of Application to Conduct Research in Malaysia

| | | |
|---|---|---|
|  | UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI <i>Economic Planning Unit</i> Jabatan Perdana Menteri <i>Prime Minister's Department</i> Block B5 & B6 Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan 62502 PUTRAJAYA MALAYSIA |  EPU <small>UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI</small> Telefon : 603-8000 8000 |
| <hr/> | | |
| | | Ruj. Tuan: <i>Your Ref.:</i> |
| | | Ruj. Kami: UPE <i>Our Ref.:</i> |
| | | Tarikh: 24 November 2014 <i>Date:</i> |
| APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA | | |
| <p>With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department. The details of the approval are as follows:</p> | | |
| Researcher's name | : | MUNIRAH BINTI HANAFI |
| Passport No./ I.C No | : | |
| Nationality | : | MALAYSIA |
| Title of Research | : | "PERCEPTIONS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON A PRE-SERVICE TESL PROGRAMME IN AN INSTITUTE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA" |
| Period of Research Approved | : | 4 YEARS |
| <p>2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia. Bring along two (2) colour passport size photographs. Kindly, get an appointment date from us before you come to collect your research pass.</p> | | |
| <hr/> | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">"Merancang Ke Arah Kecemerlangan"</p> | | |

3. I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

- a) A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and
- b) Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.

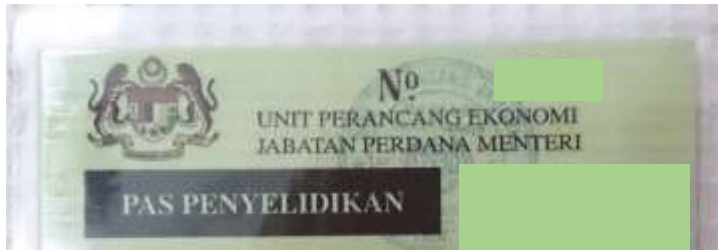
4. Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

ATTENTION

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and cannot be used as a research pass.

Appendix O: Researcher Pass



Appendix P: Letter to Conduct Research in the Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia



INSTITUT PENDIDIKAN GURU MALAYSIA
Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA
Ministry of Education Malaysia
ARAS 1, ENTERPRISE BUILDING 3, BLOK 2200,
PERSIARAN APEC, CYBER 6,
63000 CYBERJAYA
MALAYSIA



Tel : 03-63126668
Faks : 03-63126655
Web : <http://www.moe.gov.my>

"1 MALAYSIA: RAKYAT DIDAHULUKAN, PENCAPAIAN DIUTAMAKAN"

Ruj. Kami: KP(IPG)

Tarikh : 15 Januari 2015.

 Pn/Cik Munirah Binti Hanafi
Canterbury Christ Church University,
The Graduate School,
North Holmes Road, CT1 1QU
Canterbury, Kent,
United Kingdom

Tuan,

**KELULUSAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN IJAZAH KEDOKTORAN BERTAJUK
"PERCEPTIONS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON A PRE-SERVICE TESL PROGRAMME IN
AN INSTITUTE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA"**

Dengan segala hormatnya saya merujuk kepada surat tuan bertarikh 2 Januari 2015 mengenai perkara di atas.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia (IPGM) tiada halangan berkaitan permohonan pihak tuan untuk menjalankan penyelidikan peringkat Ijazah Kedoktoran yang melibatkan 10 orang pelajar PISMP Semester 7, 10 orang pensyarah Jabatan Bahasa serta seorang Ketua Unit Praktikum bermula 1 Februari 2015 hingga 30 April 2015.
3. Walaubagaimanapun, kelulusan ini adalah berdasarkan kepatuhan kepada syarat-syarat berikut:
 - a) Telah mendapat kelulusan daripada Pengarah ---- untuk menjalankan kajian.
 - b) Tidak menjejaskan proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran serta pelaksanaan aktiviti-aktiviti lain di kampus.
 - c) Satu salinan laporan penuh hasil dapatan kajian hendaklah dikemukakan kepada pihak IPGM melalui alamat emel yang disertakan dalam surat ini selepas tamat kajian.

2/



(Sila catatkan rujukan Institut ini apabila berhubung)

-2-

4. Untuk sebarang pertanyaan lanjut, sila hubungi [redacted] di talian [redacted] atau di alamat emel [redacted]. Pihak IPGM juga mengucapkan selamat maju jaya atas pengajian pihak tuan.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

[redacted]

s.k

Pengarah,

.....

Appendix Q: Confirmation of Ethics Compliance



23 October 2014

Ref:

Ms Munirah Hanafi
c/o Centre for Language Studies and Applied Linguistics
Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Dear Munirah

Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study "*Perceptions of reflective practice on a pre-service TESL Programme in the Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia.*"

I have received an Ethics Review Checklist and appropriate supporting documentation for proportionate review of the above project. I confirm that no further ethical review will be required under the terms of this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures.

In confirming compliance for your study, I must remind you that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the *Research Governance Handbook* (<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/centres/red/ethics-governance/governance-and-ethics.asp>) and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing, if appropriate, information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified to the **Research Office**, and may require a new application for ethics approval. It is a condition of compliance that you must inform me once your research has been completed.

Wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Research Governance Manager
Tel: +44 (0)1227 782940 ext 3272 (enter at prompt)
Email: research.governance@canterbury.ac.uk

cc:

Research Office
Research and Enterprise Development Centre
Canterbury Christ Church University
North Holmes Campus, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1QU
Tel +44 (0)1227 767700 Fax +44 (0)1227 470442
www.canterbury.ac.uk

Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice Chancellor and Principal

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A Company limited by guarantee
Registered Charity No: 1098136

Appendix R: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Perceptions of Reflective Practice on a Pre-Service TESL Programme in an Institute of Teacher Education in Malaysia

Name of Researcher: Munirah Binti Hanafi

Contact details:

Address:

The Graduate School
Canterbury Christ Church University
North Holmes Road
CT1 1QU Canterbury, Kent, UK

Tel:

Email:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |

Name of Participant
.....

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)
.....

Date

Signature

Researcher
.....

Date

Signature

Copies: 1 for participant 1 for researcher

Appendix S: Pilot Interview Questions for Student Teachers

| Types | Main Questions | Sub-Questions |
|---|---|---|
| A. Ice-breaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you today? • How was your day at school? | |
| B. Perceptions / Understanding of Reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term 'reflection'? • What do you expect to get from reflections? | |
| C. Time / When to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you reflect? • When do you write your reflections? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you happy about being assessed on your reflections? • How does this affect what you write in your reflections? • If you were not being assessed, would you reflect / write your reflections at all? |
| D. How to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you reflect? • How do you write your reflections? • Do you know what to reflect on or what to write in your reflections? • How do you choose what to write in your reflections? • Do you think you write good reflections? | |
| E. Learning how to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did anybody teach you how to write reflections or how to reflect? • How did your cooperating teacher or supervising lecturer help you to reflect? • How did the staff from the practicum unit help you with writing your reflections? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the feedback from your supervisor help you to reflect? • Do you think your supervisor could do more? • Do you think student teachers should be taught how to write reflections and how to reflect? |
| F. Issues found in reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you write in your reflections? | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of things do you reflect on? • What do you do about it? | |
| G. Difficulties in writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find it difficult to reflect? How about writing them? • Why do you feel that reflecting and writing reflections is difficult? • Do you find writing reflections is easy? Why? | |
| H. Effects of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the practice of writing reflections during practicum helped you to be reflective? How? If 'No' why not? • How does writing reflections make you feel? • Do you think after going through 3 rounds of practicum that you have improved in writing your reflections? | |
| I. Values of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has writing reflections affect your teaching? • Do you know why you are asked to write reflections during your practicum? • Do you feel that you need to write reflections? • Do you feel that you need to reflect? • What are the benefits of writing reflections? • Do you think writing reflection is useful? Why? | |
| J. Reflections revisit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think you will ever read your reflections again? | |

Appendix T: Pilot Interview Questions for Teacher Educators

| Types | Main Questions |
|---|---|
| A. Ice-breaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you today? • Did you have a good day? |
| B. Perceptions / Understanding of Reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term 'reflection'? |
| C. Own reflective practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you reflect on your teaching? • Do you write your own reflections? • When do you do this? • What do you write in your reflections? • What kind of things do you reflect on? • What do you do about it? |
| D. Teaching how to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think student teachers should be taught how to write reflections and how to reflect? Why? • How do you teach your students to write reflections and to reflect? • How do you help your students to reflect? • What kinds of activities do you use to help students to reflect? |
| E. Giving feedbacks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you give feedbacks on students' reflections? • What do you say in your feedback? • How does this make you feel? • What kind of reactions do you get from your students based on your feedback? • Do you see any follow-up on the feedbacks or issues you have discussed with your students in their reflections? • Do you feel you need to do more than giving feedbacks? |
| F. Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you happy about the student teachers being assessed on their reflections? • How do you think this affect what the student teachers write in their reflections? • If the student teachers were not being assessed, do you think they would reflect / write their reflections at all? |
| G. Difficulties in teaching reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find it difficult to teach students to reflect? • Why do you feel that teaching reflecting and teaching to write reflections is difficult? • Do you find writing reflections yourself is difficult or easy? |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>H. Effects of writing reflections</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the practice of writing reflections during practicum helped the student teachers to be reflective? How? If 'No' why not? • Do you think after going through 3 semesters of practicum that the student teachers have improved in writing their reflections? • Is it enough? • Do you have any suggestions on how to help student teachers to become reflective? |
| <p>I. Values of writing reflections</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has writing reflections affect student teachers' teaching? • Do you know why we need to write reflections and reflect on our teaching? • Do you know why student teachers are asked to write reflections during their practicum? • Do you feel that they need to write reflections? • Do you feel that they need to reflect? • What are the benefits of writing reflections? • Do you think writing reflections is useful? Why? |
| <p>J. Reflections revisit</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the students will ever read your reflections again? • Will you read your reflections ever again? |

Appendix U: Interview Questions: Phase 1 (Student Teachers)

| Types | Main Questions | Sub-Questions |
|---|---|---|
| A. Ice-breaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you today? • How was your day at school? | |
| B. Perceptions / Understanding of Reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term 'reflection'? • What do you expect to get from reflections? | |
| C. Time / When to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you reflect? • When do you write your reflections? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you happy about being assessed on your reflections? • How does this affect what you write in your reflections? • If you were not being assessed, would you reflect / write your reflections at all? |
| D. How to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you reflect? • How do you write your reflections? • Do you know what to reflect on or what to write in your reflections? • How do you choose what to write in your reflections? • Do you think you write good reflections? | |
| E. Learning how to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did anybody teach you how to write reflections or how to reflect? • How did your cooperating teacher or supervising lecturer help you to reflect? • How did the staff from the practicum unit help you with writing your reflections? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the feedback from your supervisor help you to reflect? • Do you think your supervisor could do more? • Do you think student teachers should be taught how to write reflections and how to reflect? |
| F. Issues found in reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you write in your reflections? • What kind of things do you reflect on? | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you do about it? | |
| G. Difficulties in writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find it difficult to reflect? How about writing them? • Why do you feel that reflecting and writing reflections is difficult? • Do you find writing reflections is easy? Why? | |
| H. Effects of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the practice of writing reflections during practicum helped you to be reflective? How? If 'No' why not? • How does writing reflections make you feel? • Do you think after going through 3 rounds of practicum that you have improved in writing your reflections? | |
| I. Values of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has writing reflections affect your teaching? • Do you know why you are asked to write reflections during your practicum? • Do you feel that you need to write reflections? • Do you feel that you need to reflect? • What are the benefits of writing reflections? • Do you think writing reflection is useful? Why? | |
| J. Reflections revisit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think you will ever read your reflections again? | |

Appendix V: Interview Questions: Phase 2 (Student Teachers)

A. Warm-up

1. How are you today?
2. How was school?

B. Motivation & Engagement

1. Tell me about the lesson that you taught today / yesterday.
2. What was the lesson about?
3. Are you happy with the lesson?
4. Did it go well? Why/why not?
5. What was the best thing about the lesson?
6. Was there anything you were unhappy about?
7. Did anything happen that you didn't expect or you weren't prepared for?
8. From what has happened during your lesson, which incident(s) you want to reflect on? / which incident(s) will you reflect on?
9. Why do you want to reflect on that?
10. What else did you write in your reflections?
11. Why did you write about it?
12. Did anybody help you to reflect on the incident? How?
13. If 'no' or if you reflected on your own, what made you think further about the incident?
14. What did the person say that made you think further about the incident?

