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THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL REFLECTION MANUAL FOR
PROMOTING CRITICAL REFLECTION OF UPSI'S STUDENT
TEACHERS UNDERGOING TEACHER
CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to develop a critical reflection manual (CRM) to promote critical reflection among student teachers in teacher clinical experience (TCE). To achieve this aim, various tools for reflection in TCE were explored; reflective components in each reflective tool that are required to promote critical reflection among student teachers in TCE were discovered; and the level of reflection among student teachers during TCE was analysed. During the process of developing and refining the CRM, validation forms were given to four student teachers and fourteen experts who are senior lecturers from the renowned teacher education institutions to determine the face and content validity of the CRM. Case study design was used in this study. Ten Bachelor of Education with honours in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) student teachers of Sultan Idris Education University who have undergone TCE were purposely selected as the research participants. Data was collected from the self-reflection notes in the daily lesson plan books, reflective journal writings, CRM, assessment rubrics and interview protocols. The student teachers' level of reflection was analysed based on the categorisation of Van Manen's levels of reflection. Overall, the data were analysed by using techniques of content analysis and document analysis. The research findings indicated that majority of TESL student teachers in current practice reflected only at the technical level. However, the level of reflection for the TESL student teachers, who were given exposure to the CRM has improved and demonstrated practical and critical reflection. The study suggested that the CRM was able to enhance level of reflection among student teachers to attain critical reflection during TCE. In conclusion, the implication of the study is CRM is able to promote critical reflection among student teachers in TCE and ultimately improve their self-confidence and competence in teaching.

PEMBANGUNAN MANUAL REFLEKSI KRITIS UNTUK MENGALAKKAN REFLEKSI KRITIS GURU PELATIH UPSI YANG MENJALANI PENGALAMAN KLINIKAL GURU

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan membangunkan satu manual refleksi kritis (MRK) untuk menggalakkan refleksi kritis dalam kalangan guru pelatih dalam Pengalaman Klinikal Guru (PKG). Bagi mencapai tujuan tersebut, pelbagai alat refleksi dalam PKG diterokai; komponen refleksi dalam setiap alat refleksi yang diperlukan untuk menggalakkan refleksi kritis dalam kalangan guru pelatih dalam PKG juga diterokai; dan tahap refleksi dalam kalangan guru pelatih semasa PKG juga dianalisis. Sepanjang proses pembangunan dan penambahbaikan MRK, borang pengesahan telah diberikan kepada empat orang guru pelatih dan empat belas orang pakar yang terdiri daripada pensyarah kanan dari institusi pendidikan guru yang terkemuka untuk mendapatkan kesahan muka dan kesahan kandungan untuk MRK. Reka bentuk kajian kes digunakan dalam kajian ini. Sepuluh orang guru pelatih Ijazah Sarjana Muda Pendidikan (TESL) dengan Kepujian dari Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris yang menjalani PKG dipilih secara persampelan bertujuan sebagai peserta kajian. Data kajian dikumpulkan daripada catatan refleksi sendiri dalam buku persediaan mengajar, penulisan jurnal refleksi, MRK, rubrik pentaksiran dan protokol temu bual. Tahap refleksi guru pelatih dianalisis dengan berpandukan kategori tahap refleksi Van Manen. Secara keseluruhan, data dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik analisis kandungan dan analisis dokumen. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa majoriti guru pelatih TESL dalam amalan semasa melakukan refleksi pada tahap teknikal sahaja. Namun, tahap refleksi bagi guru pelatih TESL yang telah didedahkan kepada MRK telah meningkat dan menunjukkan refleksi praktikal dan kritis. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa MRK dapat meningkatkan tahap refleksi dalam kalangan guru pelatih untuk mencapai refleksi kritis dalam PKG. Kesimpulannya, implikasi kajian ini ialah MRK dapat menggalakkan refleksi kritis dalam kalangan guru pelatih dalam PKG dan seterusnya berupaya mempertingkatkan keyakinan diri dan kecekapan mereka dalam pengajaran.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRM	Critical Reflection Manual
CVI	Content Validity Index
DDR	Design and Development Research
EPRD	Educational Planning and Research Division
IPGM	Teacher Education Institutions of Malaysia
IPS	Institute of Graduate Studies
IPTA	Local Public Universities
MOEM	Ministry of Education Malaysia
NEM	New Economic Model
NIE	National Institute of Education Singapore
PBS	School-based Experience
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PULAMI	Teaching Practice and Industrial Training Centre
ROS	School Orientation Plan Programme
TCE	Teacher Clinical Experience
TCEGP	Teacher Clinical Experience Guiding Principles
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
UERL	UPSI Education Research Laboratory
UPSI	Sultan Idris Education University
VSK	Values, Skills and Knowledge

