Journal Online Jaringan Pengajian Seni Bina (JOJAPS)

Reflective Practice with E-Portfolio

Vicknes Nambiar Gopal Krishnan & Azlina Abdul Aziz [a]*

[a]Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Abstract

Increasing workload has lead teachers nowadays to ignore the significance of reflective practice in classrooms. This research aims in discovering the influence of reflective teaching in enhancing the English as Second Language Teaching (ESL) teaching practice. It also reveals the role of an e-portfolio in supporting reflective practice. Primary data was collected among the B. Ed TESL student teachers through interview, focus group and also through the analysis of the selected reflections upon the observed English lessons. Student teachers are expected to practice observational reflection that allows the teachers to expand ideas on the ways of enhancing lessons, to accept and handle diverse types of students and to be critical while avoiding being judgmental when facing classroom issues. Nevertheless, their ability to implement these reflective qualities in their teaching is uncertain as they did not gain the appropriate chance in reflecting upon their own teaching practice. The Victory e-portfolio supported and assisted the B. Ed TESL undergraduates' reflective practice. Personal documentations,, personal space in reflecting and the development of peer reflection were conducted conveniently with the existence of Victory E-Portfolio. Nonetheless, advantages such as synchronous chat to enable the receiving of feedback from the teacher educator which are unavailable in Victory e-portfolio have been proven to be the aspect that could improve the ability of e-portfolio to assist reflective practice. This research had allowed the emergence of further recommendations on future research through the findings and discussion according to the principles of reflection.

Key-word: - : e-portfolio, reflective practice, reflective practitioner, ESL

1. Introduction (Times New Roman, Size 10, Bold, Single Spacing)

The liability and accountability of teachers has expanded from their duty in the classrooms to the group tasks and responsibility which involves the school and the higher management as a whole (Muhamad Kamarul & Kabilan, 2016). This has forced the teachers to be involved in decision making process and being a leader in collaborative environment (Miller, 1992, cited by Ellsworth, 2002; Yunus, 2007). Hence, establishing professionalism has become a requirement for the teachers in order to gain experience while examining the learning process systematically (Reimers, 2003; Muhamad Kamarul & Kabilan, 2016). Reflection is a vital phase in improving the level of a person's professional development (Pollard, 2002; Bates, Swennan & Jones, 2011). Reflective teaching has been acknowledged as a obligatory instrument for educator to develop a classroom and learning environment. Dewey (1993) emphasizes on integrating experience with reflective action which would enable the practitioner to criticize their own practice and encourage them to improvise and upgrade their teaching performance (Etscheidt, Curran, & Sawyer). On the other hand, electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) emerged as Web2.0 technologies which provide continuous opportunity for teacher students to extend their skills in reflecting (Ellsworth, 2002). "E-portfolio is a laboratory student construct meaning from their accumulated experience" (Paulson, Paulson & Meyer, 1991, p. 5; Bates, Swennan & Jones, 2011, p. 11). It does not only assist the teacher trainees to acknowledge their accomplishment alongside the established professional standards, but also to build up their reflective skills which will be very much useful in their future career as teachers (Morris, 2008). Two main questions have been developed upon the review of a range of studies about the usage of e-portfolio and the expansion of reflective practice. The differences in the practice and course design of the B.Ed

———————

* Vinesh Nambiar
E-mail address: vicknes.nambiar@gmail.com

TESL learners and the assorted features and facilities available in the e-portfolio used to support their reflective practice emerges two main aims in this research. The first aim is to ascertain the significance of creating teacher students into reflective practitioners and the second aim is to investigate the efficiency of Victory e-portfolio in assisting and developing the B.Ed TESL undergraduates to in developing themselves as reflective practitioners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Reflection and Professional Development

Reflecting on various teaching practice as a trainee would enable them to gain observational experience, criticise understand and analyse their own teaching practice in the future (Bates, Swennan & Jones, 2011). Reflective practice engages a trainee teacher in a process of continuous learning by encouraging them to pay critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions (Goodfellow & Lea, 2007). This leads to the development of insights on effective ways to conduct lessons (Goodfellow & Lea, 2007). Reflective professionals will analyse and evaluate their existing knowledge on teaching while planning and strategizing their teaching practice (Etscheidt, Curran, & Sawyer, 2011). Reflective practice creates a teacher who is always alert of their thinking capacity, professional beliefs and teaching values which will result in their future actions (Lynn, Castelli, Werner, & Cone, 2007). This practice encourages regular assessment of personal development which will guide the trainees to respond constructively to the evolving classroom conditions.