C. Independent Learner

1. Do you feel that writing reflections help you to become more independent in analysing and evaluating your teaching?
2. How did reflections help you to think about your teaching independently?
3. At this stage of practicum, do you feel that you are able to reflect on your issues without guidance from your supervising lecturer and teacher?
4. Do you still need their help?
5. You just had your observation, what did your lecturer do after the observation?
6. Would it be easier or harder to reflect if your supervising lecturer or teacher did not give his/her feedback on your teaching to you? Why?
7. How do you go about writing your reflections when you don't get feedback from your supervising lecturer or teacher or when you are not being observed?

8. Are there differences on how you write your reflections on lessons that are being observed and not being observed?
9. What about when you were in your first and second practicum? Were you more dependent or independent on your lecturer's guidance and feedback in writing your reflections?

D. Sharing / Exchanging Experiences

1. Do you discuss and share your experiences on teaching practice with your friends?
2. What sort of things do you share and discuss with your friends?
3. Does the process of writing reflections help to inform the discussions?
4. How does this happen?
5. After you share or discuss, what do you do?

Language Learning

1. (Although you may feel that you are proficient in English) Do you feel that writing reflections is useful in developing your English?
2. Do you think you have got better at writing reflections over time?
3. What have you improved in your reflections? (Follow up: The way you write your reflections, the way you express your thoughts or the way you organize your ideas?)
4. How did you improve on this?
5. Did your supervising lecturer or teacher comment or give feedback on the language aspect of your reflections? How did they give their comments / feedbacks?
6. What do you do after he/she gave his/her comments or feedbacks?

Follow-up questions from students' reflections

1. Based on your previous reflections, you gave some suggestions on how to improve on your teaching. Were you able to carry out the suggestions? If not, what prevented you from doing so?
2. Did it work?
3. What has helped you to come up with the suggestions?
4. How many ways were you able to think of to overcome the issues in your teaching? One or more?
5. Did feedbacks from your supervising lecturer or teacher influenced you on how to overcome the issues?

6. How do you feel about this?
7. Apart from the suggestions that you have mentioned, do you think there were any other things you could have done to improve your teaching?

Sense of Repetition

1. Are there any general issues in your lessons that you frequently write about in your reflections?
2. What are they?
3. Do you sometimes find yourself repeating what you have written in earlier reflections? If 'no', why not?
4. (Yes) Do you feel that repeating on the same issues in your reflections is good? How is this so?
5. (No) Do you feel writing about different issues in your reflections is good? Why?
6. If you repeat what you write in your reflections, do you see any changes or differences on how you reflect on these issues in your reflections?
7. Do you write about different issues all the time?
8. What do you think caused the repetition?

Appendix W: Interview Questions: Phase 1 (Teacher Educators)

| Types | Main Questions |
|---|---|
| A. Ice-breaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you today? • Did you have a good day? |
| B. Perceptions / Understanding of Reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term 'reflection'? |
| C. Own reflective practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you reflect on your teaching? • Do you write your own reflections? • When do you do this? • What do you write in your reflections? • What kind of things do you reflect on? • What do you do about it? |
| D. Teaching how to reflect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think student teachers should be taught how to write reflections and how to reflect? Why? • How do you teach your students to write reflections and to reflect? • How do you help your students to reflect? • What kinds of activities do you use to help students to reflect? |
| E. Giving feedbacks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you give feedbacks on students' reflections? • What do you say in your feedback? • How does this make you feel? • What kind of reactions do you get from your students based on your feedback? • Do you see any follow-up on the feedbacks or issues you have discussed with your students in their reflections? • Do you feel you need to do more than giving feedbacks? |
| F. Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you happy about the student teachers being assessed on their reflections? • How do you think this affect what the student teachers write in their reflections? • If the student teachers were not being assessed, do you think they would reflect / write their reflections at all? |
| G. Difficulties in teaching reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you find it difficult to teach students to reflect? • Why do you feel that teaching reflecting and teaching to write reflections is difficult? • Do you find writing reflections yourself is difficult or easy? |
| H. Effects of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the practice of writing reflections during practicum helped the student teachers to be reflective? How? If 'No' why not? • Do you think after going through 3 semesters of practicum that the student teachers have improved in writing their reflections? • Is it enough? • Do you have any suggestions on how to help student teachers to become reflective? |
| I. Values of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has writing reflections affect student teachers' teaching? • Do you know why we need to write reflections and reflect on our teaching? |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know why student teachers are asked to write reflections during their practicum? • Do you feel that they need to write reflections? • Do you feel that they need to reflect? • What are the benefits of writing reflections? • Do you think writing reflections is useful? Why? |
| J. Reflections revisit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the students will ever read your reflections again? • Will you read your reflections ever again? |

Appendix X: Interview Questions: Phase 2 (Teacher Educators)

Start off questions

1. In your opinion, what are the importance of reflection in the Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme?
2. How do you feel about reflection in this programme/course?
3. What do you want to say about it?

A. Critical Reflection / Critical Thinking

1. Do you see yourself as a reflective practitioner?
2. What do you understand by this in terms of your own practice as a teacher educator?
3. How would you describe a person who is reflective?
4. In your opinion, what is critical thinking?
5. Would you say that these two (critical thinking & reflective thinking) are the same? What are their similarities or differences?
6. *What does critical thinking involve?
7. *What does reflective thinking involve?
8. Do you expect your students to think critically beyond their classroom practice? Does this happen? When do you expect for them to have this ability?
9. What sort of things do you expect your students to think critically about, which is beyond their classroom practice?
10. How often do you see this happening?
11. If 'no', what do you think are the reasons for this?

B. Teacher-Centred vs Student-centred

1. Do you think that providing a framework for writing reflection helps students to reflect? How? Is this a good thing?
2. What else do you expect to see in the student's reflections apart from their strengths and weaknesses?
3. How much help does a student need in reflecting?
4. When do you stop providing them with help?
5. What helps students to reflect? (factors)
6. What factors inhibit students to reflect?

C. Language Learning

1. Do you think that writing reflections is useful in developing students' English? How is this so?
2. How do you give feedback on language aspects in their reflections?

D. Others

1. How do you give feedback to your students about their reflections?
2. What do you say to them?
3. Do the students always agree with your comments?
4. What do you do if the students disagree with what you say to them?
5. What kinds of support contribute to students writing better reflections?

Appendix Y: Interview Questions for Staff

Note: These questions were translated from *Bahasa Melayu*.

| Types | Main Questions |
|---|--|
| A. Ice-breaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you today? • Did you have a good day? |
| B. Perceptions / Understanding of Reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term 'reflection'? |
| C. Own reflective practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you reflect on your job? • Do you write your own reflections? • When do you do this? • What do you write in your reflections? • What kind of things do you reflect on? • What do you do about it? |
| D. Roles of Practicum Unit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you explain what are the roles of the practicum unit? • What kind of help do you provide to the students regarding reflections? • What kind of information do you provide to the lecturers about reflections by the students for practicum? |
| E. Guidelines on how to write reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think student teachers should be taught how to write reflections? Why? • How do you inform the students on how to write reflections? • What kinds of activities or training do you provide to help students to write their reflections? |
| F. Giving feedbacks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you give feedbacks or reports on students' reflections? • What do you say in your feedback or report? • What kind of reactions do you get from the students based on the feedback or report? • Do you feel you need to do more than provide feedbacks or reports to the students? |
| G. Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is reflections assessed? • Is there a set of criteria that you follow? • Are you happy about the student teachers being assessed on their reflections? • How do you think this affect what the student teachers write in their reflections? • If the student teachers were not being assessed, do you think they would reflect / write their reflections at all? |
| H. Effects of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the practice of writing reflections during practicum helped the student teachers to be reflective? How? If 'No' why not? |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think after going through 3 semesters of practicum that the student teachers have improved in writing their reflections? • Is it enough? • Do you have any suggestions on how to help student teachers to become reflective? |
| I. Values of writing reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has writing reflections affect student teachers' teaching? • Do you know why we need to write reflections and reflect on our teaching? • Do you know why student teachers are asked to write reflections during their practicum? • Do you feel that they need to write reflections? • What are the benefits of writing reflections? • Do you think writing reflections is useful? Why? |
| J. Reflections revisit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the students will ever read their reflections again? • Do you read the students reflections? |

Appendix Z: Daily Written Reflection - 14AiLing

| |
|---|
| Daily Reflection (English 3 Bestari) |
| Date : 25th February 2015 (Wednesday) |
| Today I had conducted language arts lesson and pupils were asked to perform an action song in front of the class. I had taken the effort to play the ukulele and sing the song in the classroom. Also, I got my friend's help to record her voice as my audio to be played in the classroom. I found that my pupils liked to watch me singing with the ukulele. They listened attentively through and enjoyed it very ^{and playing} much. |
| For the presentation, I managed to control the class and make sure they paid attention when I taught them the actions of the song. They were engaged in my lesson and gave positive response such as laughing, dancing, smiling and so on. I believed they enjoyed the lesson very much. |
| For the practice stage, although there was ^{were} some noises that might disrupt the lesson, most of them ^{were} still able to practice and discuss in groups for the performance later. Some even stood up and made a circle at the back of the classroom. |
| For the production stage, I managed to have 4 out of 6 groups to perform in front of the class. I had collected pupils' feedback through the use of traffic light cards. Also, some of them could give me the reason why they did liked or disliked the performance of their friends. |
| Overall, the lesson was conducted smoothly from a stage to another. I should have tried to let the pupils to come out with their own actions when they are asked to practice in group to in order to boost their creativity and confidence level. |