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



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1.1 Introduction

Teacher education programme is designed to provide theory and methods of teaching for student teachers. Because teaching is not a natural course but a practical work, student teachers need to enter a real classroom to develop their teaching competence (Mahmud, 2010). Therefore, teacher clinical experience (TCE) (or otherwise known as the teaching practicum) serves as a great arena for student teachers to apply the pedagogical knowledge and theory that they learnt from their teacher education courses to a real classroom context (Syed Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013).



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In the context of teacher education, clinical experience is a practical section of a teacher education programme in actual schools, which could include “practicum”, “internship” and “industrial training”. The term “clinical experience” was actually adapted from medical doctor clinical experience, especially the William Osler’s Medical System. Essentially, the concept of “clinical” is related to “the observation and treatment of actual patients rather than theoretical or laboratory studies” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). The etymological description stated in Oxford Dictionaries (2014) that the concept of “clinical” was formed in late 18th century: from Greek *klinikē* ‘bedside’; while the concept of “clinic” was originated in mid-19th century (in the sense ‘teaching of medicine at the bedside’): from French *clinique*, from Greek *klinikē* (*tekhnē*) ‘bedside (art)’, and from *klinē* ‘bed’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). On the other hand, “experience” is defined as the “practical contact with and observation of facts or events” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). The concept of “experience” was originated in late Middle English: via Old French from Latin *experientia*, from *experiri* ‘try’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Therefore, ideally, TCE in the context of teacher education refers to student teachers’ practical contact with and observation of events in a school which are relating to the observation and treatment (or teaching) of actual students rather than theoretical or laboratory studies, causing observable and recognisable indications (Adapted from Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).

In general, TCE is often perceived as the most crucial component of teacher education programmes by student teachers and teacher educators (Atputhasamy, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Kim, 2005; Farrell, 2008; Grudnoff, 2011) as it helps to develop student teachers’ practical competence (Cochran-Smith & Kim, 2005; Syed Manzar-Abbas & Lu, 2013). It is also a great platform to prepare student teachers in a real school



setting (Karen & Tan, 2011). During TCE, student teachers are able to experience and try out the theoretical knowledge and skills that they have learned from their teacher education institutions in a real teaching and learning environment (Goh & Matthews, 2011). In view of the importance of TCE, much research has been conducted to investigate its benefits to student teachers in terms of preparation, engagement, and learning outcomes. TCE in the context of initial teacher education in Malaysia is offered by teacher education programmes like the Diploma in Education and Bachelor of Education programmes. The duration of the TCE is usually 11 to 12 weeks where student teachers are required to teach between eight to ten hours per week (Che Rose, 2010).

Malaysia, like many other developing nations have introduced several educational reforms in teacher education to expand and improve the quality of Malaysian teacher education programmes in order to develop prospective teachers who are able to become 21st century teaching professionals. One of the efforts is to promote critical reflection among student teachers during TCE (Aizan, Walters, Ruzlan, Sarimah, & Walters, 2014). Many studies have shown that critical reflection has come to be regarded as a vital skill for teachers to develop, and many teacher education programmes have taken on the goal of developing reflective teachers throughout the world (Smyth, 1992; Calderhead & Gates, 1993; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Tse, 2007; Nor Hasniza, Mohammad Yusof, & Johari, 2008; Rodman, 2010; Aizan et al., 2014).