Observations are claimed to allow the teacher trainees to picturise the various ways of impending the implementation of the theoretical knowledge learned about teaching (Farrell, 2014). However, a judgmental mentality where student teachers tend to handle issues according to their emotions and observational experience instead of finding for ways to handle the issues in order to enhance a lesson will be developed if one does not become a reflective practitioner (Farrell, 2014). It is essential for the student teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice as it will expose them to a wide range of ideas when facing classroom problems (Farrell, 2014). Then, they will be able to grow as a teacher who will continuously analyse their teaching and find for ways to solve classroom issues without blaming the exterior factors which includes the students' learning ability or the teaching amenities for a letdown of a lesson (Ryan & Ryan, 2013).

It is also worth noting that, restricted knowledge and exposure to the pedagogical method of teaching becomes an obstruction for student teachers to begin the journey of reflection during a lesson (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan, Clarke, & Drufy, 2009). Hence, it is usual for them to just observe and experiment their teaching before being able to reflect at the initial stage of developing as reflective practitioners. In fact, research has proven that it is normal for teacher students to practice reflective teaching on the surface and general level and is not as efficient as it is required to be (Farrell, 2014). Relating to this point of view, teacher educators should play a major role in scaffolding the trainees to ensure their understanding about reflection (Ryan & Ryan, 2013). Observation and associating their thinking with their observation and beliefs requires a lot of time (Walkington, 2005). It is indeed a messy and complicated process (Goodfellow & Lea, 2007).

2.2 Reflection in e-portfolio

The ability to document evidences of learning which could consist of texts, graphics, sound and video is infatuated by an e-portfolio. It will also enable teachers to connect to other web-based content which cannot be attained by normal paper-based portfolios (Ross, 2006). E-portfolio instills a sense of achievement among trainees as it provides a distinct and friendly indicator of the learning process in a structured way (Buzzeto-More, 2010). Videos or audio recording of lessons in the classroom and the interaction in a discussion board can be saved in e-portfolio which later can be used to refer and reflect. It is a life document which would allow constant documentation which could be easily edited and revised at any flexible time with internet facilities (Cameron, 2005).The usage of e-portfolio has established emergent learning which is developed through a continuous reflective activity. Here trainees would understand better on what they know and do (Farrell, 2014). An e-portfolio should be a never-ending product as it creates a path for unending learning. Hence, trainees will become "active learners as they set goals for learning engage themselves in a self-reflective process" (Cheng & Chau, 2013)," review goals and be responsible for their own learning" (Buzzetto- More, 2010).

Peer-collaborative reflection is evident in e-portfolio as it enables trainees to comment on written journals or learning logs through asynchronous and synchronous chatting (Oakley, Pegrum, & Johnston, 2014). Trainees get to brainstorm their opinions on an issue and question while commenting on each other's point of view (Maarof, 2007). This creates an interactive learning environment where trainees get to develop themselves positively by accepting feedback, critics, and comments from their peers on the trainee's uploaded reflections, and prove of teaching practice (Cheng & Chau, 2013). Interactive reflection is claimed to motivate and encourage trainees to develop reflectivity while becoming a reason for them to evade their existing stereotype and become a broad minded person (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Hence, practitioners will be able to elicit meaning from their teaching practice and should be able to implement the learned knowledge in their future teaching practice.Here; they can extract meaning from their experience and should be able to apply their knowledge in their future teaching practice (MacAntee, Garii, 2010). Nevertheless, Cheng & Chau, (2013) is certain that trainee teachers will be highly reflective and engaged in a deep learning process, which involves reflection, intrinsic motivation, interconnection and authentic expression only if the e-portfolio is well used (Buzzeto-More, 2010)

