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An investigation of Student Teacher Development in Pre- Service English Language Teacher Education in Malaysia

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School of Education

College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

30th September 2018

Abstract

Research suggests that many factors contribute to the formation of the student teachers' reflective practice, including the nature of their teacher education, their experiences in a community of practice, and how they build their professional identity as adult learners. The purpose of this study is to investigate the significance and development of reflection and reflective skills for Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) student teachers from a major teacher education institute in Malaysia. The research addressed three questions: To what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lessons? In what ways do their capacities for reflective practice develop over the practicum? What facilitating factors and barriers exist in the development of their reflective practice?

Adopting a purposive sampling approach, ten student teachers, three mentor teachers and a supervisor were selected. All of the student teachers were studying for a bachelor's degree in TESL. They attended three phases of semi-structured interviews during the three months of their final practicum; the interviews took place after classroom observations every month. Mentor teachers and supervisors were also interviewed. Adopting an interpretivist approach, the weekly reflective diaries of the student teachers and the transcripts from the final phase of the post-observation interviews provided highly personal information from which vignettes of the participants were drawn.

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four significant issues affecting reflective practice: relational issues, such as how student teachers navigate issues arising within a community of practice; situational issues, for instance how they implement the curriculum; developmental issues, including how the quality of reflection may be judged; and experiential issues, which include how the student teachers construct their professional identities.

The findings support most of the existing literature and provide valuable insights into the significance of reflection for these novice teachers, the extent to which they master reflective skills in their practice, and the factors that influence reflection. However, further analysis and discussion revealed that whilst the student teachers' use of reflection during their practicums is evident, the role and quality of this reflection is ambiguous. Similarly, whilst supervisors and mentor teachers may insist that reflection be actively encouraged, the rationale behind how and why it is used goes unexplored. The findings also highlighted

the role that andragogy, communities of practice and experiential learning may play in partnership with reflection, serving to reconstruct reflective practice in teacher education. The study concludes by reviewing the implications of the research and putting forth ideas for further study.

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Acknowledgement

Firstly, I must thank the Almighty Allah for the countless blessings and the strength needed to complete this research journey. The path has been far from easy, containing many highs and lows, and yet it has been very memorable. The study itself formed a sort of reflection, providing a mirror in which I have viewed myself, and found where I have to improve.

Words can't adequately express my thanks to Dr. Oscar Odena and Dr. Mark Murphy, my supervisors. These individuals have remained positive and helpful and have always been present for me. Without their guidance and trust I would not have been able to complete this thesis.

My appreciation goes out to my husband Yusri A. Hasan, and my family (Che Yah Clan: Kakna and family, Nonon, Makdik and Abak) for their constant support and prayers throughout this journey, particularly when I faced obstacles. I also owe a great debt of thanks to my friends; Charlotte, Hannah, Hanan, Syafiqah, Mira, Aryati and Tasir for their amazing friendships, and for being there for me every step of the way. I am thankful to the Ministry of Education for the generous opportunity they provided me with. Last but not least, I am extremely grateful to all my colleagues in Teacher Education Institute (the headquarters) especially Dr. Jamiah Mohamad and the Technical Teacher Education Institute, as well as to all the participants and the valuable contributions they made to this research. Thank you.

Mak and ayah, this is for you. Alfatihah.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature :

Nor' Ain binti Sulaiman

Definitions/Abbreviations

BERA	British Education Research Association
ESL	English as Second Language
KSSR	Standard Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (New Curriculum)/ Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah
LTP	Linking Theory to Practice
MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
NEP	National Education Philosophy
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
TEI/ IPG	Teacher Education Institute/ Institut Pendidikan Guru
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
PISMP	Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan
PPSMI	Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English / Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris
TED/BPG	Teacher Education Division/ Bahagian Pendidikan Guru

Chapter 1:

1.1 Introduction

The validity of the status quos found in teacher education are contentious and debated globally, with some scholars supporting what may be thought of as more traditional ideas and practices whilst others advocate replacing these ideas and practices altogether. Some educators and policy makers claim that education is in the midst of a great age of reform (Little, 1993), whereas others complain education is paralysed at a stage in which nothing major happens, with teachers often unwilling to move out of their comfort zones (Rust & Meyers, 2006). In some cases, one element of education is considered as a priority above all else, with certain countries choosing to focus attention on certain endeavours, for example, the professional development of their teachers, or the performances of their students or their school development programmes.

Keeping up with the challenges of educational development involves not only catering to what educators and learners need but being able to identify what precedes and gives rise to the challenges encountered. The waves and trends of global educational development reach Malaysia, and in response to this pressure, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia recently introduced the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which aims to activate a revamping of teacher education and a transformation in the quality of the country's education, with student achievement being the primary goal (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013). The experiences that student teachers undergo during their education are greatly influenced by research and by the predominant ideas circulating in the Malaysian educational environment. The conditions and training they experience are determined by policymakers, stakeholders, school management, teacher education institutions and educators. Once a teacher's education has finished, with every passing year, it may become much more difficult to mould the way that teacher thinks and teaches as his or her habits may have already become embedded. Moreover, working full time and having to keep up with responsibilities at work, teachers may have little time to engage in the new ideas and resources made available within the field of education.

Student teachers, on the other hand, are more malleable, even whilst their education may be intense, and they may experience the same pressures afflicting qualified teachers. Hebert and Worthy (2001) identified that the high expectations student teachers face to blend into the community of senior teachers motivates them to improve and adapt. Some theorists

believe that during training, student teachers are in a stage of transition, wherein they constantly face challenges in developing their teaching and learning approaches. These constant challenges mean that adjustment is inevitable (Lacey, 1977; Vonk, 1989). Student teachers are at a stage in which their levels of motivation and enthusiasm should be at a peak; meeting the demands of the course means that there is no room for complacency (Vonk, 1989). Student teachers that are eager to succeed may delve deeper into theory as they experiment with each and every method, they learn in an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. During their education, they must do their best to establish themselves as quality teachers, and they must improve their understanding of the different processes involved in teaching and learning to succeed (Korthagen, 2006). Their practice is, at this stage, far from fully formed and cemented, and may shift with every new influence. It is argued that student teachers display a special enthusiasm for learning the new approaches they are introduced to, and take the tasks given to them seriously (Huberman, 1991). Obstacles may provoke student teachers to engage more actively and focus more on theory and on practice, as they learn to reconcile the realities, they face with the theories they have encountered (Reason, 2009). The part theory plays in the learning experiences of student teachers is emphasized by Korthagen (2010), who argued that practical experience often overshadows theoretical knowledge in terms of its perceived importance. Therefore, he stresses the need to strike a balance between theory and practice, warning against the neglect, or disproportionate development, of either.

Flores (2016) notes that teacher education and practice provide the perfect opportunity through which to implement new and innovative methods of teaching and learning. Most significantly, it is argued that any new learning techniques featuring in a school's programme, proforma or curriculum may be more easily taken up by student teachers than by qualified teachers (Flores, 2016). Mishra and Koehler (2006) state that every instruction or recommendation may be embraced and adapted by student teachers, and their participation, whether in theory or practice, will be supported, guided and directed in a constructive way. This is possible because of the nature of the learning environment, wherein student teachers remain in regular contact with more experienced individuals, to whom they have the good fortune of having access for input and advice (Barnes et al., 2018). In the efforts being made to develop education, there is, therefore, every incentive to start with student teachers and tap into the very special and fertile conditions particular to this stage in their development. Improving teacher education is a long-term strategy, and the investment put into young educators can be expected to yield sustainable returns.

The main focus of this research is on reflection and on how reflective practice plays a central role in student teachers' progression as they embark upon and move through their training within education. Reflection is a process of self-knowledge production, in which internal mental acts and experience function as the main catalysts. The attempt to understand both the place of and resolve the challenges of reflection within the educational environment takes place at a stage of deep examination and development. While earlier studies have frequently devoted themselves to proving the need for reflection, this research focuses instead on investigating and creating an awareness of the concepts within the reflection and the study of reflection at various levels. The study also seeks to identify the intersections between the teacher education that student teachers encounter and the ways in which these student teachers subsequently use reflection to assist them during their practicums.

In the following section, I present the sources of inspiration for my research, and how my personal rationale links up with my professional rationale.

1.2 The Origins of the Research: Personal aspiration became professional rationale

'Revamp the IPG (Institut Pendidikan Guru/ Teacher Education Institute)' (Malaysia Education Blueprint, pp. E-14, 2013). These same words formed the title of certain meetings I attended as an officer at the Ministry of Education, in the headquarters of the Teacher Education Institute. In these meetings, many issues surfaced, and the priorities in regard to the crafting of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) were decided. For instance, taking precedence was the effort to transform the Teacher Education Institute into one of the best teacher education institutes globally; my belief in this effort and in this vision contributed greatly to my decision to conduct this research. The courses provided for the lecturers and officers working within twenty-seven teacher education institutes are held throughout Malaysia and managed by the headquarters of the Teacher Education Institute. The previously held courses emphasized leadership, creative teaching and the use of technology, the priority being to make sure lecturers remain up-to-date with 21st century skills. I doubted how these courses helped to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice, and in what ways they helped the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) to evolve. The absence of challenging feedback previously resulted in the Malaysia Teacher Education Institute becoming a comfort zone. However, following public outcry against the conditions within the institute, the TEI published a public statement in the Malaysian educational blueprint's preliminary reports, in which it expressed its intention to make drastic changes. This pushed the TEI directors and

others involved in the institute out of their comfort zone. The scandal triggered a need in me to investigate what needed to be improved and reformed, and to discover how best to put the TEI back on track to becoming a respected, world-class teacher education institute. Starting with myself, first and foremost, I realized that I needed to detach myself from my previous role as a manager; I felt this to be necessary to successfully transition into academia. This transition required continuous reflection; moving into an academic environment is similar to getting transferred to any new place and into any new role in so far as to effectively transition, the individual must become acquainted with a new professional identity, and, in some cases, a new value system. In my case, I had to build my sense of professional identity as a researcher and navigate within a new value system where neutrality and in-depth and unbiased evaluation are extremely important.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Research into the reflective practice of student teachers in Malaysia at the level of the TEIs is still limited, one of the reasons being that the Bachelor of Education programme has only fairly recently been fully implemented (Tsui, 2008). The programme is managed by personnel at the Teacher Education Institute headquarters and implemented by twenty-seven different teacher education institutes located throughout Malaysia (a full map and description of twenty-seven TEIs located will be presented in 2.4.1, Chapter 2). In 2011, the 350 student teachers from the first cohort of the Bachelor of Education programme graduated from their respective TEIs (Ujang, 2016). Until recently, the TEIs provided a Bachelor of Education programme which involved collaboration between both local and foreign institutions, with student teachers spending time in both. I believe that reflective practice provides important opportunities in the teacher education curriculum and can contribute positively to efforts to enhance teacher education programmes in Malaysia. Moreover, I assert that reflective practice deserves a place in teacher education, whatever form the curriculum takes and however it is organized.

It is argued that incorporating reflective practices and thorough evaluation to assess the effectiveness of past decision making can assist stakeholders and curriculum decision-makers during the process of forming new, improved curriculums (Lozano et al., 2011). Likewise, the same process can be utilized to assess the effectiveness of teacher education programmes (Hussain et al., 2011). Guba and Stufflebeam (1970, p.109) emphasize that each decision made regarding curriculum evaluation ‘begins with a concern about objectives, and ends with assessment...’ The information gained through reflection and analysis can enable

stakeholders and curriculum decision-makers to make better decisions when reviewing and modifying the curriculum, ensuring that it is fit to meet the current and future needs of society.

It is important to note that the aim of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) (Primary Education) Teaching English as a Second Language programme (also known as Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan (PISMP)) is to produce quality primary school ESL teachers in terms of the knowledge, skills and professional attributes they possess. The programme also seeks to produce individuals whose conduct is in line with the National Education Philosophy, about which more information will be provided in Chapter 2. Meanwhile, the programme aims to produce student teachers who are ‘professionally dynamic, well educated, competent and able to uphold their responsibilities’ as educators, as well as meet the requirements of the National Education Philosophy (Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia, 2017, p.2).

A second language teacher-training programme should consider all aspects of the challenges involved in producing proficient and competent teachers with the requisite knowledge, skills, attitude and beliefs. According to Wright (2010), much has been discussed in terms of the aims, structure, process and assessment of teacher preparation programmes for second language teachers. Most of these strategies focus on the question of defining the purpose or goals of such programmes and on deciding what the formal learning experiences should be in initial teacher education. Elsewhere, the need for an evaluation process to properly and thoroughly assess the efficacy of the programme is emphasized (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998).

In addition, Cheng, Cheng and Tang (2010) assert that the aim of teacher education should also include helping student teachers to cope with the complexity of challenges within the profession, especially regarding the transition from theory to practice. Teacher education should arm student teachers with tools to be used in facing challenges in the teaching-learning process and prepare them to be competent in their practice. Arguably, the most crucial challenge is to help the student teachers to apply in practice the theories they encounter during their teacher education courses. Without this, there is a risk that their practice may suffer and any theoretical understanding they hold may be rendered immaterial. A similar concern was expressed by Yourn (2000) in her study into how novice teachers perceive and understand the process of learning how to become a teacher and how to form their own practice. Yourn (2000) found that student teachers faced difficulties as they learned

theories of teaching and learning in their respective institutions. She emphasized that the main problems student teachers faced during their practicum related to classroom discipline, to developing relationships and socialising with their colleagues (in this case, with senior teachers), and to the attempts to create better teaching and learning materials which would attract their students' attention. She also emphasized that institutions rarely perceive these problems as principally a matter of bridging theory and practice. As a result, the problems are addressed as solely practical challenges and the theoretical elements that may be contributing to the issue are disregarded (Yourn, 2000). Similar challenges faced in the Malaysian context are explored by Mohd. Sofi (2003), who argues that some ESL teachers in Malaysia lack the pedagogical knowledge needed to teach language, and this inevitably affects the quality of pupils' learning. Studies have found that poor pedagogical knowledge amongst teachers results in low performance levels amongst their students in primary and secondary schools (Hill, Ball, & Schilling, 2008; Goddard & Goddard, 2007). Another study, by Ong et al. (2004), found that student teachers believed their chances of effectively bridging the gap between theory and practice to be limited due to a number of factors. One of the concerns expressed by the student teachers was that they felt under pressure to complete the tasks that they had been given, within a pre-determined period of time. They also perceived that, above all else, their first priority was to secure good results by the end of their practicum. These issues were further aggravated by the fact that the student teachers were occupied with the challenge of delivering content in a language not native to them, something which has the potential to expose underdeveloped pedagogical knowledge (Kabilan & Raja Ida, 2008).

It may be difficult to implement pedagogical methods and tactics correctly when communication difficulties exist; teachers may well have a good level of understanding and yet still struggle to convey this information to their students. In addition, according to Kabilan and Raja Ida (2008), this situation can be rendered even more complicated as teachers face students who possess entirely different levels of language competency. The outcome of the existence of such concerns is that Malaysian society has been roused into heated debates, such as whether or not lessons should be delivered in the teachers' native languages so as to boost student performance.

The preconceptions that students harbour is thought to impact on how they accept their teacher and the language. Cheng, Cheng and Tang (2010) argue that there is a gap between theory and practice particular to the teaching of second languages. They argue that whether or not the teaching approaches benefit the students may be something affected by factors beyond how this information is delivered, such as, the preferences the students have

for what kind of teacher they want. Cheng, Cheng and Tang (2010) explore whether the preconceptions that exist regarding the position and authority of Malaysian English teachers, as opposed to vis-a-vis “native” English teachers (for whom English is their mother tongue), have an effect on the learning that takes. Amongst the findings, an overall preference for native English speakers was discovered. Moreover, it was found students taught English by non-native speakers tended to depend on use of their own language, communicating with their teacher in their native language rather than using English. In turn, students being taught English by native speakers of English had little choice but to address their teacher in English. It is proposed that such variations will naturally have consequences on how and at what rate the students acquire the language.

1.4 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The main objective of this study is to investigate the development of the student teachers’ reflective practice, and the relevance and adequacy of their reflections by observing how their capacity for reflection matures over the course of their practicum. In addition, this research seeks to explore what hinders and what aids the development of student teachers’ reflective practice, based on their performance in the classroom. The aims of this study are: (a) to study how student teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Malaysia use reflection in their practice, (b) to observe how student teachers’ capacity for reflective practice matures over the course of the practicum, and (c) to explore what hinders and what aids the evolution of their reflective practice. From the above three aims, the following Research Questions were developed:

- a) To what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lessons?
- b) In what ways does their capacity for reflective practice develop over the practicum?
- c) What facilitating factors and barriers exist in the development of their reflective practice?

The above questions were refined and finalised after the literature review and contextualisation discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. This study hopes to provide some insights into the effectiveness of reflective practice in preparing student teachers to become professional teachers, and to highlight further theories in teacher education that could be enhanced and applied if the need arises.

In terms of student teachers' reflective practice, the findings will provide clues as to how this practice evolves and may offer suggestions as to how the student teachers can further apply reflective practice effectively. Moreover, the hope is to create more awareness in the student teachers of the importance of linking theory to practice.

In addition, this study offers insights which may prove helpful to the student teachers, to practicum supervisors and mentors, and to administrators of teacher education programmes, encouraging all to better consider and appreciate the importance of reflective practice as they plan, implement and evaluate the curriculum in the teacher education programme. The findings may provide useful insights for the Ministry of Education to further improve the teacher education programmes in Malaysia.

Former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak underlined the relevance of the education blueprint in his 2013 budget speech. Moreover, the MOE has addressed the issue of education by reallocating funds to the most critical areas of education, such as student teacher education. The current research is also relevant as it will assess the Teaching English as a Second Language programme, also known as Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan (PISMP) for student teacher education.

1.5 Outline of Thesis Structure

The thesis is presented in seven chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces how the research originated and the rationale behind the focus of the research. This is followed by an identification of the central problems and challenges the research seeks to address, and further elaboration on the purpose of the study and how the research questions were decided.

Chapter 2 begins with an introduction to the unique dimensions of contemporary Malaysian education, and the efforts made to develop it. Following this is an overview of Malaysia's historical background as it relates to and is relevant to education; with this, national education policies that have proven formative within Malaysian education are discussed, and an explanation of where the national education philosophy stands in education is explored. Details are also provided about the current norms and debates taking place in relation to Malaysian student teacher training programmes.

Chapter 3 identifies notable literature related to reflective practice, how reflective practice is perceived, and the criticisms reflected practice is subject to and must address. The issues relating to reflective practice are delineated into four key categories: relational issues, situational issues, developmental issues, and experiential issues.

Chapter 4 provides a description of qualitative methods and the rationale behind the decision to adopt a qualitative approach to the research. This is followed by an explanation of the process that was employed to select participants and the function of the pilot study conducted prior to this study. A chronicle of how the research was conducted is then presented, with details of how the data was collected and analysed. Furthermore, the chapter presents an acknowledgement of the ethical issues involved in conducting this study and the reliability, validity and limitations of the research. Finally, an overview is presented of the researcher's history as an insider within the Teacher Education Institute, and of the researcher's experience of observing student teacher training from the outside.

Chapter 5 summarises the findings, conceptualising and analysing it as it relates to the four main kinds of issues identified in Chapter 3: relational, situational, developmental, and experiential.

Chapter 6 analyses and discusses the findings regarding the reflective practice of the student teachers. The discussion highlights and considers the main results, how they connect to previous research on reflective practice, and how reflective practice forms a bridge between the student teachers' theory and practice. Ideas regarding the potentials of hybridized forms of reflective practice are explored as they were revealed through the student teachers' engagement in their practicum.

Chapter 7 presents an overview of the research and how it may contribute to educational theory and practice. It summarizes the research findings and highlights where they may be of particular significance. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the limitations of the research and suggests directions that future research could take to advance student teachers' reflective practice. The chapter ends with a discussion of the professional development of the researcher, conceptualised through the lens of the four issues.

2 Educational development in Malaysia

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the recent Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, improving English knowledge amongst Malaysian citizens is one of the key strategic goals of Malaysian education (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013). The Malaysian education system is largely driven by the multicultural nature of Malaysian society, and the phenomenon of globalization. In his study of teacher education, Ibrahim (2007) points out that multiculturalism in Malaysia is ‘changing, and actively interacts with the influences and forces at the local and global levels’ (p. 156). In education, this means that one of the main challenges is to provide all ethnic communities with equal opportunities, maintaining their identities whilst at the same time preparing them as global citizens. The aim of this chapter is to provide a short introduction to Malaysian history and a summary of the cultural context in which the country’s education takes place. Informing and underpinning this study are certain elements of Malaysian history. The consequences of this historical background for education are explored, and student teacher education in particular is closely examined. The chapter is divided into three sections, starting with a brief overview of the historical development of Malaysian education, followed by an outline of the National Policies and National Education Philosophy (NEP). Lastly, the third section presents the relevant and recent developments and influences in Malaysian education and student teacher education programmes.

2.2 A Brief Overview of the Historical Development of Malaysian Education System

When Malaysia first became a British colony, the colonists started opening schools which focused on teaching English reading skills and arithmetic. These colonists were not interested in providing secondary Malay-language education to the local citizens as they considered Malaysians to be inferior and of a lower class (Nordin, Alias & Siraj, 2013). As such, Malaysians could only obtain an education in English if they applied to be servants and needed the language to interact with their British employers. Otherwise, they received a traditional education in local Islamic schools (Central Advisory Committee on Education, 1951). The missionaries and educators from Britain were personally interested in educating the Malaysian people and were dedicated to their mission primarily as a way of introducing the people to Christianity (Yoshida, Yuki & Hong, 2011). With this being the case, the role of the missionaries in the development of education cannot be underestimated. At the same

time, many people of Indian and Chinese origin living in Malaysia started establishing their own schools, with classes taught in their respective native languages (Rudner, 1977).

The rich heritage of Malaysia determined the multicultural nature of Malaysian society and precipitated the majority of the recent problems experienced in the country's modern education sector (Yusof, n.d.). In 1957, when Malaysia was declared an independent state, the language and cultural content of education became a subject of controversy. Before that, the British authorities had regulated the curriculum and educational policy. Following independence, the Malaysian New Education Act needed to address the needs of four large communities: native Malaysians, the British, the Chinese, and the Indians (McGowan & Porter, 2008). The challenge was to strike a balance and determine which language was more efficient as a medium of delivering educational curricula. The controversy was reflected in the Razak Report, published in 1956 (Andaya & Andaya, 1982). The report takes into account the four languages used for providing education in Malaysia. According to the report, Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil could be used as languages of primary education, while secondary education could only be obtained in Malay or English (Andaya & Andaya, 1982).

Previous attempts to create a unified curriculum had been met with distaste, hostility and, in some cases, protest. For example, the Barnes Report, proposed by the British authorities, only stressed the use of Malay and English, while Mandarin and Tamil were overlooked (Central Advisory Committee on Education, 1951). The authors of this proposal hoped that the Chinese and Indian students would be forced to assimilate, and that the unification of language would strengthen the nation (Samuel & Khan, 2013). While the Barnes report encouraged the use of Malay and English as the primary educational languages, the underrepresented communities created their own proposal, the Fenn Wu report. Both proposals were rejected by the opposing parties (Samuel & Khan, 2013). This was the main reason why, after the declaration of independence, it was necessary to create a plan that would address the needs of the country and satisfy everyone involved. Zakaria (2000) argues that education was crucial for the newly formed state and for the Malaysian people as a whole. Post-independence leaders were faced with the task of forging a national education system, with national unity as its main goal, while still preserving the rights of all ethnic groups (Zakaria, 2000, p. 115). These efforts resulted in the Education Act of 1961, which established Malay as the main language of education in the country, something which has remained the case up to this date.

2.2.1 Understanding the Education System in Malaysia

In recent years, education around the world has evolved, following revolutionary advancements in science and technology. The development of the Malaysian education system has continued as an active and ongoing process since the country's independence from the United Kingdom in 1957. Likewise, the Malaysian education sector has reached a number of significant landmarks, including the achievement of a high literacy rate, proficiency in foreign languages, and good exam performances of its students (Devos, 2003). However, the education system in Malaysia underwent dramatic changes prior to becoming a system which, though not perfect, may be described as largely effective and adequate in meeting the needs of its citizens. The curriculum was designed to address all the major ethnic groups which make up the fabric of Malaysian society, and, at the same time, to highlight the country's cultural peculiarities that should be appreciated by the new generations of students. As a result, educational reforms in Malaysia invariably become a subject of debate and, at times, provoke a great deal of controversy. For instance, a programme using English as a medium for teaching mathematics and science (PPSMI) was abruptly stopped after five years because of a series of complaints which received a lot of attention in the media. Similarly, Malaysia, inspired by methods found to be effective in Finland, attempted to implement a system of assessment based not on exams, but on teachers' judgement of a student's performance in every subject. The system provided students and their families with more general feedback, not expressed by a numerical system but through descriptions of a student's work ethic or creative performance. Malaysian parents rejected the system entirely, fearing the potential for bias, preferring the concrete nature of numbers. Moreover, teachers complained of being underprepared and of struggling to adapt to the new system. As a result, the initiative was abolished after three years.

In 2009, PPSMI programmes received a great deal of negative feedback from parents, who, supported by politicians, accused the programmes of being a medium through which students were to be made less Malaysian. Segments of the public feared that students would be confused by the mathematical and scientific terms used to conceptualise the subjects and by the methods adopted, as most teachers chose to mix both English and Malay while teaching the subjects (Yang & Ishak, 2012).

Currently, the education system in Malaysia consists of public and private institutions that provide programmes delivered in the most widely represented languages: Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil. According to Malaysian Education Policy, primary education

is obligatory, and parents have to make sure that their children have access to primary school when they reach six years of age (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004, p. 4). At this point in time, the government plans to increase the length of obligatory schooling from a total of six years in primary school (see Appendix 1 for the circular letter regarding compulsory school starting at the age of seven) to a total of eleven years, which would entail children remaining in school until they reach seventeen years of age (Guan, 2006; Annual Report of Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2016). Preschool education is also available but not compulsory. At a later stage, the students who complete secondary school have to pass exams, similar to A-levels in England, before enrolling at university.

In the development of education in Malaysia, language and culture have always presented two of the most prominent challenges. This is because different paradigms and culturally specific norms find their way into the pedagogical content and material produced in one language, making such content ill-suited for use in another language or culturally specific educational environment. The curricula provided in different institutions are either in Malay, English, Mandarin or Tamil; these variations are one of the elements that are unique to Malaysia, and also form an obstacle to attempts to harmonize the education system (Sidek & Wahi, 2018). Malaysia is a multilingual country that struggles to find a healthy balance between the promotion of its national language (Malay) and providing opportunities for students who speak Mandarin or Tamil (Ibrahim, 2007). At the same time, Malaysia's history is defined by strong connections with the English language, which is a key reason why modern education tries to take into account the future needs and opportunities of all students (Draxler, 2008; Nordin, Alias & Siraj, 2013).

2.3 National Education Policies

The next important step in the development of Malaysian education was the Education Act of 1996. One of the major decisions presented in this document was to allow private institutions access to the government education system. As a result, the number of students entering these institutions for tertiary and postgraduate courses increased from 168,489 in 1998 to 294,600 in 2002 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004, p. 3). Interest in private education in Malaysia was mostly determined by the financial crisis afflicting many Asian countries towards the end of the 1990s (Samuelowicz, 1987). As a result of the crisis, many students could not afford to get an education overseas. The Government decided to look for opportunities to provide secondary and tertiary education at home. Additionally, the Government urged the private sector to invest in scientific and technological courses, with the

aim of providing the necessary quality of education for students who wished to major in these areas (Zakaria, 2000, p. 117). This may be considered another example of the increasingly prominent place economical and financial considerations have assumed in shaping the educational environment.

One of the most recently published documents that reflects national education policy is the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, issued in 2013. This blueprint stresses the importance of ‘ethnic homogeneity’ in Malaysia’s education, and lists five major aspirations for Malaysian students and for the education system as a whole. By 2020, the authorities plan to ensure a hundred-percent enrolment of primary school graduates in secondary school and a fifty-percent reduction in achievement gaps, such as those that exist between urban and rural students, between different socioeconomic groups, and between genders (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013). Within fifteen years, Malaysia aspires to be placed within the top third of the result tables of internationally acknowledged exams (Selvaraj, 2010). Lastly, the education system aims to achieve unity by ‘embracing diversity’ and to improve the performance of students in accordance with the investments made in their education (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 9).

2.3.1 Malaysia National Education Philosophy

As mentioned earlier, the Malaysian educational system and its development are rooted in the context of a British colonial presence and continue to be influenced by the residual effects of that rule. However, following Malaysian independence in 1957, measures were taken to unify Malaysian society and reintegrate religious doctrine with education with the passing of the Education Act in 1961 (Ahmad, 1998). These measures were followed by extensive civil revolt and conflict, in which the various factions within Malaysian society (divided racially and culturally) fought to have their rights, beliefs and identities represented in the governing of the country. Different cultural groups resisted the attempt to create a unified education system and asserted their right to send their children to schools which self-identified as being, for example, specifically Chinese or specifically Indian. The Cabinet Committee report of 1979 presented the findings of comprehensive research into the impacts of the 1961 Education Act and argued for the need to unify Malaysian education and society. The report asserted the need for a shared value system that would bring together all students regardless of their cultural and racial background. Due to the impact of this report, the National Education Philosophy was introduced in 1988. The philosophy was based on the Malaysian National Principles (Al-Hudawi et al., 2014) and spells out the need to build

competent individuals who are stable ‘intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically’ (Zabit, 2010, p. 26). The NEP represented a hope for Malaysian society, aiming to finally unite, and build a more harmonious society. Engagement with the NEP was deemed not only important for each individual educator in helping him or her to develop good practice, but it was also hoped that it would impact student teachers and educators in how they perceived the teaching and learning process. According to Tisdell and Taylor (2001), each learner’s interpretation of the educational philosophy has a strong impact on their practice. It was argued that a teacher, for example, who was determined to implement his or her educational philosophy would try his or her best to deliver knowledge fairly to every student and would always reflect on each lesson to further develop his or her knowledge. It may be that by implementing the NEP, a school is provided with a coherent mission and set of objectives, something which in turn may have a good influence on the efforts to produce better teachers. This is because, clearly enshrined in the NEP are guidelines for the building of good character. The NEP may not only develop teachers’ moral character but also help them to be successful in teaching and learning. Wilson (1977) stresses that while teaching curricula are generally discussed only in terms of how they cultivate the knowledge and thinking of students, they should in fact be discussed in terms of how they cultivate the teachers that use them. He emphasized the importance of how teachers integrate the curriculum with educational philosophy and values and of how they use their creative skills to teach each of their students.

Grapragasem, Krishnan, and Mansor (2014) have explained the current trends in Malaysia’s transition towards being what is termed a ‘knowledge-based economy.’ By developing the education system, and propagating knowledge, the country aims to become more competitive at a global level. Teaching and learning aims are closely integrated into other prevalent national priorities and initiatives and may be viewed in the context of other national interests. It is anticipated, for example, that higher levels of English competency among students will contribute to the realisation of Malaysia’s Vision 2020 (Grapragasem et al., 2014). Vision 2020 was created by prime minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and outlined developmental targets for the nation; within this document, education is presented as central to achieving national cohesion and a strong, competitive economy.

Al-Hudawi et al. (2014) analyse the current effectiveness of the National Education Philosophy adopted in the country. They demonstrate that both teachers and students perceive the overall impact of the National Education Philosophy to be positive, while some spheres of improvement are recognised. These findings should provide a source of guidance in

subsequent attempts to reform the National Education Philosophy and ensure the success of future implementations. Hassan, Juahir, and Jamaludin (2009) indicate that the National Education Philosophy is perceived differently by school managers, teachers, and other stakeholders. This being the case, it would seem a priority for all involved in education to achieve a secure understanding of the purpose and aims of the philosophy. It is proposed that if the philosophy is placed in context and presented in a way that speaks to the diverse realities and roles of each individual, a firm understanding is possible.

2.4 Recent Issues in Education in Malaysia

One of the major goals of Malaysian education is to become competitive on a global level. This is why so much importance is placed on the ability of students to meet international standards, and the national standards are adjusted according to these benchmarks. At the same time, whilst students are expected to be rendered fit for the globalized world, they are also expected to be raised with ‘a strong Malaysian identity’ that incorporates a certain set of perceived personal assets and values. The behaviours deemed desirable within this model include ‘an increase in volunteerism, a willingness to embrace peoples of other nationalities, religions and ethnicities; and a reduction in corruption and crime’ (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 13). The blueprint also points out that although Muslim and non-Muslim students will undergo different courses on ethics, they will share lessons that feature ‘universal’ values. Such an approach seems fitting and sensible for a nation which carries a diverse ethnic, cultural and religious heritage.

Among the problems listed in the recent 2013 education blueprint is the insufficient return on investments made per student. According to the blueprint, the grades of Malaysian students are not proportionate to the amount of money invested in their education, are lower than average, and may be described as poor (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 8). It is also necessary to point out that in the 2010s, controversy persists surrounding the existence of vernacular schools where English and Malay are not the primary language of tuition. Advocates of using Malay in education argue that there is no place for Chinese and Tamil schools in Malaysia as they diversify the curriculum too much and distract the students from learning the country’s native culture. Nowadays, such opinions are widely regarded as racist in Malaysia, though they are supported by certain religious and ethnic groups. Overall, a consensus seems to have been reached, all ethnic groups appear equally ready to accept the necessity of strengthening and promoting the Malay culture and language (Haigh, 2002). At the same time, Nordin, Alias & Siraj (2013) pointed out that the Government’s wish to

promote multiculturalism as a cultural and educational model may not necessarily be the most efficient approach. Research shows that ‘for Malaysia, the multiple identities and assimilation models are more appealing’ (Nordin, Alias & Siraj, 2013, p. 27).

Despite having to work with a heritage which presents a number of challenges, educational policy leaders in Malaysia appear to be taking into account ethnic and cultural diversity, while at the same time promoting the country’s national values, which are considered to be applicable to all. In addition to internally generated standards, education in Malaysia is also expected to meet globally acknowledged standards, the idea being that this will make Malaysian students and graduates more competitive internationally. It could be argued that the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013) prioritizes the academic performance of students above all else. But student teacher education, the promotion of diversity, and the ability to offer universal free schooling are also taken into account.

2.4.1 Student Teacher Programme in Malaysia: Introducing the Research Setting

There are five pre-service programme types for primary and secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Three programmes are available for primary teachers teaching grades one to six, and two are available for secondary teachers teaching grades seven to thirteen. Universities offer two concurrent programmes, a Bachelor of Science (in Education) and a Bachelor of Arts (in Education). For primary level teachers, the options available are: to pursue a diploma or bachelor’s degree in teaching or pursue a bachelor’s degree (in a subject of their choice), which must then be supplemented with a certificate in teaching, which takes one year to obtain.

The teaching diploma is offered to primary teachers at a non-graduate level. Since 2005, former colleges educating future teachers have been transformed into educational institutes that are certified and assessed by the Ministry of Education. The teacher education division also sets out the requirements and strategies for implementation in two important documents. The Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) follow a common curriculum made up of six basic components. Conversely, universities may develop their own curricula but have to respect the criteria set by the Ministry of Education and the qualification agency (Ingvarson et al., 2013).