Appendix AA: Weekly Written Reflection - 30WeeMee

Weekly Reflective Journal

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Week | Nine |
| Date | 6 April 2015 until 10 April 2015 |
| Topic | Element of thinking skills |
| <p>1. Problem/ Case I found that I need to include more element of thinking skills in my lessons. Although I asked some higher order thinking skills (HOTS) questions in presentation stage, I think that I can do it more often throughout the lesson.</p> <p>2. Analysis Pupils' mind has to be challenged so that they can develop their critical and creative thinking skills. Furthermore, if the pupils are not challenged, they will feel bored easily. As consequences, they start talking and playing around in the class.</p> <p>3. Suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In order to add more elements of thinking skills, I should give tasks that need them to think on their own. As an example, I can give worksheets that require the pupils to express their own feelings while answering open-ended questions. I also want them to relate their daily experiences while completing the task. ii. Besides that, I may help them to think critically by getting them to summarize the input taught in a form of mind map. While creating mind map, they need to think of the important key words only to be written down in the mind map. Since they have learned to create flower chart, they should be given chances to use the knowledge in their learning process. <p>4. Duration In short, I hope to see the improvement of getting pupils to develop their thinking skills during the lessons. I am looking forward to getting surprising responses from the pupils in question and answer session and also in their work.</p> | |
| Checked by Mentor | Checked by Supervisor |
| Signature & Name : | Signature & Name : |
| Date : | Date : |

Appendix AB: Number of Written Reflections Submitted to the Researcher for Each Week

| No. | Student Teacher | Number of Written Reflections Submitted According to Week | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | |
|--------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|----|
| | | 1 2/2/14 - 6/2/14 | 2 9/2/14 - 13/2/14 | 3 16/2/14 - 20/2/14 | 4 23/2/14 - 27/3/14 | 5 2/3/14 - 6/3/14 | 6 9/3/14 - 13/3/14 | 7 16/3/14 - 20/3/14 | 8 23/3/14 - 27/3/14 | 9 30/3/14 - 3/4/14 | 10 6/4/14 - 10/4/14 | 11 13/4/14 - 17/4/14 | 12 20/4/14 - 24/4/14 | 13 27/4/14 - 1/5/14 | | |
| 1 | Ai Ling | 4 | 4 | | 3 | 1 | 3 | SEMESTER BREAK | 2 | 3 | | | | | 20 | 27 |
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | 7 | |
| 2 | Azrul | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 38 | 41 |
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | |
| 3 | Devi | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | 5 |
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | | 5 | |
| 4 | Dollah | 4 | 4 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | 9 | 9 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| 5 | Fatin | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 | | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | | 44 | 52 |
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 8 | |
| 6 | Gan | 1 | 2 | | 4 | | | | | | | | | | 7 | 7 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 | |
| 7 | Hendon | 2 | 3 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 31 | 32 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | |
| 8 | Jega | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | 31 | 39 | |
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 8 | | |
| 9 | Suguna | 4 | 3 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | 10 | 11 | |
| | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| 10 | Wee Mee | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | | 30 | 42 | |
| | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 12 | | |
| TOTAL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 265 | | |

Note: Top – Daily reflections; Bottom – Weekly reflections

Appendix AC: Interview Transcript with Student Teacher

| | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 1 | | Suguna (150310_0031, Student Participant 9, Interview 1) |
| 2 | Me | What do you understand by the term reflection? |
| 3 | Suguna | Reflection is more about err.. analysing, the strengths, weaknesses, of ourselves after we do some activity or anything, ok.. you reflect on.. on yourself.. ya.. that's all |
| 4 | Me | Ok.. and what do you expect to get from reflections? |
| 5 | Suguna | Err.. Identify our own strengths and weaknesses.. Ok.. from that ok.. we can know.. how to improve and what is our strength and how to keep on doing our strength. |
| 6 | Me | Ok.. right.. Do you reflect all the time? |
| 7 | Suguna | Not all the time. |
| 8 | Me | Not all the time? (ya..) When do you usually reflect then? |
| 9 | Suguna | After we do some activities.. Mostly lesson plans after each lesson we use to reflect. Generally in life we don't really reflect much. (laugh) |
| 10 | Me | You don't? |
| 11 | Suguna | Ya.. We just go with the flow. Ya.. that's all. |
| 12 | Me | Aha.. and how do you reflect? What do you do when you reflect? |
| 13 | Suguna | Usually.. I'll find out if that thing didn't work, ok.. what went wrong.. think about what went wrong and how we can solve the problem.. something like that. |
| 14 | Me | Uhhh.. Ok.. And.. usually what kind of things do you reflect on? |
| 15 | Suguna | During lesson or.. |
| 16 | Me | Umm.. well ya.. how about during the lesson, do you reflect during the lesson? (Ya of course) And how, how, how does that happen? |
| 17 | Suguna | Like when something.. being actually work as how I planned.. that is when I start to reflect ok.. why what went wrong.. why the students are not able to do the plan the activity that I plan.. aa.. something like that. If everything is fine then there is nothing to reflect. |
| 18 | Me | Ok.. So if that happens, what do you do during the lesson? |
| 19 | Suguna | Ermm.. if that thing doesn't work out I try.. on the spot to do something that.. can.. help my pupils to do the activity that I planned, if that still happen then I have to.. drop that thing and do activity.. that can fill up the gap. |
| 20 | Me | How about after the lesson, what do you do after the lesson? |
| 21 | Suguna | I will see whether the fault is on me or the materials that I have prepared. I try to avoid that thing in future lesson. |
| 22 | Me | Do you usually reflect during or after the lesson? |
| 23 | Suguna | Usually during the lesson. Like when we are carrying out the lesson ourselves we know that something went wrong then only we start to think, after the lesson we think how to overcome the problem. But during the lesson we know that something went wrong. Why that thing happen? If I exceeded time then I know maybe the worksheet is quite hard for the pupils. |
| 24 | Me | Are there times when after you reflect you change your lesson plans? |
| 25 | Suguna | Not change but just alterations. The lesson plan is just the same. We just need to change a bit activity, make it simpler or harder or add some activities that can make the lesson more interesting so we won't really change. Because we know our students we just change a bit here and there. |
| 26 | Me | Do you think you write good reflections? |
| 27 | Suguna | Not too good. Maybe just my reflections satisfy me maybe just satisfactory. |
| 28 | Me | What would you consider to be as a satisfying reflection? |
| 29 | Suguna | I state my strength, I state my weaknesses, and there will be steps to overcome my weaknesses. And the duration that I take to carry out the suggestions that I state. |
| 30 | Me | How about a good reflection? |
| 31 | Suguna | Good reflection maybe they are able to identify 100% the strengths and weaknesses. For me it just, mine a bit just here and there, maybe not fully not reflecting on myself. |
| 32 | Me | How do you choose what to write in your reflections? |

| | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 33 | Suguna | Based on my lessons, usually if I see my students enjoy something that I do, then that's my strength. If the students don't enjoy what I do that means, it's my weakness. They can't do something then the fault is on me. Means I don't teach them properly or didn't give them proper guidance or something like that. |
| 34 | Me | Is that how you choose to write in your reflection? |
| 35 | Suguna | Ya. |
| 36 | Me | Did you find it easy or difficult to write the issues you're faced with in your reflections? |
| 37 | Suguna | Because that's what I'm going through so I just put my situations into words. So it's quite easy. Maybe sometimes it hard to put the blame 100% on ourselves. Sometimes we tend to put the blame on our pupils. The pupils can't do, the pupils are not cooperating. Maybe that's where people face problem. Other than that, it's quite easy to write. |
| 38 | Me | How about in terms of language, aren't you concerned about writing you reflections in English? |
| 39 | Suguna | Maybe because my major is TESL so I don't find difficulties in writing in English. For Moral I have to write my reflections in BM that's where the problem starts where I have to translate every word into BM and then I will ask my friend what is this in BM and then I will start to write it. If in English I don't find it difficult. |
| 40 | Me | Do you feel that it is more effective to write your reflections in English rather than in BM because you're more confident in English? |
| 41 | Suguna | Ya.. I prefer writing in English than in BM. |
| 42 | Me | Does that affect the quality of reflection? |
| 43 | Suguna | Ya maybe the words that I want to state in the reflection is different but then because I translate it maybe the meaning went something missing and it doesn't state my actual point of view. |
| 44 | Me | How did you learn to write reflections? |
| 45 | Suguna | The lecturers of course. EDU lecturers, they thought us how to write reflections. SWOT and so on and of course I start to write good reflection from my practicum. First, I can see the difference from my Sem 5 practicum reflection and Sem 7. It's quite different. Sem 5 I used to..ok the students are not able to do.. that will be my weakness. But now I know, ok I didn't give them proper instruction that is why the students are not able to do so I where how to reflect on myself more compare to just putting the blame on others. |
| 46 | Me | Why do you write reflections during practicum? |
| 47 | Suguna | To improve our teaching skills. |
| 48 | Me | How did your cooperating teacher or supervising lecturers helped you in writing reflections? |
| 49 | Suguna | They will tell us ok.. this part is good, this part is not good. You need to improve your writing in another way.. maybe you rephrase it so that we can understand the meaning or we can see that we are actually reflecting on ourselves and not blaming others. |
| 50 | Me | Are you saying that the feedbacks and comments or even advises are very helpful for you to write your reflections? |
| 51 | Suguna | Ya, it's very helpful. If not we won't know what went wrong. Now we know how to improve our writing through their guidance. |
| 52 | Me | How did the practicum unit help you or what kind of information did they give you regarding reflection during practicum? |
| 53 | Suguna | The practicum unit asked us to write weekly journals where they give us a template they have few sections in it that we have to write. |
| 54 | Me | Do you think that they can do more than just give you that information? |
| 55 | Suguna | Ya.. they can maybe it's like, we write it every week, we put them into our file but no one actually checks it. |
| 56 | Me | You mean people from the practicum unit? |
| 57 | Suguna | Ya. They don't look at our files. Our files would be so thick like 3 inches. So its quite disappointing. |
| 58 | Me | Do you think that they should organise workshops and courses on how to write good reflections? |

| | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 59 | Suguna | Ya. Maybe before the practicum start. Every semester they are just giving a <i>taklimat praktikum</i> . Other than that in middle maybe they can slot in things like how to write journals, how to write reflections that can actually help rather than just telling ok you need to go to school and do this, do that. |
| 60 | Me | Do you think student teachers should be taught how to write reflections? |
| 61 | Suguna | Ya, if not we will just be reporting like when I was in Sem 1, Sem 2 when we don't know what is the difference between reflection and reports, we just keep on reporting ok I did this in my class and so on.. so when we are taught how to write reflection, then we know how to write proper reflection. |
| 62 | Me | Are you aware the reflection is a part of assessment in your practicum? |
| 63 | Suguna | Ya. It's in the <i>borang</i> PR1. There is one that points to reflection where lecturer has to give marks. |
| 64 | Me | Are you happy about your reflections being assessed. |
| 65 | Suguna | Ya. Because we have been writing one whole page on our lessons so at least there is a mark, it contributes something towards our marks. So I'm quite happy. |
| 66 | Me | Does this affect with what you write in your reflections because they are being assessed? |
| 67 | Suguna | No. Because we write our reflections just to know what is our strengths and weaknesses. So whether it is being assessed or not. We still write. |
| 68 | Me | If you are not being assessed, would you write your reflections at all? |
| 69 | Suguna | I write but maybe just <i>cincai cincai</i> . Maybe not up to the standard. Like now we know we must like this and like that. |
| 70 | Me | Let's say when you are a teacher at school, if it is not required for you to write reflections will you still write it? |
| 71 | Suguna | Ya.. If not we don't know how successful is our lesson. We need to write at least how many students acquire the skill today. So that we know the next lesson, I know whether I can proceed to the next topic or I must drill them on the same topic. |
| 72 | Me | Do you think the practice of writing reflections during practicum help you to become reflective? |
| 73 | Suguna | Ya. If not we don't know how to reflect on ourselves. Then it's just like ok, the lesson is done, move on. |
| 74 | Me | How does reflections make you feel? |
| 75 | Suguna | I feel relieved. I write everything after my class. I open my iPage and start to write and then after 5 minutes I see what I have written. So that I know for the next lesson I must do this and this. I should not repeat the mistakes that I have done. |
| 76 | Me | After going through 3 rounds of practicum, do you think you have improved in writing your reflections? |
| 77 | Suguna | Yes. I have improved a lot. |
| 78 | Me | How do you know this? |
| 79 | Suguna | Before I can't even start. The trouble is to think how to start my reflection, how to find my strengths and how to find my weaknesses. Sometimes it takes me around 20 minutes to write one reflection but now after class I can just write in ten minutes I know. in the first stage I don't even reflect during my lesson I just start writing I don't know what went wrong, I don't know how to reflect on my teaching but now, while teaching and learning session going on I can reflect on the spot. So it is easy for me to write reflection after the lesson now. |
| 80 | Me | Do you feel that you need to reflect? |
| 81 | Suguna | Ya. |
| 82 | Me | What happens if you don't? |
| 83 | Suguna | We won't know whether we have done a good job. Maybe if we do a wrong thing then we will be going on the wrong path. If you do good then no problem. So we don't repeat our mistakes over again. |
| 84 | Me | What are the benefits of writing reflections? |
| 85 | Suguna | We can improve ourselves. |
| 86 | Me | Improve what? |
| 87 | Suguna | When we reflect we know our weaknesses so we can know how to overcome our weaknesses. Then take steps to overcome our weaknesses. Like that we can improve. |

| | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 88 | Me | Can you give me one example whereby you reflected on something and then you changed something and then you feel that you have improved? |
| 89 | Suguna | My time management usually during language arts lessons. Language arts take so much time so I'm like why can't I finish on time. Even today I can finish on time I finished my closure because I know.. I asked them to bring things to class ahead of time. I remind them to bring for example tomorrow we're going to make a bookmark so bring these things. Rather than I'm suppling them everything then they take their own sweet time to prepare and do. I tell them beforehand so that they know. |
| 90 | Me | Do you read your reflections again after you write them? |
| 91 | Suguna | Ya. |
| 92 | Me | Why do you read them again? |
| 93 | Suguna | Because when we write, we don't really look at what we're writing because it's full of emotion and so on so we just write. Then I look back at what I've written, usually the weaknesses part, I read back so that I can list down the steps to overcome the problems. |
| 94 | Me | Thank you. |

Appendix AD: Interview Transcript with Teacher Educator

| | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 1 | | Ramlah (150311_0032, Lecturer Participant 10, Interview 1) |
| 2 | Me | What do you understand by the term reflection? |
| 3 | Ramlah | To review, think again about the experience that we have undergone. |
| 4 | Me | Do you reflect in your teaching? |
| 5 | Ramlah | Ya especially after I taught a lesson and while I'm teaching the lesson, especially when what I have planned, as the work the way that I wanted it to be. Or if while I'm teaching my students I realised that I could have done better. At that time perhaps I need to change my strategy. So yes, sometimes I reflect during my lesson and sometimes after the lesson, to see what other things I could have done better. What are the strengths, what are other theories I have applied in the lesson. Or I could have done better.. most of the time like that. |
| 6 | Me | How do you reflect? Can you give me an example of probably what happens or what do you do when you are reflecting? |
| 7 | Ramlah | Recently I had class called linking theory to practice. Whereby the students are supposed to apply their previous knowledge on teaching of reading and writing, listening and speaking and all into their practice. And I realised that at first I wanted to deliver the lesson giving lectures as usual. And then after student questions. But when I tried that in the class, I realised that the students do not really understand . How do I know that they don't really understand? Because they keep on.. they were not able to answer my questions. And then although they have had the experience. So I realised that that may not be the best way to make them able to relate to what they have done before with their own practice when they are supposed to go out for practicum in April. So what I did was I asked them to write their own lesson plan. And explain the lesson plan to me and relate to their knowledge of how to write the lesson plan and how to design the lesson for reading. For all the skills that have been taught before. So I think that is when I did my reflection in action mean what I do in the class and I realised I had to change my strategy there and then. So that it will be more effective for the students and more beneficial for them. |
| 8 | Me | What is your expectation of reflection? |
| 9 | Ramlah | One expectation is that I hope to be able to be better in my teaching. And I hope to be.. enable the students to learn more from my lessons. I hope if let say that my class is about learning theory to practice, if I want the students to be able to understand what they are supposed to understand, I should understand what it means first. |
| 10 | Me | Are you required to write reflections? |
| 11 | Ramlah | For the lesson plan a very brief one. That's the only requirement and think about one ten to a page and its only one piece of lesson plan and the comment column is like so little. So it's like one them for the whole page. If its A4 paper yes. But not that much. |
| 12 | Me | How do you find writing reflections as part of your professional requirement? |
| 13 | Ramlah | If writing a lesson plan is considered as writing reflection then it's not reflection at all. Because you don't really review, you don't really think about it again, and you don't really relate to what you have known before, relate to the theories that you have learnt. I think that in writing reflections you have to relate to the theories to practice. You have to be able to translate your action and try to see where the theory comes here. And how can I do better from here. So its a requirement but it is not much of requirement by IPGM i think. |
| 14 | Me | Do you a separate form of reflection apart from the one that you're supposed to write? |
| 15 | Ramlah | Because it's not a requirement so I don't write it. I think it's a setback for lecturers. But the fact that we don't have time and we are not forced to do it I think all of us don't do it. Most of us don't do it. |
| 16 | Me | Do you choose what to write in your reflections? I'm referring to the ones that you write in your lesson plan. |
| 17 | Ramlah | Ya because the space is so small, it's not really a reflection reflection. It's like it is one tenth of the page and you can only write for one lesson. We just highlight very important issue. That's all. |
| 18 | Me | Are you happy about writing that much? |

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| 19 | Ramlah | Not really because when you revisit, meaning when you re-read it again, there's not much to see and not much to learn from it. |
| 20 | Me | Do you think student teachers should be taught how to reflect or write reflections? |
| 21 | Ramlah | Ya, we should. |
| 22 | Me | How do you suggest that we should do this? |
| 23 | Ramlah | I personally think for students to be able to write good reflections and to really able to reflect, they should be given a course on reflection. Because all this while, although they write reflections but they are narrating their own experience. Even though for practicum they have their own reflective journal, most of them do not reflect they just narrate what happen, and how they feel about what happen. That's all. Which I think is not even helpful. |
| 24 | Me | How do you teach your students to write reflections? |
| 25 | Ramlah | I will let say that I go for practicum, and I read their reflections and I would give comments, and I always ask them to relate to whatever they have written, to the theories that they have learnt and try to explain more about the experience that they have had. |
| 26 | Me | How about not during practicum. Do you use a specific type of exercises or activities? |
| 27 | Ramlah | Since it is not allocated in the curriculum or in the syllabus. So I don't think we have time to do that with the students because we have to cover what we have to deliver to them. But if let's say it's a requirement of the coursework then before I ask them to do their coursework I will teach them first to reflect on their experience. |
| 28 | Me | From what I know in some of the courses, reflection is a part of their coursework. Then how do you prepare your students for that particular reflective coursework? |
| 29 | Ramlah | For that purpose I will have a class on reflection. I ask them to do reflection and I'll teach them how to go about it. |
| 30 | Me | Do you think student teachers should write reflections during practicum? |
| 31 | Ramlah | They should. Because otherwise it is just a routine for them. And then if things don't work, they just try another strategy without thinking about it. And they don't write down its not on paper, they cannot revisit the experience and see what's wrong and what right there. So they think that they have change from their initial plan or they have done better, but it is not recorded, and how they feel about it and how they rationalise their changes its not recorded i think it should be recorded. |
| 32 | Me | In your opinion how does this affect their teaching? |
| 33 | Ramlah | If they don't write their reflection, they become mechanical. When things don't work you change. But you don't have reasons for the change you think because it doesn't work. If you reflect, you are going to apply whatever knowledge you have you are going to read more. Because you have to verify whatever action you take in class or whatever actions you take for your students or your lessons. So it become more improve for them. So what is sic is that, although it is a requirement, for them to write reflections, since they are not taught well on how to write it, it is really beneficial for them. |
| 34 | Me | What do you think of the effects of your guidance have on your students' ability to reflect? |
| 35 | Ramlah | I have tried this in for my elective students. When I started with them, sic, before I make the intervention in a way whereby I teach them how to go about writing their reflections, they just narrated what I have done. And then I prompt them in their write up, still how do you relate this to the theories that you have learnt. At the end of it, after the 12th weeks of practicum I realised they were able to teach better. And they were able to rationalised better even though they are elective students of English. So I think it has its strengths because students can put in their knowledge of teaching to practice and they rationalise they think about it, they just don't do it. The problem now is that most our students they just do something but they don't think about it. |
| 36 | Me | Reflection is a part of assessment for the practicum, right? Are you happy about students being assessed? |
| 37 | Ramlah | For reflection? That is not right. |
| 38 | Me | Yes.. Why not? |
| 39 | Ramlah | Because reflection is your experience. You cannot evaluate experience. Because some people are not able to write more not because they don't have experience or the |