Interaction among the teacher educators and the trainee teachers can be developed. Teacher educators will be able to comment on the student teachers' progress and will be able to provide instant feedback in developing the content of the e-portfolio (MacAntee, Garii, 2010). This enables the trainees to immediately correct their mistakes which again assist in developing effective reflective practitioners. However, upon knowing about their lecturer monitoring their activities in the e-portfolio, student teachers may resist them from providing and sharing genuine ideas and this would reduce the legitimacy of reflective writings as it will restrict the content of discussion (Maarof, 2007). An e-portfolio as a whole supports the process of developing a trainee into a reflective practitioner (Ross, 2006). This can be visualized through Figure 1
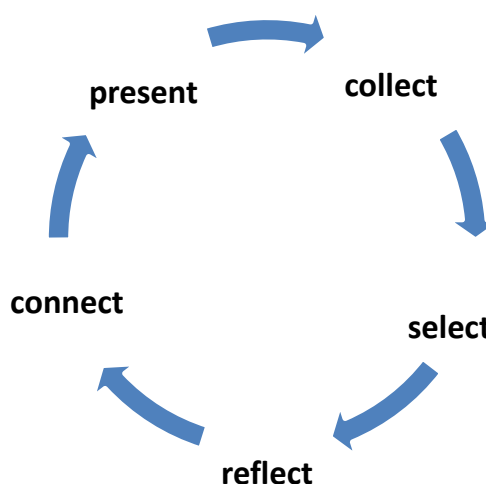

Figure 1 Circle of Progression (Ross 2006)

3.0   METHODOLOGY

3.1 Context

This research was conducted among University of Portsmouth, B.Ed Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) undergraduate teacher trainees during their final year. They were required to reflect on the observational experiences during their school visits to a primary, a secondary, and a college within ten days. Lesson observations were conducted based on the theoretical knowledge learned which includes teaching methodologies and Quality Teacher Standards (QTS). The learners were exposed to these during lectures and seminars. The reflective tasks include reflective writings that were saved in their own respective e-portfolios. The e-portfolio used by the context is accessed through a virtual learning tool maintained by the unversity. The writing task was later assessed by the unit lecturer.

3.2 Data Collection Tools

Interview was conducted with the lecturer who has introduced the need of using e-portfolio and handled the course units with the B.Ed undergraduates. Constructive questions were asked in the interview to elicit a qualitative data which disclose in-depth insights on the specific research questions. The interview was recorded and later transcribed to be analysed through themes related to the research questions.

Apart from that, focus group with twenty B.Ed TESL undergraduates was conducted. Focus group has managed to extract personalized perception on the usage of e-portfolio, the process of developing the trainees into reflective practitioners and the usage of e-portfolio in supporting themselves as reflective practitioners. Apart from gaining larger amount of information at once, focus group has managed to prompt discussions and idea sharing which leads to the discovery of potential problems and

possible ways of overcoming it while eliciting large amount of information at once (Stewart, 2007). The data gained were analyzed according to three main themes; discernment towards e-portfolio, accepting and being a reflective practitioner and the support gained though the Victory e-portfolio in implementing reflective teaching.

Student teachers' reflective writing in the e-portfolio was analyzed according to Hatton & Smith's (1995) concept of reflection. This concept claims that reflective practice appears in four different forms including "descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection and critical reflection". Hatton & Smith's concept functions as a guidance to differentiate the different types of reflective writing that portrayed by the B.Ed TESL undergraduates.

4.0 Results and Discussions

a. Importance of developing initial teacher trainees into reflective practitioners.