The English student teacher programme should prepare student teachers by increasing their effectiveness and efficiency in instructional practice. The experiences of student

teachers during their higher education should serve to develop rather than break their confidence. Moreover, English student teacher programmes should aid the development of leadership skills and healthy professional identities, which should, as a consequence, increase the teachers' productivity (Karakaş, 2012). In Malaysia, teaching English as a second language (TESL) is guided by the skills developed through a B.Ed. TESL. The country has developed clear guidelines that correspond with the unique needs of the nation. The degree is awarded after the completion of 480 credits, which requires four years of full-time study (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2014). The programme is structured in a manner that provides an explicit framework and a set of directions which English student teachers must respect and follow in order to succeed. During the first year of study, the novice teachers are expected to earn 120 credits at level four. In the second year of study, they are scheduled to obtain 100 credits at level five. In addition, these student teachers are also required to earn 20 credits in elective subjects at level four. In the third year of study, it is mandatory for student teachers to obtain 120 credits at level six, in addition to 20 elective credits at level five. By the time they reach their fourth year of study, they should have developed the core of their content and pedagogical knowledge (Coverdale-Jones, 2012).

In year four, in addition to the 60 credits at level six, the student teachers undergo a teaching practice module, which is also valued at 60 credits. The teaching practice allows instructors to assess whether or not the student teachers are ready to be released into the profession. The Malaysian educational system has also established regulations and conditions that must be met before proceeding to the subsequent years (James, Garrett & Candlin, 2014). Finally, the student teachers are awarded their degrees after attaining specified outcomes (Malaysia Education Policy Review, 2013). For example, the student teachers cannot graduate if they failed in year one or two. Therefore, prospective teachers must pass all five levels and the teaching practice module to be allowed to eventually graduate and practise. It is also worth noting that the degree classification is based upon the marks acquired at levels five and six only (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2014). Furthermore, the classification excludes any marks attained in teaching practice. These types of degree specifications are not singular to Malaysia, and, to understand their importance, it is necessary to compare these criteria with those offered within other educational systems.

In 2007, the Malaysian Ministry of Education introduced a bachelor's degree in education in various subjects, run by the Teacher Education Institute (PISMP handbook, 2017). One of the main bachelor's degrees in education programmes conducted by the TEI is Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) for primary school. Formerly, TESL was

organised into two segments: student teachers spent part of their training in Malaysia and the other part of their training in the UK, Australia or New Zealand, as part of a “twinning” programme. Just like in many other countries, twinning programmes have become popular in Malaysia, and colleges and universities allow their students to enrol in such programmes to acquire international degrees at reduced prices (Yee, 2012). Malaysian students benefited from “3+1” or “2+1” twinned degrees, whereby student teachers studied two or three years in their home institutions, followed by one year at a partner institution. Upon fulfilling the set requirements needed to graduate, the students were awarded a partnered or twinned degree. These degrees offered students a chance to acquire foreign degrees at reduced costs as well as to obtain new international perspectives and experiences. However, this programme was discontinued in 2014, with financial constraints cited as the cause.

The current TESL programme (PISMP) is conducted within twenty-seven teacher education institutes, located throughout Malaysia. (See Figure 2.1 for a map indicating the locations of the TEI’s headquarters and the associated institutes). This course shares a similar structure to that of its predecessor: 133 credit hours are spread out over eight semesters, with each student teacher experiencing three placements in different schools in close proximity to their respective teacher training institutes. Students spend three phases of practicums in these schools, after which they are awarded a four-year education degree from the TEI headquarters. Upon receiving their degree, the novice teachers are assigned a post in a primary school, which may be located anywhere in Malaysia. They are obligated to take this post, as this undertaking is agreed upon prior to being accepted onto the teaching course.

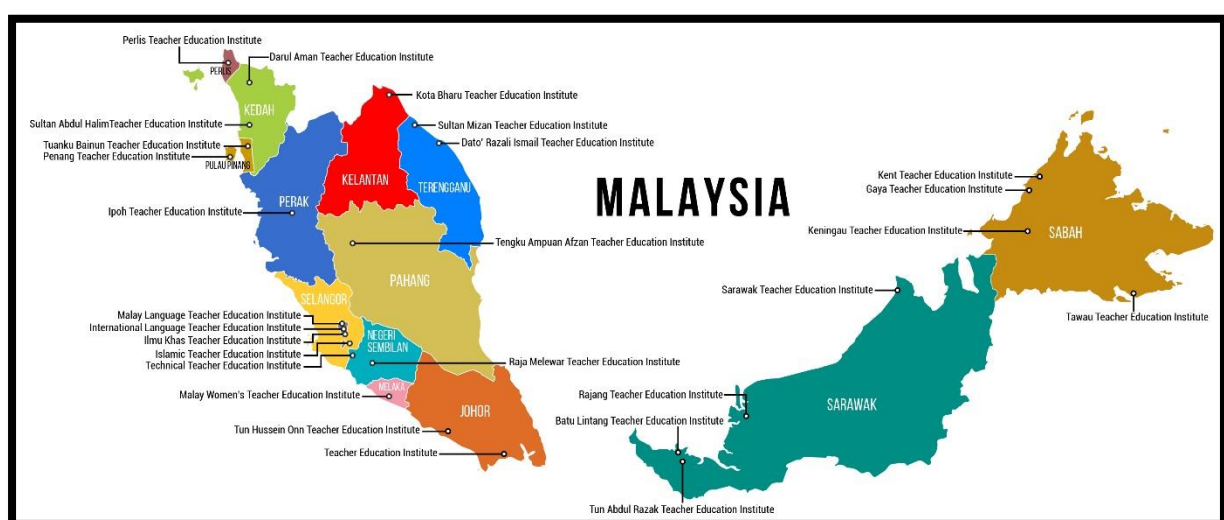


Figure 2-1 Map of Malaysia and twenty-seven Teacher Education Institutes

As Ibrahim (2007) explains, an important part of achieving independence for Malaysia was the active promotion of Malay as a national language at all levels. However, over time, the authorities and scholars alike became concerned that without proper knowledge of English, Malaysia would lose its ability to compete on a global level. While, currently, English instruction is actively implemented in Malaysian schools, the actual ability of pupils in rural and urban settings vastly differs, and non-native speakers who learn how to teach English may be unprepared for this reality.

Scholars studying various aspects of the pre-service education of Malaysian teachers of English often argue that their research should be used to help improve teacher education programmes (Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008; Darus, 2013). For example, Kabilan and Izzaham (2008) conducted a study based on the experiences of student teacher Aida who practised in a suburban school. She identified the following challenges in her practice: the mixed ability levels of the pupils, the use of their mother tongue, and the expectation of teacher-centeredness. The first challenge prevented the student teacher from engaging with every student equally, but, at the same time, pushed her to be more creative, adopting different approaches with different pupils. The second challenge prompted the teacher to reconsider her belief that lessons should be conducted in English only, as her pupils were ‘bewildered and confused’ (Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008, p. 90), could not perform any tasks, and did not answer her questions. As a result, Aida had to allow the children to use their mother tongue during group or paired tasks. Lastly, the third challenge led to the pupils expecting Aida to talk throughout the whole lesson while they listened passively (Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008). This also prompted the student teacher to encourage the participation of her pupils and to find relevant approaches that would engage them.

A study by Darus (2013), echoing the aforementioned concerns, found that among the most urgent problems educators face when teaching English are the lack of consideration given to pupils coming from non-English medium backgrounds, the prevalence of inadequate approaches, and ‘the fact that English was taught as just another subject’ (p. 19). The author argues that these problems should be addressed by acknowledging the disparities between urban and rural pupils’ proficiency levels (which parallel the distinction between ESL and EFL), choosing a clear approach to teach the language, and establishing an English exam in Grade 5 to encourage parents and pupils to pay more attention to English lessons. These changes would naturally require changes in teacher preparation.

Other studies reveal problems in student teachers' perceptions of themselves and of their future careers which can hinder their progress during training. Jiri (2012) formulated the following conclusions regarding Malaysian pre-service teachers of English. Firstly, they perceived teachers as role models for the society in general; secondly, as Malays, many pre-service teachers felt inadequate as teachers of English, and they believed that many members of the public viewed them in the same way, especially in urban settings. Thirdly, they felt unprepared for the teaching profession, and subject to enormous pressure. Among the most disturbing findings were instances of humiliation experienced by student teachers during their studies, which obviously contributed to their feelings of inadequacy and insecurity.

It is apparent that the requirements set for Malaysian teachers of English may be excessively high considering the amount of content and support that the young teachers receive. The fact that many senior teachers are still influenced by teacher-centred, authoritarian approaches places enormous pressure on their younger colleagues. At the same time, the restrictions imposed by the curriculum (for example, the use of English only) prove unrealistic and do not reflect the actual classroom conditions all over the country, pushing young teachers to violate the rules in order to achieve the desired educational results. Also, it is not hard to notice that, while the very idea of promoting English in Malaysian society is based on a compromise between global competition and local interests, the country's approach to teaching and learning English must also involve a compromise between the elevated expectations of society and the actual abilities of teachers and their pupils.

2.4.2 Relevance to Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Since an educator may be seen as an "agent of change", the education ministers at the Declaration & Recommendation of the 45th Session of the International Conference in Education in Geneva, in 1996 (Ministry of Education, 2004), stated that teachers' contributions are important in education. In this document, teachers were acknowledged as the medium through which pedagogical and educational praxis may be renewed. In attempting to meet the challenges and expectations of 21st century education and deal with the increasing pressure to compete globally, educators in Malaysia need to possess an array of skills and extensive knowledge, ranging from the generic, rudimentary skills required to teach an academic subject, to the more advanced abilities needed to apply these skills in unique or adverse conditions (Evans & Waring, 2008). Therefore, the higher structural powers that determine student teachers' education (the Teacher Education Institutions being a

notable example) play an important role in producing future teachers that possess the vital knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills.

As the aim of the teacher education programme is to equip student teachers with the set of competencies, they need to teach within real school environments, well-planned curricula are vital. Furthermore, Wright (2010) posits that the goal of teacher education, specifically of second language teacher education (SLTE), should be to provide opportunities for student teachers to acquire the skills and competencies of effective teachers, and to discover successful methods used by other teachers practising in the classroom today. This notion is founded on the belief that the effective teacher differs from the ineffective one primarily in that the former possesses a larger repertoire of competencies, skills, abilities, knowledge and so forth, which enable him or her to teach effectively (Medley, 1979).

The teacher education curriculum for the programme offered by the Teacher Education Institute in Malaysia is planned, evaluated and developed by the curriculum officers in the Teacher Education Division (TED). This used to be carried out in partnership with experts from the Teacher Education Institute before it was transformed into its own Division (Tsui, 2008). In the Teacher Education Institute, student teachers are trained in accordance with a curriculum for a specific level of education, together with a specialized area of elective subjects (BPG, 2007). Since the future teacher will act as an agent of the educational programme in Malaysia, the teacher education curriculum aspires to prepare the teachers with knowledge and skills, as well as to develop their abilities to implement effective teaching-learning processes. This aspiration is at the heart of teacher education and is stipulated in the Teaching Curriculum Course (Kurikulum Kursus Perguruan Asas) which is now implemented by TEIs and by the other higher education institutions that offer education programmes.

The doctrines and aspirations of the Teacher Education Institute hold significance for all professionals involved in education in Malaysia, for student teacher education institutions and policy makers. As stated earlier, in teacher education programmes, student teachers are trained according to the planned curriculum, with the aim to achieve the learning outcomes stipulated by the TEI. National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (2003) highlights that teachers' professional learning is an ongoing process of knowledge building and development in effective teaching practices. This notion is further supported by Nunan (1992), who outlines three different aspects of teaching practice. He argues that teachers must possess rich professional knowledge related to teaching and pedagogy, as well

as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). According to Solis (2009), PCK is a recently developed concept which emphasizes the importance of integrating subject-matter knowledge and pedagogy in teaching. PCK provides a framework to represent and formulate subject matter in a way that makes it comprehensible for students. It is through this process that PCK illustrates how the subject matter of a particular discipline is transformed when communicated to learners (Shulman, 1986; Shulman, 1987).

Assessing to what extent student teachers' teaching and learning are influenced by the development of their pedagogical knowledge is an inquiry of great importance to teacher education. Policy makers have debated whether teachers should major in education (in order to understand how they should practise) or in other disciplines, such as mathematics or history (in order to gain knowledge of the content material.) Some scholars take another stance, arguing that teachers' effectiveness depends on their concern for their students and their ability to work well with diverse groups of learners (Ball, 2000). If scholastic knowledge is declared entirely irrelevant, the result is that methods may be considered external and no longer fundamental to the teaching of subject matter. The role of the teacher is to initiate and promote genuine intellectual activity in his or her students, and the first way of doing this may be to foster this within themselves. Evolving intellectual competence is strongly rooted in self-discipline, and the teacher needs sufficient foundational knowledge about his or her subject on which to build. Therefore, knowledge of subject matter is significant in enabling a teacher to effectively deliver material to his or her students. Despite the wide consensus regarding the importance of both pedagogy and content knowledge, in teacher training, these areas have always been organized separately, with an obvious divide between the two (Brockbank & McGill, 2007). Occasionally, the teacher education curriculum is divided into domains of knowledge, such as foundational or elementary teaching skills, the sociology of education, and educational psychology. The knowledge modules are complemented with teaching observation, supervised practice, and teaching experience (Ball, 2000). Sometimes, the gap between practice and pedagogy is viewed in terms of the comparable categorization of subjects into art, science, and education; in such a case, theory may be considered a science and practice considered an art, with both fitting under the category of education.

2.4.3 Reflective Account: from Practice to Reflective Practice

“...we believe that teachers should develop, not that other people should develop teachers” (McIntyre & Hagger, 1992, p.271)

At the outset of this study I had planned to explore pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) but the findings inspired me to focus on the topic of reflection. I later investigated the relevance and adequacy of reflective practice as it was applied during the student teachers' practicum. The decision to examine reflective practice was prompted when it was observed that student teachers were consistently using such practices during their practicums and demonstrated use of reflection during their post-observational interviews. Reflective practice proved to be key to students' abilities to develop themselves; the observations and interviews showed that reflective practice enhanced student teachers' abilities to independently problem solve and evolve. Reflective practice appeared to optimise student teachers' ability to integrate their learning, to bridge theory and practice, and use the other forms of knowledge they possessed, notably their PCK. The research necessitated a shift from focusing on PCK to focusing on reflective practice, as the data showed that no matter how much student teachers are developed (equipped with PCK and theory) their development is limited by the extent that they are able to reflect and thus implement positive change.

The practicum is a practice of teacher education in which student teachers are required to acquire more than just knowledge of processes, rather they become agents of action (Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison, 2011). The practicum is a medium which allows student teachers to “capture practice” and to reflect on their understanding of knowledge (Mattsson, Eilertsen & Rorrison, p.2, 2011). According to Mann and Walsh (2017), educational practice involves more than the simple application of the PCK student teachers learn in the classroom; educational practice requires educators to develop the individual qualities that will assist them to apply their knowledge of their subject matter, moreover it requires that they willingly to reflect, learn and focus on the effort to become a wise educator. The data emerging from the interviews reinforced this view; reflecting on the data made me consider forms of knowledge beyond PCK and appreciate the particular importance of reflective practice in student teacher development. This necessitated that the research be orientated differently so that reflective practice occupied a central position within the research whilst PCK became one of many subcomponents to be considered. To clarify, PCK was not discarded from the research entirely but was studied as an important component of reflective practice. PCK is still of significance to student teacher development and worthy of

attention, thus literature on PCK features within the literature review and is referenced within the findings.

It is in this context that the widespread introduction of the practice of pedagogical reflection seems compatible with the aims of educational policy. One of the ways in which this research is relevant is that it attempts to draw from and clarify the data that exists on professional reflection in Malaysian pedagogical literature. Moreover, the research hopes to contribute towards the development of holistic theoretical ideas regarding the types and mechanisms of reflection in teachers' professional activity. The ways in which reflection is presented and explained will have an effect on how, or indeed whether or not, reflection is taken up by teachers and applied in the classroom. This research hopes to contribute constructively towards developing a comprehensive vision of reflective practice which accurately reflects its potential.

2.5 Summary of Chapter 2

Historically, the development of the Malaysian education system was and continues to be seriously affected by the British colonial rule. Colonists were not interested in providing universal access to English education for the local population, rather, only people looking to work as servants could obtain a basic knowledge of English. Some earlier attempts of English teaching were also associated with Christian missionary work in Malaysia, something which distorted subsequent efforts to advance proficiency in English. Since gaining independence from Britain in 1957, Malaysia has devoted considerable efforts towards developing its own sophisticated education system, with considerable attention given to foreign language tuition. Finding inspiration elsewhere, the country has implemented many new measures to regenerate the education system, and reform key aspects in the way it functions. Galvanized by a program which proved successful in Finland, Malaysia attempted to orientate education away from assessing student progress via exams of a traditional format, towards assessments based on teachers' judgments. Through efforts such as these, Malaysia strives for its students to become competitive on a global level.

Currently, the government aims to increase the number of years' children spend in school, from the current level of six obligatory years to eleven years (until seventeen years of age). The rationale behind this change is that more years in school will ensure that children are better prepared for the demands of a dynamic labour market, vital to which is their proficiency in foreign languages. For this reason, the country consistently implements, and

measures itself against, foundational international requirements and standards. By reorganizing existing educational priorities according to international standards, the government tries to initiate a corresponding improvement in the knowledge and skills of its Malaysian students, as well as boost the reputation of Malaysian education.

To be competitive globally, it is expected that education be inclusive and equally provided to every child throughout Malaysia. It is therefore expected that teachers demonstrate the maximum versatility and demonstrate an ability to tailor their classes to the needs of students from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Primary and secondary school teachers have to follow one or several of the pre-service program types currently available in the country. English student teacher programs which effectively facilitate the development of student teachers' leadership skills and professional identities, provide novice teachers with the skills they need to engage with and positively impact their students. Educators who are confident in their role, who proactively engage in evolving their practice and approach teaching with enthusiasm, will naturally maximise their students' motivation to learn.

Amongst the main challenges that Malaysian teacher education has to contend with, and prepare its student teachers to address, is the diverse nature of its students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, of which a lack of recognition is currently afforded. Another challenge facing teacher education is the differing levels of English proficiency of its students. At times students arrive with low levels of English competency, something which proves problematic in a context where the requirements and expectations made of students in their English classes appears to be inadequately high. It is insisted, for example, that only English be spoken in class. This may be an enormous demand for a student who lacks confidence and may require that teachers compensate by providing extra support which puts them under strain. Moreover, the curriculum itself is crafted so as to provide optimal learning for students with a certain level of English; unable to engage properly with the material they are provided, students who are less confident or inexperienced may progress.

The short-term and long-term effects of educational reform in the country will be determined by various factors, of which the effectiveness of teacher education programs is critical. Teachers must possess a wide set of professional competencies, which enable them to perform a number of critical functions while working with a diverse student population. An ability to prioritise and structure learning according to the changing needs of students is essential. Teachers must develop their ability to adapt the curriculum so that it is accessible to

every student in the classroom, whilst at the same time fostering independent learning and encouraging students to take responsibility for their education. To achieve this, teachers should promote genuine intellectual activities which promote students' ability to creatively apply knowledge and skills. Beginning with the basics and ensuring a secure foundation will help students to thenceforth take ownership over their education.

Finally, engaging in pedagogical reflection is considered necessary if educators are to successfully make sense of the educational theories they have encountered. Teachers can use theory to adapt their practice according to the conditions common to Malaysian classrooms, as well as conditions specific to school and location. In doing so, they will be best positioned to meet the needs of every student and create a supportive learning environment. Reflective practice can also be an important aid, helping to identify the main problems hindering effective tuition in the classroom. Moreover, it can help practitioners to judge the direction they must pursue in order to develop their practice. Theoretical ideas, digested and put into practice through reflection, would thus assume concrete significance. Reflective practice reinforces a holistic vision of teaching in so far as reflection encourages teachers to take a step back and look at obstacles from a variety of perspectives, rather than privileging one perspective, idea or approach.

In the next chapter, the literature on student teacher reflective practice will be presented and revised.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of scholarly literature dedicated to reflective practices within teacher education. The topics under discussion include the concept of reflection, its application in teacher preparation and practice, and its relationship with other theoretical concepts (pedagogical content knowledge, subject matter knowledge, andragogy, zone of proximal development and experiential learning).

Amongst the most important works providing the theoretical frameworks through which the present study is formed include those by Schön (1983; 1987), and by scholars who expanded or challenged Schön's concept of reflection in action, pointing out practical aspects of its application in teaching practice (Munby, 1989; Gilroy, 1993; Eraut, 1995; Newman, 1999; Erlandson & Beach, 2008; Thomson & Pascal, 2012; Beauchamp, 2015; Hébert, 2015).

After reviewing works by Schön and later research which expanded or challenged his ideas, and following a preliminary analysis of the interview data, four groups of issues appeared to be significant for the development of reflective practice and were further explored. This was an iterative process which enriched both the literature review and data analysis processes (see Chapter 4 Methodology for an explanation of the data analysis). The issues were categorised as relational, developmental, situational, and experiential; relational issues include the significance of relationships between student teachers and their mentors, as well as between student teachers themselves (mutual cooperation, encouragement, respect, constructive feedback, or the lack thereof). The situational issues identified relate to the specifics of school organization, most notably the curriculum. The developmental issues identified include the development of reflective practice over time (changes or the lack thereof during the teaching practicum, and the disparities between progress and stages of learning), based on principles of andragogy. Lastly, the experiential issues identified have to do with the student teacher's ability to learn from experience and draw conclusions from it, based on the theory of experiential learning.

The following chapter is divided into three sections. The first section 3.2 is dedicated to describing the concept of reflection and the ways in which it has been utilized in teaching practice. Then, section 3.3 focuses on works by Schön (1983; 1987), his supporters and opponents; this is followed by section 3.4 in which the four categories of issues that can

afflict reflective practice are outlined, and their positive or negative influence on the development of self-reflection in student teachers of English is described. Lastly, conclusions are made regarding the importance of reflection to student teacher education.

3.2 The Concept of Reflection

Reflective practice has been the focus of much discussion in learning and teaching research literature. Most notably, reflective practices have been examined as a means through which to improve the pedagogical content knowledge of student teachers during their pre-service training. Achugar and Carpenter (2017), for example, studied how the realities of a multicultural classroom affected the development of student teachers during their practicum, with particular attention given to their reflective practice. Nordin (2014) produced a study on student teachers' experiences in both the Malaysian and New Zealand contexts. The study shows that many ideas and theoretical concepts related to reflection can be successfully transferred into practice, helping novice teachers to successfully intertwine their content knowledge and pedagogical theory, as well as to enhance their social competence and ability to communicate with their students and fellow colleagues. Whilst reflective practice has been established within many teacher training programs, some questions relevant to reflection have not been conclusively answered, and many aspects of reflection require clarification. First and foremost, the very concept of reflective practice remains unclear despite the vast amount of related research dedicated to the topic (Collin, Karsenti & Komis, 2013). In order to understand how reflective practice can enhance the pedagogical content knowledge of student teachers, it is necessary to compare the viewpoints of the most prominent authors dedicating their energy to this endeavor.

In his book "The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action" (1983), Schön points out the so-called crisis of confidence he claimed to be affecting virtually all professions. This crisis, he argued, was created by a gap between theory and practice. He claims that while it may seem that future professionals acquire an exhaustive amount of knowledge, it usually turns out that their actual working experience and reality is vastly different from what they know about it. Likewise, Kolb (1984) emphasizes that professionals will constantly face situations which will confront them with the limitations of their own knowledge, but he takes a positive stance on the consequences of this. He describes the learning experience as cyclical and constantly moving. Students are persistently faced with the need to rise and evolve, to cope with the constant stream of new challenges. He insists that, "learning is by its very nature a tension- and a conflict-filled process" (Kolb, 1984,

p.30). This tension arises when one faces the need to present specific material to a specific audience in a way they can digest, in some cases, the material will not be well received and will not be fitting to the audience. Although encountering difficulties in the classroom will inevitably have the potential to create feelings of inadequacy in the student teacher, Kolb (1984) seems to suggest that it is not at all desirable to entirely eradicate such tension as it propels the learning process.

For teachers, meeting the challenges which come with trying to build on novice professional knowledge is vital and of relevance to their practice. Teachers experience multiple problems and stressful conditions that may expose the limitations of what they know. They may encounter “pressures for increased efficiency in the context of contracting budgets, demands that they rigorously ‘teach the basics’, exhortations to encourage creativity, build citizenship, help students to examine their values” (Schön, 1983, p.17). As a result, they have to adjust the content of their lessons so that they can cope with all of these demands, filling the gaps in their professional education themselves. For English lessons, this means much more than simply presenting elemental knowledge about grammar, syntax and vocabulary in the classroom is needed to ensure that the audience has learned anything. Student teachers must have a deep and solid of the content they wish to deliver, in this case, of the English language. This is of critical importance because if they lack this knowledge, they will not be able to manipulate their teaching material and methods accordingly to students’ abilities and needs.

The integral importance of subject content knowledge, in allowing educators to use their teaching materials with sophistication is described by Shulman (1986). Shulman develops the concept of pedagogical reasoning, something that educators must use when they approach and manipulate teaching material. The first step in this process is comprehension as the teacher is required to understand the ideas that are to be presented during the lesson, as well as the ways in which these ideas may relate to other topics and subjects. Next, the ideas must be transformed in such a way that lends itself to presentation. After that comes instruction, or the active phase of classroom teaching. During the evaluation phase, the teacher checks how well the students understand the material presented. Lastly, during the reflective phase, the lesson must be examined critically, so as to shine light on its successes and failures, with the desirable result being that information may be used instrumentally in the future. (Shulman, 1986, p.11-12). It is often suggested in scholarly literature that these skills relate directly to reflective capacity. In the book mentioned above, Schön (1983) explores this reflective capacity and its various iterations. It is widely acknowledged that

experience is most useful when the practitioner is able to reflect upon it, in the moment as well as afterwards. Since such skills have been established as useful for teachers, scholars have endeavoured to evaluate the mechanism of self-reflection during practice. Schön (1983) examines the concept of reflection-in-action, arguing that people of all professions have to reflect on their actions while working. They may do this in order to make a decision in an unknown situation, to determine the skills they need to complete a task in order to compare current circumstances with previous experience and so on (Schön, 1983, p.50). Good reflecting-in-action skills help to explain the unexpected success of our actions, or to find out the reasons why familiar solutions proved ineffective in a particular case. In turn, reflecting-in-practice is based on the ability to reflect on the repeated actions that are vital for successful practice. Schön (1983) argues that the professional who consistently encounters the same circumstances or conditions, and performs the same actions over and over again, can often suffer from a narrowing of their vision. This person may lack in versatility or overlook things that do not fit into the more typical picture they have in their minds. In such a case, “a practitioner’s reflection can serve as a corrective to overlearning” (Schön, 1983, p.61). In the case of teachers, self-reflection may include asking oneself questions about why something worked or did not work during the lesson, querying what inspired any deviations from the attitudes and atmosphere usual to a particular class, or why the initial lesson plan was successful or unsuccessful.

Another important concept that stems from reflection-in-action is defined as knowledge-in-action. It means that knowledge of a certain way to do things often manifests itself while we are doing these things (Schon, 1983, p.51). For example, it is possible for some individuals to tell bad and good solutions apart without explicit logical planning or reasoning. Also, Schön (1983) points out that we usually speak according to the rules of phonology, but very few of us actually know these rules, still this does not necessarily stop us from applying them correctly (p.53). The same phenomenon can be observed during performances at sports events, or during improvisation in music. Dismissing the ability to reflect in action for a teacher would mean dismissing adaptation, learning and growth. Since a teacher’s job often requires finding solutions here and now (explaining the concept to a particular student, answering a specific question, dealing with an emergency in the classroom), the intuitive part of making decisions should not be overlooked.

Lastly, Schön (1983) discusses reflecting-in-practice. For many professions, practice means repeating the same actions repeatedly. For teachers, an example of practice may be giving the same lesson to different audiences. This may seem easy at first sight, but with

time, “the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he is doing” (Schön, 1983, p.61). In this case, a practitioner may overlook repeated mistakes or ineffective aspects of his or her routine that lead to undesirable outcomes. A solution to the situation may be found if a teacher reflects on every single experience as it exists in comparison with previous experiences. This may build the awareness which precedes the identification of effective solutions, detrimental actions, and tactics which may help to improve their performance as a whole during their coming classes.

3.3 Expansion and criticism of Schön’s ideas

Schön’s theory of reflective practice, as well as its central concept of reflection-in-action, has been used in numerous studies of experiential learning and self-reflection. It has proved especially useful for studies dedicated to professional development, for example, in studies relating to students’ acquisition of professional skills. While previously, such studies focused more on the acquisition of content knowledge, and its proper place in professional situations (or “knowledge-in-action”, as Schön calls it), the importance of self-reflection and the ability to conduct quick self-analysis while working, or “reflection-in-action” has been overlooked (Munby, 1989). As a result, many works that aim to explore how students become more proficient and self-aware in their practice, rely heavily on Schön’s ideas – most notably because he aimed to explore how professionals deal “with situations of uncertainty, instability, and uniqueness” (Schön, 1983, p.268) which are especially significant for student teachers when facing the unpredictability of the classroom.

According to Newman (1999), there are usually two kinds of criticism which relate to Schön’s ideas, both of which, however, can be easily discredited either by referring back to the writings of Schön himself, or by looking at other theorists. Certain scholars argue, for example, that there needs to be more empirical research on the usefulness of Schön’s theory. Newman suggests that Schön himself acknowledged this need, adding that those comments “accept, rather than critique, Schön’s notion of reflection” (Newman, 1999, p.141). Other scholars find that there are not enough practical implications of reflection-in-action. For example, Kotzee (2012) discovers that the concept of reflection-in-action to be too individualistic, stating that it lacks a social context. It is argued that more attention should be paid to the specific social practices which inform one’s learning and initiation into these practices, as this reflects the actual educational environment teachers exist in. A similar concern is voiced by Munby (1989) who states that Schön does not clarify the relationship between reflection-in-action and the actual teaching practicum and does not provide any

suggestions for reflective teachers. Newman (1999), however, argues that such concerns “do not focus directly onto Schön’s work” (p.141). In other words, while other researchers are free to apply his theory to practical use, it was not Schön’s personal focus and thus he should not be blamed for his lack of overt interest in practical applicability. In contrast, Beauchamp (2015) adds that reflection is often presented as a tool for teacher education and not as a complex concept which requires deeper understanding (p.137).

Some scholars went as far as to say that the term “reflection” is now misused in certain contexts. For example, Hébert (2015) argues that the term “reflection” has become overused in educational research, adding that the most influential theories of reflective practices (those by Dewey and Schön) “privilege” knowledge over experience despite claiming to criticize such an approach. While the implication is certainly not that the term should be abandoned altogether, such comments may indicate the potential for researchers to approach reflective practice loosely or indiscreetly. Moreover, this criticism may further reinforce the idea of reflection being practically remote and difficult to pin down. At the same time, some theorists argue that it would be unfair to say that Schön values knowledge over experience. According to Eraut (1995), Schön’s book refers to at least four different kinds of professional knowledge, all of which involve experience to a certain extent. Thus, the claim that reflective theories ignore experience does not seem entirely valid.

Some critical comments regarding “reflection-in-action” were presented in the article “Schön Shock: A Case for Reframing Reflection-in-Action?” by Eraut (1995). Probably the most important concern voiced by Eraut (1995) is echoed in many works that discuss Schön’s theory: the very concept of reflection-in-action is problematic. One part of the problem here seems to concern its definition. Eraut (1995) argues that Schön is much more focused on reflection on action and for action, which makes the concept of reflection in action more difficult to appraise – especially considering the fact that it is only explained through metaphors or examples. Similarly, Hébert (2015) suggests the concept itself could be better rephrased as “reflection as action”, since the process of reflecting is an action, too. Such an idea was expressed earlier by Munby (1989). Although he does not provide a new term, he states that “thought about action is also action” (p.35), which is why it is hard to separate clearly reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Lastly, Hickson (2011) contributes to the debate, calling for reflection on reflection: “critical reflection”.

The concerns raised above naturally have consequences on the research and influence the form that any research dedicated to reflection takes. Therefore, it seems best to make a

clear distinction between the types of reflection one observes and analyzes during the various stages of the study. For example, during my study, the written reflective accounts presented by students (such as diaries), and their oral reflective accounts, are central. In both cases, the student teachers were asked to reflect not only on their actions, but on their reflections as well (for example, their thoughts about their profession and self-evaluation of changes in thinking). Thus, aside from the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, it would probably be relevant to use the term “critical reflection” as well.

Speaking about the language of Schön’s inquiry, Munby (1989) proceeds to pose four questions which, in his opinion, will form a clearer cognitive model for reflection. Munby (1989) asks how teachers reframe “puzzles” that arise in their practice, what experiences strengthen the teachers’ ability to make sense of their own teaching and to use their knowledge; what features of professional practice are puzzling to teachers, and what the role of language (metaphors) is for the development of professional knowledge (Munby, 1989, p.38). Such an approach is in line with Schön’s ideas in that he detailed the way in which “media, language, and repertoire” shape one’s reflection-in-action and might be “an intriguing and promising topic for future research” (Schön, 1983, p.271). Thus, studying how student teachers reflect upon their practice could be worthwhile, especially if many of them are not entirely conscious of this process. One also could delve into how student teachers describe their experiences and try to make sense of it themselves.

Another potentially fruitful examination regarding reflection-in-action, relates to its time frame. Eraut (1995) argues that when Schön speaks of reflection-in-action, referring to a situation in which a teacher has to make a quick decision on the spot, he overlooks situations where teachers are allowed more time for thinking and decision-making. Eraut (1995) puts forward his own example. He describes the thought process teachers engage in when watching over a quiet room of pupils and asserts that in this situation, they are engaging in reflection-in-action to an equal extent. It would therefore be inappropriate to reduce or characterize reflection-in-action as very quick acts of thinking during rapid sequences of actions, because actions themselves can be executed under very different conditions. Similarly, in his social learning theory, Mead notably focuses on instincts. This is significant because in some way it parallels Schön’s focus on immediate action, said to be informed by instinct. However, according to Mead’s theory, instincts have a social nature and cannot form in an individual outside of community. This approach was widely criticized and ultimately rejected (Parkovnick, 2015), but other components of Mead’s theory proved influential.

Continuing to evaluate the concept of reflection, Erlandson and Beach (2008) state that one concern with Schön's argument may be in the ambivalent nature of reflection, which can be assessed as both theoretical inclusion and open exploration. On the one hand, it is possible to reflect upon the reflection itself; such an exercise renders this process a completely intellectual system, or something that happens only in one's mind. On the other hand, Schön (1983) shows how reflection-in-action and acquisition of professional skills are closely tied to the bodily existence and experiences of the practitioner. Bodily phenomena present one form of evidence that can be gathered during observations of student teachers' classes; in the early stages of their training, most student teachers show visible confusion and a lack of confidence when they do something wrong; they may, for example, deliver content stiffly, or their voices may tremble (Tsui, 1996). However, as they progress from lesson to lesson, one can observe confidence in their posture and voice. Moreover, their attitude towards mistakes often softens, they are more relaxed and may learn to laugh minor errors off instead of becoming upset or distressed.

All the comments and criticisms described above exist in accord with Newman (1999), who argued that "we should reject the certainty of any one meaning implied by the single term 'reflective practice'" (Newman, 1999, p. 160), as any meaning derived will greatly depend on personal interpretation and context. Nonetheless, some of these ideas and concerns may be helpful for student teachers' study of reflective practice, most notably, they may challenge how language is used in their reflections, pushing them to be more precise in how they articulate themselves. Knowledge may foster a keener awareness of the connection between thinking and bodily experiences, and thus a better control may be exercised. An enhanced understanding of how learning and reflection may be simultaneously developed and strengthened, would allow practitioners to optimize their evolution. Reflection would therefore come more naturally, require less time and work in harmony with practitioners' development in other areas.