As Sockman and Sharma (2008) argued, critical reflection helps teachers to discover obstacles and realise the needs to adjust their teaching values in order to implement transformative teaching strategies. Thus, critical reflection is a great tool for

student teachers as it brings not only changes but also supplies enough information for student teachers to set new goals and plans. It is also agreed that practice and feedback on critical reflection during TCE are essential for student teachers' learning experience.

1.2 Background of the Study

The 21st century is a century where we are transitioning into an era of increasingly knowledge-driven economies, rapid-moving communication technologies and fast information exchanges. In order for Malaysia to move towards a knowledgeable-based economy and be a sustainable developed country, we should focus on the development of human capital. It is essential for teachers to play their role effectively in shaping human capital especially in teaching and learning process.

Unfortunately, a vast number of literature existed that claimed a major shortcoming of student teachers was being constantly identified, including the inability of student teachers to handle situation of teaching-learning and to reflect in action (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOEM], 2011; Noraini, Ahmad Jazimin, Noor Shah, Rosma, & Othman, 2013). Also, as noted by Siti Salina and Lee (2008), several supervisors have complained about their Bachelor of Education with honours in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) student teachers' poor classroom management, poor teaching skills, poor attitude towards teaching and learning and the lack of subject matter knowledge. It is also disheartening to find out that most common feedback from school supervisor is that some TESL student teachers do not have high English proficiency (Siti Salina & Lee, 2008; Aizan et al., 2014). Furthermore, the

failure of TESL student teachers to integrate theory and practice emerging as another most worrying issues (Siti Salina & Lee, 2008).

It has been argued that student teachers' reflection on teaching can improve teacher education as it helps to bridge the gap between theory and practice; conciliate prior beliefs with theory and practice; reconstruct or extend professional knowledge based on situational knowledge; as well as to produce more capable and skilled practitioners (Schön, 1987; Toh, 2001; Adibah et al., 2002; National Institute of Education [NIE], 2009; NIE, 2010; Rodman, 2010). Student teachers are encouraged to engage in systematic reflection about their teaching practices and adopt reflective teaching pedagogy as that can help them to improve their professionalism and become empowered decision makers (Loughran, 2002; NIE, 2010; Rodman, 2010). In addition, some educators (Faizah, 2008; Goh & Matthews, 2011) asserted that reflective thinking is useful to describe student teachers' experience as it helps student teachers to develop deeper understanding of the TCE.

The critical relationship between experience and reflection was introduced by Dewey (1933), who stated that reflective thinking is “the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration” (p. 3). Likewise, Burnett and Lingam (2007) indicated that by practising critical reflection, teachers and administrators can rethink the objectives of education and restructure the programmes to satisfy the needs of students and improve teaching and learning in the classrooms. Indeed, critical reflection is seen as an essential characteristic of teaching and learning, which must be taught to student teachers and convinced of its worth (Aizan et al., 2014). Pragmatically, Malaysian teacher education

institutions have undertaken a number of initiatives to develop critically reflective skills amongst student teachers in their programmes since the Department of Higher Education under the MOEM has recognised the importance of critical reflection in strengthening the theory-practice nexus (Hanipah, 2003).

However, critical reflection is not a natural occurrence as it is a developmental learning process that can be taught to help student teachers to consolidate and reflect on their learning and teaching practices to improve on their decisions, actions and lessons by using various reflective tools. The tools such as traditional journal writing, video-recording, peer observations with feedback, blogs, portfolios, electronic portfolios, critical incident questionnaires, logbooks, weekly teaching logs, learning autobiographies and discussion forums have been used by teacher educators to facilitate reflection among student teachers (Brookfield, 1995; Stein, 2000; Roskos, Risko, & Vukelich, 2003; Stiler & Philleo, 2003; Hernández-Ramos, 2004; Tan, 2006; Christodoulou, 2010; Rieger, Radcliffe, & Doepker, 2013; Farrell, 2016). Realising the importance of reflective practice, Malaysia has also adopted reflective practice in its TCE (Nor Hasniza, 2012; Aizan et al., 2014). However, Nor Hasniza et al. (2008) and Nor Hasniza (2012) reported that there are still problems in implementing reflective teaching among student teachers even though it has been advocated in Malaysia for almost three decades.