Many claimed that writing reflective journals brings about a lot of advantages in nurturing themselves as future educators. Through this journey, they have observed many lessons and reflect upon their observational experience while relating their theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom. This has also avoided them from being judgmental over issues that occur in classrooms. The reflections lead them to think about ways to improve lessons (Farell, 2014). Even though they did not have the occasion to teach and reflect upon their own teaching, reflecting upon other teachers' lessons with provides them the knowledge on classroom management and prepare them to become an effective teacher in the future (Bates, Swennan & Jones, 2011). They were sure to be able to analyse a classroom condition professionally, and will discover variety of techniques and ways of teaching and managing a classroom to ensure a positive learning environment (Freese, 2006). A quote from the focus group:

"We will not end up blaming our students for a bad lesson like how our teachers did in the past. This reflective practice will make us a professional teacher where we will not be blaming anyone but we will put the blame on ourselves positively so that we will not take a failure lesson for granted but we will see where we can correct ourselves to make the children to stay focus in a lesson"

The issue arises when trainees were not given the chance to teach and reflect upon their own teaching experience as they were claimed not to be qualified to teach yet. Nevertheless, reflecting upon their understanding on teaching methodology and Quality Teacher Standards (QTS) applied by other teachers in the school has somehow complimented their inability to reflect upon their own teaching. The lecturer explains that this equips and prepared them in becoming holistic teachers who are capable of knowing and executing various ways of handling unexpected complications and challenges in their future teaching career (MacEntee & Garii, 2010). It has been proven that many teacher training programs include practical learning that allows the learners to reflect upon their own practice. This had led to progress in their teaching practice compared to when they merely observe lessons (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2007). It is undeniable that reflecting upon own experience would provide more space for trainee teachers to evaluate their own teaching practice effectively (Ryan & Ryan, 2013).

Education programs must include numerous clinical experiences and variety of reflective approaches which involves journal writing, portfolios and action research. (Ryan & Ryan, 2013). The ability to reflect on their own teaching experience should be nurtured since their training period to develop them as a consistent and permanent reflective practitioner in their career while allowing continuous professional development (Vygotsky, 1978, cited by MacAntee & Garii, 2010). In addition, the reflective journals written upon their own practical teaching experience should be assessed.

In relation to this, some B.Ed undergraduates did not see the point and relevance in reflecting on someone else's practice. They could not see the significance of being a reflective practitioner as a teacher trainee as they were not given an opportunity to teach and reflect upon their own teaching. A quote from the focus group:

"I don't see the point of reflecting upon another person's teaching. Even if I have managed to reflect and identify the advantages and how things can be improved, I am not sure that this can ensure me being a good teacher in the future. Will I be able to be a good teacher after learning from what had happened in the other lessons? Will I be ready not to repeat the mistakes other teachers tend to do in their lessons? I don't think so. My teaching context is going to be totally different. I have to start teaching, I have to reflect upon my own teaching, learn about myself and my own style, and then this whole reflective practice will be useful for me".

Reflecting on their own performance and practice would have provided insights into the practical realities of teaching. It makes the reflective process more effective as they can monitor and evaluate their own teaching process, detect the advantages and disadvantages in a lesson, and discover the ways to overcome their problems and improve their future lessons (Sung, Chang, Yu & Chang, 2009, cited by MacAntee, & Garii, 2010). The process of reflecting expands positively only when learners tend to encounter a similar teaching situation several times as it allows them to understand its position in a wider perspective. Teacher training programs which have successfully developed their learners as reflective practitioners claim that it has been achieved through a continuous reflective activity on their personal teaching experience (Cheng & Chau, 2013). Hence, it is essential to integrate teaching practical opportunities if the initial teacher trainees are expected to develop themselves as a reflective practitioner

b. Effectiveness of Victory e-portfolio in supporting B.Ed TESL undergraduates to develop themselves as a reflective practitioner

The teacher trainees claimed that Victory e-portfolio had played a major role as a tool to support evidence based practice where learners do not merely chat and share insights on a teaching practice but they are able to document their discussion in a professional learning tool (Ross, 2006; Cameron, 2005). The teacher candidates will have the evidence of their learning which can be used for future references. The evidencing favours the teacher trainees in visualising the areas need to be strengthened (Ellsworth, 2002). Learners will be able to edit, and revisit their writings at their desired time with internet connection while being able to recall and visualize their experience whenever they reread their reflections which have been saved in their e-portfolio (Cameron, 2005).