Overall, the review of literature on reflection highlights many ways in which reflective processes are shaped. It is apparent that they are influenced by the social interactions (at least between the mentor and mentee), by the amount of time available for reflection (whether during, before or after action), by the situation in which reflection occurs (namely, the environment in which a reflecting person finds him or herself), and by the amount of practice and quality of experience that stimulates or fails to stimulate one's reflection.

Four groups of issues that can inform the development of reflective skills are discussed below. First, I will discuss relational issues – namely, the social aspect of encouraging and fostering reflection and self-evaluation. While Schon (1983) pays attention to the relationship between mentor and mentee, he does not discuss in detail the relationships which occur in communities of teachers and learners. Secondly, I will discuss situational issues, addressing the criticism made by Eraut (1995) regarding the reality of “crowded classrooms”. Thirdly, I will discuss developmental issues. As was stated above, the developmental aspect of reflection in Schon’s theory is problematic, so it may be necessary to look further into the changes in reflection that occur over time (if indeed they do). Fourthly, I will discuss experiential issues, as it is important to determine how student teachers assess their experiences and reflect upon them (or fail to do so).

3.4 Development of Reflective Skills: Key Issues

3.4.1 Relational Issues

A key factor that needs to be acknowledged in contexts where reflection is practiced, is the importance of relationships. The significance of the positive interventions of mentors, who encourage their respective student teachers to become more reflective, has been mentioned above. However, this deserves closer attention because the negative impact of a lack of positive intervention and guidance during teaching practicums has been pointed out in many studies; for instance, by Abdullah-Sani (2000), Ambrosetti (2012) and Reese (2012). Earlier, ideas that proved helpful for explaining the nature of reflection were formulated by Lev Vygotsky. An especially important idea introduced by Vygotsky (1986) was the connection between higher mental functions and social interactions. In his book “Thought and Language”, the author argues that all cognitive processes and the acquisition of language skills can only be developed with the help of social interactions. He argues that in childhood, we process information both on inter-psychological and intra-psychological levels. In the context of teaching, the first level relates to the teachers’ interactions with other people (such as parents, teachers or other adults). The second level concerns the ways in which an individual processes the information received during these interactions within themselves. Vygotsky (1986) argues that it is impossible to develop higher mental functions without interactions with others, as devoid of these interactions, individuals lack the necessary stimuli or valuable information to move forward. Walford (2011) positively comments on the use of Vygotsky’s findings in teacher education. He supports Vygotsky’s idea that learning leads development and sheds light on the way in which teachers should be educated. He stresses

that adopting such an approach to learning and development will entail that the “formation [of teachers’ skills] both precedes and follows study in a teacher education program” (Walford, 2011, p.257).

Another, more thorough examination of Vygotsky’s findings is presented in an article by Collin and Karsenti (2011), who argue that Vygotsky’s idea of the zone of proximal development, as well as his views on higher mental functions and social relationships, help to explain the role of verbal interactions in reflective teaching. They focus on the collective aspect of reflective practice of student teachers. They state that, although most educational institutions recognize the importance of reflective practice and include it into the pre-service training courses, the concept itself remains unclear. The authors suggest that reflective practice should be defined as “a meta-competency that is used to develop and sustain the other teaching competencies” (Collin & Karsenti, 2011, p.571). The relationship between reflective practice and verbal interaction is positively evaluated but lacks adequate research. The importance of verbal interaction for reflective practitioners can be explained as follows. When reflection is a personal process, it is usually hard to externalize. Although there are certainly many ways to share one’s critical thoughts about lessons, students or performance, (such as using personal logs,) the problems or drawbacks of one’s teaching style can become much more apparent during actual interaction with other student teachers, colleagues or pupils. As a result, verbal interaction “provides a useful, concrete, and observable situation in which to examine the collective dimension of reflective practice” (Collin & Karsenti, 2011, p.571). In order to define verbal interaction as a concept, the authors use Vygotsky’s idea of socio-cognitive approach to semiotic mediation. They argue that, if the students can benefit from verbal interaction with their teachers, the teachers themselves can benefit from it as well, as it may serve to stimulate their minds and improve their higher mental functions (Collin & Karsenti, 2011).

In order to support or disprove this idea, Collin & Karsenti (2011) conducted research among pre-service teachers, who predominantly reported that verbal interactions improved their reflective skills greatly (whether taking place with instructors or with each other). Without these interactions, it would have been impossible to share the results of their self-reflection and to receive any valuable feedback, advice or criticism. These findings allowed the authors to compare the zone of proximal development to the zone of the influence of reflective practice, and also to add the concept of professional practice, discussed in detail by Schön (1983), into the model of interaction and reflective practice. According to this model, interpersonal interactions between pre-service teachers improve the collaborative aspect of

reflective practice, while internalized thinking and self-reflection develop their autonomy. Thus, collaboration and autonomy, informed by reflective practice, successfully migrate into one's professional practice (Collin & Karsenti, 2011).

Mentors will be one of the most important partners in collaboration that student teachers will engage with throughout their education, and these figures have different things to offer students teachers to their peers. Vygotsky's findings stress the role of the mentor in the development of the mentee's reflective skills. In order to understand how teaching can shape the learner's skills, it is necessary to take into account the mechanism of learning itself, which was thoroughly examined in the works by Vygotsky. Commenting on Vygotsky's theory, Daniels (2002) points out the great importance that the author places on psychological tools, as helping to change "mind and behavior" (p.15). However, the mechanism of learning is much more complicated than "stimulus-response", as if such were the case, we would be able to acquire all necessary skills ourselves, without outside help and guidance. According to Vygotsky (1999), mediation is crucial in the development of new skills and for gathering the latest information, the role of which becomes apparent as early as in childhood, when children learn to react and to behave differently with the help of education, leading them to replace certain mental functions with different ones. As a result, "development proceeds mainly in the direction of mediating the psychological operations that at the first stages work accomplished by direct forms of adaptation" (Vygotsky, 1999, p.58). It would follow that a teacher's mediation of the learning process is much more complicated and involves more than the simple presentation of knowledge. Learners react psychologically and emotionally towards their teachers and the way they conduct themselves, as well as the environment they shape; the students will therefore adapt and react to the experiences their teachers provide in their entirety.

Adopting approaches which prioritise and value the mediation that occurs between teacher and learner complies with Schön's aforementioned approach, as interpreted by Widdowson (2011). Implementing such approaches are said to be capable of bringing improvements to many areas of teaching; for example, Widdowson (2011) cites the case of English teacher Marina who struggled with the attempt to make students write compositions. Instead of simply proofreading many similar and uninteresting texts, she decided to give her students an opportunity to revise and improve their drafts according to her comments. Progressing from this, students were required to read and comment on each other's work. As a result, the students learned how to be critical of their own writing and of the writings of others (Tsui, 1996).

The case described above confirms Shulman's emphasis on the importance of the "wisdom of practice", conceptualized as "maxims that guide the practices of able teachers" (Shulman, 1986, p.11). Such maxims can be retrieved from a careful examination of the techniques used by the experienced teachers. The more information of this kind which is analyzed, the clearer the principles of successful teaching practice become for other educators. Shulman (1986) stresses that such a knowledge base helps in preserving vital information and passing it forward to the next generations of young teachers, otherwise information is usually lost with time (p.12). Whilst some knowledge may hold lasting relevance, it is necessary to remember the flexible and changing nature of knowledge production and the constant efforts to improve and enrich it with new relevant data. This may explain why educators constantly recommend that their students do their own research; that they encourage them to develop their own ideas, as well as expand on and develop further the ideas that they receive. However, it must be acknowledged that this requires the active participation of both teachers and learners in teaching and learning (Ulvik & Smith, 2011).

a) Issues in Communication

Unfortunately, several studies revealed a certain communication gap between student teachers and their mentors, where one or both parties were unwilling to interact for one reason or another. For example, Abdulllah-Sani (2000) who studied student teachers' beliefs and perceptions regarding their work, argues that the participants indeed have firm beliefs and strong images of teachers, which inform their performance and attitude to their duties. However, a more alarming finding was a lack of interest in building a community and interacting with other teachers, overridden by a preference for one's own preconceived notions and beliefs.

In turn, ninety percent of the students interviewed for the study by Ogonor and Badmus (2006) reported that they did not receive any assistance or advice from their supervisors. Also, it was revealed that the school staff did not provide any help or support to the student teachers and did not even demonstrate any lessons as examples for the trainees. The teaching materials and resources were also not provided to the student teachers. From this viewpoint, the underperformance of student teachers does not seem surprising. It sheds light on the importance of cooperation and friendly environment for adequate teaching practice. The superficial attitude of the school staff, along with the limited time of teaching practice, will not serve to enhance the student teachers' teaching skills in any way. Overall, it was determined that, while reflective teaching can improve the student teachers' experience

at school, they completely lacked the necessary support and mentoring from their older colleagues.

An interesting commentary on the role of senior colleagues in student teachers' education, which may serve to elucidate the findings above, is presented in the article by Loughran (2014). It is suggested that the professional development of educators "too often revolves around doing things to teachers rather than with teachers" (Loughran, 2014, p.271). As a result, the pre-service education sometimes turns out to be unnecessarily authoritarian and lacks the cooperation of all educators involved. The author points out several problems within the education of student teachers. On the one hand, Loughran (2014) admits that some educational institutions do not truly value the teachers' expertise because their job seems to be "easy" (which is based on the false assumption that a good teacher is someone who simply knows the subject matter well). On the other hand, it is argued that senior, experienced educators often try to avoid teaching young professionals and focus on different duties instead – scientific research, their own practice etc. (Loughran, 2014, p.274). As a result, they fail to pass on their knowledge and experience, overlooking or underestimating its importance for their younger colleagues.

Loughran (2014) argues that both problems must be resolved in order to improve the quality of the pre-service training. In addition, he stresses the importance of self-reflection, as the critical evaluation of one's own teaching practice, helping teachers to "better understand the relationship between teaching and learning" (Loughran, 2014, p.278). Even if an experience is negative, it can be very helpful to examine it critically and objectively, so that the roots of the issues manifested during the lesson may be found and taken into account in future practice. Overall, it is concluded that all teachers regardless of their age, experience or available resources should have an unobstructed vision of what they want to achieve, as this vision will provide them with more agency in their choices (Loughran, 2014, p.280).

In a similar vein, Ball (2000) argues that many teachers are not flexible in their approach to knowledge. They do not want to hear the students who ask difficult questions or voice different opinions, they are unable to find alternative ways to present ideas, to put these ideas in a wider context or assume a viewpoint different from their own (p.243). In turn, it is also important to note the tendency of learners to idealise their peers and mentors, and thus their past assumptions about their teachers greatly inform their present experiences so that they do not know what to expect from their seniors (Murphy & Brown, 2012).

b) Suggestions for Organizational Change

One can suggest that, considering the aforementioned issues, there should be organizational changes in the approach to educating young teachers which would help foster a different, more effective relationship between all members of the teaching community. In order to consider such organizational improvements in the teaching practicum, it is possible to use Bandura's recommendations (1988) which are based on his social cognitive theory: developing competencies through mastery modelling, strengthening people's beliefs in their capabilities and talents, and enhancing self-motivation through goal systems (p.276). The first step, guided mastery modelling, consists of three elements: learners have to model (or imitate) the skills appropriate for their profession; they receive guided practice under simulated conditions in order to improve these skills; they are helped to apply these skills at work. It is apparent that all these components are present in teacher education: student teachers are expected to imitate the skills they witness in their colleagues, peers etc.; senior colleagues provide guidance to student teachers under the simulated conditions during teaching practicums; lastly, it is expected that student teachers will receive guidance when they start working.

The second step depends on perceived self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1988), aside from skills, success requires "strong self-belief in one's capabilities to exercise control over events to accomplish desired goals" (p.279). Positive self-beliefs directly influence the ability to master tasks, solve problems and be persistent. If people adequately and positively assess their capabilities, they may be able to accomplish more. On the contrary, negative self-beliefs may lead to poor performance and a lack in professional progress – namely, to stress, excessive worrying, and inability to find solutions. Self-efficacy is another crucial quality for future teachers, as not only do they need to believe in their own capabilities, but also to inspire self-belief in their students as well.

Lastly, the third step in the organization of social learning is the development of self-regulation and motivation. Self-regulation is said to urge people to observe their behavior over time and to persist until they reach their goals. Bandura (1988) argues that self-directedness and motivation are achieved with the help of "self-evaluative reactions," which seems to be synonymous with self-reflection. It is also notable that a crucial element in developing better self-regulation is feedback. As Bandura (1988) argues, it is unproductive to have goals and not know whether one is effective in trying to achieve them. Similarly, Wodtke and Brown (1967) argue that social learning occurs through imitation. They insist

that social reinforcement (in the shape of feedback and positive comments) is extremely important for better learning.

c) Communities of Practice

In order to put the relationship that occurs between learners and their teachers in a bigger context, Lave and Wenger (2008) introduce the term “community of practice.” In such communities of practitioners, learners acquire both the professional skills and sociocultural practices accepted by more experienced members. They argue that even the newcomers can be considered members of the communities of practice, although their participation on the initial stages is described as ‘peripheral.’

Learning itself is defined as social participation, meaning that learners are active participants in the practices of their communities, and that these practices shape their identities accordingly (Wenger 1998). The way in which students adopt new professional practices sometimes contradicts “curriculum, discipline, and exhortation” (Wenger, 1998, p.4). Learning is said to be related to four important concepts: meaning, practice, community, and identity. Lave and Wenger (1991) also set about defining different types of professional learning, including learning through apprenticeship, situational learning, and legitimate peripheral participation.

Wenger (1998) argues that, even though his suggestions about the importance of relational aspects of learning may seem obvious, the paradox is that many institutions “work against them with a relentless zeal” (p.10). Similarly, Murphy and Brown (2012) point out the “erosion” of higher education as an appropriate space for intellectual development of students. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to remember that each educational system is designed, and thus its design needs to be changed if it is not effective. Situatedness, or situated experience, is an important part of learning as participation. Situated experience focuses on the “local construction of individual or interpersonal events such as activities and conversations” (Wenger, 1990, p. 13). Wenger (1998) provides vignettes which illustrate his point and show in great detail the situations in which professional activities occur (for example, how one gets to his or her office, how comfortable this office is, what the nature of his or her relationship to colleagues seems to be, what routine actions are present in this field of work and so on).

Another indicator of the crucial role relations has in the development of professional identity is the formative nature of the relationships professionals share with their peers. Lave and Wenger argue that people mostly learn from their peers and not from their ‘teachers.’ Additionally, as was mentioned above, Wenger (1998) argues that identity is shaped by shared practices in the professional or social community – thus, how the community perceives certain practices in general is also important (whether it encourages them or not, whether it provides healthy or unhealthy role models in terms of practice and so on). It is not difficult to conclude that, if reflection is present in the community’s practices, student teachers may adopt it as their practice.

In turn, Murphy and Brown (2012) argue that learning is relational by nature, and thus future attempts at creating new, more effective pedagogy should stem from a relational approach. It is suggested that such approach will foster “trust, recognition and respect which lie at the heart of the student’s experience, while also making space for doubt, confusion and relational anxiety” (Murphy & Brown, 2012, p. 643).

Reflection is frequently discussed and conceptualised through the lens of various relational issues. Firstly, it is held that reflection is naturally stimulated and improved through communication. Secondly, that reflection is improved by feedback, while the lack of feedback and comments can negatively inform one’s self-beliefs. Thirdly, the gaps in communication between student teachers and their mentors, which negatively impact reflection, are usually explained by the lack of understanding of their respective roles. Fourthly, in order to foster reflection and learning, it is important to encourage mastery modelling, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Lastly, the ultimate goal of developing the teaching community would be the creation of community of practice, where student teachers would serve as legitimate (albeit peripheral) participants.

3.4.2 Situational Issues

The literature review showed that situational factors have significant consequences for many aspects of student teachers’ teacher training. The development of the student teachers’ reflective skills is naturally affected by these factors too. The different languages spoken in class by student teachers, and their students (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008), the student teachers’ familiarity with and comfort using the curriculum (Nguyen, 2009); the location of schools’ students spend their practicums working in (Masry & Mohd Saad, 2018), and the financial support given to student teachers (Zeichner, 2010) are all examples of situational

factors. Moreover, the experiences of student teachers in rural and urban schools can vastly differ (the Rural and Urban Setting section is dedicated to this situational factor), as well as the experiences of those who teach small and large numbers of pupils. All of these variations may be identified as situational.

The approach to teaching material dictated by the form the curriculum takes is described by Shulman (1986), who addresses the concept of pedagogical reasoning. The first step in this process is said to be comprehension; the teacher is required to understand the ideas that are to be presented during the lesson, as well as the ways in which these ideas may relate to other topics and subjects. Next, the ideas must be transformed in such a way that lends itself to presentation. After that comes instruction, or ‘the active phase’ of classroom teaching. During the evaluation phase, the teacher checks how well the students understand the presented material. Lastly, reflection requires that the lesson be examined critically, with its successes and failures examined, so that this information may be utilised in future (Shulman, 1986, p.11-12). The implication is that, first and foremost, student teachers should be properly introduced to the curriculum which is used in a particular school. This is especially important and challenging in Malaysian education, as the curriculum may vary somewhat from school to school. However, if this is achieved, if students are properly acquainted with the curriculum, and use it in a sophisticated way, the development of their reflective skills could be stimulated. The student teachers who wish to succeed will inevitably have to find ways to adapt the topics in the curriculum to the actual situations they find in the classroom. To do this, they will have to engage in reflection.

Languages as subjects of education have many peculiarities, as does teaching them. Acquiring a language is one of the most intricate processes to occur in human development. According to Vygotsky (1986), a child “masters’ syntax of speech before syntax of thought” (87). As a result, thought development is influenced by language development. In those who acquire knowledge of a second language, this process is more complicated. They already know their native language, and it is deeply incorporated into their thought and logical processing. Aside from the different vocabulary and pronunciation, they have to deal with new grammatical rules and idiomatic language, which is not always easy to adjust to and will not always fit with the pre-existing model of their native language. Therefore, student teachers should be aware of the ways in which thought, and language are interconnected. When preparing for and teaching their classes they need to take into account the cognitive state of their learners, the stage of learning they are at, and the abilities and capacities of their students (which may relate to factors such as age or level in a given subject).

Effectively presenting content during English lessons may seem easy to solve. After all, there are numerous textbooks and grammar books along with the school, college or university curricula that determine the amount of knowledge received by students. However, it is extremely important to understand how and for what purposes novice teachers can influence the curriculum. If, during their pre-service practice, they are taught that the curriculum is strict and rigid, it is likely that they will stick to it regardless of whether such content, pace and depth of the material is appropriate for the audience. Ball (2000) argues that by over-analyzing the curriculum during pre-service, student teachers often overlook the practical aspect of their work (p.244). For example, they may create an interesting task for their pupils to demonstrate a rule or a concept. However, in order for this to be effective, teachers also should imagine how pupils may respond to this task, what questions they might have, what problems they might encounter in attempting to do the task. At the same time, they should carefully analyze the actual response of the audience and think about its implications for the future course of the learning process. This is when methodological and pedagogical aspects of the teacher's preparation become apparent.

According to the 2006 issue of the Guidelines for Preparation of English Teachers and teachers of English Language Arts ("National Council of Teachers of English", 2006), there is no need to form either an obligatory set of courses for student teachers, or a strict curriculum for their pupils. Instead, the authors suggest fixing a set of program aims in terms of "dispositions, knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge", as well as goals for professional development ("National Council of Teachers of English", 2006, p. 5). It is also emphasized that English should not be viewed as "a body of content," with the implication that student teachers should not only master this subject, but also acquire additional knowledge about the ways in which they may make this content pedagogically relevant and appropriate. As we can see, such approach allows for versatility and reflects the varying nature of both teaching and learning.

The content of English lessons for non-native speakers is determined by the particular aims of a particular course. However, there is one common goal that should be striven for in all classrooms regardless of the students' level. According to Widdowson (2011), the aim of teaching English is "to develop in learners a proficiency or competence that enables them to put the language to communicative use" (p.5). One of the most important manifestations of this competence might be found in the ways that students manage to put their knowledge into practice. Thus, the content of the lessons should reflect the endeavor to realise this learning priority. However, two problems arise from the communicative approach to English. On the

one hand, the language content of the lessons should not be too formal, as formally structured sentences do not always reflect the reality of the spoken word. Such language can be perceived by native speakers as archaistic or artificial, despite being grammatically correct. On the other hand, however, examples of real spoken English may be incomprehensible to students, either because of their unfamiliar grammatical structure, or because of unknown cultural references. As a result, non-native speakers have to adapt to the language used by native speakers, although this language's communicative "purposes and contexts represent a reality that learners do not share" (Widdowson, 2011, p.11).

The examples of such communication provided by the author reflect Vygotsky's statement where he explains that the common speech of people who have a shared context is characterized by "a simplified syntax, condensation, and a greatly reduced number of words" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.238). Although such language may be clear for native speakers, it will not be suitable for educational purposes. Regarding the communicative aspect of the oral language, the author points out that its speed "is unfavourable to a complicated process of formulation" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.242), meaning that during actual dialogue, there is not much time for thinking about and choosing words. Differently, written speech is not as limited by time and ways of expression, and there is the opportunity to create drafts of work which can be perfected. However, writing strongly depends on "words and their combinations" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.242). It is quite apparent for a teacher that new students of English lack competence in both communicative areas, they can neither speak quickly without deliberately choosing words nor write using a grammatically appropriate combination of words. This is why contemporary research into the content of English lessons largely reflects the perceived need to develop these exact skills, as the basis on which successful communication may be built.

Students have to learn how to form sentences quickly and how to respond to the stimuli provided by the teacher, instead of relying on a traditional grammar-based approach. To achieve this, the teacher must be aware of the ways in which they may nurture the students' interest in the language and encourage quick and natural responses in English. The subject must, therefore, be made relatable to students, and engage their attention. With it being the case that English is a foreign language to the students and given that they only spend a few hours a week speaking English, the content of the lessons must be engaging and interesting if the content is to leave a more lasting impression than formal exercises within a textbook. Widdowson (2011) suggests that these exercises can in the right circumstances evoke fantasy in the minds of the learners, so that they are intrigued and gripped by the texts.

Widdowson (2011) also places emphasis on the ability of role play to arouse student teachers' interest, to make content digestible and put content to use. Finding ways of making content approachable and accessible would benefit students of all backgrounds and levels of proficiency; likewise, the consequences of failing to present content in a palatable way, would be equally detrimental. If a teacher, for example, is unable to relate the subject to the students' experience of the world, the development of their understanding will be much slower. Thus, current approaches to content presented during class, shape this content in a way that reflects the actual need of all students of English, knowing how to use the language for communicative purposes.

The analysis of current literature shows that, while there may not be any single perfect way to conduct English lessons, there are still many promising models and recommendations provided by teachers that can be incorporated into one's practice. For example, Ur (2011) presents the following proposals for English lessons: use a skill-based methodology, focus on form; use communicative tasks, raise consciousness, and encourage learning through exemplars (p.93). Such an approach might make it easier to teach grammar and, at the same time, to improve communicative skills. Similarly, to Widdowson, Ur reminds the reader that a healthy balance should exist between studying grammar and pronunciation, and practicing actual communication, although identifying one central way of achieving such a balance is recognised as impossible (Ur, 2011, p. 94).

a) Rural and Urban Settings

Rural and urban settings in Malaysia provide, at times, different experiences for their student teachers. The practicums are facilitated differently, and under different conditions; as a result, student teachers in rural and urban settings will be subject to different pressures and have different resources at hand to prepare their lessons. The differences between rural and urban schools are vast in many respects: in terms of class size, the general ability of their pupils, and the preconceived notions, and expectations of what teachers' and pupils' behavior should be like. Rural schools tend to have fewer pupils per class, which may prove somewhat easier for a student teacher to manage in terms of their classroom control. Whilst larger classes are characteristic of urban schools, as Darus (2013) points out, children coming from urban families have usually had a certain amount of exposure to English before they enter school, so English-only instruction is less of a problem for them. Moreover, urban parents are "enthusiastic for their children to acquire better English" (Darus, 2013, p.24) as it will improve their career prospects. Jiri (2012) focuses on the language barriers in students and

explains that student teachers face various challenges in both urban and rural environments. The student teachers placed in urban areas may benefit from the higher levels of basic English proficiency in their students, being better positioned to implement curriculums which assume students will have this foundation. This being the case, Jiri (2012) highlights that teachers in urban environments may face pressure to prove themselves and their knowledge of English to students who already speak English to a certain degree. As Jiri (2012) continues, in urban areas teachers are more likely to encounter a certain bias against non-native speakers of English who teach English, something which can make Malay-speaking student teachers feel inadequate, uncomfortable and doubtful of their credibility. This situation is said to be more prevalent in urban areas as native English teachers are often drawn to urban centers and are more of a rarity in rural areas.

Rural schools are said to pose another difficult challenge for teachers, as it is often there that teachers are presented with mixed-ability classes where various levels of competence in English coexist (Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008). While some pupils may know a few words of English already, others may be completely unprepared for lessons conducted entirely in English. This can become an issue as student teachers are often ill-prepared to conduct lessons in Malay, but the students will not always show enthusiasm toward or value learning another language. Student teachers may find themselves exerting energy simply trying to attract their students to the language and capture their imagination, effectively stalling the learning process until the students want to engage. In urban settings, however, student teachers may start off at an advantage, working with students who are more likely to arrive with a basic understanding of English. These teachers are able to proceed directly to the content of the curriculum, whereas teachers in rural schools must first prepare and get their students ready to meet the curriculum (Jiri, 2012).

3.4.3 Developmental Issues

Many studies aim to explore how student teachers' skills evolve and develop and how well they can perceive the extent of this evolution themselves. In order to do this, researchers either observe student teachers a number of times during their teaching practicums or ask the participants themselves to reflect upon the changes they notice in their teaching (if any). Ideally, student teachers would be expected to have fewer and fewer problems as they progress and develop, but research shows that this is not always the case.

Successful growth over time is associated with the use of principles of andragogy in the education of student teachers. Adult learners are very aware of the time restrictions and pressures that frame their development, and they are faced with the need to grow and progress at a predetermined rate (according to the duration of their course or education). As adult learners, student teachers are in a strong position to use and direct their motivation, to set targets and to organize and manage their time. Student teachers develop an awareness of how their development coincides with the passing of time by looking back and looking forward; reflecting back on their experiences as a novice teacher can help them to appreciate how far their practice has come. Looking forward they can set expectations for themselves and personal goals, linking where they are, what they have achieved so far and where they would like to be in terms of their practice. Reflection is therefore intricately linked with, and based on, an understanding and perception of time in their teaching and learning development. It is also argued that it takes adults time to appreciate and develop effective reflection, and thereby develop and advance in his/her education (Brown, 2002).

The ability of student teachers to understand their development and how it relates to time may be predicated on the characteristics they possess as adult learners. The following assumptions can be made about adult education according to Lindeman (1926) and adapted by Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2005):

1. Adults are motivated to learn because it will satisfy their needs and interests
2. Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered
3. The richest source of adult learning is experience
4. Adults have a need to be self-directing
5. Individual differences between adults increase with age

Each of these assumptions seems relevant to the learning experience development of the teachers. Firstly, they may be motivated to learn because learning will satisfy their need to become more competent professionals. This idea is put forth by Covington et al. (2017) who insists that student teachers are not motivated solely by the pursuit of good grades and passing exams, but that they consciously choose a profession they like and in which they are eager to become competent. This eagerness is apparent at each phase of their learning, as

student teachers reach different developmental stages they reassess and reconsider their knowledge, demonstrating an awareness of and control over their learning process (Day & Gu, 2010; Durksen, 2015).

Secondly, student teachers' learning impacts their lives in many ways. They either become promising professionals who constantly grow and learn to overcome the challenges which frustrate them or become consumed with stress and give up on maximizing the meaningful contribution they could make, following the example of more 'conventional' teachers. Each time student teachers succeed, each time they survive a difficult phase, and with ever challenge they overcome, their development is enhanced (Durksen, 2015). As Freire (1998) argues, teachers who were not taught themselves to think critically will never "make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community" (p.14). As a result, they will mechanically pass on book knowledge, never teaching truly authentic or creative lessons to others.

Thirdly, student teachers always arrive to their training with previous learning and social experience. The experiences they have acquired in life contribute to the ways in which they will go on to reflect, which in turn will affect that which they learn in the future (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). Life experience can affect the ways in which an individual reflects, but the same is true of the reverse: reflection can help student teachers to process life events. Reflection can help student teachers to understand and scrutinize the assumptions they hold about learning and teaching in many ways. This is worthwhile for adult educators as this will allow them to appropriately challenge or reinforce their beliefs and assumptions, all of which will inform their practice. However, student teachers' challenges during their practicum, may also serve to impede their teaching and learning development (Boud et al., 1985). During the interviews, some students commented on the unpleasant experiences they had with teachers during their childhood. Such experiences can either lead to the conviction that it is wrong to behave in a disrespectful way towards a child or transmit the idea that it was okay to do so. If there is productive, meaningful dialogue between student teachers and their mentors and supervisors, it is possible to share such experiences, analyse them and understand how they may inform practice positively. These conversations will help student teachers to reflect and regulate the assumptions and conclusions they have drawn from their experiences.

Fourthly, student teachers will have to learn to do most of their work independently. The processes of building the courage and confidence necessary to be an independent learner is not complete after their first practicum. According to Mtika (2011), mentoring and

professional encouragement could help student teachers to overcome their doubts and uncertainties, something essential if they are to be able to cope with the demands of the training. Student teachers will have to, for example, make decisions about the best theories to utilise; they will have to try innovative approaches in their classroom and create lesson plans. Also, each of the student teachers will face a unique classroom, and they will have to devise their own ways of making the learning process effective. During their actual classes nobody will be immediately at hand to help them, but during the course of their education as a whole, they will rely on guidance and advice. Educators should teach the students to be responsible and to approach their mistakes honestly (Marais & Meier, 2004). In the end, student teachers must work hard to ameliorate the frustration they feel by the pressures they encounter; they have to manage the overwhelming amount of duties they are responsible for, and become more confident in their abilities, seizing opportunities to change things for the better in the future. It is very important that educators teach them what it means to be self-directed, and not be reliant on someone else's expertise. As Knowles (1977) indicates, a mentor teacher who practices andragogy will place "self-directiveness on a much higher level than dependency and so will do everything one can to help a learner become increasingly self-directive" (p.206-207).

Finally, it is clear that there will not only be individual differences in age and maturity between adult students, but also between adult students and their educators. Age difference should not be used to justify authoritative or patronizing conduct, instead, educators of adults should recognize the psychological and cognitive peculiarities which are typical of young people, and adapt his or her teaching style to them, instead of trying to force the young students to adjust. Rather than making them compete with each other for recognition and better grades, it is important to foster feelings of community and support among student teachers (Knowles, 1977). This might involve respecting their personhood and acknowledging their autonomy as adults, but also recognising that a community is composed of individuals who are unique. Some of the student teachers, for example, may arrive with an excellent standard of education and knowledge of English but lack actual teaching skills; others may be gifted in communication but lack in subject matter knowledge. These disparities should be considered.

Andragogy draws upon many theories from Psychology, significantly those by Jung in 1933 which relate to adult development, and later those by Erikson in 1950 who is famous for his periodical study of adult life. Andragogy appears to be influenced by Roger's "self-theory" which emphasizes self-initiated learning (p.157, 1969) and Maslow's theory of 1970

on self-actualization through motivation. For example, Erikson defines in his works various stages of human development, where young adulthood is viewed as a separate stage. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2005) also point out the role of developmental psychology, sociology and philosophy in forming an effective adult learning environment. Based on these many theories, Knowles (1977; 1978; 2005) provides the following adaptation of the principles of pedagogy into principles of andragogy. Firstly, it is emphasized that adults have a need to know ‘what, why, and how’, and their interests will likely extend beyond what the teacher presents to them, the student teachers can impart this curiosity to their young learners. Secondly, it is stated that the self-perception of the learner should include feelings of autonomy and self-directedness. Thirdly it is advised that the prior experiences of the learner be used as a resource. Fourthly it is indicated that nurturing a readiness to learn should be approached as life-oriented, and as a developmental task requiring long term investment. Fifthly it is advised that orientation to learning be problem-centred and contextual. Finally, the need for motivation to learn must have intrinsic value and personal payoff is highlighted.

Savery (2006) describes problem-based learning as an instructional approach which has been successfully applied within many disciplines. Providing examples of problem-based learning within medicine, Savery (2006) explores how problem-based learning relates to and compliments other theoretical frameworks such as experiential learning. He provides a persuasive endorsement of the approach within education, stating that the approach can help practitioners to generate solutions and ideas. This is because the approach presupposes that students take responsibility for their learning and proactively address obstacles and issues. It is believed that problem simulations allow and encourage free inquiry and creativity, leading students to go past standard solutions and demonstrate maximum innovation and flexibility in their responses. It is insisted that learning be properly integrated within a number of disciplines and subjects because in the face of various practical problems, within various disciplines, it is believed that students will naturally develop skills to cope. They will have to learn to strike a sensible balance between their theoretical comprehension of various issues and their practical implications and applications. In addition, it is thought that cycles of learning, (and therefore momentum,) may be created as students find new solutions to initial problems troubling them. It is suggested that consistent, objective re-evaluations of issues can be integrated into these cycles of learning, something which will have positive implications for the student’s ability to self-direct their education.

Savery (2006) also explains that problem-based learning lends itself to team work, and students benefit when they effectively collaborate with one other. He states that through

discussion, the strengths of each participant can be realized and enhanced, so that the ability of the group surpasses individual potential. Moreover, in addition to self-assessment, it is said that students can gain from the assessment and suggestions of their peers. This is presented as essential if a student's achievements and problems are to be objectively analysed, as it will allow students to move beyond the restrictions of their own perspective. Peer assessment thus creates a fertile environment from which measured recommendations can emerge, as suggestions will be subject to the scrutiny of multiple individuals in the group. For Savery, developing the skills necessary for effective collaboration is a clear priority, and vital for the students when they qualify.

Kokotsaki, Menzies, and Wiggins (2016) provide a new perspective on project-based learning. It is stated that project-based learning is characterized by a high degree of student autonomy, and an emphasis on collaboration in different contexts. Students' freedom of choice is respected at all stages of the education process, and students are encouraged to concentrate on real-world practices and consistently develop their creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Moreover, it is stated that the approach is applicable both to primary and higher education, establishing a consistent learning network equally in both. The rapid development of modern digital technology, resulting in the many and new ways student teachers, their peers and mentors interact, serves to facilitate the further spreading of problem-based learning. Through problem-based learning, the specific preferences and inclinations of every student may be considered; this is because each issue that each individual encounter can be inspected closely, allowing the student to develop better awareness of how they may be contributing to a problem. The versatility of the approach means that every individual can make use of it.

Kokotsaki, Menzies, and Wiggins (2016) have formulated a number of recommendations to ensure the integrity and quality of the approach is maintained when adopted in a mainstream school setting. In particular, it is insisted that the support given to student teachers be increased, and proper guidance and self-management instructions provided. It is emphasized that in order for teachers to support their students, they must in turn receive the adequate organizational assistance necessary to perform their functions effectively. It is said that effective group work should be properly balanced with independent inquiry methods; this way, every student will be able to reveal his/her creative potential.

Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, and Chinn (2007) demonstrate that problem-based learning may be used to evaluate and address complex phenomena. At the same time, the authors

explain that problem-based learning should not be confused with discovery learning. It is suggested that if problem-based learning were to be correctly understood and applied, a number of positive long-term outcomes would ensue. The empirical data confirms the higher abilities of students who routinely utilize problem-based learning to deal with complicated issues, compared to those who rely on traditional problem-solving methods (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn 2007). Students may, in practical settings, come to understand and find new insights in the theoretical concepts they have explored. The events and interactions that they encounter in practical settings (markedly, the classroom), will give them something to relate and ground their understanding of theory. Thus, problem-based learning appears to be much more effective than other approaches in helping students to orient themselves and their practice, making concrete theories that have been presented to them on an abstract level.

Overall, it may be expected that the applicability of problem-based learning will increase in the future as new practical challenges and more sophisticated technologies continue to emerge and dominate the educational landscape. It is important to consider the potential and inclinations of each individual when deciding how to optimally apply this approach within teacher education.

As research of the actual practice of student teachers shows, not all of them are willing to incorporate the aforementioned qualities in their development and work. The role of educators in this process will be discussed in the next section, but below are some instances of problematic acquisitions of teaching, learning and reflective skills, informed sometimes by a lack of independence and sometimes by idealistic perceptions of the profession.

For example, in the study by Fung (1999), where the development of pedagogical content knowledge and reflective skills of novice mathematics teachers was explored, the student teachers proved reliant on various textbooks and curricula, and yet could not use the content effectively and did not consider alternative ways of improving their practice. It is for this reason that Fung (1999) warns against the unwarranted criticism that some theorists direct at the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) itself, calling it “distracting.” He argues that “every piece of mathematics subject matter knowledge has its pedagogical value” (Fung, 1999, p.126). Indeed, the outright dismissal of PCK could be the source of the problem itself – if PCK were unnecessary for mathematics, the student teachers would not have any problems teaching successful lessons, using textbooks and curricula only. Fung (1999) is reluctant to disregard the need for pedagogical knowledge when teaching

mathematics, insisting rather that enhancing the PCK of student teachers could effectively prevent the problems they encountered in the study.

Penso (2002) aims to find out which learning difficulties student teachers report as encountering over the course of their practice. During the study, the author observed students attending and teaching classes as part of their teaching practice. The focus was on three components: the frequency at which they identified certain learning difficulties; how they characterized the sources of these difficulties and emphasised the most frequent sources of the issues they encountered (Penso, 2002, p.26). The students were required to have two diaries: an observation diary for the lessons they observed, delivered by their mentors, and a teaching diary for their own lessons. They were specifically asked to focus on the parts of the lessons during which the pupils struggled to comprehend the content presented by the teacher. Difficulties were categorized as: general, specific or devoid; the sources of such difficulties were divided into four types: the pupil, the content, the teacher and the lesson (Penso, 2002, p.28).

Penso (2002) considers the findings of her study striking, as it was established that the students who could identify the problems in the lessons carried out by their mentors but failed to detect the difficulties encountered in their own lessons. This could be explained by the high level of stress encountered by the student teachers, as their ability to see learning difficulties becomes influenced by “their feelings, their self-concept as teachers and their lack of professional self-confidence” (Penso, 2002, p.32). Another significant problem in identifying learning difficulties was the inability of students to accurately remember the course of the lesson. They tended to focus on neutral or positive events and forgot the negative ones. This can also be explained by stress, but Penso (2002) suggests that this problem stems from a limited ability to manage the classroom and to reflect on one’s actions at the same time. Lastly, it is pointed out that most often student teachers emphasized problems concerned with the perceived negative characteristics of the learners, rather than on the problems with their teaching.

Reflective practice may present solutions to these problems, helping student teachers to detect the ways in which their own emotions interfere with their ability to accurately assess the course of their class. Whilst student teachers may struggle to accurately recall the events of their classes, if they continue to reflect and reflect after each lesson, they may be able to identify patterns and the aspects of their practice which may be disturbing the learning process of their pupils may become clear. In this way, reflective practice can help teachers to

connect the dots between their classes; reflective practice can help teachers to view their practice as a whole and identify obstacles which must be overcome. Reflection is said to be part of the “adult learning experience,” allowing adult learners to continuously respond to the obstacles they face (Lasker, Moore & Simpson, 1980, p. 47). Moreover, it is argued that the student teacher’s status as an adult learner is apparent in the decisions, they make in the classroom which are based on reflection.

3.4.4 Experiential issues

The last set of issues relate to the experience’s student teachers’ have during their training. Student teachers acquire many new experiences during their first lessons, both positive and negative. However, their “real-life” experiences, that is those connected to their background and culture, and the events they have witnessed in life, can also shape their practice and their attitudes to the teaching profession in many ways. Murphy and Brown (2012) state that a student’s education continuously unfolds and is reworked in the turbulence of the present. Unanticipated events cause old understandings to be reassessed and reworked, and the ways an individual respond to current life experiences will be unpredictable (Murphy & Brown, 2012, p.646). According to Korthagen (2001), possessing these experiences, student teachers live under conditions in which reflection is a necessity: reflection is triggered by the experiences they have in each lesson, and in order to improve their teaching gradually they have to meet these experiences with a reflective response.

John Dewey may be considered one of the pioneers of experiential learning. His work shed light on many ideas and problems relating to the role of experience in education and the ways in which experience can play a positive, productive role. Dewey (1938) held that learning from experience plays a crucial role in modern education and criticized traditional education severely, which he believed fails to promote the right kind of experiences for the students. Experiential learning is at odds with “learning from texts and teachers” (Dewey, 1938, p.19), as it allows students to acquire skills and knowledge through self-expression, and through putting knowledge into practice here and now. However, the author warns that such an education will only work if the organization of subject matter and its relationship with experience is correctly understood. In his opinion, one of the central dilemmas of learning from experience is found in the attempt to reconcile keeping it personal whilst at the same time encouraging fruitful contact and engagement between teachers and students to be established (Dewey, 1938, p.21). Overall, it is necessary to find out how students can relate their past knowledge and experiences to their present life and experiences. Developing this

capacity is extremely important for student teachers, as they must know how to revise and adapt subject matter knowledge to new or unknown situations, using not only the theoretical knowledge they gain from the textbooks, but also their own memories and experiences of teaching and watching others teach.

Outlining the potential problems with experiential learning, Dewey (1938) argues that experience and education themselves should be distinguished from each other because not all experiences are positive or useful in development and self-growth. For example, certain experiences might be pleasant and interesting but, at the same time, promote careless attitudes, or be uninformed by or inconsistent with other knowledge. Such experiences prevent students from developing effective learning habits and controlling them (Dewey, 1938, p.26). Dewey (1938) highlights the importance of acknowledging and averting these potentialities by properly defining the concept of quality in experience. The concept of quality is said to involve two aspects; the first is 'agreeableness,' which can be immediately seen and understood, and the second is the effect, which can only become apparent with time (Dewey, 1938, p.27).

The concept that stems from the effects of experience is called the experiential continuum. Dewey (1938) suggests that a sense of continuity that the experiential continuum provides, allows positive and negative experiences to be united in terms of their educational value, and connected as useful experiences. Rather than perceiving experiences as separate events and not trying to find common traces, Dewey recommends that experience be approached positively and with optimism. It is said that continuous and consistent exposure to negative or unhealthy habits normally corrupts one's growth, as past negative experiences shape one's attitude to all future experiences regardless of their quality. On the other hand, the same can be said about positive for preventive experiences. If an individual is consistently exposed to positive learning experiences, and these events and facts are viewed as parts of a bigger picture, the habit of finding new environment for growth will be promoted. Moreover, the effort to expand one's learning opportunities, to acquire new knowledge and apply existing information to practice will be encouraged as the individual comes to appreciate it (Dewey, 1938).

In order to describe the role of the teacher in the learning process, Vygotsky (1986) introduced the concept of the zone of proximal development. This zone "lies" between the maximum level of knowledge that the learner can achieve on his or her own, and the level of knowledge they can acquire with someone else's help. According to Warford (2011), the

concept of proximal development can be successfully applied to student teachers and their education, which should include four stages: use of self-assistance, of expert assistance, internalization and recursion (p.254). The success of this model, based on self-reflection, observation and the professional guidance received from experienced colleagues, largely depends on the techniques and principles described below.

Dewey (1938) distinguishes between traditional and progressive education, arguing that traditional education serves to pass information and skills from one generation to another, to impose social rules and norms, and to create a unique social organization (Dewey, 1938). This type of education requires pupils to be receptive and obedient to their teachers whose job it is to transmit knowledge to them. Dewey is critical of such learning because he believes that it imposes adult standards onto the young audience, who may not be mature enough to perceive and adopt them. Also, it is said that under such conditions, knowledge itself is likely to be presented as finished, stale and rigid. In contrast, “progressive” education encourages expression and learning from experience, as well as focusing on the present instead of being prepared for the future (Dewey, 1938, p.20).

Pointing out the crucial role of experience in learning, the author suggests that educators should have “a correct idea of experience” (Dewey, 1938, p.19). The idea of the teacher’s guidance should not be rejected simply because the traditional role of authority decreases. However, this guidance should not interfere with the personal experience of those who learn. The problematic aspects of experience require theoretical evaluation. Most notably, it is argued that not all experience is useful for education and that some experiences can even be restricting or harmful. For example, negative experiences in the classroom can eliminate the practitioner’s desire to learn and grow, and the learning process may even seem pointless and boring to the pupil who is used to being educated in a traditional way (Dewey, 1938, p.27). Dewey concludes that the type of experience promoted in the classroom should be more democratic and less authoritarian, taking into account the importance of interpersonal communication rather than personal authority.

The construct through which a distinction between worthy and unworthy experiences may be made is named the experiential continuum. A worthwhile experience is said to be one that becomes a positive force in the development of pupils, one that leads to more maturity and curiosity, and fosters in them a desire to learn. As a result, teachers should be able to “utilize the surroundings, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile” (Dewey, 1938, p.40).

This idea quickly became widespread in the works of other scholars of education, who started suggesting new ways of creating such worthwhile experiences in the classroom. According to the most relevant studies, being able to manage the experiential continuum requires a particular set of skills on the teacher's behalf. Ideally, these skills are developed during the acquisition of pedagogical content knowledge.

The concept of experiential learning is also thoroughly examined by Kolb (1984). He evaluates three models of this process and defines several qualities of experiential learning, which is described as fundamentally different from other, more traditional types of learning. Kolb relies on works by Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget, all of whom explore various aspects of experience and learning. That which unites their models is the shared emphasis on observation, judgment, accommodation and assimilation, which reflects the intricate connection between learning and the ability to perceive and react to the real world. However, Kolb (1984) points out that "the wider "real-world" environment at times seems to be actively rejected by educational systems at all levels" (p.34). Likewise, Murphy and Brown (2012) argue that one of the biggest issues with education is that many experiences which are not designed specifically to promote 'learning' remain memorable and influential, while those that are directly aimed at educating the student lack impact and are easily forgotten.

Similarly, to Dewey, Kolb (1984) contrasts traditional and experiential learning in order to highlight the effectiveness of the latter. The first type of learning is based on the assumption that knowledge is fixed and rigid, and that one can acquire this knowledge little by little, once and for all. If this was the case, theoretically it would be possible to measure exactly how much one knows simply by counting up all of these bits of knowledge (Kolb, 1984, p.26). Such a view on education focuses on the outcome of learning, in other words, on the sum of knowledge acquired by the student during his or her interactions with the teacher. As long as the outcome matches the initial plan (most often represented by the curriculum), the techniques used to mediate the acquisition of knowledge are not viewed as important.

Since no two identical human experiences exist, it would be plausible to suggest that our worldview is in a constant state of adaptation in the face of constant new circumstances. From this viewpoint, the focus of learning should be shifted from the outcome of learning to the process of learning itself. According to Kolb, (1984), ideas are not fixed, they can change and evolve according to additional information as it becomes available, and for the human mind, this process is ongoing. However, if the focus of education is on the end result only, thoughts, concepts and ideas are never modified, and the person who learns never challenges

them or adapts to the new environment (Kolb, 1984). More importantly, this person does not acquire relevant skills for handling innovative ideas. Kolb's position has significant consequences for the training of young teachers because the formal end of the training would not entail the end of a teacher's training and education, neither would it signal the end of the need to evaluate new experiences or challenge what they believe they know. Sticking to the traditional learning position, student teachers would not be able to adapt to the changing environment in the classroom, to unfamiliar audiences, novel problematic aspects relating to content or to unexpected dynamics in their relationships with students. In his 2005 article, Kolb goes as far as to say that all learning is, in fact, relearning.

Lastly, an important part of learning from experience is said to occur everywhere and at all times, given that people have to constantly evaluate things, make decisions and adapt to new situations in all areas of their everyday life. This is a visualization of learning as "a holistic adaptive process" (Kolb, 1984, p.34) and also reflects the important role of the interactions between people and environment. Such an understanding of learning holds true for both student teachers, who always have to use new circumstances to their benefit. For students of English, whose primary aim is to become able to act in a different cultural and linguistic environment, such a perception makes sense.

Overall, Kolb (1984) defines the following characteristics of experiential learning: it is best conceived as a process, it is a continuous process grounded in experience; it requires the resolution of conflicting modes of adaptation to the world; it is a holistic process of adaptation to the world; it involves transactions between people and the environment, and lastly, it is a process of knowledge creation. Such an approach allows speaking about learning to be conceived as a process "whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.38). As a result, a teacher must know how to transform the learners' experience without imposing his or her own views or restricting them. In later work, the author continues expanding and clarifying his theory. Notably, he focuses on what is termed learning styles and learning spaces. In order to create an adequate learning space for experiential learning, it is said to be necessary to respect, value and take seriously the existing experience of the students, to encourage conversation and the development of expertise, and to allow students to take charge of their own learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 208-209). Preferably, all these skills would be developed during pre-service education.

The study of the effectiveness of experiential learning for early childhood educators is thoroughly discussed by McKenzie-Weinhandl (2000). The author draws the following

conclusions from her research. Firstly, it is necessary to acknowledge that the experience of adults is vastly different from the experience of children, and this should be reflected in the experiential learning process. Secondly, fun, humour and play are extremely important for stress reduction during training. Thirdly, educators of adults should work on removing the barriers between themselves and their students, moving away from the teacher-directed to the center-oriented classroom. Other significant suggestions include encouraging educators to reject the lecture method, acknowledging that they are learners too and creating more opportunities for dialogue. It is also recommended that student teachers be careful in how they use role-play because of the potential for ambiguous power dynamics (McKenzie-Weinhandl, 2000, p. 115-117).

An important part of learning from experience is understanding to what extent one's experience can be changed and managed. In this respect, one of Vygotsky's most notable achievements in the field of pedagogical theory was his introduction of the zone of proximal development. In his work "Mind and society" (Vygotsky, 1978), he points out the lack of theoretical explanation into the ways in which education influences children and shapes their minds. He acknowledges the difference between different learning and stages of development, proposing that actual developmental level (the level of skills and knowledge that can be measured with tests here and now) and potential developmental level (the maximum level that can be achieved through education and learning) be properly distinguished. The zone of proximal development is a space between these two levels (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). It is important to note that, while actual development refers to the results of past experience, potential development refers to possible future experiences and the zone of proximal development reflects the present situation. The knowledge contained in it can move to the zone of actual knowledge with proper learning effort and with outside stimulation (Vygotsky, 1978, p.87). Vygotsky's concept helps teachers measure their own abilities and potential, as well as their influence on the students' skills and knowledge.

A vivid example of the role experience plays in teaching practice is presented in the study by Lin, Wu and Wang (2006), where the authors compared the performance of native and non-native speakers who taught English at school. Although native speakers seemed to be better equipped with knowledge of the language itself, non-native speakers were able to present and explain the content better. They were more able to identify the lesson objectives, use content to bridge the new and existing knowledge of the students, use relevant examples and demonstrate multiple ways of assessing their students' performance. Lin, Wu and Wang (2006) suggest that this happens because non-native speakers are able to relate to the

experiences of their students better, as for them, English is also a second language. As a result, they employ different techniques and may be better at understanding the potential problems that can be encountered when learning English.

Lastly, Moon (2004) provides a summary on the various opinions that exist on experiential learning, stating: such learning takes effort; some experiences form more prolific learning material than others, “unlearning” may be more important than learning more, and lastly, every experience is subjective (p.113). Among the issues identified with experiential learning Moon (2004) names the moment of transition from the educational context to the actual working context. Even if the core strategies of experiential learning are used correctly, and the student teachers successfully use the reflection skills, this does not always result in the application of these skills to practice. Many student teachers recollect not understanding why experiential learning is necessary and how it can improve their performance. As a result, they abandoned reflective practices altogether. Since such behaviour is an obvious setback for self-improvement, it is recommended that some new activities be included into pre-service practice: the development of awareness of current workplace practice, the clarification of the new learning, its integration and the anticipation of improvement in one’s practice (Moon, 2004, p.119). The last aspect is highlighted as the most important. Student teachers should use their imagination to understand how they can use their new experience in the actual work.

a) Professional Identity Development

It is clear that student teachers perceive their identity in different ways. Knowles (1992) believes identity and the construction of identity relates closely to the image’s individuals hold of themselves. According to Burke and Stets (2009), and Volkmann and Anderson (1998), the professional identity of a teacher depends on their character and the roles they assume in teaching and learning processes. Tickle (2000) believes that teachers should not be preoccupied with how others define them, and what images others project onto them but should use their own experiences to construct their own authentic identity. The question of professional identity arises consistently and is woven into student teachers’ experiences of their education, is apparent in their reflection and in how their professional practice evolves. Student teachers’ experiences dictate the ways in which they form their professional identity, something which is not static but changes over time in response to subsequent experiences and reflection. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) share this conviction,

insisting that experience has an impact on the continuous building and rebuilding of the learner's professional identity.

It is also argued that student teachers' school communities and peer communities of practice contribute to the formation of their professional identity and encourage them to reflect, supporting them and providing them with a platform on which to reflect on their experiences in teaching and learning (Farnsworth, 2010; Izadinia, 2013). It follows that reflective practice likewise supports the community of practice in which it occurs; it assists educators to construct communities of practice, it helps them to make sense of their learning and teaching experiences, all the while contributing to the development of their professional identities (a conviction shared also by Moon (2005) and Day (1999)).

This research discusses how reflective practice aids the development of teachers' professional identities and communities of practice, something which is indicated in research by Leichsenring (2017) who studied student teachers' growth and changes in attitude within teacher education. Leichsenring observed, for instance, how student teachers' confidence develops strongly from one lesson to another. He emphasised the role communities of practice play in the formation of student teachers' identities, stating that senior teachers and the school administration provide the raw materials student teachers use to mould their professional practice and identity. The community of practice represents a safety net, protecting and reassuring the student teachers at times when they feel they have exhausted their own ideas and need further input to move forward (Leichsenring, 2017).

The experiences student teachers have during their training and education continually direct the form their professional identity will assume; this study indicated that student teachers' reflective practice fortified student teachers' confidence in teaching and at the same time helped them to build their professional identity. According to Korthagen (2001) the process of reflecting during and after each experience, and the knowledge obtained as a result of reflection, builds student teachers' identities. He argues that student teachers who possess stable and self-assured professional identities will interpret and respond to their experiences in a more positive way, this is because they will want to honour their profession and will have the confidence, motivation and self-belief necessary to make decisions. Beijgaard et al. (2004) follows a similar line of thought, arguing that how teachers perceive and appreciate themselves affects the trust they build up between themselves and their students, and their professional identity.

Uniting the ideas and theorists discussed in this section is the conviction that a teacher's professional identity is largely determined by the teacher's own thoughts and perspectives, and how they portray themselves and conduct themselves in the classroom. The student teachers' experiences during their placement are therefore crucial; whilst a teacher's professional identity can and will change throughout their career, it is vital that the student teachers take ownership over their professional identity at this early stage and learn that they can control the form their identity takes.

3.5 Summary of Chapter 3

Reflective practices may develop with time and practice, are stimulated by the productive relationship with mentors and peers, inform the ability to adapt the learning material, and grow out of positive and negative experiences. However, the same factors can become problematic when student teachers do not learn to think about their problems with time, fail to form relationships with peers (regardless of the reason), overlook the curriculum or rely on it too heavily, or do not approach their experiences critically (Moon, 1999; 2004).

Overall, the literature review shows that the development of reflective practice relates to many practical issues: relational, developmental, situational, and experiential. These issues were formulated after reviewing the theory of reflection-in-action presented by Schon (1983) and its subsequent expansions and criticisms. It was noted that, despite its influence and potential, Schon's theory lacks certain important aspects. Most notably, it overlooks the relational aspects of reflection and the social context in which learning occurs, the changes that occur in reflective processes over time (as opposed to quick thinking on the spot), the situational factors that inform the context of education, and the issues related to acquiring professional experience and reflecting upon it.

Four groups of issues (relational, situational, developmental and experiential) were further reviewed in order to understand what can facilitate or disrupt reflection among student teachers. Issues or factors classified as relational include the importance of social learning and communities of practice, and the interactions student teachers have with their mentors, supervisors and peers (Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Ambrosetti, 2012). Issues identified as situational include the specific conditions of the particular educational environment, for instance: how student teachers manage the curriculum, how student teachers prepare their classes, the languages spoken in the classes, and the financial support provided by the school (Widdowson, 2011; Ur, 2011). The developmental issues discussed stemmed from the

principles of andragogy, or adult learning, and described the peculiarities of learning of student teachers (Knowles, 1977; Penso, 2002). Lastly, exploration of experiential issues was based on the principles of Dewey's theory of experiential learning and the experiential dimensions of the student teachers' practice and development prior to and during their education (Moon, 2004). The next chapter outlines the methodology of the research.

4 Methodology

“It is not the fruits of scientific research that elevate man and enrich his nature but the urge to understand, the intellectual work, creative or receptive” (Einstein 1949, p. 9)

4.1 Introduction

In search of the essence of progressive research, Einstein stated precisely that scientific research alone is not enough. If “scientific research” may historically be understood as research that employs the use of quantitative measuring, then how should qualitative research and the data it produces be perceived?

At the beginning of this research, I personally had doubts as to the appropriateness and effectiveness of qualitative research. Generally speaking, there is a strong preference in Malaysia for quantitative research, so I was hitherto unfamiliar with the benefits of qualitative research. However, with the understanding that a researcher ought not to determine the direction and forms the research takes according to one’s own preferences, I decided to put aside my own predisposition towards quantitative research and consider what qualitative research approaches had to offer.

As the literature review revealed, reflective practice in teaching remains a prominent topic within educational research (Schon, 1983, 1987; Eraut, 1995; Collin, Karsenti & Komis, 2013; Beauchamp, 2015). The issues relevant to reflective practice within teacher education include the connection between reflection and phenomena, such as experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), andragogy (Freire, 1970; Knowles, 1977), social learning (Bandura, 1977), and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The literature review highlighted the great variety that exists in the number and the scope of the research questions regarding the problems of novice teachers’ reflective practice, including, but not limited to, a critique of the beliefs held by students during practice (Abdullah-Sani, 2000), interactions between students, their senior teachers and their peers (Ambrosetti, 2012; Loughran, 2014), and the extent to which the teaching practicum incorporates elements of reflection (Ulvik & Smith, 2011). Lastly, a number of authors have suggested that if any issues with the acquisition of reflective skills were discovered, research involving student teachers ought to inspire changes in the teaching practicum (Kömür, 2010; Schmidt, 2010).

Informed by the review of the literature, the following research questions were formulated for the main study, set in the Teacher Education Institute in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia and in six of its associated placement schools:

- To what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lessons?
- In what ways does their capacity for reflective practice develop over the practicum?
- What facilitating factors and barriers exist in the development of their reflective practice?

This chapter includes four sections outlining the following methodological issues: the first section, 4.1, focuses on the ontological and epistemological views that inform my stance on qualitative research, its strengths and weaknesses. In the second section, 4.2 Overview of Research Design, I discuss the research designs commonly utilized for pedagogical research, with attention given to the problems of reflective practice and its related issues. Next, in the third section (4.3), I explain how the thorough review of the literature was conducted to produce Chapters 3 and 4. This is followed by Section 4.4 Pilot Study and Research Design, where I discuss some relevant findings and the implications of the pilot study which dealt with the pedagogical content knowledge of student teachers. Further to this, in Section 4.5, I outline the amendments made to update the design of the main study, namely, how the research questions were redesigned, how the timeline was adjusted to align properly with the participants' practicums, and how new data gathering tools were utilized. I then outline the process of data analysis in Section 4.6. In the final section, I present the ethical considerations of the study; I detail the research application journey undertaken to gain the approval of the University of Glasgow and the Malaysian Government.

4.2 Constructivist Research Paradigm

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the ways in which student teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice with the use of reflective practice. The breadth of the study expanded as a result of the pilot study, following which the research questions were scrutinized and the methods refined so that more detail and attention could be paid to student teachers' reflective skills, their self-assessment in terms of reflection, and their ability to reflect as professional teachers. A central priority was to discover how student teachers' reflective practice skills are implemented critically in practice in order to be able to observe

how student teachers process their past mistakes and determine future action and developments. The main study also aimed to find out whether student teachers may need more theory, more practice, or both in order to evolve as teachers. For this reason, a constructivist research paradigm was chosen. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that determining one's own stance on ontological and epistemological issues is crucial for designing and carrying out research. Therefore, in Subsection 4.2.1, I will briefly discuss my stance on the ontology and epistemology of research, on qualitative research, its nature and its most common problems, as well as the criticisms made against it.

4.2.1 Ontological views

My ontological views, or my views on reality that is studied, created and shaped by research, are close to those that underpin constructivism as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2013). Constructivists believe that there is not one single reality, but rather many realities which are socially constructed and holistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similarly, Crotty (1998) argues that reality, its meaning, and our very knowledge about the world are social constructs. Such views on ontology would suit modern educational research and very much reflect the needs and peculiarities of the present investigation. Firstly, the views on Malaysian educational reality held by experienced teachers, novice teachers, policy makers, and educational researchers may be different. Each of these groups can have a shared "reality". Secondly, such realities are constructed by their members. Thirdly, they are informed by numerous factors, including, but not limited to: social climate; economic issues or the lack thereof; the society's perception of teaching and teachers; the governmental stance on the role of education; and the overall beliefs and values of the society. Lastly, as a researcher, I create my own socially constructed reality, which encompasses all of the above, along with my views and beliefs, expertise, and objectives. Thus, I am engaged in epistemological constructivism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Crotty, 1998; Stake, 2010) by deriving meaning from my research, while my research reveals the ways in which particular knowledge is constructed and passed on within a specific community (in this case, a community of teachers and teacher educators in Malaysia).

4.2.2 Qualitative research

Although there are different views on non-quantitative research methods' effectiveness in terms of their validity and reliability (Weber, 1949; Patton, 1999), qualitative research is viewed as indispensable for social studies (Kvale, 1994; Bleich & Pekkanen,

2013). There are certain qualities, aside from perceptions, that are difficult to measure with numbers, such as one's personal development, confidence, willingness to learn, and ability to reflect upon past experiences and connect them with the present ones. However, these exact qualities have to be evaluated in order to assess an individual's reflective skills; thus, qualitative research must be turned to. Qualitative research allows questions to be answered that may not be adequately answered by quantitative research designs (Strauss, 1987; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The focus of qualitative research is both on the researcher, who becomes an instrument (Merriam, 2009), and on the participant, whose personal history becomes a valuable resource.

As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue, since the 1980s, non-qualitative researchers have been experiencing a crisis in three critical areas: authority, representation, and praxis. Firstly, the authors outline the crisis of authority, meaning that the researcher is no longer seen as the provider of unquestionable truths, due to the fact that his or her inquiry is shown to be consistently influenced by his or her personal interpretation. Secondly, the crisis of representation refers to the failure of quantitative research to give a voice to the participants of the research, as they are not granted any opportunity to contribute and present their own interpretations of the issues under discussion but are instead restrained by the forms quantitative inquiry takes. In the case of surveys, a participant's response may, for example, fall outside of the options they are provided with, and there may be no space for the participant to either elaborate on his/her answers or give a response to the question itself.

In addition to this, inequalities exist in the ways gender, race, and ethnicity are represented in academic research; this has led qualitative researchers to suggest that one cannot perfectly discuss and interpret the experiences of a group other than one's own (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). Whereas quantitative research may attempt to categorize, and in some cases demands that the participants simplify their responses so that they fit seamlessly, qualitative research provides more room for exploring the grey areas of people's ideas, perceptions, identities and cultures.

Thirdly, the crisis of praxis (or action) asserts that when researchers conform to pre-established ways of conducting research, the research cannot sufficiently challenge the status quo and generate meaningful change. Research has the potential to 'reconnect art and science, literary forms, with scientific information' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 4), but this opportunity can be missed if the research is limited to quantitative methods. Qualitative research is believed to provide potential answers to and address some of these issues, as it

allows existing authorities to be challenged by the new voices that are introduced (for example, by those of feminist scholars and indigenous people). Qualitative research allows multiple perspectives to be put forward on the same issues.

These aspects of qualitative research appeal to me, as an educational researcher. Moreover, this form of research appears to be a suitable way of approaching the complexities of the Malaysian context. Education in Malaysia, throughout its development, has experienced many problems and dilemmas. Approaches to and beliefs about authority, for example, were challenged by a shift towards learner-centred education, as outlined in the investigation of (medical) education by Wong and Abdul Kadir (2017). Research in Malaysia became less insular as more educational research became available globally; likewise, the practical aspects of teaching and the quality of action undertaken by teachers became heavily influenced by both global and local contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Loh & Gu, 2014; Wong, Tang, & Chang, 2014; Goh & Blake, 2015). The data obtained from quantitative research may only provide statistical information about how many participants hold certain views and which approaches they feel to be correct. Instead, qualitative research would provide a space in which the participants could more fully express their views. Qualitative research therefore offers an opportunity to clarify the reasoning behind the participants' ideas, and to identify any conflicting thoughts they may have in terms of how they feel and what educational decisions they make.

Thus, I find a qualitative approach to be the most appropriate for this research as it allows for an adequate description and study of the complexities of Malaysian education today. Nonetheless, before engaging in qualitative research myself, as a researcher, I must first judge whether I can address some of its criticisms.

4.2.3 Validity and reliability

The postmodernist paradigm in research presently questions the relevance of the validity and reliability of qualitative research, as these qualities are often viewed as unattainable (Morse, 1999). Moreover, a number of leading qualitative researchers believe that “validity” and “reliability” are terms relating to the quantitative and are therefore inapplicable within a qualitative paradigm (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Leininger, 1994). As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) argue, there are many definitions and approaches to ensuring validity and reliability, and both of them may be applied to research regardless of its nature and purpose. Validity in research concerns the quality and accuracy of the reporting of

the data gathered over the course of the study, formulating criteria and concepts, and providing definitions. It also means that research is valid in so far as it addresses the research questions formulated. In turn, reliability concerns the extent to which repeating a study in similar conditions and contexts is possible, with similar results found. While in quantitative research, the conditions of the previous studies can be more or less accurately reproduced, the same is not true for qualitative research, and this is viewed as problematic for social sciences in general. According to Golafshani (2003), when quantitative research is faced with concerns of validity and reliability, two separate processes can be undertaken in order to satisfy the demands of each. Qualitative research, however, considers issues of validity and reliability as a single concern, referring to data clarification in the terms of its ‘credibility, transferability and trustworthiness’ (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600)

Validity and reliability are viewed as positivist constructs, closely related to positivist ideas of controllability, predictability and context-freedom (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, as a researcher within a constructivist paradigm, it is important to address the relevance and the possibility of achieving these qualities in a non-positivist context. Most positivist views regarding validity and reliability are contradicted by constructivism, since it is believed to be impossible to avoid relying on personal interpretation and context of research, while differences in the received data and its unpredictability simply reflect the complexity of the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This leads to the suggestion that, for constructivist research, it would be more relevant to talk about authenticity and understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Maxwell, 1992).

Those who disagree with the need to discard the notion of validity argue that it should be re-conceptualized in order to reflect the naturalist paradigm. Scholars argue that validity in qualitative research requires triangulation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Stake, 2010) or the seeking of additional confirmation of the ways in which data is interpreted across data sets and individuals. One issue is the fact that it is often very difficult to perform a “member check” or to show the interviewee his or her quotations as used in the research paper and ask him or her to confirm the interpretation (Stake, 2010).

It is apparent that, due to these concerns, scholars must navigate between various conflicting positions and stances on methodology and find their own methodological foundations (Seale, 1999). One way of addressing these criticisms which I personally find acceptable is suggested by Seale (1999), who argues that researchers have to distinguish claims from evidence, provide the best evidence for the strongest claims, and make their own

judgments as researchers apparent in their work so that they can be effectively scrutinized by the scholarly community of peers. A similar idea is voiced by Lincoln & Denzin (2000), who argue that ethics in modern qualitative research play a crucial role in the relationship between researchers, their respondents and their peers. The idea of establishing such a “self-critical research community” (Seale, 1999, p.472) aligns well with my thoughts about research.

Another important critical point is that qualitative research is typically associated with a certain level of personal bias. There is usually a risk that a researcher who deals with personal narratives (whether presented during interviews or in a written form) will tend to focus on the things that interest him or her personally, often disregarding other potentially interesting topics that can disprove or even reshape the focus of the research. Therefore, Chase (2003) stresses the importance of creating a narrative during interviews and inviting life stories, not reports. This can be done by asking more specific questions pertaining to specific participants’ lives and experiences, as opposed to trying to make them generalize on a given subject.

Lastly, commenting on the standard critique regarding the lack of objectivity in qualitative research, Kvale (1994) points out that “objective” research means only ‘doing good, solid craftsmanship by research, producing new knowledge which has been systematically checked and verified’ (p. 152). Also, discussing the potential bias of qualitative research, Kvale (1994) proposes distinguishing between conscious deception of the audience (for example, when the researcher manipulates the data in order to get the necessary result) and unconscious bias. The second type of bias is believed to be more widespread because the interviewer always has certain expectations regarding the outcome of interviews, and these expectations usually influence how he or she eventually interprets the data. However, Kvale (1994) argues that these phenomena are not only unavoidable in research, but also necessary, and that one would not confuse the existence of personal interpretation with a lack of professionalism.

In order to address any concerns over validity and reliability in this study, I undertook the following measures. Firstly, I sent each participant a transcription and audio recording of his or her interview via email - I later received positive responses from three participants. I also shared the third phase of the coded transcripts of the anonymized student interviews (see Section 5.2 Chapter 5 for an explanation of coding) and the students’ diaries with four of my PhD colleagues. My colleagues were then asked to review them critically, a strategy which is advocated in Burnard’s framework for examining primary sources objectively (1991).