According to Boon and Wee (2005), guided reflection is able to encourage reflective practice among student teachers. It is able to enhance the development of dispositions, skills and knowledge needed by student teachers in order to become effective educators (Rodman, 2010). In addition, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005)

claimed that structured reflection is important in cultivating sound professional behaviour. It also helps with the development of growth competence and encourages student teachers to adopt internally directed learning professionally. Additionally, structured reflection allows student teachers to become more conscious about their teaching, as well as to actively and critically question and critique their practice (Williams & Grudnoff, 2011). Othman Lebar (personal communication, August 22, 2014), a senior professor emeritus in Faculty of Education and Human Development in the Sultan Idris Education University (UPSI being its acronym in the Malay language), who specialised in the field of educational measurement and evaluation also claimed that reflection process will be more systematic if structured reflective guidelines are provided as student teachers will have a better understanding of what they should include in their reflective writings.

Therefore, this study is carried out to address the issue of facilitating reflective practice and promoting critical reflection among student teachers in TCE by developing a critical reflection manual (CRM) so as to assist student teachers to enhance deepening of their reflective thinking. This study also focuses on various tools for reflection in TCE, the reflective components raised in the five oft-cited reflective tools, that is, reflective journal writing, portfolio, blogs, video-recording and peer observation (Christodoulou, 2010; Rieger et al., 2013; Farrell, 2016), as well as the level of reflection among student teachers during TCE. With reference to the identified tools for reflection, reflective components and student teachers' reflectivity, a CRM is then developed. The CRM is hoped to encourage student teachers to engage in critical reflection, which can contribute to the professional development and growth of individual student teacher and to the improvement of their teaching profession as a



whole.

1.3 Statements of the Problem

It is argued that TCE has “a bridging role between both the theoretical and practical perspectives of the learning and the teaching world” (Qazi, Rawat, & Thomas, 2012, p. 46). It plays an integral role in connecting the two worlds: one of “theoretical knowledge, applied science, or technical rationality” and the second of “practical competence and epistemology of reflective practitioner” (Qazi et al., 2012). In essence, critical reflection is often practised in teacher education to facilitate the combination of theory and practice while boosting teachers’ teaching and self-confidence (Lucas, 2012). In teaching context, unlike general reflection, critical reflection is about how teachers evaluate their own teaching beliefs through a series of critical self-analysis and become responsible for their actions (Korthagen, 1993; Sockman & Sharma, 2008). Liou (2001) believed critical reflection has been helping teachers to reflect on their teaching and initiating positive changes. Hence, TCE plays a vital role to emphasise critical reflection in the process of teaching practice amongst student teachers so as to bridge the theory-practice linkage and help the enrichment of student teachers’ practicum experience.

Unfortunately, studies have shown that student teachers as well as new teachers are facing many issues in teaching practice mainly because there is a disconnection between teacher preparation and professional practice as a teacher (Grudnoff, 2011). Student teachers who have undergone the TCE failed to receive full ultimate benefit from the practicum experience as they lacked in reflection skills and self-evaluation



(Melor, Harwati, Noriah, & Zamri, 2010). In addition, student teachers feel helpless, unsupported and easily give up when they encounter conflicts during TCE due to the theory-practice gap (Siti Salina & Lee, 2008). Although some student teachers try to question the teaching and learning theories and find alternatives when they encountered conflicts but their reflection is not in-depth (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Furthermore, Rieger et al. (2013) stated that student teachers are facing major lack of reflection. This might be due to their inexperience and lacking of knowledge in reflection to confidently apply reflective thinking in their teaching. Studies of Risko, Vukelich and Roskos (2002) supported this view as their analysis of student teachers' reflections has shown that student teachers' reflections were "frequently shallow and egocentric" (p. 135). In fact, student teachers may not even know what to reflect upon and simply "recalled the facts from their observations and teaching procedures or wrote about teaching strategies that they would use to enhance literacy development in the classroom. Rarely did they justify their choices or critique their reasoning" (Risko et al., 2002, p. 135). According to Holloway and Gouthro (2011), some student teachers may demonstrate resistance toward reflection as it may involve sometimes painful process of self-exploring one's own assumptions and beliefs, as well as self-realising one's own learning difficulties.