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| | | experience doesn't meet matter to them. But because they are lacking in the skill of writing. And then when you evaluate the experience how do you evaluate it? Do you evaluate because the students can write more or rationalise more? And then they will feel..it's not genuine anymore. Because you know that you're going to grade it. So sometimes when things doesn't work or what not, you may not want to express it. Because you are graded for that. So reflection shouldn't be considered as part of the evaluation. But it should be made as a requirement but not as an evaluation. |
| 40 | Me | If the student teachers were not required to write reflections during practicum, do you think they would reflect or write reflections at all? |
| 41 | Ramlah | Ya, if it is not a requirement like what we are doing now as lecturers we do not required to reflect then high probability that they are not going to write. So they have to be another way or another strategy. Whereby we have to.. we are going to ensure that they are going to write but they are not going to be evaluated. And they should be an environment whereby these students really want to write because of how the lecturers participate in their reflection meaning by giving them comments, by giving them feedbacks. Because all this while perhaps they don't write that much because we don't give feedback, we don't comment so they don't see the point there. When a reflection has its feedback or some comments or something said about it, I think they see that ok somebody gave response to what I'm feeling or what I'm writing so there is a positive encouragement there. So that is done perhaps it becomes more meaningful. |
| 42 | Me | Do you think that the practice of writing reflections during practicum helps the student teachers to be reflective? |
| 43 | Ramlah | For the practicum that the one we have now. No. |
| 44 | Me | How do you know that? |
| 45 | Ramlah | Because they narrate all the time. |
| 46 | Me | Then, how would you describe a narrative? How do you differ which one is reflection and which one is a narrative? |
| 47 | Ramlah | A narration is when they tell us what happen in class. How they feel about it, what could have been done. If it is a reflection, they would write what happen how they feel about it also. They are also going to write on what are the strategies that they can use, what are the theories that they can use, in making it better. They build to relate that experience to what they have learnt. And then they are going to come up with their strategies, the techniques. And this is also going to be related to their knowledge also. So it becomes meaningful to me because it is not, if it is just a mere narration of what happen. So it's just like a story. But if you relate to what you know, then it becomes meaningful because you put what you were into practice. |
| 48 | Me | After having three rounds of practicum, do you the students have improved at all in writing reflection? |
| 49 | Ramlah | Depends on the students themselves how they take it. If some students are serious, they will write reflections seriously. If some are not, they will continue to write a narration of happen in the class until the third practicum. |
| 50 | Me | Since you said that most of the students are actually not writing reflection but more of a narration what happen in the class, what can you do or what are the ways would you suggest so that at the end of the course so that they do write reflection? |
| 51 | Ramlah | Like what I've did before, is that I give the comments. Meaning after they have written, after I've read their reflections, I'm going to give comments how it can be improved and I follow through until the end of the practicum. Every time i go for practicum I will give comments on the previous reflections. So it's going to be quite a task for the lecturers themselves because they have to read quite a lot. But I think it can be one of the strategies that can be taken. |
| 52 | Me | The students are now in semester 7. Are you saying that they have not achieved the reflection level? |
| 53 | Ramlah | Some yes. But the lazy ones no. Because they can't be bothered they still continue writing very short lines. I'm very happy with my lesson today. What I've planned worked. That's all. |
| 54 | Me | How do you assess your students' reflection then? You do read your students' reflections so how do you come up with the criteria of saying this is a good reflection, this is not so good, this is a narrative. |

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| 55 | Ramlah | How insightful it is. How I can learn from sic (he knows). |
| 56 | Me | So does that mean that your criteria is not the same all the time? |
| 57 | Ramlah | It's the same criteria. That's why I said the lazy ones are like that, they don't write, they say what happen and that's it. But there are some who look into what happen and relate to what they know, what should be done in the lesson and theoretical part they can't really put in their reflection. I think because it is not a practice. |
| 58 | Me | Do you think that the students benefit from writing reflection during practicum? |
| 59 | Ramlah | Ya. They should if they write properly. If not, then its like ok just say I'm happy today and that's all. But at least how they feel and think is put on paper and if they feel bad they get to see it again next day ok I could have done better this time. So at least that is the benefit of writing it even thought it's not that insightful or deep. Just tell you what happen but at least they know that I should have done better in the previous class. So I will try to do better this time. |
| 60 | Me | How about in terms of learning English. Does reflection helps with that? |
| 61 | Ramlah | Ya reflection is like writing a journal. So I think they write a lot then they could improve in their language because they have to write more and then they have to choose more vocabulary and then they have to find the correct word for how they feel. So in a way yes, it's like a forced journal writing. |
| 62 | Me | What do you see as the values of reflection? For you and also for the students. |
| 63 | Ramlah | To make them better teachers. Not just like mechanical pencils. It like just push it and they do their work but at least there are some thinking there. |
| 64 | Me | How about for you? |
| 65 | Ramlah | For me.. too bad isn't it because I don't write my own reflection. No time. I don't even have time to sit down and think. Writing is an issue. If I could write I could benefit from it too because have recorded. The most important about reflection is that you record it. When you put it on paper, or perhaps another strategy that I can do is I can record myself. Record my own reflection. |
| 66 | Me | Is it necessary to record or have it written down? |
| 67 | Ramlah | I think it's good. Because what you have in your mind when revisit it. But you have recorded even if it is taped or on paper you can revisit and then from it later. So I think that's the value of making it on paper or making it on tape. |
| 68 | Me | What are the chances of you or anybody, students or lecturers to re-read, read again or look back at the written reflection? |
| 69 | Ramlah | For example if I teach learning theory and practice next semester, I can revisit my my experiences what and where I have gone wrong or what I've done before, I will reflect our lesson plan have a very small part of writing the reflection, if i have recorded it perhaps then I can develop from it and I can make something better. Who knows? |
| 70 | Me | Thank you. |
| 71 | Ramlah | You make me learn something today. I have to do my reflection...hahahaha |

Appendix AE: Interview Transcript with Staff

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| 1 | | Zamri (150209_0017, Staff Participant) |
| 2 | Saya | Apakah maksud refleksi di dalam konteks praktikum? |
| 3 | Zamri | Maksud refleksi di dalam konteks praktikum, dia lebih kepada bentuk seperti muhasabah tentang pengajaran yang disampaikan. Sebab apabila seorang guru pelatih atau pelajar dia mengajar, kadang-kadang di dalam tempoh pengajaran itu dia akan rasa seperti sesuatu yang tak mencukupi atau sesuatu yang memuaskan hati dia, jadi dia akan buat refleksi berdasarkan kepuasan dia ataupun ketidakpuasan dia dalam pengajaran tu. Jadi ia satu bentuk muhasabah bertujuan untuk menambahbaikkan lagi pengajaran dia kepada masa akan datang. |
| 4 | Saya | Secara umumnya, boleh tolong jelaskan tugas-tugas unit praktikum di IPG? |
| 5 | Zamri | Tugas unit praktikum, yang pertamanya dia melaksanakan penempatan pelajar di sekolah-sekolah rendah kelolaan jabatan pendidikan negeri. Jadi pelajar ini ditempatkan di sekolah-sekolah berdasarkan juga kepada major dia dan itu antaranya yang utama. Dan yang kedua apabila penempatan telah dilaksanakan unit praktikum akan menempatkan pensyarah-pensyarah untuk menyelia dan membimbing guru pelatih ini sepanjang tempoh praktikum. Disamping itu dia juga akan mekenalpasti guru pembimbing di sekolah sebagai pembimbing kepada dia dah secara tak langsung bermakna unit praktikum juga akan ada koleborasi dengan pihak pengurusan sekolah dan sehingga lah praktikum itu tamat berjalan dan disepanjang tempoh itu guru pembimbing dan juga pensyarah memainkan peranan yang sangat penting. |
| 6 | Saya | Apakah tujuan bagi guru pelatih menulis refleksi semasa praktikum? Sebab penulisan refleksi ni adalah sebahagian daripada aktiviti semasa praktikum. |
| 7 | Zamri | Seperti mana yang saya kata pada soalan pertama, dia adalah satu bentuk muhasabah. Jadi apabila dia melaksanakan refleksi, antara matlamatnya ialah supaya dia dapat mempertingkatkan lagi pengajaran dia pada masa yang akan datang. Mungkin ada satu dua kelemahan semasa pengajaran dia ketika itu. Jadi dengan refleksi kita harap dia kan mengubah tentang pendekatan dia, teknik dia, strategi dia, jadi yang tak berapa sesuai untuk ditingkatkan lagi dalam pengajaran selepas itu. Itu adalah matlamat yang paling penting refleksi tu. |
| 8 | Saya | Dalam praktikum, refleksi boleh diandaikan sebagai bahagian besar atau adakah dia penting? |
| 9 | Zamri | Dia penting tetapi bukan lah kita katakan sebahagian daripada sebahagian matlamat praktikum. Tapi dia penting disebabkan refleksi ini dia boleh meningkatkan keyakinan dan meningkatkan kualiti pengajaran dia selepas itu. |
| 10 | Saya | Bagaimanakah unit praktikum memberi maklumat kepada guru pelatih dan juga kepada pensyarah pembimbing mengenai refleksi atau pon penulisan refleksi? |
| 11 | Zamri | Sebelum seseorang atau pon sesuatu kohort itu dia pergi praktikum, unit praktikum akan memberi taklimat berkaitan dengan praktikum dan antara perkara yang ditekankan dalam taklimat tu adalah refleksi. Disamping itu unit praktikum juga biasanya akan undang pensyarah daripada jabatan lain untuk memberikan input tentang refleksi ni dan begitu juga kepada guru pembimbing sebab guru pembimbing ni dia akan dijemput ke kampus untuk kita bagi taklimat tentang penyeliaan dan bimbingan dan secara tak langsung kita terangkan juga tentang refleksi itu kepada mereka. |
| 12 | Saya | Refleksi ni adakah ia sebahagian daripada penilaian? |
| 13 | Zamri | Refleksi ni sebahagian daripada penilaian ya. Tetapi dia bukan memberi sumbangan yang besar sehingga 50%. Dia sangat penting dikira sebahagian kecil daripada penilaian kerana refleksi ini setiap kali dibuat, mereka akan masukkan dalam portfolio dan portfolio ni akan disemak diteliti oleh pensyarah dan guru dan refleksi ni dia wajib dilaksanakan bukan sehaja seminggu sekali tetapi refleksi ini juga wajib dilaksanakan setiap kali pengajaran dilaksanakan. |
| 14 | Saya | Kalau tak tulis refleksi ni takpe ke? |
| 15 | Zamri | Kalau tak tulis refleksi ni tak boleh. Dia mesti buat jugak sebab refleksi ni ada dua. Satu setiap lepas P&P dan satu lagi setiap minggu. Jadi bila dia tak buat refleksi, dia tak dapat masukkan dalam portfolio dan portfolio dia kita ibaratkan dia tak update. |
| 16 | Saya | Adakah refleksi ni perlu dinilai? |