My PhD colleagues recommended the use of colour coding, the first phase of which had scope for improvement as I lacked proficiency and familiarity with the process of colour coding. The second attempt proved similarly challenging as I was not confident in using NVivo, the university's software package for qualitative data analysis (Odena, 2013; 2014). Finally, after comparing both manual and NVivo coded transcripts, I shared my own drafts of the collected data with my colleagues, where I outlined my interpretation of the transcripts. This approach helped me first and foremost to clarify my language and avoid overstatements; I was able to make more tentative descriptions, because I was able to compare the manual data analysis, I conducted with the data output of NVivo to identify any inconsistencies and patterns. Acquainted with a fuller picture, I was able to avoid making generalizations. Moreover, my own preconceptions and expectations were challenged as the unexpected data forced me to explore viewpoints other than my own (a more in-depth analysis of the data is provided in Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

As a further measure, I decided to utilize more than one research method, conducting interviews, observations and studying the student teachers' reflective diaries. According to Stake (2010), adopting many different methods of qualitative data gathering in the same study can help to secure better, stronger evidence (see Section 4.6.2 below for a discussion of the data gathering tools used). Indeed, in this case, it helped me to better apprehend the results and form a more comprehensive picture. I believe this approach enhanced the study's validity and contributed to shifting my initial views and predictions regarding the content of my research towards a different, more nuanced understanding of the various approaches to teaching practice.

4.3 Overview of research design: developing an interpretive approach

As evidenced in the literature review, a number of studies on the reflective practice of student teachers have employed a mixed-methods approach, relying on numerous sources of information, including observation, pre- and post-observational interviews, questionnaires, artefact analysis, and examination of lesson plans and diaries (for example, Fung, 1999; Ogonor & Badmus, 2006; Fatima, 2010; Gravett, Henning & Eiselen, 2011). Such an approach is identified by Creswell (2013) as one which is growing in popularity within the modern social sciences because of its integrative nature. Its strengths include the opportunity to collect two types of data simultaneously and to combine the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data. While qualitative data has its potential weaknesses, the

researcher may be able to move beyond some of these limitations if qualitative research is implemented properly. According to Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson (2010), a researcher must remind oneself of one's position as a researcher during the research, which is achieved by reflecting on one's own perceptions in order to minimize unhelpful interferences such as bias. One concern which must be addressed is the potential for qualitative research to fall behind quantitative research in terms of the volume of data generated. This can be resolved when the appropriate methods of qualitative research are employed, in which case the researcher has ample opportunity to delve deeper into certain questions, and the flexibility with which to make further enquiries, following the lead of the data as it presents itself. Being able to pursue new lines of enquiry will allow the researcher to gather more and more data. Consequently, in the main study, I have chosen to focus exclusively on a qualitative research approach, which I feel confident is able to satisfy the needs of the research as a whole.

Formulated research questions and subsequent research techniques interrelate and must be developed simultaneously so that compatibility is ensured (Jiri, 2012; Wong & Abdul Kadir, 2017). When formulating the research questions, care should be taken to ensure that they correlate with the aims and objectives of the study. Moreover, once data has been acquired, it becomes essential to avoid overgeneralizations during the interpretation of that data. Generalizations may intrude when researchers suggest solutions to the difficulties made apparent in the data, when they formulate the implications of the data, and when they analyse the findings. If the findings contradict other significant research in the area, hasty conclusions and generalizations should not be drawn, but the causes of this discrepancy may need to be further explored.

It seemed appropriate to use an interpretive methodology because such an approach provided a platform on which the participants' interpersonal differences and ideas could be thoroughly examined and understood. Adjusting the content of the interview questions according to certain cues that the participants gave allowed issues to be approached from different angles and for attention to be distributed sensibly amongst those issues. If, for example, a participant raised a matter that appeared to be of great importance to him or her, the researcher was able to seek more information about this issue by asking another question, or by recording the potential significance of the issue with the aim of approaching the topic from another angle at another time. If a participant expressed opinions with little elaboration, or uttered statements which appeared contradictory, further questions could be constructed that would clarify their beliefs. The interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to avoid making oversimplified conclusions about the target populations and seeing them as a

homogenous block. This is because an interpretivist approach allows the researcher to honour the individuality of the participants, and to address an issue from one's own unique perspective without the restraints of standardized questioning. Thus, it is argued that the conclusions and implications of interpretivist research may be more reliable, have higher practical significance, and reflect more accurately the realities of the target population.

While some of the works considered in the literature review used such methodologies as the case study (Schmidt, 2010; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013) and survey (Fung, 1999; Ogonor & Badmus, 2006; Fatima, 2010; Gravett, Henning & Eiselen, 2011), it was judged that these approaches did not fit with the circumstances and goals of the present study. While individual case studies can provide extensive information about the participants, the data is time-consuming to process, and the results cannot be easily generalized beyond the case studies, being only applicable to a particular situation. For this study, it was important to be able to draw general conclusions about the level of preparation of student teachers across the group of participants.

It was also deemed that questionnaires would not sufficiently benefit the present study. Questionnaires used in survey studies may be an effective way to collect quantitative data, but they do not help in acquiring detailed personal impressions of the participants' perspectives; questionnaires would not reveal, for example, the researcher's perceptions of the participants' level of confidence or shyness, the accuracy of the language used by the participants, or the tone of their voice. Furthermore, questionnaires in which close-ended questions dominate provide no opportunity to discover or explore each teacher's personal insights into the difficulties of teaching and learning. In contrast, interviews allow unscripted answers to be given; they allow the researcher to observe how the interviewees choose their words, and how confident or reflective the student teachers are in their opinions. Teaching as a profession relies greatly on interpersonal skills and seeing the teachers' answers on paper may be enough to ascertain their subject matter knowledge, but not their actual decision-making, attentiveness and the respect they give to pupils in the classroom.

The decision to conduct a pilot study before engaging in a larger-scale study was made for the following reasons. Creswell (2012) argues that a pilot study is vital for revising and perfecting instruments such as interviews, as it allows the researcher to test questions on participants and clarify their accuracy, as well as evaluate the potential of a larger study. Indeed, the pilot study was designed to test the effectiveness of the interview questions (and the relevance of interviews for the chosen topic), to see whether the participants were able to

understand the questions and ready to discuss them, and to determine whether the research questions were strong enough to carry a larger study. The pilot study was also an effective way to gain the interviewing experience necessary to approach the main study.

4.4 Contextualising Data from the Literature Review

The pilot study proved its worth and left its mark on every area of the main study. Of particular importance to the literature review was the discovery of reliable databases from which to source publications. The pilot study allowed the refinement of keywords to be used in the search; moreover, it greatly developed the researcher's ability to assess the relevance and credibility of sources. The publications included in this review were sourced from the following databases: EBSCOhost, JSTOR, Research Gate, Expanded Academic ASAP (Gale), Taylor and Francis Social Science and Humanities, Web of Science, Sage Publications, Directory of Open Access Journals, Open Access Theses and Dissertations (OATD), British Library Catalogue, and also with the help of Google Scholar. The keywords used in the search included "reflective practices", "self-reflection", "reflective teaching", "pedagogy", "pre-service teacher", "student teachers", "experiential learning" – i.e., the topics deemed most relevant to the present study. Certain studies stood out as significant because they were referenced so frequently in other works, and thus were selected according to the "snowballing method", in which studies are found in chains, through networks of studies. Other studies were suggested directly by the supervisors of the present study. Fortunately, the initial search revealed an abundance of relevant scholarly works to form a foundation from which to move forward. The works were so numerous that to meet the needs of the present paper, it was decided that they be classified before and after analysis.

The search was conducted over four phases, with the first phase occurring prior to data collection. The primary areas identified as being of scholarly interest in the first phase included the development of pedagogical content knowledge among pre-service teachers, and the connection between pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and professional growth. The main focal points in each of these areas were the distinction between subject matter knowledge and PCK, and the ability of student teachers to adapt subject matter knowledge to the needs of real pupils in the classroom. The second phase occurred whilst the pilot study was being carried out (based on the topics emerging from the first phase), during which additional topics emerged. These additional topics included the role of the teaching practicum for the adequate preparation of student teachers; the role that supervisor feedback plays in teacher education; the significance of school mentors and fellow students; and the types of classroom activities. The third phase occurred during the data analysis, conducted with the help of NVivo software. At this point, yet another set of themes emerged. The original

themes emerging from the first phase of data analysis were joined by more specific themes, including reflection, reflective practice, experience, classroom behaviour, time management in the classroom, and mentoring. Lastly, finalizing the themes and drafting the discussion chapter led me back to the literature review. I divided the themes into the four key issues identified in the findings: relational factors, developmental factors, situational factors, and experiential factors. Each of these themes were further narrowed down and conceptualized into several categories, such as andragogy, professional learning, experiential learning, reflective practice criticism, feedback, self-reflection, and practicums.

I will next discuss the research design, the findings and the implications of my pilot study. The study was aimed at examining the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of student teachers, and it served to inform the decisions I made later on in the main study, affecting my choice of research design and methods. After the section on the pilot study, I will discuss in more detail the research process of the main study.

4.5 The pilot study: research design, findings and implications

The pilot study was designed with the aim of acquiring information relevant to the three research questions, and of developing and refining appropriate data gathering tools. The questions concerned: (1) how student teachers use the pedagogical content knowledge that they learn in the Teacher Education Institute during actual practice, (2) how student teachers usually deal with the various challenges that arise in the classroom, (3) how student teachers reflect on their practice and the practice of other professionals. After an in-depth literature review on qualitative research, the semi-structured interview was considered to be the most appropriate tool for the purpose of the pilot study. The semi-structured interview was chosen rather than the structured or unstructured interview because of its ability to generate specific kinds of data and to be flexible at the same time (Merriam, 2009). Since one of the objectives of the pilot study was to test the student teachers' reflective skills, it was important to use open-ended questions and to observe the ways in which the participants responded. The interviews were designed to be conducted via Skype because of the affordability of such a resource and the flexibility of scheduling it allows. The participants of the pilot study consisted of five women and one man. Four of the participants were 19 years old and two were 20 years old. All were student teachers in their last year of their practicum and were in the 2010-2015 cohort of the Technical Teacher Institute of Education, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

The results of the pilot study revealed a significant overlapping with the theories of experiential learning and reflective teaching. According to Schon (1983, p. 49), ‘the workaday life of the professional depends on a tacit knowing-in-action’, while Fischler (1999) argues that teachers make knowledge about learning ‘an explicit part of their thinking about, and action in, teaching’ (1999, p. 172). Since all the participants of the pilot study were in their last year at the teaching institute, it was apparent that some were only just starting to acquire the skills of knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action, while others could already make informed decisions over the course of a lesson, stepping out of the boundaries of curriculum. Most of them correctly understood that learning outcomes extend beyond receiving good grades and that obtaining good communicative skills and being able to use the knowledge of English outside the classroom are also very desirable aims.

Overall, the data analysis conducted for the pilot study showed that the reflective skills of the majority of the participants, as well as their level of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), could be discussed positively. Among the constructive findings were the students’ abilities to distinguish between PCK and subject matter knowledge, to provide specific strategies and techniques for solving problems in the classroom, to address criticism thoughtfully, and to create a learning-centred environment for the pupils in which the novice teachers felt comfortable. In this respect, four pilot participants demonstrated a good awareness of the skills necessary for the teaching profession, with just one of them truly standing out in terms of the specific, detailed and thought-provoking answers provided. The aim of conducting a pilot study is not only to provide answers to the research questions or to push the researcher to delve deeper into formulating the questions of the main study, but also to guide the researcher towards thinking more about factors which could facilitate the research, such as how best to communicate with the participants.

Following the pilot, the areas which were subjected to scrutiny and further examination included: how to determine appropriate methods; how data could be better retrieved and analysed; and how the major themes within the data may be identified. It is worth pointing out that many questions arose during the pilot study, one of which concerned the reliability of the data collected during the pilot study, as interviews were conducted via Skype. During the pilot study interviews, the students made overwhelmingly positive comments regarding the role of the teaching practicum in their work. In the main study, I was able to explore further whether or not comments such as these reflected the experiences of student teachers as a whole, or the performance of student teachers during their practicum.

Whilst several of the student teachers had responded positively to the teaching practicum, one student was clearly struggling with the practicum because she was unable to distinguish between pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge. This led her to place the responsibility for unsuccessful lessons or failed tests solely on the students and she struggled to provide coherent answers on the whole. The participant presented her ideas “as a matter of fact” and did not elaborate on her answers when some of them were factually incorrect. It is therefore suggested that this student seek the guidance of experienced colleagues in the future, spend more time on self-reflection to discover the role she plays in unsuccessful classes, and learn about student-centred environments.

The pilot study was extremely helpful in that it illuminated areas of potential improvement for further research on the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of student teachers. Aside from the need to clarify certain questions, ask for more elaborate answers and solve technical problems beforehand, it hinted at the need to draw out information regarding student teachers’ PCK from other sources – most notably, from real-life teaching situations. The pilot study also helped in the effort to refine the questions for the main study (for example, they were subsequently adjusted for the target group), it shifted the focus towards reflective issues (as those turned out to be prominent), and it prompted me to consider expanding the number of research tools to gain a fuller picture.

4.6 The Main Study: Research Questions, Participants and Methods

The purpose of the main study was to examine the level of reflective skills among student teachers of English as a second language who undergo pre-service education in Malaysia. The results of the research could be useful both for student teachers and for their educators. It was hoped that the results could help to enhance self-reflection in student teachers by encouraging them to share their teaching practice experiences and accounts of when they handled difficulties in the classroom innovatively, thereby promoting self-analysis and the giving and receiving of feedback. At the same time, the study intended to investigate any challenges that come with using reflection in practice, making room for corrections or potential improvements in the student teachers’ education. After analysing previous relevant investigations in terms of their research questions and research design, as well as considering the implications of the pilot study, the following research questions were formulated for the main study:

- To what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lessons?
- In what ways does their capacity for reflective practice develop over the practicum?
- What facilitating factors and barriers exist in the development of their reflective practice?

The first question is fundamental to the research because it is necessary to understand whether or not student teachers use reflective practices, whether they realize they are using them, and whether they perceive such practices as helpful (Ogonor & Badmus, 2006; Ulvik & Smith, 2011).

The second question is very important because one of the key components of reflection is its development over time. Previous studies collected data repeatedly over a certain period of time in order to identify improvements or stagnation in the reflective skills of novice teachers (Park & Chen, 2012; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). Ideally, the development of reflective skills should become apparent over the course of data collection. The study could also reveal the student teachers' abilities to respond to critical suggestions, a skill believed to determine one's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986; Warford, 2011 – see Chapter 3), something which is itself directly influenced by self-reflection, observation and the guidance of experienced colleagues. Also, the study aims to investigate whether the novice teachers can use the principles of experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Lastly, it helps explore how student teachers address and recognize their past mistakes in the present – a skill that is reportedly lacking in many young professionals (Penso, 2002).

The third question had to be answered for two reasons. Firstly, it was necessary to understand perspectives on student teachers' education and practice, the benefits and drawbacks of preparation, and the possibilities for improving reflective skills. Additionally, it presents the chance to talk in more detail about the student teachers' perceptions of the teaching practicum. Secondly, when exploring facilitating factors and barriers in the development of reflective practice, taking into account the different perspectives of the actors involved in teacher education could help create a more complete picture of the overall atmosphere in Malaysian educational institutions and the ways in which reflection is

encouraged or deterred. An overview of the research questions and methods for both the pilot and the main studies are provided in Table 4-1:

Table 4-1 Overview of research design, questions and methods of pilot and main studies

	Pilot study	Main study
Research questions	1) How do student teachers use their pedagogical content knowledge that they learn in the Teacher Education Institute during actual practice? 2) How do student teachers usually deal with various problems that arise in the classroom? 3) How do student teachers reflect on their practice and the practice of other professionals?	1) To what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lessons? 2) In what ways does their capacity for reflective practice develop over the practicum? 3) What facilitating factors and barriers exist in the development of their reflective practice?
Participants	Six final-year student teachers	Ten student teachers (third practicums) Three mentor teachers One teacher educator/supervisor
Research methods	Skype interview	Classroom observation Post-observation interview Analysis of weekly reflective diaries Vignettes

4.6.1 Participants

a) Researcher as an “Insider” and “Outsider”

This research was directed and determined in part by the conditions of the sponsorship I received to undertake research relevant to Malaysia’s Ministry of Education. It seemed a sensible proposal to conduct the research within the Teacher Education Institute, as, when applying for the scholarship, I was aware that the Institute had been urged to evolve and rejuvenate itself. I fear that this push to renovate Malaysian Education is not the result of the discussions that are happening on the ground (driven by educators and debates on forums frequented by educators) but from above, according to standards not adequately assessed. Malaysia’s poor position within TIMSS and PISA 2012 rankings resulted in a push to make changes, but whether or not such changes are appropriate or can ever be effective when they

are not informed by those working within education is debatable. Research projects need to be conducted to investigate whether changes are necessary and what form they ought to take. Following the Malaysia Blueprint Preliminary Report (2013), the Teacher Education Institute was specifically targeted, with particular attention paid to teacher education. I believed, however, that a greater challenge and therefore greater potential for progress may be found in student teacher education. A famous Malaysian saying advises us to 'bend the tree while it is young.' This is exactly the message I suggested in my proposal to the Malaysian Ministry of Education. In order to develop better teacher education, and a system which caters for 21st century students, it was suggested that student teachers be placed at the centre of the doctoral investigation. Their knowledge and experience can be tools with which to enhance practice and knowledge within Malaysian Education, and their ideas and feedback should be sought. After looking into these matters and observing the lack of research activities that focus on student teachers, I undertook the challenge of placing myself as an insider and of adopting an insider approach. I have been working as assistant director at both the Teacher Education Division and the Teacher Education Institute. Although I was not directly involved with teaching the students or student teachers, I attended a series of workshops on introducing new curricula to the teachers, headmasters, administrators and education officers. I actively participated in various workshops regarding blueprints and evaluations. Besides this, my past experience teaching for five years in primary schools provided me with a basis on which to conduct classroom observations. In addition to this, I had organized workshops and courses, and worked directly with all the lecturers of the Teacher Education Institute during evaluation programmes. These experiences gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the practicum programme schedules and allowed me to experience the culture and environment of the Teacher Education Institute. Being an insider allowed me to contact the lecturers and be trusted in a way that afforded me access to student teachers and their placement schools. Abu-Lughod (1988) and Hill Collins (1990) agree that, as insiders, researchers have better opportunities to retrieve information, as he or she has a better understanding of the environment and is able to understand and situate the participants' opinion within that context. Although responses were not received from all of the potential participants that were contacted, I believe the treatment I received was far better than would have been the case had I been a complete outsider. According to Fonow and Cook (1991), researchers who are outsiders may receive more neutral answers and be given information different from that which would be given to an insider. Although, overall, I considered myself an insider, and as a result, considered myself to be in a better position from which to understand the participants' comments, I was still subject to many of the same conditions as outsider

researchers. For instance, I had to gain various levels of ethical approval (discussed in Section 4.6); also, the research had to adhere to the normal restraints of scheduling, and I was not based within the placement schools but at the Teacher Education Institute headquarters. Mullings (1999) claims that no researcher remains exclusively an insider or exclusively an outsider throughout the research process. Being an insider, I faced certain challenges, a significant one being to maintain the anonymity of the participants and their data. This was not straightforward as the TEI requested the recorded interviews and the full reports made for each participant. It is generally accepted that when conducting research, researchers need to prioritise the protection of their participants' identities; in doing so, the validity of the data and the integrity of both the research and the researcher is safeguarded. (Saunders et al., 2015). If a researcher were to break a participant's trust, his or her data may be compromised. In the case of this study, the student teachers and their mentors were free to withdraw at any time. If the participants remaining within the study were unsure as to whether the information they provided would be passed into other hands, their answers would be affected. As an insider and former employee of the TEI, in addition to being an outsider and feeling a certain loyalty toward the participants of the study, I searched for a solution that would satisfy both parties. I talked through and shared "the plain statement" and consent form with the TEI and schools; the plain statement and consent form promised the participants their anonymity and the security of the data. In the end, a compromise was reached. It was agreed that I would provide the TEI and schools with the reports they needed, but that pseudonyms would be used to protect the identity of each participant.

b) Accessing and recruiting participants

During the early stage of recruiting potential participants, I had the opportunity to be in contact with three lecturers, as I was working at the headquarters (HQ) of Teacher Education Institute in Cyberjaya. The lecturers were involved in many programmes conducted by the HQ (by the department of which I was in charge), particularly programmes relating to professional development workshops. Although the lecturers contacted did not personally teach the participants (most taught science and mathematics), they were nonetheless willing to help me to approach the students. Fifty-two student teachers were contacted based on the details received from the lecturers. A non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, was considered to be the best choice (Neyman, 1937; Palinkas et al., 2015). According to Curtis, Mark & Shields (2014), researchers are encouraged to use purposive sampling when they know that the participants are in the field of research they are exploring. This allowed the representative sample of student teachers to be

obtained and potential biases to be avoided. The first twelve student teachers were chosen based on the promptness of their replies and on their willingness to voluntarily participate in the research. Two of the participants withdrew at a later stage due to their reluctance to share any personal information.

After the first phase of interviews, seven mentor teachers and four supervisors were approached, of which three mentor teachers and a supervisor agreed to participate. The breakdown of participants by classroom, ethnicity, and gender can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4-2 An overview of all approached candidates and 13 final participants in main study

Classroom	Approached Candidates		Participants	
	Gender	Ethnicity	Gender	Ethnicity
Teaching English as Second Language 1 (TESL 1)	3 Male	2 Malay 1 Chinese	1 Male	Malay
	24 Female	16 Malay 4 Chinese 4 Indian	2 Female	Malay
Teaching English as Second Language 2 (TESL 2)	3 Male	3 Malay 1 Chinese	Nil	Nil
	22 Female	17 Malay 4 Chinese 1 Indian	7 Female	5 Malay 1 Chinese 1 Indian
Mentor teachers	6 Female 2 Male	6 Malay 2 Chinese	2 Female 1 Male	1 Malay 2 Chinese
Supervisors	2 Female 2 Male	2 Malay 1 Chinese 1 Indian	1 Male	1 Indian

c) Establishing collaboration and procedure and introducing the student teachers

The study included ten student teachers, all of whom were studying at the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) Malaysia, as well as three senior teachers from three practicum schools, and one supervisor of a student teacher. All the schools involved in the placement were suggested by the State Education Office, after gaining mutual agreement from the respective headmasters and the TEI. It was a requirement that all schools be situated within 30km of the TEI. The TEI is located within the 30km border area between the Selangor State and Negeri Sembilan state; the schools of the student teachers' placement were likewise, therefore, situated in this area. Figure 4-1 below shows a map indicating the locations of the TEI's headquarters and the Technical Teacher Education Institute.

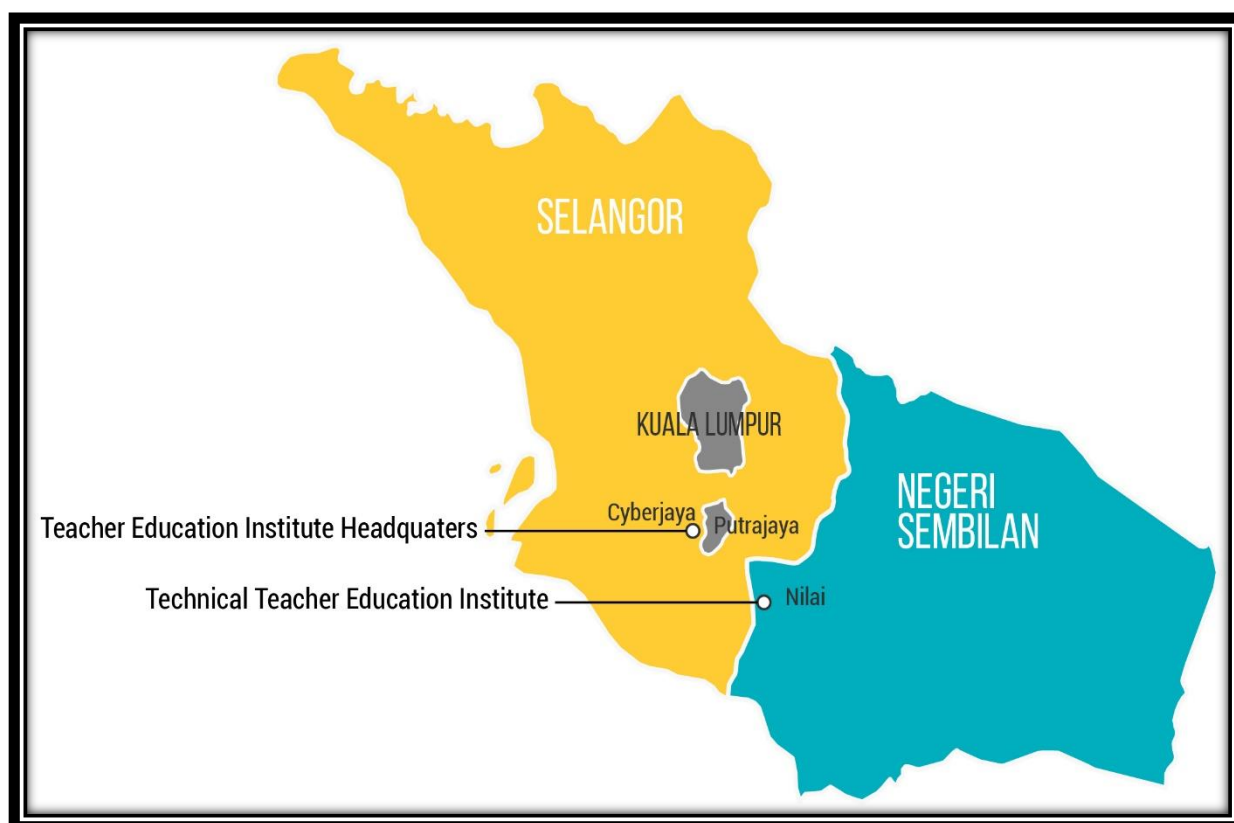


Figure 4-1 Map of TEI's headquarters and Technical Teacher Education Institute

The participating students had to represent the Teacher Education Institute, while senior teachers and supervisors had to be their mentors over the course of their practice. Next, the head of the English Department and the institute's practicum officer were consulted. Then, only those student teachers who had volunteered from the Teaching English as Second Language programme, 8th semester batch of the Teacher Education Institute's at the Technical Education Campus were contacted. The participants were subsequently provided with consent forms once all necessary approvals had been obtained (see Appendix 3). However, even after volunteering, the students were not obliged to take part. If they wished to do so, they remained free to withdraw at any time. Consequently, twelve of the fifty-two student teachers who had been contacted were invited to participate in the study. Over the course of the data collection, between January 2016 and April 2016, two withdrew and one participant considered leaving the study but later changed his mind. Table 4-3 below presents the final ten student participants, along with their type of school and local authority.

Table 4-3 An overview of the student participants, schools and local authorities in the main study.

No	Participants (pseudonym)	Ethnicity	Gender	Type of school	School Name (pseudonym)	Local Authority (States)
1	Arina	Malay	Female	Rural school	Jaya Primary School	Negeri Sembilan
2	Bavani	Indian	Female			Negeri Sembilan
3	Chua	Chinese	Female	Chinese Primary School - suburban	Sin Hwa Chinese Primary School	Selangor
4	Dania	Malay	Female	Rural school	Gemilang Primary School	Negeri Sembilan
5	Emylia	Malay	Female	Suburban school	Perdana Primary School	Selangor
6	Fauziah	Malay	Female			
7	Gina	Malay	Female			
8	Hayati	Malay	Female	Rural school	Sentosa Primary School	Negeri Sembilan
9	Iman	Malay	Female			Negeri Sembilan
10	Jamal	Malay	Male	Suburban school	Kejayaan Primary School	Negeri Sembilan

The methods used for the main study included classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and student teachers' reflections, all of which are discussed in more detail in the next section. The student teachers were observed and interviewed three times over the three months of their teaching practicum in order to determine their progress in linking theory to practice. After consulting the participants, it was decided that the interviews take place after the observations of the participants' lessons had been completed; this is recommended by Drever (2003) who stated that the location of an interview is best chosen by the interviewees to avoid unnecessary pressure and discomfort. The students were engaged in their final 12-week practicum, having already finished two practicums. During this practicum, the participants were required to teach for at least eight hours per week, of which seven hours were dedicated to English lessons and one hour to another subject, which could be art, technology or history. Three mentor teachers and a supervisor of the teaching practicum were also interviewed across the seven placement schools. Overall, 405 pages of double-spaced text were transcribed after the recording of 28.36 hours of interviews. The

interviews were conducted with ten student teachers, after each of three lessons, during each month of the final practicum, as well as with mentors and supervisor in the final month of the final practicum (see Table 4.6 for the practicum schedule). I also had access to the student teachers' reflective diaries, which were used as a source of additional insight into their answers.

In order to present each student teacher's background, I used a vignette approach - interested readers can find a full collection of the vignettes for all participants in Appendix 2. During the final phase or cycle of practicum interviews, I asked the participants to share their educational backgrounds, their family backgrounds, and the motivations and aspirations informing their choices of a career in education. It was from this information and at this late stage that the vignettes were created. Although I had asked similar questions at the beginning of the research, at that time I received only short responses. During the third phase, however, I was encouraged to approach these areas again with all the participants after Arina, the first participant, became enthusiastic upon being asked about her family and was keen to share her impressions of the practicum and the school (see Appendix 2). All of the participants were assigned pseudonyms, which will be used throughout the chapter to protect their privacy. Arina, Bavani, Dania, Hayati and Iman conducted lessons in three rural schools, while Chua, Emylia, Fauziah, Gina and Jamal were placed in three suburban schools. The study also welcomed three senior teachers – two of the school mentors who worked with the participants (Mr Soon supervised Dania, Ms Yasmine supervised Arina and Bavani and Mrs Lee supervised Chua), and one supervisor from the Teaching Institute, Mr. Raja, who attended Jamal's lessons.

A meticulous process was engaged in to ensure protection of the participants' identities; firstly, all of the participants were assigned pseudonyms, to be used throughout the research to protect their privacy. Changing the participants' real names worked twofold; it served both to conceal their real name but also to conceal their ethnicity as within Malaysia, names reveal the ethnicity of the person. Christopherson (2007) defines anonymity of participants in research as "the inability of others to identify an individual or for others to identify one's self" (p.3040), it was therefore deemed necessary that the participants' ethnic identity be hidden. The first consideration that needs to be made when analysing qualitative data is whether or not the changes taken to protect a participant's identity will affect the data as a whole (Patton, 1987; Richards, 2005). It was concluded that concealing participants' names and identities would not affect the analysis as ethnicity was not the focus of the

research. Moreover, the majority of the participants are Malay, with only four participants of other ethnicities represented.

The student teachers' backgrounds and their motivations for becoming teachers were diverse; some had focused on teaching as their first-choice career and it represented their primary professional goal, while others had resorted to teaching as a secondary option or viewed it purely in terms of its practical worth. Arina had wanted to be a teacher from an early age, and her mother was a teacher as well. She was planning to continue her career and grow professionally. Bavani was encouraged to pursue a career in teaching by her mother and recalled being inspired by her own English teacher in elementary school. Dania had also wished to be a teacher since early childhood, citing her own schoolteachers and popular culture as inspiration; she expressed a desire to become a headmistress. Fauziah's primary motivation was her desire to be useful and to inspire students with lower achievements, as she was once one of them herself. She would like to obtain an education-related position in the Government or to open her own school. Hayati wanted her career to be related to English, and her English teacher had motivated her to pursue a career in education.

Chua did not actually want to be a teacher herself and was pressured into choosing this career by her parents, who valued its financial security. Gina, similar to Chua, was pressured by her parents, who felt that teaching would be a suitable career for a woman. In turn, Emylia was motivated to pursue this career by her teachers in primary and secondary school, but explicitly said that she did not want to be a teacher and may change her career after a few years. Another two students who did not feel that teaching was their calling (despite having teachers in their families) had chosen this career for financial reasons. Iman's parents both worked in the field of education, and she cited allowance as her main motivation for becoming a teacher. Similarly, Jamal also cited financial benefits as main motivation, but added that his sister worked as a teacher, too (see Appendix 2 for descriptions).

4.6.2 Research Methods

a) Observation method

Semi-structured observation seemed to be the most appropriate observation method, offering, on the one hand, a structure through which to address specific topics that were anticipated and deemed certain to arise during the class. On the other hand, semi-structured observation offers enough scope and the flexibility with which to head in new directions, to address the unexpected, and to develop new conversations according to unpredictable

phenomena. The observation was organized with consideration given to the learning objectives being pursued by the teachers and learners at different stages of the learning process; close attention was paid to identifying the teachers' initial strategies and monitoring the actual responses of the students.

The pilot study helped to reveal how student teachers evaluate their teaching practice, use the knowledge obtained during the Linking Theory to Practice (LTP) course, and reflect on their professional growth. However, it was immensely helpful to put this information into a wider context; most notably, this was achieved by comparing student teachers' perceptions with their actual lessons. This method is widely used in educational research (Fischler, 1999; Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Staley, 2004; Stevens, 2005; Marsh, 2011; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). Seeing student teachers in action during their actual lessons is considered to be very useful for those wishing to compare student teachers' self-evaluation with their real performance. Furthermore, the classroom observations helped with the identification of potential interview and analysis themes, expanding the dialogue beyond the initially narrow focus of PCK.

Table 4-4 below outlines the aspects that were the focus of the observation.

Table 4-4 Classroom observation proforma

Section/Component	Aspect
Linking Theory to Practice (LTP) Course (Curriculum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Aims and objectives b) Lesson plan (content)
i) Lesson Planning (Subject Matter Knowledge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Teaching- learning strategies (depth mastery) d) Teaching- learning resources (provide information) e) Higher Order Thinking Skills
ii) Lesson implementation (pedagogical knowledge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Uses techniques suggested during the LTP Course (set induction, questioning and feedback techniques, closure, achievement of objectives) <p>Ability to adapt to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) learners need (adapt the course material to the abilities and needs of the pupils) c) Stays focused and meets stated objectives d) Uses examples that are simple, precise and clear
iii) Reflective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Demonstrates the ability to incorporate comments and feedback b) Addresses problems pointed out on previous lessons c) Shows the ability to change the strategy if the current one does not fit the needs of the audience d) Knows pupils and their levels of preparation
iv) Approach to instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Makes room for discussion and for pupils' questions b) Answers difficult questions / finds ways to discuss the answer together c) Admits to mistakes if any
v) Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leads the lesson but is respectful of pupils and their opinions b) Allows questions and discussion c) Maintains discipline (makes sure that pupils do not misbehave, finds ways to engage noisy or hyperactive pupils, remains respectful while applying discipline measures)

According to Wragg (1999), observation is as vital for teaching practice as surgery is for medical practice. It plays an important role in initial teacher education, in-service education and professional development, studying pupils, curriculum development and evaluation, job analysis, teacher appraisal, and observation by lay people. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) cite the widespread opinion that observation is a part of all other methods of research because it is impossible to be uninvolved in one's own research. There is more "freshness" to the information received during the observation because it is less predictable than the information obtained, for example, from a completed questionnaire. Moreover, Stake (2010) argues that new researchers should not worry too much about audio- or video-taping all observed events, as what they themselves find notable and interesting right at the moment of observation can be more important than the details analysed afterwards.

Potential difficulties associated with observation include the potential for selective attention (we may see only what we are looking for), reactivity (if people know that they are being observed, they can become anxious or try to look better in the eyes of the observer), attention deficit (the observer may miss things), varying validity of constructs (it is necessary to decide what counts as absolute proof of certain behaviour), and other issues, mostly related to validity and reliability. Strategies for ensuring the reliability of information include using the same operational definitions, recording the same observations in the same way, possessing good concentration skills, focusing on details, being unobtrusive but attentive, having the necessary experience to make judgments about received data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

In the investigations reviewed in Chapter 3, observation was used among others by Fischler (1999), Abdullah-Sani (2000) and Monte-Sano & Budano (2013). According to Abdullah-Sani (2000), the notes made during observations provided topics for further discussion during interviews and were also very helpful one year after the study, when the same students were to be observed again. The notes in this case 'served to complement and to supplement information needed for the interviews conducted during training and post training' (Abdullah-Sani, 2000, pp. 127-128). Fischler (1999) also used observation primarily to uncover more topics and problems to discuss during the interviews. However, the most important aspect identified is the use of observation for data collection and subsequent analysis.