E-portfolio has been claimed to create a sense of ownership and personalization as it allows them to document their reflections, assignments, reading materials and electronic teaching aids in their own desired way. They own the authority to decide the ways of organizing the files, choosing the background colour and also the layout. The self-authority to their own e-portfolio which allows autonomous learning has reduced their anxiety when completing their reflection writing as well as encourages them to prepare and review it before sharing it with their colleagues (Ryan & Ryan, 2013).

The e-portfolio becomes even more effective when it supports peer-to-peer interaction through discussion boards where learners can comment, criticize and develop their colleagues' reflective comments upon a topic assigned by the lecturer. Here, learners acquire positive learning skills by being able to share and accept their friends' idea and critics (Cheng & Chau, 2013). They also become more open minded and gain the opportunity to widen their horizons as they can begin to think and reflect from various angles though, some teacher trainees were rather upset as they could only communicate with their own course mates and this limits them from communicating with a broader range of audience thus limiting the sharing of ideas and insights.

One of the trainee teachers said that "The best part is when the lecturers can comment on our work and we get a chance to correct ourselves without meeting them". However, trainees also mentioned that Victory e-portfolio could have been better through the features of synchronous communication which would enable the lecturers to join a discussion board and provide instant feedback. Through this, the dialogic reflection becomes more efficient and effective (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Below are some of the evidences from B.Ed undergraduates Victory e-portfolio. The image in Figure 2 proves that Victory E-Portfolio supports the B.Ed TESL undergraduates to develop themselves as a reflective practitioner

Figure 2: Evidence of reflective practice and peer reflection

5.0 Conclusion

The B.Ed TESL undergraduates have develop themselves as reflective practitioners and have understood the benefits of it as future teachers. Reflecting their observational experience has allowed them to think on ways a lesson could be improvised and how it can be adapted in different teaching context. They have become broad minded are able to think of different ways to handle issues that may arise unexpectedly in a teaching and learning environment. However, without the proper space and opportunity to reflect on their own action, the ability to apply their knowledge gained through their observational experience into their own teaching practice is doubtful. "The observational experience itself is insufficient to build a complete reflective practitioner" (Bolton 2010).

The e-portfolio has supported and assisted reflective practice among the teacher trainees. The usage has been maximized to document their reflective writings, create their own discussion board to express their personal reflective ideas and to grow peer interaction and reflection through online discussion. Nevertheless, it is claimed to be less user-friendly when it disables synchronous chatting which does not allow the receiving of instant feedback from colleagues and lecturers. Apart from that, the controlled audience system limits their collaboration within their course mates while reducing the opportunity for them to share and receive constructive insights with a wider range of audience. Another drawback is that Victory e-portfolio is not an effective instrument that would maintain continuous professional development as student teachers will not be able to access their e-portfolio and revert to their documented reflections in it upon disassociating from the university. It is worth emphasizing that an e-portfolio would be more efficient if it functions like a social network where it would provide a permanent ease of access while allowing documentation and synchronous discussion with anyone of similar profession line.

Few principles that impacts reflective practice have surfaced through findings and discussion. It includes the importance of own teaching experience, the scaffolding from the teacher educator, the attitude of the teacher trainees themselves and the need of sufficient understanding on the technical aspects of an e-portfolio. Furthermore, the values of reflective thinking and reflective practice could be analysed through their response on their own teaching experience (Maarof, 2007). The capability of other Web2.0 tools such as social networking, blogs, Google document and Wiki space in supporting reflective practice among teacher trainees should be studied and examined to rationalize the usage of alternative tools in supporting reflective practice.

References

Andreotti, V. (2006). 'Soft versus critical global citizenship education' in Policy & Practice*: A Development Education Review*, Centre for Global Education, Vol. 1, Autumn 2006, pp. 40-51

Bates, T., Swennan, A., & Jones, K. (2011). Professional Development. In Bates, T., Swennan, A., & Jones, K (Eds.), *The Professionl Development of Teacher Educators* (pp. 7-19). Oxon: Routledge

Boloton, G. (2010). *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development* (3rd ed). London: SAGE Publication Ltd.