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| 17 | Zamri | Refleksi dia dinilai sekali bersama-sama dengan portfolio. Dan refleksi ini akan dinilai dari segi contohnya apabila seseorang pelajar itu ditulis dalam refleksi. Sebagai contoh, dia kata dalam refleksi itu dia kata pembelajaran kurang memuaskan ketika itu, mungkin disebabkan bahan bantuan mengajar yang kurang menarik. Dan dalam refleksi itu dia juga akan mencadangkan untuk dia melaksanakan satu teknik penghasilan bahan bantu mengajar yang lebih menarik. Pada minggu yang akan datang, pada minggu-minggu selepas itu pensyarah atau guru akan lihat dia punya bantuan mengajar tu adakah ada perubahan dan lebih baik berdasarkan kepada refleksi dia atau pun dia tak buat apa-apa. Jadi secara tak langsung, walaupun dia tak memberi markah yang direct disitu tetapi dia berkaitan dengan sikap berkaitan dengan teknik yang dia akan sampaikan pada masa tu penambahbaikan yang akan dilakukan atau pun dia tak buat apa-apa langsung. |
| 18 | Saya | Secara perbadi, memang rasa patut dinilai tak? |
| 19 | Zamri | Ya. Patut dinilai. |
| 20 | Saya | Unit praktikum dia ada dia punya criteria sendiri, marking scheme tu. Cukup ke dengan itu sahaja atau pon kene lebih lagi? |
| 21 | Zamri | Pada pendapat saya borang bimbingan tu agak lengkap, agak sempurna dan menyeluruh kerana borang bimbingan itu mengambil kira dari segi perancangan. Ia itu sebelum P&P berjalan kemudian dia ada juga elemen ketika P&P itu berjalan. Dan dia juga ada elemen selepas P&P. Ketiga-tiga perkara ni ada pada borang bimbingan tu. Jadi dia boleh dikatakan ia borang yang agak sempurna dan cukup untuk menjadi seorang guru yang baik. |
| 22 | Saya | Bagaimanakah unit praktikum memberi persediaan atau pun apakah jenis persediaan yang diberi kepada guru pelatih mengenai penulisan refleksi? |
| 23 | Zamri | Tadi saya maklumkan berkaitan persediaan yang kita beri ialah semasa taklimat. Setiap kali pelajar ini sebelum mereka keluar pergi praktikum mereka akan diberi taklimat berkaitan refleksi. Memandangkan pelajar ini tiga kali pergi praktikum, ini bermaksud tiga kali taklimat berkaitan refleksi dimaklumkan kepada mereka. |
| 24 | Saya | Maksudnya ada tak bagi contoh format ker atau pun latihan semasa taklimat? |
| 25 | Zamri | Masa taklimat itu diberi format dan diberi satu contoh penulisan refleksi. Tapi dari segi berbengkel, mungkin tidak dibuat secara group. Dia buat secara dalam kumpulan yang besar dan tak buat dalam group yang kecil-kecil. |
| 26 | Saya | Apa elemen yang dinilai dan dilihat dalam refleksi pelajar? |
| 27 | Zamri | Ada beberapa elemen yang cara penulisan itu untuk kita nilai, saya tak ingat sepenuhnya tapi antaranya ialah dia mesti ada isu. Apabila dia ada isu dia mesti ada penyelesaian isu itu. Dan kemudian dia ada satu lagi elemen, tindakan susulan selepas itu. Sebenarnya ada lagi cuma saya tak dapat tunjukkan sekarang. Tak silap rasanya dia ada 5 perkara yang mesti dilihat dan ditulis, dan perkara yang perlu dibaca dan dilihat oleh pensyarah atau guru dalam refleksi tu. |
| 28 | Saya | Maksudnya, maklumat ini diberi kepada pensyarah dan pelajar semasa taklimat? |
| 29 | Zamri | Ya ada diberi tetapi diberi dalam lampiran. |
| 30 | Saya | Ini adalah guideline standard untuk semua IPG atau pon untuk satu IPG sahaja. |
| 31 | Zamri | Saya tak pasti. |
| 32 | Saya | Adakah ini atas inisiatif unit praktikum atau pon memang.. |
| 33 | Zamri | Ok dia ada dua yang saya kata tadi, satu refleksi setiap kali P&P, yang setiap kali P&P tu hanya untuk kampus kita sahaja. Tetapi untuk jurnal refleksi mingguan, seminggu satu dia standard. |
| 34 | Saya | Secara general apa kebaikan menulis refleksi semasa praktikum kepada guru pelatih? |
| 35 | Zamri | Contoh, apabila kita tak tulis refleksi, dia akan menyebabkan kita tak dapat mengenal pasti sebenarnya kelemahan kita kekuatan kita dan juga kepuasan kita dalam pengajaran. Dengan ini kita bimbang, seorang pelajar itu semacam seronok sendiri sedangkan hakikatnya murid-murid tak paham. Jadi apabila dia buat refleksi dengan ikhlas, seperti mana saya kata di awal tadi dalam bentuk muhasabah diri, apabila muhasabah ni bukan semestinya benda yang negatif, benda yang positif pon kita boleh muhasabah untuk kita jadikan lebih baik. Apatah lagi jika dia negative. Jadi dengan refleksi ini dia dapat kenal pasti satu-satu tentang kekurangan pengajaran dia. Seperti mana saya bagi contoh kalau dia mengajar, bila dia mengajar kadang-kadang pelajar bising, dia rasa dia dah buat persediaan, malam tadi dia dah buat persediaan dengan bahan bantuan mengajar dengan semua sekali ok, dia dah kumpul kan pelajar mengikut kumpulan ok semua sekali tetapi |

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| | | dia rasa pelajar bising, bising jugak. Jadi dia akan buat muhasabah, kenapa benda tu berlaku dan mungkin disebabkan oleh bahan bantuan mengajar dia terlalu kecil atau pun tak cukup, atau pun tak menarik. Sebab pelajar-pelajar sekolah rendah ni kadang-kadang dia suka kan benda yang menarik jadi secara tak langsung bila dia buat muhasabah macam tu, pada masa akan datang dia akan pastikan dia atasi kelemahan-kelemahan dia dalam pengajaran ketika itu. Jadi pada pengajaran pada masa akan datang, perkara yang sama takkan berulang. Jadi dengan refleksi ini, insyaallah kualiti pengajaran akan lebih baik. Dan pelajar akan lebih menumpukan perhatian terhadap pengajaran guru. Itu yang penting nya. |
| 36 | Saya | Cukup tak tiga kali praktikum pelajar praktis tulis refleksi dan akhirnya jadi seorang yang reflektif atau reflektif praktitioner? |
| 37 | Zamri | Sebenarnya tiga kali praktikum tu satu jangka masa ynag sangat lama. Dalam senario sekarang ni tiga kali tu sangat lama sebab dia memakan masa hingga enam bulan. Jarang mana-mana kampus mana collage, mana-mana university pergi praktikum sehingga enam bulan. Jadi selama tiga kali, tempoh keseluruhan enam bulan tu satu jangka masa yang sangat lama dan refleksi jika kita nak lihat dalam tempoh enam bulan tu dia akan buat sepuluh-puluh kali sebenarnya. Jadi sangkat cukup dan sangat memadai dan insyaallah apabila dia pergi sekolah dia akan jadi guru permulaan yang sangat baik. kalau nak jadi guru yang betul-betul yang terbaik, dia sebenarnya memerlukan pengalaman, dan pengalaman takde dalam buku. Dalam jangka masa tempoh lima tahun pertama dia akan dalam peringkat yang pertama mungkin dalam tahun kedua dia akan jadi guru yang sangat baik. |
| 38 | Saya | Sebagai pendidik apakah pendapat tn hj mengenai amalan menulis refleksi ini? |
| 39 | Zamri | Dia satu amalan yang bagus kerana dia dalam refleksi ni juga dia akan masuk dalam file, porfolio, dan portfolio itu jika kita lihat dia satu bentuk macam diari. Kadang-kadang kita berada di minggu ke 12 kita tak boleh ingat keseluruhannya dalam minggu pertama kerana kita berada di minggu kesepuluh pon kita tak boleh ingat sepenuhnya apa yang berlaku dalam minggu ke dua, Jadi dengan refleksi ni dan juga lain-lain komponen dalam file itu, dia akan dapat lihat balik dia akan jadi satu macam satu diari ker atau dalam satu album ker dan dia boleh buat rujukan dan sebagainya. |
| 40 | Saya | Unit praktikum bila dia kumpul semua PR2 daripada lecture, lepas tu portfolio students reflections semua tu, dia tak kumpul students reflection kan? |
| 41 | Zamri | Refleksi tu dia yang pertama tu dia akan tulis dalam buku persediaan mengajar dan yang kedua tu dia akan hasilkan dalam form dan dia akan masuk dalam portfolio jadi satu berada dalam buku perediaan mengajar dan satu berada dalam portfolio. Kedua-duanya disimpan oleh pelajar sepanjang masa kecuali jika kita perlukan kita boleh minta bila-bila masa. |
| 42 | Saya | Maksudnya unit baca refleksi pelajar? |
| 43 | Zamri | Sebenarnya bukan kita tak baca, tetapi jika kita perlukan kita ambil dan kita boleh baca. Tetapi bukan satu kewajipan untuk dibaca kerana dia telah dinilai dibaca oleh guru dan pensyarah. |
| 44 | Saya | Report yang lecturer bagi tu yang PR2 tu, yang tu unit practikum baca tak? Sebab boleh nampak tak improvement? Macam reflection ni kan kalau dia dah start daripada sem 5, 6, & 7 yang nampak students' improvement dalam refleksi tu lectuere sebab dia yang bimbing and then dia yang nilai. Unit praktikum pulak macam mana? |
| 45 | Zamri | Sebenarnya borang-borang bimbingan tu kita kutip. Dan kita boleh lihat setiap pelar dia punya progress refleksi berdasarkan kepada skala sebab pensyarah dia akan menilai berdasarkan kepada skala, 1, 2, 3, 4, dan 5. jadi jika skala itu semakin meningkat maknanya kita mengandaikan refleksi itu semakin baik sebab dia sebenarnya subjektif maka mustahil kita boleh menilai dengan tepat, dia formatif kan. |
| 46 | Saya | Rasanya nak standardkan criteria kalau orang ni tulis macam ni, ni dia punya descriptors ni dia reflection. Kalau dia tulis macam ni, ni bukan reflection. Rasanya bagus tak kalau kita ada standardise criteria untuk written reflection? |
| 47 | Zamri | Bagus tapi beban tugas tu akan lebih berganda sebab pensyarah tidak melihat itu sehaja. pensyarah akan melihat perancangan itu juga, pelaksanaan P&P |
| 48 | Saya | Terima kasih. |

Appendix AF: Initial codes for Student Teachers' Interviews

| No | Code | Coded segments of all interviews |
|----|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 | ST Improvement in teaching | 80 |
| 2 | ST SWIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Improvements, Suggestions) | 78 |
| 3 | ST Support, guidance, feedback | 77 |
| 4 | ST Writing structure or framework | 33 |
| 5 | ST Teaching Skill, about teaching | 29 |
| 6 | ST Improvement in reflection | 28 |
| 7 | ST Self-directed learning | 25 |
| 8 | ST Comparing and learning from others | 23 |
| 9 | ST Looking back | 21 |
| 10 | ST Self-development | 20 |
| 11 | ST When to reflect BAD (Before, After, During) | 20 |
| 12 | ST Reflective, descriptive | 19 |
| 13 | ST Length vs content | 18 |
| 14 | ST Sharing with peers | 18 |
| 15 | ST Language development | 17 |
| 16 | ST Expectation of reflection on the course | 16 |
| 17 | ST Limiting behaviour | 16 |
| 18 | ST Course requirement | 14 |
| 19 | ST Good, bad teaching, right or wrong | 13 |
| 20 | ST Realisation, own reflection | 11 |
| 21 | ST Reflection as assessment | 10 |
| 22 | ST Role of practicum unit | 10 |
| 23 | ST Writing skills | 10 |
| 24 | ST Awareness and realisation, ah-ha moment | 8 |
| 25 | ST Check own teaching progress | 8 |
| 26 | ST Classroom management | 8 |
| 27 | ST Planning for future actions | 8 |
| 28 | ST Being critical | 7 |
| 29 | ST Record, written evidence | 7 |
| 30 | ST attitudes and reflections | 6 |
| 31 | ST Developing as a person | 5 |
| 32 | ST English teacher image | 4 |
| 33 | ST Motivation and confidence | 4 |
| 34 | ST Own expectations, aims | 4 |
| 35 | ST Content | 3 |
| 36 | ST Other than classroom issues | 3 |
| 37 | ST Distraction, distort initial planning | 2 |
| 38 | ST Factors help with reflection | 2 |
| 39 | ST Revisit | 1 |