With regard to the first topic, I was looking for the student teachers to demonstrate an ability to formulate the aims and objectives of the lesson, to follow the lesson plan, to use specific teaching and learning strategies, to handle specific teaching and learning resources, and to demonstrate higher order thinking skills (having a critical approach to the taught material, the ability to put it into a wider context, and to provide abstract and concrete examples when necessary).

When it came to the second topic, I was focusing on observing the student teachers' ability to adapt to learners' needs, to stay focused and meet stated objectives, and to use simple, precise and clear examples. I was also looking out for the use of the specific techniques taught during the Linking Theory to Practice (LTP) course, which includes giving an appropriate, set induction, questioning and giving feedback effectively, ensuring effective closure of the class, and achieving the set objectives. As Shulman notes (1986, p.8), to investigate a teacher's use of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) the researcher must observe how they apply pedagogy to subject matter knowledge.

The third topic focused on observing the student teachers' ability to incorporate comments and feedback, to address and avoid any teaching difficulties identified following their previous lessons, and to change strategy if the one in use proved unsuitable for or inefficient in meeting the needs of the audience. Lastly, I was looking for demonstrations of the student teachers' knowledge of their pupils, and of their levels of preparation. Although the main focus of self-reflection would be more directly apparent during the post-observational interviews, during the lessons, I hoped to observe the "reflection-in-action" (Schon, 1983) of student teachers and their immediate decision-making.

It was expected that the student teachers' approaches to instruction would become apparent, manifested in their ability or inability to make room for discussion and to respond to pupils' questions, to answer unanticipated questions, to provide vivid descriptions, and to explain clearly (Shulman, 1986). Lastly, authority during the lesson was assessed in terms of the student teachers' ability to lead the lesson while being respectful of pupils and their opinions, the permitting of questions and discussion, and the maintenance of discipline in a strict but non-authoritarian manner.

Overall, the details of the observation proforma for the study were designed so that they could provide useful information for discussion during the interviews and during the follow-up observation session. Firstly, while interviews provide a lot of information about a

student teacher, it is impossible to be sure that this information is valid. Some participants may be reluctant to talk about their challenges or failures, or they might try to paint themselves in a more positive light, while others may simply remember things incorrectly. Observations paired with interviews provide better and more balanced insights and assist the researcher in analysing the data and later interpreting the interview transcripts (Elwood & Martin, 2000). The observations proved helpful, particularly in that they allowed the student teachers' self-evaluations to be put into a wider perspective. Furthermore, the structure established for the three phases of observation helped provide a model through which to consistently track the progress and action plans the student teachers made from one lesson to another. Each of the answers provided and the concerns identified by the student teachers during the first phase of observation and interviews could then be directly observed in the second phase. As Merriam (2009) writes, observation helps to 'provide some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviours, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews' (p. 119).

Secondly, such observations were helpful because they served to highlight the evolving differences in the participants' behaviour (for example, their level of confidence and their body language) in the presence of more experienced colleagues, as well as in their absence. Student teachers were more confident teaching their lesson without the presence of their supervisors and their mentor teachers, although their lessons were nonetheless well prepared. Wragg (1999) states that 'lesson observers often do not write down the detail of non-verbal behaviour, but it does inform their judgement' (p. 73). This is one of the reasons why personal observation of and presence during the lesson can provide more information about the students and their practice than is possible with the interview alone. Engaging in reflection on the observed lesson and sharing comments about the lesson during the post-interview is a process that can instil a level of trust between the participants and the researcher. This intimacy, born from the interaction that takes place during the interviews, continued throughout the data collection and was evident later in the trust the student teachers demonstrated when consenting to share their reflective diaries. Finally, the observations and their implications contributed to the development of the interview questions, as they provided additional prompts to explore during the interviews.

b) Interview

Taking into account the aforementioned considerations, it was decided that the interview method be used and form a central part of the main study on student teachers'

reflective practice. The interview is one of the most popular methods in educational research, interpreted in the literature as ‘a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 329). This tool tends to be more effective than the questionnaire in terms of response rate, personalization and the possibility to ask for a more elaborate answer or further explanation. Also, according to Seidman (2006), the interview does not simply serve to provide answers to specific questions posed by the researcher but demonstrates ‘an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience’ (p. 9). Such a stance is clearly in line with Chase’s (2003) view regarding the importance of real people’s stories. The strengths of the interview are underlined in many scholarly works dedicated to qualitative research approaches (e.g. Kvale, 1994; Merriam, 2009; Bell, 2010; Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013; Brinkmann, 2013; Creswell, 2013). In educational research, the interview enables the communication of detailed information about the students’ perception of their skills, of the effectiveness of their education, and of their means of improvement. This being the case, interviews seem to avoid the difficulties that usually arise with the use of questionnaires – most notably, a good response rate and level of detail are almost guaranteed with interviews. Also, interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to examine the student teachers’ reflective skills and attitudes in person. This is possible because the interview is qualitative in nature, whereas the written form of questionnaires is quantitative.

The common criticisms of qualitative research discussed above (for example, in terms of their validity and reliability) have been mentioned by many scholars who specifically discuss the interview as a method. It is argued that, if the interview is conducted ethically, the data can be highly reliable, valid and unbiased (Kvale, 1994; Bleich & Pekkanen, 2013). Moreover, Brinkmann (2013) suggests that qualitative interviewing is ‘the most objective method of inquiry when one is interested in qualitative features of human experience, talk, and interaction’ (p. 4), which makes it appropriate for studying the experiences of student teachers in terms of their learning, teaching and self-evaluation. The ethical concerns associated with the qualitative interview are discussed by Brinkmann (2013), who argues that the following ethical criteria should be met: they should contribute positively to the transformation of practice in a fruitful direction, be respectful to participants, be sensitive to issues of confidentiality and consent, be faithful to the lives and experiences of those portrayed, and be aware of power dynamics. During the first interviews, the ethical aspects of data collection strategies were discussed, and the plain language statement was read and understood by the participants. This process was important in making sure the participants

understood both the process and their right to withdraw at any time, and to assure participants that all personal data would be kept safely. Furthermore, the participants were not pressured into answering any questions that they would find uncomfortable (see Appendix 3 for more details of the plain language statement and the consent letter). In the following section, the use of post-observational interviews will be discussed.

c) Post-observational interview design

In previous studies by other scholars, the interview was effectively used alone. However, scholars highlight the benefits of following up classroom observations with interviews. As Merriam (2009) writes, in this case, observation will help to ‘provide some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviours, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews’ (p. 119). As a result, the observer will know what to ask if there are any interesting incidents or interactions among student teachers and their pupils. Also, Wragg (1999) suggests that interviews with teachers and pupils be used as a necessary part of any curriculum evaluation that includes observations. Only after interviews can the potential changes in the curriculum and preparation of the students be discussed. Adopting the approach of using classroom observation as a tool with which to derive more meaning and understanding from the comments made during the participants’ interviews aided me as a researcher to prepare the next interview questions based on the student teachers’ individual classroom observations.

It is argued that interviews are usually chosen by researchers for such purposes, as they ‘raise key questions, but also allow the observer and teacher to have some natural conversation about events’ (Wragg, 1999, p. 115). The observation involved identifying teachers’ learning patterns and students’ responses before making logical inferences and drawing conclusions. It also required identifying the motivations of all parties involved to demonstrate such behaviour patterns. If the observation is followed by the interview, the student teacher and the researcher can have shared topics to discuss and can compare their perspectives on very recent events in the classroom (Fischler, 1999; Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Stevens, 2005; Park & Chen, 2012; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013).

The post-lesson observation interview was effectively used in work by Stevens (2005), who argues that it was conducted in order to ‘clarify what was observed and to determine why specific decisions were made regarding the lesson’ (p. 94). Post-interview questions were asked directly after the observation of each lesson in each phase of the

practicum; the post-interview questions were aimed at helping to understand each situation that had arisen during their lesson, as participants provided immediate responses and comments on aspects of the lesson still fresh in their memories. Participants are said to feel more empowered in their interviews with the researcher when the researcher can relate to the classroom contexts to which they make references (Elwood & Martin, 2000). The interview was semi-structured, which is conducive to creating a friendlier bond between the researcher and the student teacher. In turn, Abdullah-Sani (2000) views post-observation interviews as more important than the observation itself and cites numerous examples from the student teachers' answers as being beneficial in highlighting their teaching beliefs. In the case of this study, interviews helped me to identify challenges in the practice of student teachers and to ask the student teachers about their goals and their sources of motivation or anxiety. In the study conducted by Fischler (1999), post-observation interviews were conducted immediately after the observed lessons, the aim of which was determined as 'identifying the conceptions and addressing these in relation to the student-teacher's instructional behaviour' (p. 179). Park & Chen (2012) argue that observations alone provide only limited impressions regarding the participants' skills, which is why it is necessary to back them up with interviews 'to understand what teachers know and the reason for their instructional actions' (p. 928).

As the literature review highlights, both observation and post-observation interviews have been used on a number of occasions in educational research into reflective skills (Fischler, 1999; Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Staley, 2004; Stevens, 2005, Park & Chen, 2012; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). Some of these works also contained a preliminary interview conducted before the observation in order to clarify the teaching beliefs and views of student teachers before and after the observation. I had the opportunity to spend half an hour before each classroom observation with the participants, at which point I discussed lesson plans and teaching materials. Some of the participants shared how and why they had created different materials and had altered their methods of teaching following their experiences of previous classes or previous practicum.

Overall, from this, it can be concluded that a combination of methods may be most effective in evaluating the student teachers' reflective skills. Interviews are arguably the most appropriate way of studying a small sample of student teachers in a limited amount of time and of gaining insight into their perceptions and opinions. While it would be impossible to watch the participants in real-life teaching situations and to draw conclusions about them, the interview can be helpful, or even 'necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them' (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). However, when the

interview complements direct observation, a more wholesome picture of the interviewee and their professional and personal stance can be created. Despite certain objections raised against this method, the works cited in this methodology chapter make it clear that, as a whole, when conducted professionally, the combination of interview and direct observation works well and brings valuable results (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

The interviews in the main study echoed the interviews from the pilot study in that the students stressed the importance of feedback and of access to the expertise of others. For example, one participant suggested that if she had problems during the lesson, she would ask a colleague to observe her teaching and to give her advice. The observation was therefore perceived as being helpful for the student teachers themselves, as post-lesson observation interviews were planned to be conducted with their senior teachers or supervisors or both.

The semi-structured interview questions were first drafted around potential themes, bounded by observation proforma and research questions, which related to pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). These themes included identifying and using PCK, establishing authority and improving communication, handling difficulties in the classroom, using reflective practice, and using feedback and other professionals' expertise. The questions for the main study's post-observation interview (see Appendix 4) were revised and adjusted according to what was observed in the student teachers' classroom during each phase. Furthermore, the questions were revised so as to explore the difference between subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, and the student teachers' ability to adapt the course material. Following the curriculum is crucial in the achievement of educational goals, but each classroom may have its peculiarities and issues. Therefore, the teacher should address these by adapting the curriculum (dedicating longer amounts of time to difficult topics and taking additional time to repeat explanations of previous material if necessary). In turn, the ability or inability to follow or disregard the course of the lesson plan may indicate how effective a student teacher's self-preparation has been. This was observed during the first phase of the interviews, when many student teachers were not able to identify the differences between the previous curriculum and the new curriculum. According to Mitchell (1999) and Ball (2000), student teachers tend to rely on textbooks and curriculum too much, without thinking about how the topic will be perceived by their audience. For this reason, it can be insightful to ask student teachers to elaborate on the ways in which they handled and enhanced classroom material.

Furthermore, some questions aimed to test the student teachers' self-reflective skills and to compare their impressions with those of the observer. For example, one student teacher found that the biggest problem was maintaining order in the classroom, while the observer noticed that student teachers were, overall, very nervous and unable to maintain their composure during the lessons where mentor teachers or supervisors were present to observe. Later questions related to the student teachers' abilities to handle difficulties in the classroom with authority. It was helpful to observe how the student teachers addressed questions and misunderstandings (whether they shied away from answering difficult or subjective questions or tried to find the answer in a creative and cooperative way). This line of inquiry also opened the way for more approaches taken by students with distinct levels of preparation for their practicum observations with their supervisors and mentor teachers.

Most questions provided a platform on which comparisons could be made; the student teachers' impressions right after the lessons were found to be vastly different from their impressions after talking and reflecting upon the events of the lessons for a while. First of all, the student teacher was expected to give an overall opinion of his or her performance (good, bad, or neutral). However, by the end of the interview, it was expected that his or her consideration of the lesson would be more specific, thoughtful and critical, with suggestions made for future improvement. Moreover, the experience of being observed and of reading their lesson plans led the student teachers to provide more data, which was recorded after each lesson in their lesson plans, in addition to their weekly reflections, which were written in a form and kept in their portfolios. It emerged from the interviews that these portfolios correlated well with the positive enhancement of their practice from one lesson to another. Interview questions attempted to assess the continuities of the observed lessons and aimed to reveal whether or not the student teachers reflected on their previous experiences and incorporated the comments of the mentor teachers into their practice. If differences in a student teacher's performance during the observation were noticed, further discussion led to the discovery of why the change had taken place (whether it was informed by self-reflection, by the comments of a senior teacher or supervisor, or otherwise).

Overall, the post-observational interviews proved to be crucial sources of information for the main study. It was possible to engage student teachers in critical discussions regarding their performance, their beliefs and their approaches. The interview questions themselves prompted reflection, but, more than this, the participants were able to reflect on their past reflections, explain how they had arrived at certain conclusions, and why they had made certain decisions during their lessons.

d) Reflective diaries

All of the student teachers were asked to write reflective diaries. The student teachers' weekly reflections provided insights into their growth and pushed the boundaries of the research, taking it into new territories. The content of the reflections was broad in scope, and provoked questions leading beyond PCK, such as how Shulman's concept of pedagogical content knowledge may form a stepping stone to other potentially significant theories, like reflective practice, experiential learning and andragogy (and more that came to be explored at a later stage). Each entry in the reflective diaries was dedicated to the events of the school day, the challenges encountered during the lessons, and the practical solutions considered. No word limitations or other specific guidelines for the writing of the diaries were given; it was expected only that the student teachers insert the weekly reflections into their portfolios and the daily reflections after each lesson into their lesson plan books. Knowing that it was not obligatory, and not having been emphasized by their supervisors, some participants did not enclose their weekly reflective diaries in their portfolios, but, upon request, many of them did not hesitate to share their reflective diaries with me. Figure 4-2 below includes an extract of a weekly routine entry by one of the participating students.

<p>Week 6: Chua reflective diaries</p> <p>Topic: The failure of using role play in low proficiency class</p> <p>1. Problem/incidence:</p> <p>I faced a serious problem when conducting role play in my English lesson. I could not manage to make my pupils to act out according to the situation given to them</p> <p>2. Analysis:</p> <p>My pupils love to act but they were very noisy when the other groups were acting. Besides, they were not very systematic when acting. Some were too loud, and some were not serious. All of these happened because I did not give proper instructions to them. I did not give them the chance to discuss with their friends on how to act. Furthermore, I did not provide scripts to them. I also did not give enough motivations such as giving stars. All of these had caused them to be out of control in a role play lesson.</p> <p>3. Suggestion for problem solving:</p> <p>i. I should always give proper instructions to them</p> <p>ii. I should let them discuss and plan on how to act and choose dialogues that they want to use</p> <p>iii. I should provide them with scripts on the situations given.</p> <p>(full description can be found in Appendix 9)</p>
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Figure 4-2 Extract of Chua's reflective diary (week 6)

The increasingly significant role of the diary as a ‘professional instrument of monitoring or self-monitoring’ (Feliz, Feliz & Rikoy, 2011) is relevant to both teacher preparation and educational research. For student teachers, the diary is a form of self-expression which facilitates the sharing of their thoughts and the development of their abilities to express their ideas more critically. For senior teachers, diaries can be an instrument used to guide student teachers’ development and enhance their self-assessment skills. Lastly, for educational researchers, reflective diaries offer an opportunity to witness how reflection occurs after lessons, how student teachers understand what it means “to reflect” on their experience, and how their reflection changes over time. The researcher may notice how much or how little student teachers write, what their tone is, how well they follow the structure of the diary, and whether they understand why they are engaged in journaling.

As Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori (2013) state, there is usually no standard procedure for dealing with written texts, and the adoption of an ‘informal approach’ proves to be the best in many cases. The general approach to analysing written data is to look for predetermined themes of research and note those that prove unexpected. In the main study, the information from the daily and weekly writings provided by the student teachers was used together with the interview transcripts. On some occasions, it was necessary to look for written accounts of the events to which the participants referred in their oral answers. On others, it was important to analyse the inclusive style of writing, its level of detail, and its formal or informal tone. The reflective diaries were provided by student teachers and analysed over the course of the study along with their interview transcripts.

e) Vignette

Exploring the background of each participant proved useful as it helped with the interpretation of the collected data and with placing it into a wider context. For example, such inquiry helps to reveal the condition and realities of Malaysian education and its peculiarities. Beyond this, it is helpful in understanding the reasons why student teachers chose this profession, how they perceived their choice, and, consequently, how these factors influenced their performances and their attitudes to professional development. In order to present each student teacher’s background, I used a vignette approach (see Appendix 2 for the full vignettes of the ten participating students). The approach works through the exploration of a series of topics and is reportedly well-suited to situations within research when it is impossible to construct case studies on each person involved (Lieberman, 1987). As a tool,

vignettes can be useful for studying student teacher education and describing student teachers' views and beliefs generally as well as specifically (Veal, 2002; Norsworthy, 2008). See Figure 4-3 for an extract from a vignette.

Bavani is 22 years old, thus is the oldest of all the participants. She joined the teacher preparation program because of her mother, who encouraged her to find a financially secure job where she would not have struggle to find employment (as after graduation, Malaysian teachers are automatically assigned teaching positions). Since Bavani's family are not rich, and getting a scholarship is hard, the allowance of 600 dollars (Ringgit Malaysia) per month, along with fully covered fees and accommodation in the hostel, is very important for her. Although teaching was not Bavani's first choice of a career, she performed well during the observation phase and reported that she was enjoying herself after having two teaching practicums. She cited her own English teacher as a source of motivation, being impressed with how the teacher helped her and remembered how the teacher helped her and how this stuck with her throughout the years.

Figure 4-3 Extract from Bavani's Vignette.

Drawing up the vignettes required the participants to provide some information about themselves, discuss their teaching experience, explain their motivations and aspirations regarding the teaching profession, and share their impressions about the practicum and the school. In the subsequent chapters, I will make use of extracts from the participants' vignettes when placing their interview answers within a wider context (in some cases, for example, the vignettes served to explain the student teachers' reactions in the classroom and to shine further light on their assessments of difficult situations and on the comments they made regarding their choices).

In all, observations, interviews, reflective diaries and participant vignettes were used in the main study to gather a variety of data to address the research question. Table 4.5 below summarizes all data gathering tools and their rationale in the main study:

Table 4-5 Outline and rationale of all data gathering tools used in the main study

Data gathering tools	Rationale/Brief explanation
Observation	These three observations helped me to see how student teachers progressed in their teaching, which subsequently helped to build my understanding of how they had applied the knowledge and reflective understanding gained from one lesson to another. This helped me to get closer to the participants and make them more comfortable with me. It helped me to understand the information delivered during the interviews. It also assisted in creating interview questions relevant to real classroom situations.
Post-observation interviews	The post-observation interview was an effective tool because it established rapport and provided an easier means for the participants and me to communicate about the events we had both witnessed. It was interesting to find out whether the student teachers recognized the same challenges in the lesson or perceived the same situations and interactions in different ways. The content of the semi-structured interviews was based on the observation of the student teachers' practicum, and were held directly after each observed lesson, at the end of a day's lessons, or during the intermission (according to convenience).
Reflective diaries	Reading the student teachers' reflective diaries allowed me to understand how they reflected on their experiences in the classroom and on the other events occurring in the school. It allowed me to observe how the knowledge they had acquired contributed to the evolution of their ideas and thinking regarding how to solve the challenges they encountered in each lesson. I could also look further into how they understood the feedback they received and what comments they focused on.
Participants' Vignette	It helped me as a researcher to understand each participant's experience and each individual's perspective of teaching. It also exposed how student teachers' personal prospects and life experiences persuaded them to be a teacher and evolve.

4.6.3 Research schedule

As explained in the previous section, the student teachers were observed and interviewed three times during the main study. Lecturers and mentors were interviewed after the final classroom observations. Table 4.6 below shows the schedule of classroom observations and interviews of all participants, carried out between February and April 2016.

Table 4-6 Schedule of Classroom Observations and Interviews to all participants

Student Teacher	Months (February to April)		
	1 st Observation and interview	2 nd Observation and interview	3 rd Observation and interview
Arina	Feb (week2)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
Bavani	Feb (week2)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
Chua	Feb (week2)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
Dania	Feb (week2)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
Emylia	Feb (week2)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
Fauziah	Feb (week1)	March (week 2)	April (week2)
Gina	Feb (week1)	March (week 2)	April (week2)
Hayati	Feb (week1)	March (week 2)	April (week2)
Iman	Feb (week1)	March (week 2)	April (week2)
Jamal	Feb (week1)	March (week 2)	April (week2)
Ms Yasmin (mentor teacher)			April (week1)
Mr Soon (mentor teacher)			April (week1)
Mrs Lee (mentor teacher)			April (week2)
Mr Raja (supervisor)			April (week2)

4.7 The Process of Data Analysis

The first stage of the transcribing process began with the making of 33 audio recordings, which consisted of the interviews with fourteen participants, held during the three phases of practicum. All of the ten student teachers were interviewed after each of their three classroom observations. Three mentor teachers and a supervisor were also interviewed once.

The data obtained during the interviews was transcribed and then analysed according to the aforementioned research questions and related themes. The transcripts were analysed with the help of specialized software (NVivo) (Richards, 2006), which assisted me in identifying the common patterns and persistent themes in the student teachers' and their mentors' answers in over 120 pages of double-spaced transcripts. The transcripts of each of the interviews was inserted into the programme separately. After that, they were read and searched carefully for repeatedly emerging themes, which allowed information to be sorted into subcategories, or "nodes". Similar to the approach suggested by McCulloch (2009), I created a tentative list of potentially important and persistent themes myself, but then started categorizing the answers with the help of the NVivo software, while at the same time paying attention to other issues that consistently emerged. Such an approach helped me to focus on my research questions, but, at the same time, to avoid ignoring the potentially important issues for which I had not been initially looking.

The texts of the interviews were coded with the use of "free nodes", or the highlighting of specific parts of the text which were of interest, before "coding" them under a special name, such as "general reflection", "reflective skills", "problems in the classroom", "language of instruction" and "practicum" (see Appendix 5). Over the course of the coding process, these categories were edited and revised several times in order to ensure they accurately reflected the content of the answers. The process of going back and forth between examining the original themes and subthemes (which were initially developed according to the research questions and interviews,) and the transcript and its quotes was essential as it allowed consistencies to be detected, in addition to new, unexpected subthemes to emerge. Repetition of this careful process of categorization allowed themes and subthemes to be added, refined, accepted or rejected, and potential subthemes to be highlighted for further consideration. Similarly, the names of each category were reassessed and at times had to be broken down into two separate themes; for example, what was initially coded under "general reflection" was later subdivided into "positive experiences" and "negative experiences").

Also, it was found that many comments made by the participants could be coded as more than one node. For example, a single comment could be classified as “problems in the classroom”, “language of instruction”, and “negative experiences” (see Appendix 6). A comparison was also made between the themes and codes emerging out of the Nvivo data analysis (see Appendix 7 for the percentage scores which emerged during analysis) and the themes and codes emerging out of the manual data analysis. These were later reviewed by my fellow PhD colleagues in an effort to ensure that none of the themes and subthemes were redundant, and to ensure that no theme or subtheme had gone undetected.

The final set of themes and subthemes that came out of this comparison are presented in Chapter 5. Once I had determined this final set of themes and was content with the ways in which they reflected the transcripts, I arranged the themes according to the initial research questions. As in the previous stage of analysis, this stage also required much revision and rearrangement, as my initial understanding of the way in which the themes reflect the questions was somewhat challenged by the actual analysis results. The approach offered by Kaefer, Roper and Singha (2015) could be of use as it suggests multi-level coding with the help of software such as NVivo. This is in line with McCulloch (2009), in so far as I found that the issues, I predicted to be important were sometimes mentioned only briefly, while issues I had not even considered turned out to be prominent in all interviews. These differences largely informed my analysis and interpretation, as they urged me to reconsider my initial stance and to reflect upon the reasons why my initial understanding of the issue was different. The researcher’s observational notes were not included in the NVivo analysis because these notes were mostly used to complement and direct the questions posed during the post-observation interviews. The notes did not comment on the data and focussed on potential issues to explore at post-observation interviews.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Considering ethical questions is crucial when engaging in research. My research was informed by BERA (2011) Ethical Guidelines standards, but I also reviewed the academic literature for a more in-depth understanding of the most urgent ethical issues in qualitative research and with the aim of strengthening my own ethical stance as a researcher. The BERA guidelines have recently been updated in a 4th edition, i.e. BERA (2018). Bridges (2012) argues that following the ethical guidelines can have an ambiguous influence on academic independence, which researchers should consider. For example, in some cultures scientific communities are reluctant, or downright offended, when asked to sign consent forms for

participating in research, as this is viewed not as a standard ethical procedure but rather as a sign of mistrust and disrespect. Thus, my every step must be examined through not only the lens of the ethical guidelines, but also through a perspective informed by the actual educational realities found in Malaysia – something which led me to exercise what Bridges (2012) calls “situational judgment”.

In accordance with BERA (2011), the following ethical markers regarding the relationship with participants were considered, the voluntary informed consent as well as openness and disclosure have been negotiated. The terms of participation and the nature of the research were fully disclosed to the participants. Although BERA (2011) indicates that sometimes research requires non-disclosure, deception, or subterfuge, these strategies were not adopted in this study. As mentioned above, all of the participants were free to withdraw at any time and were under no obligation to remain in the study unless they themselves wished to stay. No children or members of vulnerable population groups participated in the study.

In addition, incentives were not used to encourage participants to engage in the research. While this might not detriment participation per se, I recognized that student teachers may be uncomfortable with such an imbalanced power dynamic. It was also recognized that the use of incentives may resemble extortion; this would be problematic in a context where student teachers are required to provide personal information and speak in detail about their relationships with their mentors and the amount of help they were receiving. Incentives were therefore deemed inappropriate. To encourage student teachers to feel at ease and able to disclose critical or negative information as readily as they might disclose positive information, I also reminded the participants that the data from the study was accessible only to me, and that their mentors or supervisors could not gain any access to it.

Protecting the privacy of the participants is a key task for every researcher, according to the standards of BERA and other research associations, such as the British Psychological Association. As previously disclosed, all student teachers were assigned culturally sensitive pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity and protect their privacy. All information received from the participants was kept in encrypted archives under a password. There was no need to override privacy and confidentiality policies and disclose the personal information to third parties.

Considering all of the above, the process of ethical approval began with two applications to two different committees. The first was submitted to the University of

Glasgow's College of Science in November 2015, and the second was submitted to the Education Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Office. Explanations were provided as to the purpose of the research and the ethical approach and methodology employed. According to Malaysian policy, any research conducted in Malaysia requires ethical approval from the university or educational institution. This task proved to be a challenge as the university committee requested an approval letter from the country in which the research would be conducted, and, at the same time, the Education Planning Unit waited for the approval of the university committee. After further explanation was provided to the Education Planning Unit Committee, a pre-approval letter was granted, to be attached to the university committee, and the original letter was given by hand at the Ministry office. The process of obtaining approval from both committees took three months. The second stage involved seeking approval from the Malaysia Research Department and the Teacher Education Institute (headquarters). The third stage took place in Malaysia, where I was required to obtain approval from the State Education Offices overseeing the schools in their districts.

The Technical Teaching Education Institute is located in Negeri Sembilan State, close to the Selangor State border. Two of the schools featuring in the study are therefore situated in Selangor State, and another four schools are situated in Negeri Sembilan State. This is unusual as each teaching education institute typically sends its student teachers to schools located within the same state. This meant that in my case, I had to apply for approval from two different states. A more detailed representation of the ethical approval process for the main study can be found below:

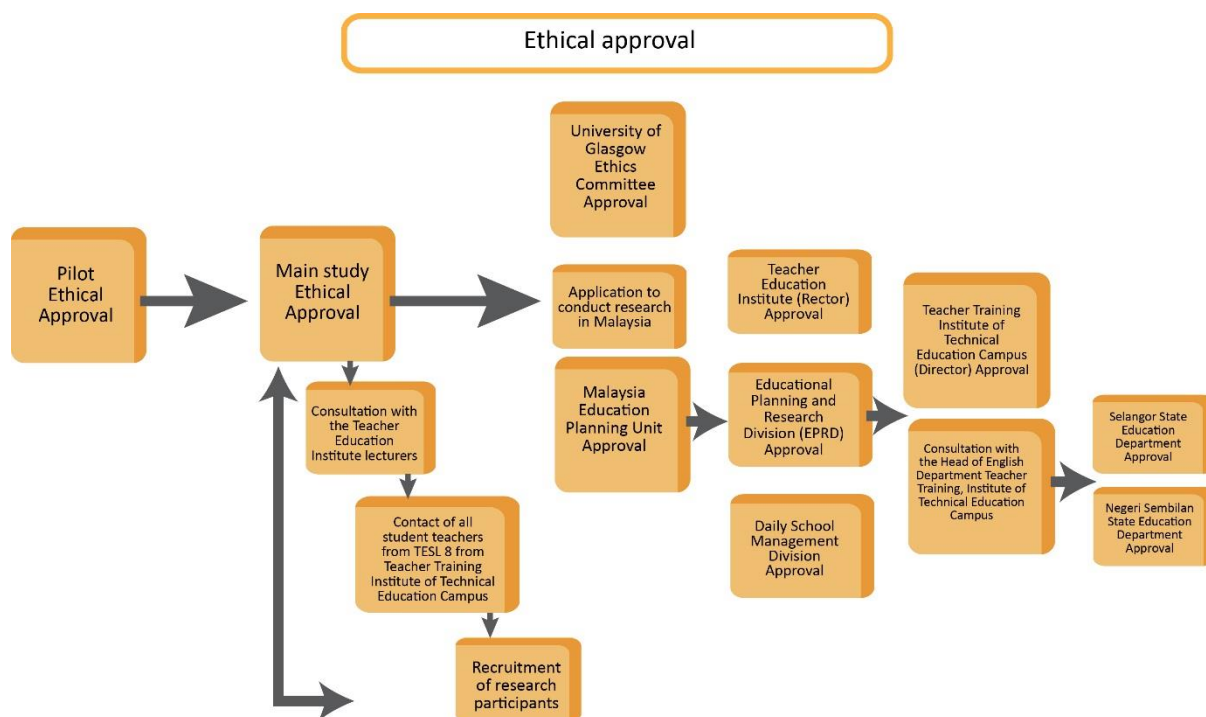


Figure 4-4 The main study ethical approval

4.9 Summary of Chapter 4

The study embraced a qualitative research methodology, which included classroom observation, post-observation interview, analysis of reflective diaries, and vignettes on the participants' backgrounds. After the initial piloting of Skype interviews, a combination of face-to-face methods was deemed the optimal choice in the attempt to address the formulated research questions. The combination of classroom observation and post-observation interviews allows comparisons to be made of student teachers' performances and their self-assessments. For all three phases of the practicum, semi-structured interview questions were drafted before the observations. During the first phase, after each classroom observation, the participants were firstly interviewed using pre-drafted questions. They were then asked other questions, subject to revision in accordance with the events observed in the classroom. During the second and third phases, questions were drafted during the observation, taking into account the relevant information which had emerged from earlier interviews. These questions were later used to examine the weekly reflective diaries in search of consistencies, inconsistencies, or other connections. Answers to these questions also helped in the formation of the questions to be asked in the next round of interviews; if a line of questioning proved to yield interesting data, it could be pursued. Alternatively, if a line of questioning evoked little response from the participants, it could be abandoned altogether, or the approach could be changed.

According to Khan (2017), the classroom observation used in her research complemented the other methods she used. This would appear to justify using the tool suitable for my research, as it is suggested that the observation opens up the way for more in-depth interview questions, from the first phase through to the third phase. The observation also inspired me as a researcher to ask the participants more personal questions during their third phase observation as a means of getting to know them at a stage when they felt comfortable and relaxed. While I had also asked them a few personal questions in the first phase, their responses discouraged me from proceeding further.

The analysis of the student teachers' reflective diaries provided additional information about their reflective skills, as well as about the design of the reflective activities to be undertaken during the teaching practicum. Lastly, vignettes were used to describe the participants and their backgrounds, to provide more insights into their socioeconomic status, their personal beliefs regarding the teaching profession, and their reasons for becoming teachers. These vignettes also integrated well into the investigation, as they provided first-hand accounts of the student teachers' different perceptions of the teaching profession, as well as of their individual priorities and strategies.

These methods were chosen after reviewing educational research and conducting a pilot study into the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of student teachers. The results of the pilot study showed that the interview would provide more useful data if supplemented by other qualitative research methods, such as lesson observation. Conducting lesson observations and follow-up interviews with the student teachers made it possible to compare their actual performances with their impressions and reflections. Additionally, the analysis of the participants' reflective diaries revealed the nature and structure of their educational reflective activities and contributed to understanding their self-awareness levels. It allowed the relevant implications for teaching professionals and the integration of the participants' subjective experiences to be formulated into a coherent system, which later enabled generalizations to be made in the main findings.

The following chapter will present the findings of the study regarding the research questions. These findings will be drawn from the interview recordings, as well as from the student teachers' reflective diaries and their vignettes.

5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This research aimed to investigate student teacher development in pre-service English language teacher education in Malaysia. The study indicated that the methods and ideas of reflective practice can play a crucial part in the endeavour to bridge the gap between theory and practice in teacher education. The study showed a general tendency for the student teachers, throughout the course of their practicums, to reflect more and more, and to be guided in practice by the conclusions they reached through reflection. Given the general positive trajectory toward reflection, it could be that after graduating, student teachers will increasingly turn to reflective practice as their career progresses – thus building what Schön (1983) described as “reflection-in-practice”, or a habit of reflecting in action (during actual practice) and on action (after the practice is completed) in professional circumstances. Practicums for student teachers tend to include some elements of self-reflection (most notably, journaling and one-on-one talks with mentors and supervisors where students are asked to reflect upon their lessons). From these activities, elements of self-reflection and themes emerged.

In the following three sections I will discuss the findings of the main study. After briefly introducing the participating student teachers, the results of NVivo analysis will be presented, and discussion of the themes which emerged during the analysis will be distributed along the research questions in according detail. The chapter concludes with a short summary of the research findings with implications of the study following in the next chapter, ‘Discussion of Results’.