Bryan, A., Clarke, M., & Drudy, S. (2009). *Social Justice Education in Initial Teacher Education*: A Crosss Border Perspective, A Report for the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTens). Retrieved January 6, 2012, from http://scotens.org/wp-content/uploads/Social-Jusctice-Education-in-Initial-Teacher-Education-2009.pdf

Buzzetto-More, N.A. (2010). Applications of E-Portfolio for Value Added Assessment. In N.A. Buzzetto- More (Ed.), *The E-Portfolio Paradigm: Informing, Educating, Assessing and Managing with E-Portfolios* (pp. 225-246). California: Informing Science Press.

Cameron, R. (2005). Activity-Reflection E-Portfolios; An Approach to the Problem of Effectively Integrating ICTs in Teaching and Learning. Retrieved January 7, 2012, from http://lsn. curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2005/refereed/Richards.htm

Cheng, G., & Chau, J. (2013). A Study of the Effect of the Goal Orientation on the Reflective Ability of electronic portfolio users. *The Internet and Higher Education,* 16, 51-56

Ellsworth, J.Z. (2002). Using Student Portfolio to Increase Student Reflective Practice. *Journal of Teacher Education,* 53(4),342-355

Etscheidt, S., Curran, C.M., & Sawyer,C.M. (2011). Promoting Reflection in Teacher Preparation Programs: A Multilevel Model. *Teacher Education and Special Education: The Journal of The Teacher Education Devision of the Council for Exceptional Children*, 35(1), 7-26

Farrell, T.S.C (2014). Review of Reflective Writing for Language Teachers. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 11(2), 358-369

Goodfellow, R., & Lea, M.R. (2007). *Challenging E-Learning in the Unviersity*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Hatton, N., & Smith, D. (1995). Reflection in Teacher Education: Towards Definition and Implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 1(2), 193-214

Lynn, S., Castelli, D., Werner, P., & Cone, S. (2007). *Seminar in Physcial Education: From Student Teaching to Teaching Student*. Leeds: Human Kinetics

Maarof, N. (2007). Telling His or Her Story through Reflective Journals. International Educational Journal, 8(1) 205-220.

MacEntee, V., & Garii, B. (2010). E-Portfolios in teacher Education. In N. Buzzetto-More (Ed.), *The E-Portfolio Paradigm: Informing, Educating, Assessing and managing with E-Portfolios* (pp. 191-206). California: Informing Science Press.

Morris, K. (2008). Use of e-portfolio in teacher education reflective practice: an online Record of School Experience. *Newport CELT Journal*, 1, 41-44

Muhammad Kamarul, & Kabilan (2016). Using Facebook, as an E-portfolio in Enhancing Pre-service Teachers' Professional Development. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 31(1), 19-31

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2007). Retrieved January 6, 2012, from the NCATE Unit Standards website http://ncate.org/Standards/NCATEUnitStandards/tabid/123/Default.aspx

Oakley, G., Pegrum, M., & Johnson, S. (2014). Introducing e-portfolio to pre-service teacher as tools for reflection and growth;lesson learnt. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(1), 36-50

Paulson, F.L., Paulson, P.R., & Meyer, C. (1991). What Makes a Portfolio a Portfolio? *Educational Leadership*, 48(5), 60-63

Pollard, A. (2002). *Reflective Teaching: Effective and Evidence- Informed Professional Practice. New York*: Continuum

Reimers, E.V. (2003). *Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature*. Eugene Delacroix: International Institute of Educational Plannning.

Ross, J. (2006). E-Portfolio for Scoltland's Teachers- Background Paper. Retrieved January 6, 2012, from http://www,erdee,org,uk/natsem/eport_seminar_background.pdf

Ryan, M. & Ryan, M. (2013). Theorising a Model for Teaching and Assessing Reflective Learning in Higher Education. *Journal of Higher Education Research and Development*, 32(1), 244-257

Stewart, D.W. (2007). *Focus Group; Theory and Practice* (2nd ed). London: SAGE Publication Ltd.

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a Teacher: Encouraging Development of Teacher Identity through Reflective Practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1), 53-64

Yunus,M.M.(2007). Malaysian ESL teachers'use of ICT in their classrooms: expectations and reality. *ReCALL*, 19(1), 79-95