Appendix AG: Phase 3 - Potential Themes for Student Teachers' Interviews

| Potential Theme | Initial Code |
|---|---|
| 1. Perceptions – Identifying SWIS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWIS • Look back on teaching • Good or bad teaching, right or wrong teaching |
| 2. Reasons for Writing Reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look back on teaching • Self-development • Course requirement • Reflection as assessment • Plan for future actions • Record, written evidence • English teacher image |
| 3. Support in Writing Reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, guidance, feedback • Sharing with peers • Role of practicum unit • Factors that help reflection |
| 4. Values of Writing Reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in reflection • Comparing and learning from others • Self-realisation, awareness • Language development & writing skills • Limiting behaviour • Becoming critical • Motivation and confidence |

Appendix AH: Memo in MAXQDA

| Document group | Document name | Title | Memo text | Begin | End |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------|---|-------|-----|
| Students Interviews Phase 1 | 1 Ai Ling | Memo 1 | Forced to find and write a teaching issue in the reflections. | 1 | 1 |
| Students Interviews Phase 1 | 1 Azrul | Memo 2 | The participant seemed to form own concept of reflection after making comparison with his peers. | 36 | 36 |
| Students Interviews Phase 1 | 1 Azrul | Memo 3 | Forming own concept but still based on what lecturer says. | 38 | 38 |
| Students Interviews Phase 1 | 1 Azrul | Memo 4 | Repetition makes writing reflections easier. | 49 | 49 |
| Students Interviews Phase 1 | 1 Azrul | Memo 5 | Language is not a problem. Confident of own writing ability. | 51 | 51 |
| Students Interviews Phase 1 | 1 Azrul | Memo 7 | Have experience writing reflection in secondary school. Draw upon this past experience to write reflection now. | 57 | 57 |

Appendix AI: Initial Codes for Teacher Educators' Interviews

| No | Code | Coded segments of all interviews |
|----|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 | TE Support, guidance, feedback | 44 |
| 2 | TE SWIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Improvements, Suggestions) | 41 |
| 3 | TE Improvement in teaching | 39 |
| 4 | TE Check own teaching progress, self-development | 26 |
| 5 | TE Expectation of reflection | 25 |
| 6 | TE Looking back on teaching | 21 |
| 7 | TE Reflection as part of assessment | 21 |
| 8 | TE Writing structure or framework | 20 |
| 9 | TE Job requirement | 17 |
| 10 | TE Self-development | 16 |
| 11 | TE Training | 15 |
| 12 | TE Instructing how to write good reflections | 14 |
| 13 | TE When to reflect BAD (Before, After, During) | 14 |
| 14 | TE Record, written evidence | 13 |
| 15 | TE Criteria that makes a good reflection | 12 |
| 16 | TE Length vs content | 12 |
| 17 | TE Reflective, descriptive, narrative | 11 |
| 18 | TE Check student teachers' progress in teaching | 10 |
| 19 | TE Developing classroom teaching strategies | 9 |
| 20 | TE Planning for future actions | 8 |
| 21 | TE Realisation, own reflection | 8 |
| 22 | TE Cognitive, thinking | 7 |
| 23 | TE Course requirement | 7 |
| 24 | TE Forming habit | 7 |
| 25 | TE Role of practicum unit | 6 |
| 26 | TE Limiting behaviour | 5 |
| 27 | TE Sharing with peers | 5 |
| 28 | TE Comparing and learning from others | 4 |
| 29 | TE Developing as a person | 4 |
| 30 | TE Language development | 4 |
| 31 | TE Purpose of reflections | 4 |
| 32 | TE Education agenda | 3 |
| 33 | TE Good, bad teaching, right or wrong | 3 |
| 34 | TE Improvement in reflection | 3 |
| 35 | TE Lecture skills and knowledge | 3 |
| 36 | TE Reflective Skills | 3 |
| 37 | TE Self-directed learning | 3 |
| 38 | TE Critical thinking | 2 |
| 39 | TE Experience help writing reflection | 2 |

| | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 40 | TE Moral and spiritual aspects | 2 |
| 41 | TE Standardisation | 2 |
| 42 | TE Writing skills | 2 |
| 43 | TE Issues in teaching | 1 |
| 44 | TE Motivation | 1 |
| 45 | TE Quality education | 1 |

Appendix AJ: Potential Themes for Teacher Educators' Interviews

| Potential Theme | Initial Code |
|---|---|
| 1. Perceptions – Identifying SWIS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWIS • Look back on teaching • When to reflect BAD |
| 2. Reasons for Writing Reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look back on teaching • Improve teaching skills • Improve reflective skills • Reflection as part of assessment • Job requirement • Course requirement • Record, written evidence • Planning for future actions • Education agenda |
| 3. Support in Writing Reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing guidance, feedback & comments • Writing structure or framework • Lecture's skills and knowledge about reflection • Teaching experience • Practicum unit • Motivation |
| 4. Value of Writing Reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-development • Realisation and awareness about teaching • Forming reflective habit • Limiting behaviour • Comparing and learning from others • Language development • Reflective Skills • Self-directed learning • Critical thinking • Moral and spiritual aspects • Improve writing skills |

Appendix AK: Reviewed Themes and Sub-Themes for Student Teachers' Interviews

| Theme | Sub-Theme |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Perceptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SWIS (Strengths, Weaknesses, Improvements, Suggestions)• Reflection as writing |
| 2. Reasons | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course requirement• Reflection as part of assessment• Anxiety and pressure to reflect |
| 3. Benefit and Value | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection is about self-development• Learning from others |
| 4. Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support from teacher educators• Support from practicum unit• Support and sharing with peers |

Appendix AL: Reviewed Themes and Sub-Themes for Teacher Educators' Interviews

| Theme | Sub-Theme |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Perceptions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SWIS• Thinking back on teaching |
| 2. Reasons | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course requirement (for student teachers)• Job requirement (for teacher educators) |
| 3. Benefit and Value | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-development• Language development |
| 4. Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing writing structures or framework to help student teachers write their reflections• Providing support and guidance to student teachers regarding their teaching through feedbacks and comments |

Appendix AM: Daily Written Reflection - 8Dollah

The set induction stage was a success. The pupils were attracted to the lesson and they were excited to do the Hangman Game. I was able to introduce few words related to the topic at this stage.

Next, during the presentation stage, the pupils were able to respond to the listening audio. I was able to come out with a sample of postcard and introduced the features of the postcard to the pupils.

For practice stage, I prepared the groupwork activity, where the pupils were needed to make their own postcard, responding to the audio listened earlier. I think it was appropriate for this class to perform this kind of activity as they can work together to complete the task.

During the production stage, the pupils were accordingly grouped and placed in the classroom for the groupwork activity. It was a success because the pupils were able to come out with their own postcard.

All in all, the lesson was a success. Pupils were able to learn in a fun and exciting way. They were also able to achieve what are stated in the objective list.

To improve the lesson, I should encourage my pupils to speak in English among themselves. I may reward my pupils with sweets in order to motivate them.

Appendix AN: Module 1 - Topics for Reflective Writing

Choose the topics you wrote in your reflections.

Phase: SBE / Practicum 1 / Practicum 2 / Practicum 3 (Circle one)

| Topic | Reflection 1 | Reflection 2 | Reflection 3 | Reflection 4 |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Context | | | | |
| 2. Learning | | | | |
| 3. Language | | | | |
| 4. Teaching | | | | |
| 5. Beliefs & Values | | | | |
| 6. Content | | | | |
| 7. Attitudes | | | | |
| 8. Teachers | | | | |
| 9. Culture | | | | |
| 10. Theories | | | | |
| 11. Learners | | | | |
| 12. Others: | | | | |

Sample reflection:

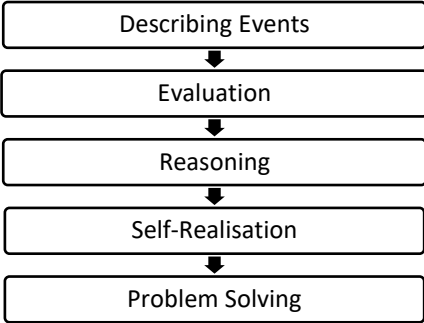
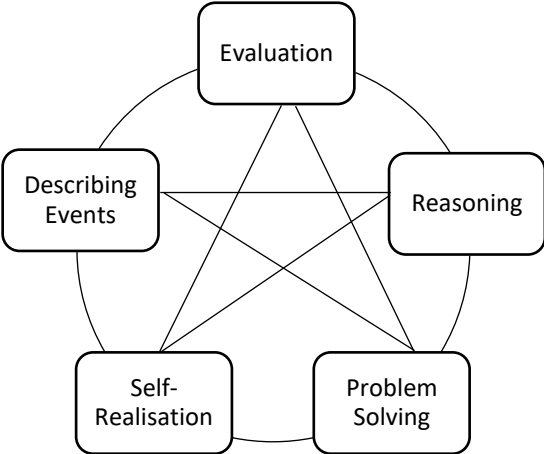
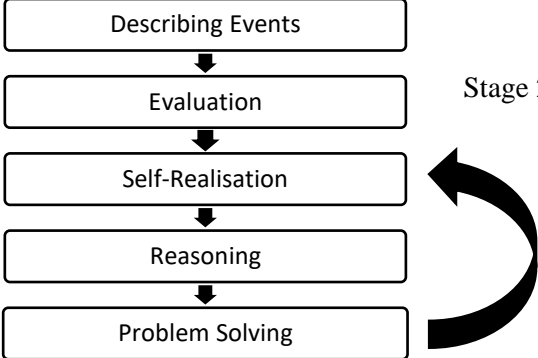
Topic: Learners and Language

Although I have reinforced the token system in my classroom, some of the pupils are still speaking in their mother tongue. I noticed most of them are Malay pupils. I have reminded them to speak in the target language in the classroom, but they refused to do so. I deduce that they are either low proficient in English language or they are too worried to make mistakes. I can see some of them who refuse to speak English are quite good in their writing. Perhaps they are worried if they say something wrong and their friends will laugh at them.