During the pilot study (described in more detail in Chapter Four), I conducted semi-structured interviews through Skype with six student teachers. The findings of the pilot study suggested that student teachers’ successful performance was connected with both an understanding of pedagogical content knowledge and evolving reflective skills. In short, successful performance was associated with an ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice: being able to adapt the curriculum to a real-life audience, handle difficulties in the classroom, and determine means of self-improvement. However, further review of recent studies on pre-service education suggested that other factors may play an equally important part in teacher training. They may include adherence to principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1977), “peer mentoring” (Ambrosetti, 2012), relevant teaching education programs

(Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006; Ulvik & Smith, 2011), and beliefs and perceptions regarding the teacher's work (Curtis, 2012). As a result, the research questions for the main study, as well as the questions for semi-structured interview, were redesigned and expanded to address these additional issues. Consequently, the participating students and mentors were asked to reflect upon these additional topics, as well as engage in critical reflection of their self-growth and the barriers they believed may have hindered them.

The main study was designed to further investigate the ways in which student teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice with the use of reflective practice. While the pilot study focused more on the concept of pedagogical content knowledge, the main study expanded and deepened its research questions by focusing in more detail on student teachers' reflective skills, how they self-assess through reflection, and how they develop their ability to look critically not only at their past mistakes, but at potential future improvement as well. The main study also aimed to find out whether student teachers may need more theory, more practice or a combination of both.

As described in Chapter 4, the methods used for the study include classroom observation, the semi-structured interview and student teachers' reflective diaries. The study included ten student teachers, all of who were studying at Teacher Education Institute Malaysia (located in Negeri Sembilan), three mentor teachers and a supervisor. In order to present each student teacher's background, I used a vignette approach – a full description of the vignettes can be found in Appendix 2. In this case, the vignette required the participants to tell a little about themselves, to describe their teaching experience at that point, to describe their motivations and aspirations regarding teaching profession, and to share their impressions about the practicum and the school (see Appendix 2). All participants were assigned pseudonyms which will be used throughout the chapter to protect their privacy. Arina, Bavani, Dania, Hayati, and Iman conducted their lessons in rural schools, while Chua, Emylia, Fauziah, Gina, and Jamal were placed in suburban schools (A summary of information of participants and their schools can be seen in Table 4.3 in Chapter Four)

5.2 Main Study Findings

The answers of the student teachers provided over the course of three semi-structured interviews, were analyzed with the assistance of NVivo software (along with the interview transcripts of mentors and supervisors). Initially, I defined themes used in the analysis, relying on those that emerged during the pilot study, as some of them remained relevant.

Thus, for the preliminary analysis I coded each interview transcript according to these themes. However, I soon noticed other prominent themes and subthemes that recurred throughout the interviews and began to consider them. Following the example of Mayne (2012), I allowed these themes to emerge naturally even though I did not examine or aim to assess their importance at first. As I continued coding the interviews, my preliminary list of themes had to be updated. Also, some subthemes that initially seemed prominent had to be redesigned, moved to a different group of subthemes, or dropped altogether, as they did not quite fit the purposes of the current study (although they may certainly be useful in future research). After defining all themes and subthemes (a full list of the themes can be found in Appendix 3) I created three tables to show the links between them and to address each research question separately. As a result, the themes were framed in the following way (Figure 5.1)

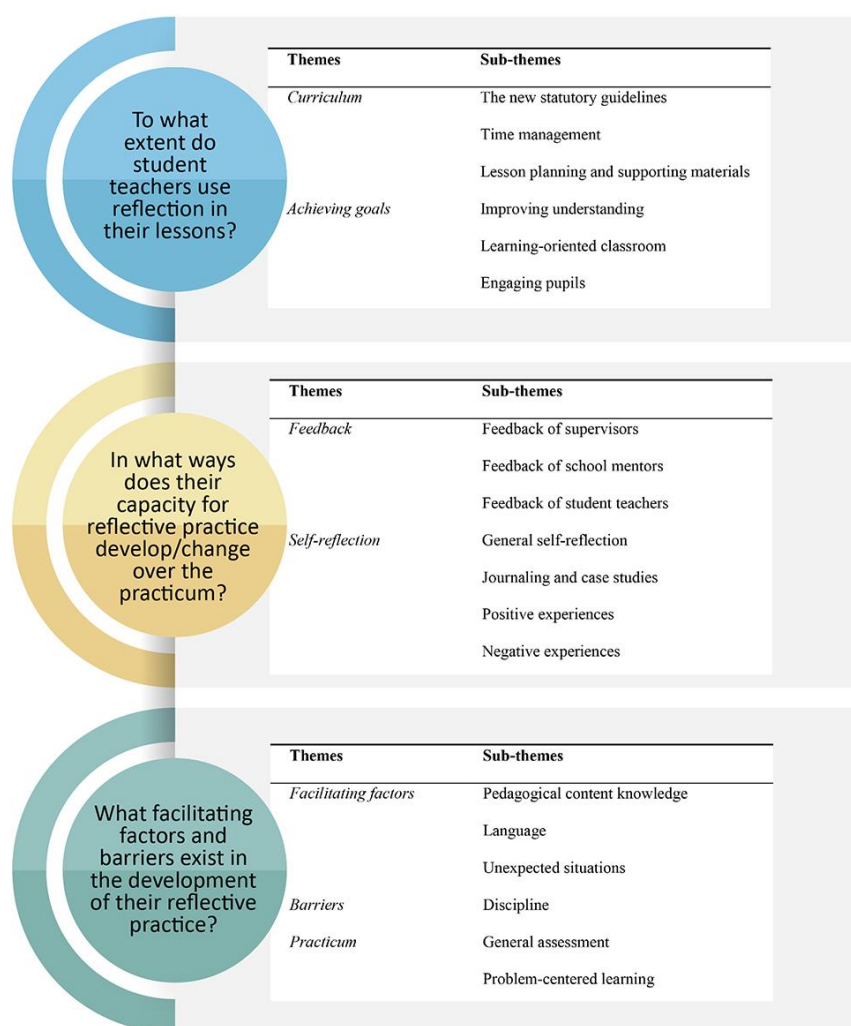


Figure 5-1 Themes and subthemes emerging from analysis

In the next three sections, I will discuss the findings around the three topics aligned with the research questions posed above: the differences between lesson planning and lesson implementation, the development of teaching and reflective skills over the course of the teaching practicum, and the facilitating factors and barriers which emerged during the acquisition of reflective skills. Each section will contain the themes and subthemes that arose during analysis, a brief overview of the answers provided by student teachers with regards to each subtheme, and a summary of key issues that came to light during analysis.

5.2.1 Use of reflective practices during the lessons

Overall, several questions were asked in order to prompt the participants to reflect upon their perception of their lessons and preparation. During the first set of interviews, the questions touched upon various subjects, such as the participants' impression about how well they could follow their own plans; the connection between lesson plans and the curriculum, and the use of supporting materials. During the following interviews, the questions related to the student teachers' awareness and use of the concept of pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge – both of which are crucial when turning theoretical knowledge into practical and pedagogically sound content, appropriate for the pupils. Such design of the questions aimed to highlight how (and whether) reflective practices became more prominent in the lessons as the student teachers moved forward. In this section, the key concept was reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983), as student teachers were required to reflect upon their usual teaching practices and their basic elements (such as following the curriculum, lesson planning, time management, and use of supporting materials).

Consequently, several issues related to the first research question, which emerged from the analysis and were grouped under the following themes and subthemes:

Table 5-1 Reflection in lesson planning and implementation (themes and subthemes emerging from transcripts)

Themes	Sub-themes
Curriculum	a1) The new statutory guidelines a2) Time management a3) Lesson planning and supporting materials
Achieving goals	b1) Improving understanding b2) Learning-oriented classroom b3) Engaging pupils

a) Curriculum

Comments made by student teachers, mentors and supervisors regarding the new statutory curricular guidelines were grouped under the subtheme “the New Statutory Guidelines.” This title was thought appropriate given that the participants expressed concerns specifically over how the curriculum was implemented and the lack training provided but did not criticize the content of the curriculum.

a1) The New Statutory Guidelines

Currently, all Malaysian public schools work under the same, governmentally approved curriculum, Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, shortly known as KSSR. It was first introduced in 2011 for students in Standard 1, 2 and 3 (phase by phase) and 2014 for students in Standard 4, 5 and 6 (see Appendix 6 for the circular letter). This is a relatively new curriculum, which places more focus on specific subjects, including English. School mentors who were interviewed for the purposes of this study positively commented on this curriculum, pointing out its flexibility which allowed the teacher to choose whatever materials he or she finds necessary.

The curriculum was mentioned as a primary source of information for effective lesson planning – as Gina explained, it helped her “to know what should be in the lesson, what to write in the learning objectives and what I must achieve in the end of the lesson”. Similarly, Arina said that the school provided her with access to all necessary materials: “the syllabus, yearly plan and curriculum, we downloaded it from [the school] website on the 1st day we came here.” Bavani mentioned that her school had an updated curriculum in comparison to the one provided by the Teacher Education Institute and that it was more flexible and comfortable to use. Emylia argued that she followed the curriculum but still needed to add “real-life experience” to make the content more relatable for the pupils. Dania said that curriculum was her main reference point for journaling and creating lesson plans.

However, not all student teachers knew the specific requirements of the curriculum well during the practicum. As it was mentioned above, new curriculum (KSSR) is a relatively new installment, which is why not all schools are aware of it and the teachers lack relevant information about the new aspects of the teaching process. When asked to comment on curriculum, a supervisor from Teacher Education Institute, Mr. Raja assessed it positively in comparison with the previous editions of the curriculum but said that it was very poorly implemented by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia:

Not all of us lecturers are mastering the new curriculum; whether we do or not depends on whether we take the initiative to understand it. If teachers complain that they are not being properly introduced to the new curriculum, what about us, the lecturers? We are not being properly introduced either! Yet we have to make full use of the materials given to us by the Ministry of Education and make sure the lecturers who attended the curriculum courses share all the information (Interview with Mr. Raja, question 6)

Similar criticism was shared by a school mentor Ms. Yasmine, who argued that they only had five days to receive the information about the curriculum from the headmistress, and that it would have been better to create a YouTube channel or another way of presenting the curriculum to share it with the teaching community faster and more efficiently.

Student teachers mostly shared the ideas stated above. For example, when asked about it, Dania replied: “I don’t know much about [the curriculum] as it was only introduced to us in a day and we have to discover it by ourselves”. Similarly, Arina mentioned that she “doesn’t know” the name of the curriculum that her school uses. However, the same participant positively commented on the level of awareness of the curriculum, saying that the school provided her with necessary information for her class’s level of proficiency. Both Arina and Chua positively commented on changes in the curriculum, while Hayati stated that “21st century style learning is very helpful for me to keep pupils busy.”

The need to follow the curriculum and to use a specific textbook during the lesson was met with certain complications. For example, Hayati recalled needing to teach the pupils how to expand the sentence into a paragraph. She expanded and updated the topic herself for the purposes of the lesson, but it turned out that the pupils could not even construct a sentence in the first place, although by that point they could have been expected to do so judging by the curriculum. The same complications were revealed by Dania, who called the curriculum “too tough” for her class. Similarly, Bavani said that the textbook and the curriculum topics proved too difficult for her pupils:

The text in the textbook is quite lengthy and wordy, so it will be only suitable for modern schools, like city schools, not for rural school, like this one. The teacher needs to work twice to modify the text into a simpler form before using the same text to the students – even the comprehension questions in the textbook (3rd interview with Bavani, question 13).

It is notable how one of the participants, Chua, positively commented on the current educational practices in Malaysia:

The Malaysian education system has improved so much, because now they incorporated the... implementation of 21st century teaching; higher order thinking skills approach, they encourage students to think out of the box... so, I think it has improved so as to be equivalent to other foreign countries (3rd interview with Chua, question 7)

Nonetheless, when asked whether she received the knowledge about the 21st century technologies and techniques from the teaching practicum, Chua answered negatively, saying that she had to look them up on the Internet herself.

a2) Time management

Comments on the developmental aspect of conducting the lessons (most notably keeping up with the lesson plan in terms of time) were grouped under “Time management.” Virtually all participants experienced problems with time management during the lesson. Bavani said that this topic was a part of her training during the practicum and that they were taught how to manage time for various stages of the lesson. Still, some student teachers took too much time on less important activities and did not finish explaining the content, while others did not prepare any extra material to engage the pupils in case they finished work too early. As Arina recalled, “.... as you can see in my lesson plan, I planned how many minutes for each phase, so that I would not overrun. There was one time when I took half an hour just focusing on set induction.” Sometimes difficulties with time management were not the student teacher’s fault, but it was still necessary to readjust – for example, Iman recalled the lesson which started ten minutes later because of some school disturbance and thus disrupted the first ten minutes of her planned activities. A comparable situation was described by Gina who said that it was often necessary to cut time from one stage of the lesson and to add it to another stage.

Time management was also mentioned not only in the interviews, but in the journal⁵ entries made by the participants. For example, Dania dedicated the whole entry from her first week of practicum to her inability to complete all parts of the lessons in time. She recalled that her supervisor pointed it out and asked her to revise her lesson plans accordingly in the future and “cut the unnecessary activities.”

For some student teachers, time management became less problematic as the practicum progressed, while others continued to highlight it as a possible area for improvement. For example, Gina stated that in order to adapt to the situation in the

classroom, she could take up extra five minutes and later subtract this time from one of the activities.

a3) Lesson planning and supporting materials

Two topics that came up during the discussion of lesson preparation were grouped together as “Lesson planning and supporting materials.” Student teachers reported various degrees of struggling to plan lessons effectively, although all of them mentioned using textbooks and curriculum for reference. Arina stated that even despite writing everything down, she tended to forget what she planned at the beginning of each lesson. Chua regretted not having more exercises to give to her pupils. In turn, Emylia shared that she was allowed to have a flexible lesson plan – eighty percent of planned and scripted material and twenty percent for “flexible” content depending on the situation in each particular classroom. Fauziah said that she had to “go extra miles” designing her lessons plans, as she needed to both teach a skill and to engage a classroom of twenty-four boys.

All students used a wide variety of props and supporting materials for their lessons, whilst hardly any of them referred to using only the textbook and the curriculum. Only Dania recalled having only textbook material for one of her lessons, commenting that in the future, she “should always be ready because it’s not enough to use only textbook as teaching aid” (Dania’s journal entry #4). The materials included YouTube videos, projector and paper copies. Gina revealed struggling with the need to look for additional materials online, saying that it took up too much of her time and that she felt exhausted and helpless:

...we tend to spend out most of the time on things online. As trainee teachers, we need to look for lots of information. So, when it comes to teaching, when it comes to entering the class, we get very tired, and somehow, we tend to be very angry with the pupils, without reason, because we are tired. So, I...I don’t know the best tool to improve this situation is, I don’t think the technology that we have nowadays could help if we can’t keep up with it. We need someone to help us (3rd interview with Gina, question 18)

Another common concern shared by the interviewees is that they had to pay for the materials themselves and had no financial support from their respective schools. However, Arina stated that, “I bought them myself, because I think that they are very necessary for all teachers nowadays, because this is 21st century, so, all teachers need these things I think... and... and they actually make our work easier”. Chua mentioned that she needed to provide additional worksheets if the textbook material or dictionary was too difficult for pupils.

b) Achieving goals

Under this theme the participants' observations on achieving various academic and communicative goals are considered. The discussion is focused around three subthemes, namely 'Improving understanding', 'Learner-oriented classroom' and "Engaging pupils."

b1) Improving understanding

One of the key tasks for all student teachers was to make sure that the pupils had understood the material properly and had been able to show good academic results. Therefore, a separate subtheme covers the comments made about the ways in which student teachers tried to improve the understanding of concepts. Most participants showed concern for the pupils' understanding, stating that it was among their primary goals. Some of them mentioned using worksheets or additional exercises to check whether pupils understand the content of the lesson (Arina), while others tried to adjust the difficulty of the exercises if the pupils struggled or to find more interesting activities (Bavani) or adapt the content of the textbook (Chua). In turn, Dania thought that challenging exercises helped to reveal pupils' problems better. Many problems with understanding were related to language of instruction, which is why some student teachers revealed that they had to translate English words and sentences even though it is forbidden (Bavani explicitly said that her supervisor deducted marks from her every time she used Malay instead of English even though her pupils struggled understanding it).

b2) Learner-oriented classroom

Since one of the goals of Malaysian teacher education is to overcome the teacher-centeredness and shift towards a more learner-oriented environment, issues relevant to creating a learner-oriented classroom were discussed and later grouped under the subtheme of the same name. Most student teachers argued in favour of a learner-oriented classroom. Their answers made it clear that many of them respected their pupils and tried to make them less shy with making mistakes and more comfortable asking questions. For example, Arina stated that she often tried calling her students by names "to make them feel more present and loved". However, the same participant said that her classroom was "teacher-centred", although she did not elaborate on that. Such remarks are consistent with findings by Mayne (2012), who observed that many student teachers tend to emulate the teaching style of their educators which is usually teacher-centred. Bavani said that she aimed towards a more student-centred environment because the students liked it better that way:

“I try to make each lesson and activity more to student-centred like, just now we did run dictation, used set inductions, all that so that they... I think that they will be more active and enjoy if it is student-centred” (2nd interview with Bavani, question 10).

Although it led to poorer discipline, Bavani did not view it as a problem, noting that her pupils were very afraid of their school mentor who preferred strict discipline and that she did not mind them opening more during her lessons, even though it meant that they would be noisier. She also added that student-centred approach was reportedly easier for her, as it meant “less work” for a teacher.

Chua argued in favour of a more flexible approach, switching between teacher- and learner-centred approaches where necessary:

...we have a presentation stage and then we have grading stage where we will introduce the vocabulary first. It is more teacher-centred because I’m the one who is providing them knowledge and the information. But then, when it comes to the end of the lesson, for example, at the production stage, then it will become student-centred, as they will have to solve the task by themselves (2nd interview with Chua, question 13).

Similarly, Dania said that various activities require either a teacher-centred or a learner-centred approach, so she had to switch between them during the lesson. Emylia, however, credited sustaining a learner-centred approach as having helped her with her classroom stage fright. She recalled that during her first practicum she had difficulty teaching her pupils, particularly when her class was being observed. Later she realised that adopting a learner-centred approach really helped her to deliver the knowledge to her pupils as it served to encourage them to participate:

Even today, sometimes, I don’t believe I made it to this point with my stage fright. I was so scared during my first practicum. I did not know how to implement my lesson plan. I remembered this one piece of feedback which said that my lesson plan was way better than my teaching. Now I feel comfortable teaching my pupils and I love preparing fun and challenging activities for them to participate in. At the same time I will not face the problems teacher-centredness causes. (2nd interview with Emylia, question 8).

Schweisfurth (2013a) recognises the many practical difficulties associated with successfully implementing learner-centred education. On the one hand, learner-centred approaches are said to be highly effective in various contexts within developed countries. It enables educators to make adjustments according to the needs of students, ensuring the timely recognition of their needs and preferences. On the other hand, the successful implementation

of such an approach presupposes and relies on corresponding adjustments at global, national, and local levels (Schweisfurth, 2013a). However, it must be recognised that educational environments within developing countries are very different from that of developed ones. Educational institutions are not properly oriented towards the needs of learners, and the ultimate effects of such interventions may appear to be below the initial expectations. Further attention and elaboration on implementing learner-centred education within developing countries will be given later in the discussion chapter

b3) Engaging pupils

Successfully engaging all pupils regardless of the level of proficiency and discipline usually requires practice and preparation, and most student teachers addressed it in their answers – which were reflected in this subtheme. Arina argued that pair work was the preferable style of class engagement for her, as both individual and group work proved bad for her active, energetic pupils who quickly started misbehaving. In turn, Dania tried to engage the pupils with the content by making them think of specific things and places at school, so that they could relate English words to their real-life experiences and memories. Iman commented that she wanted to make the content of the lesson more personally relatable for the pupils:

I don't want the learning to be somehow very theory-like. So, I...I want them to learn through songs. So, I think with songs especially music, they can learn faster, and I can help them to use the vocabulary and making English as a fun language to learn (3rd interview with Iman, question 14).

A persistent problem with pupil engagement was related to the language of instruction, which was briefly discussed above. However, all student teachers revealed different methods of handling the lack of understanding or interest in English language. Arina used pictures, audios with pronunciation, and videos to illustrate English words, trying to turn to the class translator only in the most desperate cases. She argued that it was crucial to engage the students during the lesson, as “they do not practice at home, so this is the only time they can practice the language”. As it was mentioned, dictionary (either dual language or English only) proved ineffective for the students, as they did not engage well with it. Bavani recalled being “in their shoes”, explaining how she studied English herself and how the teacher had to translate everything. Emylia had to set up a reward system for pupils to speak in English, as otherwise they did not want to participate in the lesson. In turn, Chua argued that it was necessary to persist with questions and try to make pupils voice their concerns without being afraid of punishment or confusion:

All the time, every class, my students stay quiet. Maybe, they don't understand what I teach, or they are afraid to ask, or my lesson is not interesting. I don't know what their problems are. So, maybe I should...I should talk to them slowly and maybe I should...I should tell them that it's okay to come and ask me because there's nothing wrong with asking or telling me the truth, I should let them know it's not wrong to ask your teacher a question if you don't understand. I should emphasize that I am not going to scold them if they ask me questions or correct me if I make a mistake. I am their teacher, I will help them. (3rd interview with Chua, question 6)

Overall, the achievement of goals discussed under the three subthemes above were influenced by the student teachers' abilities to find a balance between learning outcomes and actual situations in the classroom (thus improving rapport and understanding). During the interviews, and in the student teachers' reflective diaries, it was evident that reflection frequently occurred when student teachers detected problems in their pupils' understanding. Subsequent efforts were then made to make the learning material more personally relatable to the pupils, leading the student teachers to consider the pupils' background and everyday lives to find appropriate activities and exercises for them. The research presented clear evidence of the student teachers' attempts to better understand their pupils' needs and prepare the content of their lessons accordingly. However, whether this constitutes a veritable shift towards a learner-centred environment is difficult to say; whilst the student teachers demonstrated good intentions and a desire to place their pupils at the centre of their practice, when faced with circumstances in the classroom which concerned them, they often resorted to teacher-centred methods. This inconsistency was apparent in the classroom observations; in some cases student teachers appeared to adopt a new strategy mid-lesson, switching from a learner-centred to a teacher-centred teaching style in an effort to salvage classes they perceived to be going badly. The student teachers' unstable relationship with learner-centredness reflects a similar ambiguity to the learner-centred approaches to senior teachers take to mentoring.

5.2.2 Development and Change of the Capacity for Reflective Practice

According to Kelly and Cherkowski (2015), professional learning communities depend on three key factors: collaboration, relationships, and reflective practice. During their practice, student teachers may find themselves to be parts of a professional community for the first time in their lives. Therefore, fruitful collaboration, respectful relationships with senior colleagues and fellow students, and self-reflection become crucial for effective professional growth and improved self-reflection. During the interviews, the first two factors were addressed in questions related to feedback. The answers of the participants helped to

reveal whether their relationships with colleagues were indeed respectful and whether there was collaboration between student teachers, their supervisors and especially school mentors and school authorities.

In turn, the reflective aspect of young teachers' practice was prominent in their answers. As a result, it was possible to define three subthemes which would cover general reflective comments, journaling practices and analysis of case studies, and self-analysis of positive and negative events – as suggested in sources on reflective practices in teacher education (Moon, 2005).

Table 5-2 Development of reflective capacity (themes reported by participants)

Themes	Sub-themes
Feedback	a1) Feedback of supervisors a2) Feedback of school mentors a3) Feedback of student teachers
Self-reflection	b1) General self-reflection b2) Journaling and case studies b3) Positive experiences b4) Negative experiences

a) Feedback

Feedback was a prominent topic during the interviews, which is why the comments made by participants regarding feedback are grouped here under the theme of the same name. However, it was necessary to distinguish between the sources of feedback, so the subthemes were defined according to the groups of people who provide it – supervisors, school mentors, or student teachers themselves. According to Ulvik and Smith (2011), many student teachers tend to view good mentoring as the main thing which defines a good teaching practicum. However, this was not frequently the case with student teachers.

a1) Feedback of Supervisors

The first subtheme describes comments made about establishing contact with supervisors and getting their feedback (or failing to do so). According to Ulvik and Smith (2011), many student teachers tend to view good mentoring as the main thing which defines a good teaching practicum. However, this was rarely the case with student teachers. A few

participants explicitly stated that they were afraid of their supervisors' comments and were reluctant to share the information about the lessons with them. Arina, for example, stated that she expected her supervisor to be "someone who is knowledgeable, who will share experiences that, I think, would motivate me to become better English teacher". As a matter of fact, she was scared to talk with her supervisor about her problems and concerns: "I'm afraid she will have a bad impression of me, because she is quite particular." Bavani was also extremely nervous due to receiving feedback, despite revealing later that all feedback was usually positive. She shared that in one particular situation, when she needed to negotiate the use of English and Malay during the lesson, she turned for help to her friends and her school mentor, but not to her supervisor (whom she described as too strict). Fauziah stated that she was "ashamed" of asking for guidance: "I'm in my final year and this is my last practicum. I don't want to create problems; I just want to finish this successfully".

Indeed, during the second phase Emylia stated that she appreciated all feedback a lot, as it helped her to become a better teacher:

... from the comments by the lecturers and the teachers, I can indirectly make an assumption of what is really happening in the classroom and where am I weak at. So, I will take those comments to improve my teaching and learning process in that lesson (3rd interview with Emylia, question 4).

Not everyone shared the anxiety of their young colleagues – some student teachers simply mentioned how their supervisors suggested new activities or areas for improvement. Bavani was told that her lesson was more teacher-centered and that she had to move towards learner-centered orientation. Chua argued that her supervisors were "too good" because they did not criticize her lessons much: "the supervisors don't expect so much from you because you are still training". In turn, Dania specifically asked her supervisor for the evaluation of her weaknesses rather than strengths because "this is the most important thing that we need to know". Emylia directly worked together with two school teachers in order to tutor pupils who struggled with English. From her description, it seems that they were treating her as a young colleague, inviting her on meetings and discussions and advising her about several types of classroom issues (from discipline to conducting lessons). She also recalls being 'thankful' for the fact that senior teachers were around and showed an example of behavior in a difficult situation (a young boy refused to go into class and did not let go of his mother's hand). Although Emylia was 'taken aback' by this situation and did not know how to react, the teachers around her remained calm. In turn, when her students were misbehaving, Dania lost her patience with them but asked for a senior teacher's intervention and was provided with

advice to try using silent treatment on the pupils; as a result, she recorded her successful classroom control in her weekly reflective diaries (Dania, week 10 weekly diary entry).

Overall, such answers were in line with the research by Ulvik and Smith (2011) who observed that all student teachers have individual needs in terms of mentoring, while all mentors view their duty differently.

Supervisors who agreed to participate in the study also demonstrated a variety of opinions on the role of feedback and the exact ways in which it should be provided. An interview with Mr. Raja, who was Jamal's supervisor during the practicum, revealed his conflicted feelings about the student. He was extremely concerned with Jamal's reserved behavior and perceived lack of progress: "He just doesn't change; I can't see any progress in him since his second practicum. I was not his supervisor at his first practicum. Sometimes I feel like failing him. But I don't want to put myself in a difficult situation" (Interview with Mr. Raja, question 9). The reason for such concerns, according to the supervisor, was two-fold: both Jamal's reluctance to admit his own problems and his lack of success during the lessons since Jamal reportedly put on videos every lesson and just made pupils read from the blackboard.

Comments regarding more independence in thinking and decision-making were also made. For example, Mr. Raja argued that, while all student teachers are well-trained, their supervisors "are always there to help them but cannot spoon-feed them all the information, knowledge and experiences. They have to contribute to their own future."

a2) Feedback of School Mentors

Comments regarding relationships with school mentors and their feedback, as well as school mentors' perception of feedback necessary to young teachers, were grouped under "Feedback of school mentors." Difficulties were clearly identified regarding relationships with school mentors. Dania credited one of her fellow student teachers for "being brave" and directly talking to the school mentor. When asked to elaborate, she explained:

... some senior teachers are quite ermm... they don't really like to be disturbed. Some of them don't really want to talk to us or maybe it is just [my feeling]. The teachers' room is quite big and when they tease you, everyone can hear it... There was one time when I gave an idea on how to create more attractive teaching aid, and she [a school mentor] laughed so hard (1st interview with Dania, question 11).

Chua contended that her school mentor did not approve of how she shared and brainstormed ideas together with other student teachers, blaming her for allegedly not possessing original ideas. Such attitude of the school mentor can be explained by the observation made by Orland-Barak (2010) who argued that many mentors can be resistant to reflective practices and prefer students to simply do what they are told. In turn, Fauziah, whose negative experience with pupils was described above and the most troublesome in terms of discipline, recalled that she was told: “They’re simply kids, they didn’t mean it”.

At the same time, Arina and Chua positively described working with headmasters and headmistresses, as opposed to teachers. Emylia compared three school mentors she worked with during all three teaching practicums. Her first teacher was described as very good and understanding, while the second one was referred to as a very linear, strict person with conventional views. In turn, the third teacher turned out to be flexible and “relaxed”.

The perspective of school mentors sometimes created an interesting contrast with the experiences shared by their mentees. Both school mentors interviewed for the study said that student teachers were allowed to ask them any relevant questions even if they did not have to do anything with the lesson. This was because mentoring included providing all kinds of help. One mentor explained such an attitude to young teachers with the fact that she had been a student herself and remembered her own struggles and need for support.

Mr. Soon agreed that modern student teachers indeed could not blend well in the school environment:

...student teachers today don't blend in with the school's environment. That is a skill you need to have when you go to a new school; the lecturers can't teach this, it is your personality and how you talk to other teachers, how you get yourself involved in the school's activities. Although you are only a student teacher, you have to learn how to make full use of your surroundings (Interview with Mr. Soon, question 8).

Generally, Mr. Soon observed that “old” (his words) student teachers demonstrated a more passionate attitude toward their profession, love for their pupils and the material. Mr. Soon expressed satisfaction toward student teachers who engaged strongly in self-improvement and managed to overcome their weaknesses. For example, he acknowledged and praised the maturity and progress of student teacher Dania, commenting that she had

learned how to control her emotions better (early in her training she had revealed that pupils' misbehavior tended to make her feel sad and frustrated) and learned how to "show more love" to her students. He also added that he encouraged her to write in her reflective diary more, "so that she could learn from her experiences." Overall, it was notable how Mr. Soon used the same expression to characterize the relationship of mentors to student teachers as Mr. Raja, stating "they don't need to be spoon-fed everything."

In turn, Ms. Yasmine shared that she did not want to be a mentor for students at first. She said that the most challenging part of the mentoring for her was to make sure that the student teachers follow the curriculum, because if they could not complete their topics on time, she would be under excessive pressure to cover this material before the midterm exam. As a mentor, Ms. Yasmine seemed quite strict, arguing that while there were many energetic students who were eager to learn and many of those who could study well independently, some just did not show up and ask for any advice. This was what urged her to put very strict deadlines on student teachers and make them deliver necessary results. However, she added that she also urged her student to precipitate and to share whatever problems they have without the fear of being reprimanded or scolded.

Regarding Arina, Ms. Yasmine was very positive and said that there needed to be more students like her, as she was open and ready to help (although, similarly to Dania, she needed more control over her emotions in the classroom). However, she was concerned with Arina's low perception of herself and her emotional state which could hinder her performance:

... I always tell her, teachers never fail lessons, we just need improvement. I think she is worried about the supervisor's perception so much and trying to please him, I always encourage her to act natural, just imagine that the supervisor is not there during supervision. Maybe she is worried about marks after each observation, that is where she is pressuring herself and sometimes has high expectation on the students, and if she could not finish every component that she plans, she will panic and forget the flows of what she already planned. (Interview with Ms. Yasmine, question 25).

a3) Feedback of other Student Teachers (Peer Mentoring)

This subtheme is dedicated to comments on feedback provided by student teachers to each other. Experience of the practicum proved to be quite stressful for many student teachers, which is why they sought for a supportive community; as Chua stated, "We share our experiences. Sometimes we do cry, so we promise to have each other's back" Gina

said that she tended to discuss her problems with other students, rather than with supervisors or school mentors:

Usually I will, listen to my friends... my friend's recommendation; okay, how they do [it] for their pupils, and how can... how I can use their interventions in my classroom. Usually, I always discuss with my friends, okay, what to do... what to do, for this lesson (2nd interview with Gina, question 5)

However, in an especially distressing situation which left Gina very frustrated (her students had such a bad discipline that she could not conduct the lesson at all), she recalled asking both her supervisor and friends for help and receiving effective advice:

I met my friends, okay, all my friends, okay... what shall I do, my... my pupils are behaving like this, this, this. And then, they give many... many [examples of] interventions, for example, by using whistles, by using silent treatment and then, one more is by using video camera. For example, in every lesson, you have to record their behaviour and then use them, use it as a threat for them, yes, but I didn't do that; I choose to do silent treatment and then, it works for, maybe like, 2 weeks (2nd interview with Gina, question 19).

Bavani stated that she and her young colleagues actively provided each other with feedback when necessary: "Although sometimes we can become quite passive in class, when it comes to peer coaching presentation, we are active and have ideas." Bavani also said that she and her fellow student teachers shared many techniques, "... we give each other's ideas on how to enhance the lesson and materials, and we realise our own mistakes and pick up our own skills and innovative skills". In turn, Fauziah, who previously revealed that she was ashamed of asking for guidance, stated that she actively shared information with other student teachers. Dania said that sharing was a natural process for her: "As we live in the same room, the same building, discussions with friends are very important, [so I] consult with the...the lecturers and our group."

Other examples of peer mentoring between student teachers included Chua (who said that they 'promised to have each other's back'), Gina (who revealed that they actively shared ideas and learning materials), Bavani (who said that other student teachers often gave her feedback if necessary) and Dania (who said that it was 'natural' for people who live together to share ideas), discussed in the previous chapter. Some of them mentioned their friends and senior teachers as equally important, while others (like Arina, who was reluctant to speak with her mentor despite the fact that the latter gave a very good assessment of her progress) only turned to friends and the Internet for help.

It is apparent that feedback indeed plays a crucial role in developing better reflective skills. Positive rapport with supervisors and school mentors was undeniably important for shaping the participants' perception of their practice. However, it is notable that at that point, the relationship with other student teachers was more important as it did not depend on marks and approval and was based on more efficient emotional support. Moreover, we can see that there is not continuously a mutual understanding between school mentors and their mentees – while school teachers argued that students should simply be more active and blend in when they were at school, students shared the experience of being humiliated and not being taken seriously when they tried to ask for help. On other occasions, even a positive intervention of a school mentor could not stop the student teacher from drawing wrong conclusions about herself and her performance, placing too much importance on grades.

b) Self-Reflection

While answers to all questions required reflection, certain questions invited more self-reflection and self-analysis in terms of professional improvement (or the perceived lack thereof), effectiveness of reflective activities suggested in the practicum, and being influenced by positive and negative experiences of conducting lessons and being a part of the school community. The following three sub-sections are focused on general self-reflection, journaling and case studies, positive experiences and negative experiences.

b1) General Self-Reflection

This subtheme includes all comments that had a self-reflective nature – most notably those dedicated to self-improvement or the lack thereof. Student teachers suggested that their performance improved in comparison to their previous lessons. Dania said that, in her opinion, she improved the discipline in her class and seemed to be “on the right track” with them. She also shared that she had to shift from group activities towards individual tasks because her pupils could not read very well, and she wanted to ensure that everyone is heard. Fauziah shared that she needed to readjust the difficulty of the tasks for her pupils, and that they could finally complete the exercises that she gave them. Emylia stated that she actively tried to address the comments that she received, and whenever she noticed problems she tried to fix them as soon as possible:

Every time I face challenges like the ones I faced today, I quickly remember the feedback and ideas of my friends and mentors. Sometimes I need to think as fast as I can to find better ways of helping my pupils to understand. I try to improve where... where there is a lack of, at which part I'm lacking, like, for example, last

time during the group work thing, not everyone worked together as a group; but this time I will ensure that I walk around, I will stand by... stand beside the person who isn't working in their group, then I will... I will call out the names of those who never pay attention in my class (2nd interview with Emylia, question 10).