Adibah et al. (2002) also argued that the main problem that student teachers are facing during TCE is that there is no proper format or guideline that can help them in practising reflection. In addition, Rahman, Mohd Jelas and Osman (1999) claimed that student teachers have minimal exposure and poor understanding of the practice of reflection. It is shown that poor understanding of the practice of reflection has resulted

in poor level of knowledge, perception and teaching practice among student teachers. This claim was supported by Collier (1999), Wong (2000), Toh (2001), Boon and Wee (2005), Isikoglu (2007) and Subramanian (2012) who discovered that student teachers were barely reflective and their reflective writings collected at the end of the TCE were demonstrating very low level of reflection based on Van Manen's (1977) categorisation of levels of reflectivity. This might be due to student teachers are more inclined to achieving goals rather than thinking about the moral, ethical and professional action as stated by Van Manen (1977). Moreover, much research on the level of reflection has also indicated that the reflective writings of student teachers are at a superficial level of reflectivity (see for example, Hatton & Smith, 1995; Hanipah, 2000; Nor Hasniza & Mohammad Yusof, 2005; Nor Hasniza, 2006; Nooreiny, 2007).

Likewise, based on the studies of student teachers' reflective journals, Haslee Sharil and Majid (2010), as well as Aizan et al. (2014) reported that majority of the TESL student teachers from respective Malaysian universities were at the low level of reflection during TCE. The TESL student teachers' reflective journals were found to be poor because their journals' contents were mainly a description of their actions and lessons without any reference to relevant literature to synthesise and assess their actions and lessons (Haslee Sharil & Majid, 2010). Most TESL student teachers in their studies demonstrated technical and practical levels rather than critical level of reflection because they were more concerned about the success and failures of their lessons; the effectiveness of the teaching strategies to achieve certain ends; their self-doubts and disappointments (Aizan et al., 2014). Also, studies of Haslee Sharil and Majid (2010) indicated that TESL student teachers often just state their decisions in their reflective journals without further evaluating their reflections for other reasons and alternative

solutions. These findings resonate with the previous studies on reflective practice by Boon (2002) which found that many journal entries often only exhibited reflection at the technical and practical levels because the lack of structured opportunities to reflect.

According to Hatton and Smith (1995), as well as Hanipah (2000), studies have shown that student teachers are able to improve their level of reflection in their reflective writings after they have been exposed to the guide for reflecting. Majority of the student teachers were able to improve their level of reflection from descriptive to dialogic. Cote Parra (2012) also explained that student teachers are not equipped with the knowledge and strategies to achieve higher level of reflection and guidance are needed to make that happen. He asserted that more attention should be focussed on proper methodology that can provide rigorous reflection instead of the conceptualisation.

However, Abdul Talib Mohamed Hashim (personal communication, August 14, 2014), an expert in the field of reflection; Othman Lebar (personal communication, August 22, 2014), a senior professor emeritus; Ahmad Jazimin Jusoh (personal communication, August 8, 2014), former director of the Teaching Practice and Industrial Training Centre (PULAMI being its acronym in the Malay language) in the UPSI; and Noor Shah Saad (personal communication, March 31, 2015), former director of the PULAMI in the UPSI indicated that UPSI does not have a formal and standardised model of reflection to structure student teachers' reflective writings. Moreover, Abdul Talib Mohamed Hashim (personal communication, August 14, 2014) also mentioned that not all lecturers in the university are using model of reflection, and even if they do, the choice of model of reflection is solely depending on the lecturers'