Appendix AO: Module 2 - Features of Reflective Writing

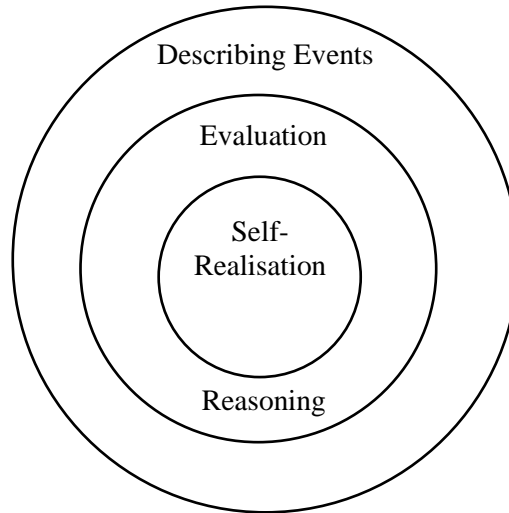
| Feature | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Evaluation | Determining whether a lesson was successful or unsuccessful, whether it went or did not go according to plan, whether the lesson objectives were achieved or not achieved. Analysing own performance in teaching the lesson. Making a judgement of the overall lesson. |
| 2. Reasoning | Examining things that took place in the classroom: before, during, and after the lesson. Justifying and demonstrating an understanding of why certain things happened. Relating teaching with theory. Discussing why things work or did not work. Making sense of things. May also include some form of evaluation onto own teaching. |
| 3. Self-Realisation | Learning from the teaching process. Recognising and expressing personal feelings such as happiness, relief, disappointment, etc. Being aware of the things that are happening in the classroom. Thinking about the effects of the lesson on the learners and learning. |
| 4. Problem Solving | Identifying a problem and finding a possible solution. Thinking about what to do next in the lesson. Deciding on the next steps or action to take. Exploring alternative ways to improve teaching. Planning for action, developing solutions to the problems and suggesting ways to improve the lesson. |
| 5. Describing Events | Simply recording things that happened in the classroom or school. Describing the activities or tasks in the lesson. Retelling, observing, noticing or recalling the events that took place in the classroom. Stating other things apart from teaching. No follow-up, analysis, or evaluation. |

Appendix AP: Module 3 - Reflective Writing Framework (Patterns of Flow)

| Type | Pattern |
|---|--|
| <p>Linear Flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a typical pattern in which the features are connected to each other and flow in sequence following a linear pattern |  <pre> graph TD A[Describing Events] --> B[Evaluation] B --> C[Reasoning] C --> D[Self-Realisation] D --> E[Problem Solving] </pre> |
| <p>Random Flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a number of features or all of the features are found in the written reflections and they move from one feature to the other in all directions randomly |  <pre> graph TD A[Describing Events] --- B[Evaluation] A --- C[Reasoning] A --- D[Self-Realisation] A --- E[Problem Solving] B --- C B --- D B --- E C --- D C --- E D --- E </pre> |
| <p>Recursive Flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the flow of the features could occur in stages or layers | <p>Stage 1</p>  <p>Stage 2</p> |

Dominant Flow

- there is an overlapping relationship between the features and that one feature could be dominant than the others



Appendix AQ: Handout

| Sample Reflection | Feature and Pattern of Flow |
|---|--|
| <p>1. I managed to conduct presentation stage like what I had planned. Pupils' pronunciation had been corrected by me as they read the chapter. In fact, I managed to explain what acrostic poem is to them within a short time. Apart from that, they also managed to answer the questions given in the worksheets. As an overall, the objectives of the lesson were achieved except for the activity during practice stage.</p> | <p>Feature: Evaluation Explanation: Mainly stating that the activities in the lesson were successful.</p> <p>Pattern of Flow: Linear or Dominant Explanation: there is only one pattern in this reflection</p> |
| <p>2. This problem (selecting suitable activities for her pupils) continues to exist because I am thinking too much about my practicum duty. This problem really upsets me and I am feeling guilty towards my students as I think that I do not deliver my lesson well. At times, I can see their unenthusiastic face and subtle reluctance to get involved in the activity that has been planned.</p> | <p>Feature: Reasoning or Self-Realisation Explanation: The student teacher was trying to make sense of the things that happened in the classroom and in the process she realised something about the her actions and decisions towards the lesson.</p> <p>Pattern of Flow: Linear or Random Explanation: Evaluation – Reasoning – Self-Realisation – Reasoning – Self-Realisation – Describing Event</p> |
| <p>3. Although I have reinforced the token system in my classroom, some of the pupils are still speaking in their mother tongue. I noticed most of them are Malay pupils. I have reminded them to speak in the target language in the classroom, but they refused to do so. I deduce that they are either low proficient in English language or they are too worried to make mistakes. I can see some of them who refuse to speak English are quite good in their writing. Perhaps they are worried if they say something wrong and their friends will laugh at them.</p> | <p>Feature: Problem Solving Explanation: The student teacher attempts to solve the problem that she encountered in her classroom.</p> <p>Pattern of Flow: Recursive Explanation: Evaluation - Self-Realisation - Reasoning - Problem Solving - Self-Realisation – Reasoning – Problem Solving</p> |
| <p>5. We did not have the lesson for the first 30 minutes as we had assembly. So, my lesson cannot be carried out exactly just like what I had planned. I did not conduct the set induction. Within 30 minutes, I conducted the presentation and practice stages. The production stage could not be carry out so I gave the task as their homework. Therefore, next time I need to have Plan B in case things like this would happen again.</p> | <p>Feature: Describing Events Explanation: The extract mainly describing the things that happened in the classroom. The lack of follow-up discussions and elaboration in this reflection makes it essentially descriptive.</p> <p>Pattern of Flow: Dominant Flow Explanation: Mainly Describing Event</p> |

Appendix AR: Descriptions of Reflective Elements in Frameworks for ‘Reflection’

| Author | Description of Reflective Element | Dimension |
|------------------|--|--|
| Van Manen (1977) | <p>Level 1: Technical – addressing the application of specific skills and pedagogy in the classroom and considering alternative actions and strategies; reflection is confined to analysing the effects of strategies used</p> <p>Level 2: Practical – interpreting the value of specific teaching practices for independent, individual teaching decisions; teachers are assessing the educational implications of their actions and beliefs</p> <p>Level 3: Critical – examining the influence of structural and societal constraints and how personal values may conflict with those constraints; questioning the moral and ethical dimensions of decisions related directly or indirectly to the classroom situation</p> | Hierarchal Focus on Breadth |
| Valli (1993a) | <p>Technical reflection – applying reflection to specific teaching practices; rule-governed; evaluating a teaching performance based on externally imposed criteria, narrow, pre-established boundaries, prescriptive way of learning to teach Content: focus on the narrow domain of teaching techniques or skills, prospective teachers think about the general teaching behaviours that have been derived from research on teaching and try to match their performance to those guidelines Quality: directing one’s actions through a straight forward application of research on teaching; their reflection will be judged by the knowledge of research findings and their ability to match their teaching performance to these findings</p> <p>Reflection on-action and in-action – Based on Schön (1983) reflection on-action is the retrospective thinking teachers do after lesson has been taught, reflection in-action is the spontaneous, intuitive decisions made during the act of teaching, teacher’s voice is expert; evaluating a teaching performance Content: reflection comes from one’s unique experience Quality: reflection is judge by teacher’s ability to make and justify good decisions based on his or her own situation and experience</p> <p>Deliberative reflection – considering alternative perspectives and actions; no one voice dominates Content: inclusive, emphasis decision making based on variety of resources Quality: reflection is judged by teacher’s abilities to weigh these competing claims and give good reasons for decision they make</p> | Hierarchal Focus is mixed between Breadth & Depth Two-dimensional |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | <p>Personalistic reflection – appraising individual development, attentive to own voice as well as the voices of their students Content: reflect in personal way, consciously link their personal and professional lives, also think about their students in all aspects of their lives Quality: ability to empathize</p> <p>Critical reflection – considering social and political influences on teaching practices Content: ways in which schools and teachers contribute to social injustices and inequality and ways in which they can help overcome these inequities. Quality: determined by the teacher’s ability to apply ethical criteria to the goals and processes of schooling</p> | |
| <p>Bain, Ballantyne, Packer & Mills (1999)</p> | <p>Content: Focus on teaching – general teaching issues; specific lesson or incident; behavioural management; other like lesson management, content, homework</p> <p>Focus on self – own skills/worth as teacher; own teaching approach; other like feelings, identity, learning</p> <p>Focus on professional issues – relationship/discussion with supervising teacher; teaching as profession; institutional issues; professional preparation; social/ethical issues; out-of-class activities</p> <p>Focus on students or class – student/class behaviour; student/class characteristics; relationship with specific students; teaching of specific students</p> <p>Level of Reflection: Level 1: Reporting - The student describes, reports or retells with minimal transformation, no added observations or insights</p> <p>Level 2: Responding - The student uses the source data in some way, but with little transformation or conceptualization; The student makes an observation or judgement without making any further inferences or detailing the reasons for the judgement; The student asks a ‘rhetorical’ question without attempting to answer it or consider alternatives; The student reports a feeling such as relief, anxiety, happiness, etc.</p> <p>Level 3: Relating - The student identifies aspects of the data which have personal meaning or which connect with their prior or current experience; The student seeks a superficial understanding of relationships; The student identifies something they are good at, something that they need to improve, a mistake they have made, or an area</p> | <p>Hierarchal Two-dimensional Focus on Breadth and Depth Each dimension is treated separately Each level is treated separately</p> |

| | | |
|----------------------|--|---|
| | <p>in which they have learned from their practical experience; The student gives a superficial explanation of the reason why something has happened or identifies something they need or plan to do or change</p> <p>Level 4: Reasoning - The student integrates the data into an appropriate relationship, e.g. with theoretical concepts, personal experience, involving a high level of transformation and conceptualization; The student seeks a deep understanding of why something has happened; The student explores or analyses a concept, event or experience, asks questions and looks for answers, considers alternatives, speculates or hypothesises about why something is happening; The student attempts to explain their own or others' behaviour or feelings using their own insight, inferences, experiences or previous learning, with some depth of understanding; The student explores the relationship between theory and practice in some depth</p> <p>Level 5: Reconstructing - The student displays a high level of abstract thinking to generalise and/or apply learning; The student draws an original conclusion from their reflections, generalises from their experience, extracts general principles, formulates a personal theory of teaching or takes a position on an issue; The student extracts and internalises the personal significance of their learning and/or plans their own further learning on the basis of their reflections</p> | |
| Jay & Johnson (2002) | <p>Descriptive – examining personal classroom actions, ‘setting the problem’; *descriptive reflection entails more than just reporting the facts, it involves finding significance in a matter so as to recognize salient features, extract and study causes and consequences, re-contextualise them, and envision a change</p> <p>Comparative – inviting alternative views, perspectives, and research; ‘frame experiment’ – Schon; reframe the matter for reflection in light of alternative views, others’ perspectives, research, etc.; assumes to still be narrow view of the situation itself</p> <p>Critical – posing questions pertaining to the public democratic purposes of schooling and the moral and political dimensions of schooling; having considered the implications of the matter, establish a renewed perspective; making a judgement, making a decision through careful deliberation</p> | Non-hierarchical Focus on Breadth Holistic |
| Farrell (2015) | <p>Philosophy – examines ‘teacher-as-person’ and suggests that professional practice, both inside and outside the classroom is invariably guided by a teacher’s basic philosophy and that this philosophy has been developed since birth, to reflect on basic philosophy we need to obtain self-knowledge by exploring, examining, and reflecting on our background; (hidden aspect of teaching)</p> | Non-hierarchical Focus on Breadth Each stage is treated separately but linked |

| | | |
|--|---|----------|
| | <p>Principles – reflections on teacher’s assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning; (hidden aspect of teaching)</p> <p>Theory – explores and examines the different choices a teacher makes about particular skills that are taught and how to put these theories into practice; considers the type of lesson they want to deliver; (hidden aspect of teaching)</p> <p>Practice – examination of observable actions while we are teaching as well as our students’ reactions during the lessons; reflect on and in action; (visible behaviours)</p> <p>Beyond practice – sociocultural dimension to teaching and learning; critical reflection</p> | Holistic |
|--|---|----------|