Emylia reiterated this again later in a week 12 reflective diary entry where she mentioned classroom control as being the key element to a successful lesson. Emylia, with the help of reflective practices, demonstrated a mature ability to identify ineffective teaching methods; moreover, she had enough confidence in the conclusions she reached to take appropriate action, accelerating her ability to develop.

At the same time, many teachers still expressed many doubts and emphasized how much they still needed to improve. During phase 2 interviews, after the student teachers had spent four weeks in placement schools, some participants stated that they did not improve compared with the previous time they were observed. Arina argued that she still had problems with her pupils' discipline and could not make them sit still – however, she further explained that their behavior actually urged her to think about some improvements she could introduce (such as more interactivity).

Some were able to think of ways of improving their performance over the course of the interview. For example, when asked about pupils' reactions to receiving additional worksheets during the lesson, Chua stated, "I don't know, I did not notice whether they are happy or not. I am doing that for their own good", but later added that it would be important to watch the pupils' faces in the future. Similarly, Arina explained giving out the worksheets to check pupils' understanding and added that the interviewer's question made her understand how she used the same technique for all topics "without even realising it".

Interestingly, some student teachers credited their pupils with stimulating their self-growth and motivation to improve. For example, Jamal stated "they are correcting my mistakes; they are helping me to become a better person in terms of my instruction". In turn, Hayati mentioned that she still felt unable to control her "hot temper," and reported becoming quickly angry with students who misbehave. This highlights that, whilst student teachers may be able to recognise their own faults within the classroom, this is only the first step and must be followed by real action plans. This being said, adequately recognizing every improvement can be very motivational, even when an individual still has a lot to learn. Hayati stated she was proud of her development and seemed to recognize the continuous nature of self-development:

I feel proud of myself. Don't get me wrong. When compare my first day of my first practicum and my second practicum last year, I am much, much, much better. I remember not knowing how to control the pupils, and how they gave me a headache when I had to control my anger. When I read back all my weekly diaries, I believe I have made progress. Yes, I know I am not the best, but I think I can improve over time. All I need is time and looking back at my previous experience I feel shy, but it is just a process I have to face to be a better person. (3rd interview with Hayati, question 11).

Lastly, the positive image many student teachers had of the teaching profession, and their willingness to embrace the professional identity was cited as inspiration for self-improvement, along with desire to 'model' the behavior of their favorite teachers and mentors. A vivid example of such 'modeling' is presented in Arina's reflection on why she wanted to become a teacher since her early childhood:

When I was small, I really loved to [imagine] becoming a teacher, yeah, you know... holding a bag like a teacher, and then, teaching... teaching my dolls, okay, just imagining my dolls are my students (3rd interview with Arina, question 3).

The qualities of a 'perfect teacher' conveyed by participants appear to not only include appearance and manners, but also self-improvement – Bavani referred to the need to 'serve the pupils' better because they are the teacher's 'clients.' However, some student teachers demonstrated perfectionism in their self-perception – for example, Iman had a medical emergency and felt 'guilty' for not conducting her lessons and leaving the pupils without English for a while.

b2) Journaling and case studies

This subtheme describes the remarks dedicated to educational activities that were deemed to be performed by student teachers for improving their reflective skills – journaling and reviewing case studies. All student teachers used journaling for self-reflection. They were asked by their supervisors to reflect in writing on their experience in their journals every week. For the purposes of the research, their teaching journals were retrieved and analysed, which helped revealing the correlation between actual practice and students' perception of this practice (including evaluation of their successes and failures). It is important to note that all journals were designed differently and required different amounts of analysis and self-reflection. Some journal entries did not contain much – for example, Dania's journal was more of a mechanical recollection of the lesson, and only two entries referred to problems and the need to solve them in future. It was echoed in the above comment made by her

mentor Mr. Soon who thought that she did not write enough in her diary. Other journals followed a stricter plan which required listing problems, explanations of the reasons why they may have occurred, and solutions to them in each entry. For example, Arina mentioned problems with discipline, explained that she was not strict enough and did not punish the students when she should have, and suggested that she should “implement the strategies that could discipline my pupils throughout my teaching and learning process” (Arina’s journal entry #2).

At the same time, Bavani’s journal contained sections called “Inner voice” and “New awareness”, which allowed for more actual reflection rather than simple listing of problems. For example, her problem was using too much translation during the lesson and inability to make pupils switch back from Malay to English. In “New awareness” section, Bavani concluded that she must conduct lessons in English only no matter what – however, in “Inner voice” section she honestly explained her concern that she might find it hard to instruct in English fully, and that pupils “will lose track when they are not able to understand what they are supposed to do”. Such an answer revealed a deeper understanding of the complexity of classroom issues.

Chua’s diary, while containing a very thoughtful and interesting analysis of the lesson’s events, also had a typical last paragraph at the end of each entry, which was the same for all entries under analysis: “I hope I can overcome this problem starting from today until my practicum session ends. I have to remind myself from time to time to remain calm in my lesson.” Since the paragraph was called “Duration of the Problem”, it seemed that the participant misunderstood the meaning of the task (she should have indicated if she had been having a certain problem for a while or it was a one-time occasion). Thus, it looked less like an actual reflection and more like a personal affirmation for improvement. At the same time, in all other sections of the entry Chua performed very well, providing a detailed recollection of the issue and five to six steps which would help her solve it.

Emylia stated that reflection in the diary helped her a lot with overcoming repeated problems:

After every lesson, we write the reflection. So, whenever I... I’m teaching the same skill - for example - today I was teaching, like, listening and speaking skills; so, when I want to conduct another lesson for listening and speaking, I tend to refer back to... the reflection that I’ve written, then I try to overcome the problems that have been recorded in that reflection (2nd interview with Emylia, question 21)

Hayati's reflective diary has notably longer entries than the entries of other participants (about two pages each), and she elaborates more on every question. It is also apparent that her school mentor actively reviewed the journal, as here and there are corrections of spelling errors and various comments. It was somewhat disheartening that Hayati's reflective diary was among the few to receive such close attention of the school mentor, as it could have been helpful for all students. Similar comments were made by a school mentor, Ms. Yasmine who shared not wanting to be a mentor for student teachers because of high workload and low engagement of students.

In turn, exemplary case studies of practice were mentioned among the learning materials suggested by lecturers during the teaching practicum. Student teachers were advised to use case studies prepared by other teachers or researchers in order to get suggestions for their own professional practice and think of the ways in which someone else's experience can enrich their lessons. The question about case studies was met by student teachers with mixed responses. In this case, the question was designed to reveal whether student teachers analyze case studies as a part of their teaching practicum to gain better insight into other teachers' experience and whether they read such materials as preparation for their lessons. According to Moon (2004), such activities can help developing reflective practices. However, some participants did not understand what was meant by a "case study", thinking that it was an activity they could perform with their pupils. Still, a number of student teachers have reviewed actual case studies (Dania, Emylia, Gina, Hayati), while Dania recalled that they indeed had such an activity during their practicum:

There was a study...a case study, and then what we did is, we analysed the...the pupils' behaviour. Obviously, that article is about...was about destructive behaviour among pupils, and then how the teacher approached that scenario...helping the pupils learning English better (2nd interview with Dania, question 28).

Emylia argued that using case studies was helpful for overcoming problems in the classroom.

Interestingly, others shared information regarding the lessons with their fellow student teachers, and thus used each other's real-life experience as "case studies". Hayati stated that her supervisor suggested that she should visit more lessons of other student teachers and analyse them to improve her own experience. Moreover, numerous participants within the study asserted that they actively shared ideas, methods and techniques with other student teachers, providing each other with useful practical information and routes for improvement.

For example, referring to her fellow student teachers, Chua said, “There are seven of us, we share everything and even worksheets.” A similar statement was made by Bavani:

Yes, we always talk about our practicums at IPG, I think we talk 24-7. We always discuss our problems at the canteen and share tips on each practicum school, pupils, mentors and many more. For example, my roommate got the same school I had in my first practicum, so we share some tips about that school, the management, the pupils and the teachers. Although we may not have had the same experience, this could help to prepare us with some background knowledge of the school (2nd interview with Bavani, question 16).

There was also recognition of the fact that each teacher’s experience is unique. Chua mentioned that, while pupils of her fellow student teachers may not have “the same attitude”, they still can “discuss and adapt... think back to find the best solution”. She also stated that it was very helpful for her to discuss her experience because she “learned a lot to actually become a teacher.”

b3) Positive experiences

A certain portion of the answers was dedicated to positive experiences in the classroom, which was reflected in the subtheme of the same name. Even small successes are especially important for young teachers who may feel helpless and frustrated, helping to build self-confidence. For example, after one phase 1 lesson, Bavani shared that she was happy because her pupils who greatly struggled understanding English “read the story at home, and today they were eager to know more.” However, it turned out that generally the participants were more willing to focus on their perceived failures than on their successes – probably because they were only learning to appreciate the significance of the latter. While I expected to see more mentions of positive events in the participants’ reflective diaries, I was surprised to find mostly reflections on the negative and suggestions for future improvement.

Some participants, however, took time to congratulate themselves. For example, Chua, who had an accident during the lesson (it will be discussed in more details below), pointed out that she “had done a great job” carrying the injured pupil and also “had given mental support and motivation to cheer him up.” Those remarks positively stood out because otherwise the diary entry obviously reflected the participant’s stress and frustration, as she was not able to proceed with the lesson. Emylia shared that she was happy with her pupils after teaching for two months because she could see their progress. She recalled that the children kept asking her what they were going to learn each lesson and it motivated her greatly: “That kind of response from them motivates me actually, to like, when I plan the

lesson... I want to plan something more interesting, more fun for them because they are not very good in English.”

Surprisingly, Hayati stated that her favorite activity was disciplining the pupils and that she considered becoming a discipline teacher. It was especially interesting because later, she shared that she struggled with her anger at misbehaving children even despite understanding that “they are Year 2 pupils, okay, they are bound to be...they are bound to be excited about everything, they talk non-stop.” Thus, she found a healthy and positive way to direct her anger and displeasure at maintaining better discipline instead of simply lashing out when her pupils did not deserve it.

Overall, a positive outlook was more typical for students who wished to become teachers and were not pressured into choosing this career – such as Arina, Bavani and others who stated that they loved teaching overall (for short vignettes about students’ backgrounds see Appendix 2). This is probably why most positive experiences for these and other student teachers were from the past – for example, from observing other teachers or lecturers in the Teaching Institute. Because of this, the participants were able to establish role models and use them as inspiration for their own practice. For example, Hayati shared that a positive experience in her own learning was her lecturer who was very strict and often told the truth about her students’ performance, but also had an inspiring level of enthusiasm. Similarly, Bavani recalled a teacher from her school who “elected” her as a “dictionary girl”, which motivated her to learn English better and inspired her to help her own students.

b4) Negative Experiences

Recollections of various negative experiences of student teachers were grouped under the corresponding subtheme. During Phase 1, at least three participants stated that they were dissatisfied with the lesson they had just conducted, but the reasons for such assessment usually did not include poor preparation of student teachers. In some cases, it happened because of poor discipline or the lack of engagement, while in others, pupils did not understand the content of the lesson and the student teacher needed to readjust. Bavani said that she overestimated her students’ abilities while preparing for the lesson: “sometimes I become too ambitious. I think that they can do this, they can do that, but they cannot”. In turn, Chua shared that it was hard for her to understand whether her pupils failed to grasp the material only during one specific lesson or they did not understand it at all. She concluded that some topics just needed more lessons and practice to be properly understood, especially

for primary students, and that there was no need to be frustrated. Generally, such comments show the lack of pedagogical experience which is quite understandable at this point.

During the second phase, interviewees admitted to having lessons they were unhappy with, but mainly viewed them in a positive light as an inevitable – and often necessary – part of their learning. Upon reflection, many also found negative experiences in the classroom helpful rather than frustrating. In cases, wherein good instruction led to bad test results, student teachers suggested changing their approach. Some of them argued that a specific activity could have gone wrong, while others mentioned the possibility of other factors. Chua notably concluded that “if your lessons are always good, then you will not learn anything”.

However, some experiences proved undeniably traumatising: for example, Gina recalled having an unsuccessful lesson which made her “frustrated, pissed off and sad” because she could not identify the reason of her failure on the spot.

Student teachers mentioned numerous small “failures” which nevertheless could bring the whole lesson down: Bavani forgot to charge her laptop, Chua did not take extra copies for the pupils and did not know what to do with the remaining time, Dania forgot to bring the puzzle designed for the lesson. While these problems would probably be avoided or handled better by senior teachers, for student teachers all these issues can lead to unsuccessful lessons and disappointments. This is why such issues, while inevitable, taught many participants to avoid such mistakes in the future and to ensure that they have back-up plans.

Other problems related to student teachers’ attempts at forging respectable professional identities. Bavani was concerned that the pupils viewed her as their ‘sister’ and not as their teacher. She was disheartened because she believed the pupils did not seem pay her enough respect and ‘even shared their personal problems’ with her. It is an interesting assessment of the situation, as sharing personal concerns could be a sign of trust which is very hard for a new teacher to gain. A more experienced teacher could have identified the value in this trust and built upon it to create better rapport with pupils. Certainly, it reflects the difficulty novice teachers have in striking a balance between winning the respect of their students, while also remaining available and trustworthy (as opposed to distant and authoritarian). Similarly, Emylia pointed out that pupils behaved more badly when she conducted her lessons alone, and the senior teacher was not around. This allowed her to realize the importance of building her own authority, and of deciding how she would approach maintaining a positive form of authority.

Overall, the responses provided by the student teachers during three phases of interviews were analysed, and a certain proficiency in student teachers' self-reflection and self-awareness was revealed. Using self-reflection allowed student teachers to process negative experiences in the classroom, gaining the understanding they need to view the challenges they faced as learning experiences of potential future value. Moreover, student teachers were able to share their reflections and interpretations of certain events, communicating their thoughts with their senior colleagues and fellow student teachers allowed the participants to gain other perspectives into solving specific situations in the classroom.

However, it felt somewhat alarming that some student teachers preferred asking their friends for feedback and avoided contact with their senior colleagues. In turn, the answers regarding journaling and case studies showed that some participants could be more open and analytical in their reflections, so that their weekly reflective diaries did not turn into mechanical recollections of the events of the lesson. It was apparent that their readiness to share was to a certain extent shaped by the very form of the journal with which they were presented.

5.2.3 Facilitating factors and barriers in the development of reflective practice

Previous sections have already revealed certain problematic areas in the practice of student teachers. However, in the cases that have been featured, the student teachers mostly struggled with problems that related primarily to themselves, and their own lack of experience; while in point of fact, there were several outside barriers that could hinder their progress. At the same time, there were facilitating factors that helped student teachers along the way – for example, the development of pedagogical content knowledge urged them to use reflection to better adapt their teaching theories and learning materials, as well as to help them to draw conclusions about what worked and what did not during the lesson. Also, the language barrier that often appeared between student teachers and their students, surprisingly turned out to be a strong facilitating factor as well as challenging the student teachers to improve their methods.

In addition to this, student teachers reflect upon solutions for improvement how they react to unexpected situations (such as outside intrusions and pupils showing up without homework) and more predictable ones (the need to engage pupils during each lesson, finding

ways to improve understanding, and maintaining stable discipline). Furthermore, they were asked to discuss the lecture-based element of their teaching practicum and evaluate its relevance, as it was expected to provide them with enough tools to overcome the aforementioned barriers.

Table 5-3 Facilitating factors and barriers in the development of reflective practice

Themes	Sub-themes
<i>a) Facilitating factors</i>	a1) Pedagogical content knowledge
	a2) Language
	a3) Unexpected situations
<i>b) Disciplinary Barriers</i>	c1) General assessment
<i>c) Practicum</i>	c2) Problem-centered learning

a) Facilitating factors

Comments about factors that stimulated reflection were divided into three subthemes – “Pedagogical content knowledge,” “Language,” and “Unexpected situations.”

a1) Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

Under this subtheme, the comments regarding student teachers’ understanding of PCK and attitude to this concept were grouped. The interviews which touched the subject of PCK took place during Phase 2 of my research, when the participants were expected to have a somewhat higher level of self-awareness and more experience to build upon. At that point, most student teachers were able to explain the meaning and importance of PCK, although they did not remember the exact definition or the creator of this concept. At times, the description of PCK sounded too basic for student teachers who have already completed the preparation course and were conducting their own lessons. For example, Arina summed up the meaning of PCK simply as “pedagogy is more important for you”. Bavani stated that she does not think about pedagogy at all, she “just teaches”. Fauziah described pedagogical

knowledge as “more specific and more complicated” than subject matter knowledge but did not elaborate on her answer. Interestingly, two participants – Gina and Hayati – stated that PCK was necessary to carry the lesson out smoothly.

At the same time, all student teachers agreed that subject matter knowledge alone was not enough to conduct a lesson, which shows that they have an inherent understanding of PCK’s role even if they cannot formulate it well. Probably the most elaborate answer was provided by Dania who explained the importance of PCK as follows:

[sometimes] the lesson base is very impressive, it’s very good, but when it comes to practice in the classroom, maybe the teacher couldn’t deliver what he or she planned because of the teaching methods, because of the learning style or how that person approached the pupils – and for a teacher, handling the pupils the right way is one of the most important aspects in teaching (2nd interview with Dania, question 7).

Overall, the answers of student teachers revealed the ability to reflect upon their teaching experiences and to adapt to the real-life school environment. All participants recognized that there was indeed a gap between perfect lesson planning and smooth implementation, and that implementing the lesson successfully took more than a good plan, a lot of supporting materials, and adherence to the rules.

a2) Language

This subtheme is dedicated to comments on the situation with the language of instruction in Malaysia, as, regardless of their mother tongue, pupils in schools under discussion have to be fully instructed in English. Language of instruction was a great concern and possibly the greatest barrier for absolutely all interviewees – however, surprisingly, it stimulated their reflection and made them think outside the box to follow the rules but at the same time make themselves understood. Thus, it is better reassessed as a facilitating factor. All student teachers said that their pupils struggled to understand English. Most classrooms had a guest translator, or a student teacher could pick one fluent child to translate for his/her classmates. This was despite the fact that supervisors insisted on fully instructing in English, as noted by Dania – Bavani added that she has already been reprimanded by her supervisor for not using English at all times and even had to negotiate using Malay with her school mentor in secret. However, many pupils resisted the need to speak English very actively – as Gina noted, “they are simply refusing to understand.” Arina suggested that whenever she

translated anything, pupils became unwilling to say a single word in English and just waited for her to translate everything for them.

The majority of student teachers were forced to use simple short (and even “broken”) sentences (Arina, Emylia) or even speak word by individual word (Dania). “Pupils don’t understand anything, and you didn’t expect [anything like that], how do you react?” – Arina wondered. Bavani tried to approach her pupils more skillfully and insist on English at first, but later allowed them to use the mix of English and Malay:

They have limited vocabularies and even like just now when I ask them “what does that mean?” they meet- they tend to directly translate one word to another word. Like, the word ‘to’ to ‘kepada’ ‘land’ to ‘tanah’. So, they tend to do things like that. Sometimes, directly translating causes ... leads to different meanings (1st interview with Bavani, question 18).

In turn, Emylia said that she tried to show her kids what the words meant whenever possible; for example, saying “Take out a book” every lesson and showing how she takes the book out of the bag. Chua said that she managed to instruct in English fully, but in exchange for that allowed children to ask questions to her in Malay one-on-one.

Several student teachers stated that the use of a dictionary was not effective, as one experienced, “I introduced a dictionary, but it was quite boring for the kids” (Arina, whilst Fauziah expressed a similar experience – pupils found it too difficult and time-consuming). Moreover, these student teachers argued that dictionaries were too heavy for students to carry with them and too expensive for many. Bavani said that, while at her previous teaching practicums she could use dictionaries successfully, during this one she did not have enough time to teach the children relevant skills and just had to skip it in favor of other activities. At the same time, Jamal contended that his pupils brought their dictionaries to the lessons and used them effectively.

a3) Unexpected situations

Under this subtheme, the remarks about various unexpected occurrences that took place in the classroom or at school and disrupted the learning process were analyzed. The majority of participants in this study were forced to deal with various unexpected situations. Bavani recalled the need to rearrange the whole lesson quickly because the pupils did not do their homework and did not understand the content of the previous lesson. She revealed initially being “sad and angry” because of the students’ behaviour and the need to repeat

everything once more, but her school mentor calmed her down, saying this is typical for primary students and they cannot help themselves. Similarly, Emylia cried because her pupils could not complete their home assignments for the second time in a row and did not let her move on to a new lesson. Jamal recalled having a spelling mistake in his lesson plan, which made his pupils laugh; however, he was not disappointed or shy, simply stating: “we are all learning”. Hayati described a sudden change of the timetable at school which made her miss almost half of the lesson.

Probably the most distressing situation was described by Chua in her diary, where she recalled how one of her pupils fell and twisted his ankle while singing and dancing along with the class. Since all kids were shocked and she herself got confused, she could not finish the lesson at all. Chua mentioned that in the future, she would have to remain calm at all times, call another teacher immediately, and learn how to use a first aid kit to help with injuries.

One curious example of an uncomfortable situation was provided by Bavani, who, as an Indian, was not happy with the tradition of kissing the teacher’s hand and shaking it several times a day. However, the participant said that it was okay and “a cultural thing”, showing a certain degree of cultural sensitivity (Hovater, 2007). Overall, the majority of student teachers were able to mention specific approaches and strategies to handling lessons that did not go well, even at the early stage of their practicum. However, many recognised that they needed to be better prepared in the future in regard to these issues.

b) Disciplinary Barriers

This theme proved the most relevant for the topic of negatively influencing or discouraging reflection. The majority of student teachers in this study clearly struggled with discipline, but their responses to a noisy classroom varied greatly. Some mentioned group or pair work as effective methods for preventing high noise levels. Bavani even stated that noise was “a sign of active learning”. The same participant, however, disagreed with the need to “pamper” misbehaving pupils and argued that it was better to be “strict” with them in phase two. Other participants shared tactics for maintaining discipline, such as individually identifying pupils by their names or pointing fingers at specific pupils. Emylia also argued in favour of a more authoritative approach when dealing with noisy classrooms:

I need to respond quickly, for example, they fight over a chair or they want to pair with this particular person during activity and many more, chaos. So, I need to be firm. In a word, teacher authority, I always say “No, you do what I say.” (1st interview with Emylia, question 20).

Many participants mentioned the tactic of “reverse psychology” or “the silent treatment”, regarding a noisy class, when noisy students were expected to calm down on their own. In her journal entry #5, Dania described having a tough lesson during week five of her practicum, when her pupils made noises and did not follow instructions, teasing her and making rude remarks instead. With the help of her supervisors and mentors, she was able to choose a correct strategy next lesson and use “silent treatment” of pupils, who later apologized for their behaviour.

On the contrary, Fauziah revealed a similarly distressing experience with “troubled” pupils who did not respect her and did not respond to any pedagogical techniques she employed. Moreover, they laughed at her when she broke down and started crying during one disruptive lesson, and all efforts to establish any kind of positive rapport with them failed. Problems with discipline have clearly influenced the negative academic performance of this class: according to the interviewee, “First, they don’t take English seriously; second, they think English is boring and difficult, third, they don’t have enough practice and don’t put in enough effort”. Unfortunately, the school mentors did not help Fauziah with this situation, which seemed to remain unresolved at the time when the interviews took place.

c) Practicum

A significant portion of the interviews is dedicated to the discussion of teaching practicum and its various aspects. As a result, the ideas that came up were grouped under the subtopics “General assessment” (comments about the practicum as a whole) and “Problem-centered learning” (issues related to the “old” authoritarian style of teaching in Malaysia and reflection of new focus in learning).

c1) General assessment

The following subtheme covers general comments about the teaching practicum, its positive and negative sides, as well as possible areas for improvement. According to Ulvik and Smith (2011), the perception of a “good” teaching practicum may vary greatly from student to student and also from student to teacher. This idea was reflected in the answers of the participants. Namely, lectures of the practicum were generally described as a helpful

source of specific techniques. However, not every student teacher could remember actually taking this course. Some of them, however, successfully listed specific theories they learned during the lectures and provided examples of applying them to practice. Theories mentioned by the participants include Piaget's cognitive theory, theories by Vygotsky, behaviourism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Chua credited the course with providing valuable instrument for problem-solving in the classroom: "If the pupils behave in a certain way, and we haven't learned the theory before we go to practicum, then how do we know the solution to this situation?" In turn, Hayati argued that the course contained all important information and courses necessary for the students.

c2) Problem-centered learning

"Problem-centered learning" as a subtheme reflected the suggestions about current focus of the teaching practicum. There were concerns regarding some specific aspects of the practicum – most notably, it seemed that the practicum was conducted in a rather traditional way and was not based on problem-centered learning. Namely, Gina stated that she felt like "the same theory was repeated over and over again" and commented more positively on the teaching practicum, saying that, "We learn all the theory in IPG, but the real thing is here." Suggestions regarding new courses included one in school administrations, and Dania suggested that there could be a course in classroom management, while Emylia would like a course on "interesting activities" for pupils. A few participants stated that some courses should have been removed from the practicum altogether.

Notably, Arina stated that she wished the course to be longer and include "theory and practice" rather than only theory. She argued that by the time student teachers enter the teaching practicum, they have forgotten what they had been taught. Unfortunately, such a view is consistent with Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) who argued that, taught experience can be "washed out" later by practical school experience. More recently, Ulvik and Smith (2011) suggested that Zeichner and Tabachnick's opinion remained relevant, adding that theoretical knowledge indeed tends to vanish during the first year of practice.

The role-play aspects of the practicum were also evaluated somewhat critically, as student teachers were not asked to solve specific problems but rather found themselves in unrealistic, made-up situations:

...when we carried out those kinds of activities with my classmates as students, they were able to do them, but when I take exactly the same lesson plan and activities and apply it in rural schools, like I'm teaching now, I will be having difficulties, because the activities that I planned in my classroom are too challenging. (2nd interview with Bavani, question 7)

Additionally, Bavani argued that she found an inconsistency between the practicum and the school curriculum – while they were taught to use dictionary symbols, at school she was required to teach the children pronunciation, and the preparation course did not cover that problem. Another suggestion was made regarding the real-life aspects of teacher's work by Iman:

I personally think...think that they should add on a course where...where they introduce us to the administration of the school maybe on the KSSR [curriculum] and the school's need, for example, the...the filing system and so on because we can...we could see that the teachers are busy with the filing, marking exam papers then they have to enter the marks in the system, so much of technical work. (3rd interview with Iman, question 8).

Overall, this part of the research helped revealing how student teachers master the skill of combining theory and practice. They are informed to have all kinds of challenges, not all of which could be predicted during their training, and it was notable that although they revealed feeling helpless and tired at times, they still managed to find ways to conduct more or less effective lessons. This shows that in most cases, problems and unexpected situations served to facilitate their reflection rather than become a barrier. Their problematic experiences were largely in line with problem-centered learning, suggested by Knowles (1977) as one of the key parts of andragogy – their answers clearly revealed that they needed more practical information for problem-solving (from everyday issues such as classroom management to specific problems such as explaining a difficult topic). However, discipline proved to be a barrier for many, especially in situations when there was no outside help. Also, practicum proved to have a mixed effect on the student teachers, facilitating some experiences but failing to provide relevant information about others.

5.3 Summary

This chapter investigated the findings of the research; this summary aims to look at those findings through the lens of the three research questions. Each research question will be used to structure the exploration of the key issues that came to light during the data analysis.

In attempting to answer the first question: “to what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lessons?” various problems with the curriculum were uncovered. Firstly, some student and senior teachers complained about the lack of time spent on the introduction of the new curriculum. Teachers did not react uniformly to this; some student teachers felt isolated and full of doubt, uncertain how to proceed without guidance; others viewed the situation in a positive light, feeling that they had the space and freedom they needed to shape the curriculum in a way that suited them. Secondly, the research showed a clear potential for lesson planning and implementation to become disassociated. The realities of the classroom environment often caused student teachers to abandon the plans they had written down for the class. For example, encountering the lack of English proficiency in their students, some student teachers chose to halt the progress of their lessons (thus departing from the organization of time contained in their plans) so as to be sure their students were ready for the next part of the syllabus. Mixed-ability classrooms also forced some student teachers to adopt mixed approaches and adapt to the learning requirements of different individuals in the classroom, drifting from the more general approach they had written in their lesson planning. Adherence to the curriculum and lesson planning therefore altered depending on the realities of the classroom. The curriculum was described as being flexible enough to allow the student teachers to adopt different methods of implementation, to develop their creativity and take the initiative to organize their lessons according to their unique classroom circumstances (that is, the proficiency of their students, the behavior of the class, and the ability of their class to keep up with the learning material.)

However, whilst the curriculum allowed a certain amount of flexibility, the student teachers reported school-specific problems. Some teachers were compelled by their schools to achieve certain goals during their practicum, leading some students to have to make decisions for the sake of chasing time, rather than for the sake of their students. Another school-specific factor related to financial status. Schools differed in terms of the funding they reserved for purchasing props and other learning supporting materials. This was held to be a particular problem in rural schools, where student teachers were often required to spend their own money on teaching materials.

The second question asks: “in what ways does the student teachers’ capacity for reflective practice develop over the practicum?” The findings revealed that student teachers’ reflective practice is propelled by many factors, one being their need to build and be a part of a community of practice. The influence the relationships the student teachers had with their peers was also revealed as having a strong influence on their reflective practice. Student

teachers engaged in discussion, and shared information with their peers, something which allowed them to process their own feelings and experiences. Peer mentoring was unanimously embraced and appreciated; all students commented positively on the role of their fellow student teachers and appeared to find great comfort and inspiration in their consultations with them. Student teachers expressed mixed-feelings toward the relationship established between them and their senior teachers, and it was clear at times that mentor teacher and student teacher were not on the same page. This could be explained by the difference in power between student teachers and their senior teachers; whereas communication flowed freely between student teachers and their peers, student teachers often withheld information from their mentors. Without clear information, mentor teachers sometimes mistakenly interpreted the behavior and attitude of the student teachers and thus failed to provide the kind of support the student teachers needed. There were cases, however, when the potential of this relationship was realized. Ms. Yasmine and Bavani built a special relationship and mutual understanding; as a consequence of the encouragement of Ms. Yasmine, Bavani reflected more on her classes and was able to learn from her previous mistakes. Likewise, student teacher Dania benefited greatly from the support and advice of her mentor Mr. Soon. Mr. Soon advised that she change her tactics and try a gentler approach to classroom control; this, in turn, proved to have a hugely positive effect on her practice as a whole as her students became both more at ease and more engaged in the class. Mr. Soon also placed emphasis on self-improvement; imparting his positive approach to self-development allowed Dania to develop her self-awareness, to detect and celebrate helpful changes in her practice, and to acknowledge areas where work was still to be done.

The third research question asks: “what barriers and facilitating factors exist in the development of student teachers’ reflective practice?” This question provokes an examination the quality of student teachers’ reflection, and an examination into what factors affect the quality of student teachers’ reflective practice. How to assess quality in reflection, turned out to be a thought-provoking inquiry. It was found to be a very difficult task to draft clear criteria through which ‘quality’ could be measured, or the ‘level’ of any reflection could be estimated. What ‘quality’ reflection consists of will be discussed in more detail in the Discussion Chapter.

For the purpose of this summary, reflection is considered in terms of the level or depth of analysis demonstrated by student teachers as they progress through the various stages of their training. The levels of the reflective processes the student teachers engaged in (as evidenced in their reflective diaries and the responses they provided to the interview

questions,) are examined in terms of how they affected or failed to affect change in the student teachers' practice. The quality of the reflection student teachers used when preparing and planning their lessons is assessed in terms of how student teachers anticipate or fail to anticipate problems in their classroom, and form their lessons plans to address these problems.

All participants demonstrated adequate ability to be reflective, as they were able at times to identify problems in their practice and suggest solutions to solve these problems. However, in other circumstances student teachers were unable to accurately assess or identify the cause of their emotions or provide the reasoning behind their decisions. Doubt, low motivation, and feelings of frustration served to cloud the reflective capacity of some student teachers; when student teachers felt isolated or lacking in confidence, their reflection tended to be emotionally rather than logically driven. The problem-solving potentials of reflective practice were thereby stifled.

Quality in reflection was also found to be influenced by the specific ways in which student teachers were required to reflect, for instance, the structure they had to adhere to in their journal entries. Those participants who were required to write more and had more subsections in their journals were more elaborate and thoughtful in their comments, while those who had short entries with two-three subsections usually presented a short, mechanical list of events of the day and future plans. The strength of the relation between the levels of self-assessment and self-awareness demonstrated by the student teachers, and the time they dedicated to their reflective diary entries, emerged strongly from the findings. Student teachers who reserved more time to reflect were better able to react positively to their experiences in their practicum, to prepare better lessons in the future and identify their own strengths and weaknesses. The ways in which the student teachers organized their diary entries also had a meaningful impact on the levels of the analysis they were able to generate. Student teachers who created subsections were able to better organize their thoughts, and come up with sensible, comprehensive action plans. These subsections helped them to divide different aspects of their practice into digestible pieces, improving their ability to evaluate their own progress, the progress of their pupils, and develop their ability to set realistic and measurable goals for future. This final ability varied for all participants; some were able only to indicate a final deadline in which they hoped to entirely eradicate the problems, meaning that if the solution was ineffective, they felt they were back at the starting line. Others were able to suggest steps in their plans to solve a particular problem and seemed

to be motivated by obstacles. They were able to experiment; if one solution did not work, they would try something different.

The next chapter will provide further elaboration on the findings, conceptualized and structured in consultation with the four main issues.

6 Discussion of results

By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest Confucius (as translated in Wood, pp.34, 1893)

6.1 Introduction

This well-known quote from Confucius encapsulates the high position reflection is held to occupy in learning. What do the findings tell us about reflective practice and its connection to the issues which arose within this study? The purpose of this study was (a) to study how student teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Malaysia use reflection in their practice, (b) to observe how student teachers' capacity for reflective practice matures over the course of the practicum and (c) to explore what hinders and what aids the evolution of their reflective practice.

This chapter is dedicated to a discussion of what the evidence demonstrates about reflection. The discussion includes a comparison between the present findings with that of previous literature on reflection, considering key issues such as the importance of reflection when enhancing a lesson in the future, in developing the professional identity of student teachers, and when identifying issues in teacher education. The key findings are grouped into concerns relating to issues of reflective practice. These issues are manifested in how the student teachers constructed their professional identities; in the way they engaged and negotiated within a community of practice, in how they conceptualized mentoring, how they actually implemented the curriculum, and how their experiences in the classroom presented barriers as well as scaffolding for their reflections. The findings provided valuable insights into the significance of reflection for novice teachers, the extent to which they master reflective skills in their practice, and the factors that influence reflection (whether positively or negatively). However, it must be noted that the findings of studies related to reflection cannot be easily reduced to a clear list of conclusions but rather to a list of ideas and discussion topics (McCulloch, 2009). In general, key insights from the findings clearly demonstrated an awareness of developing reflective skills.

Thus, below is a concise summary of key insights from the findings:

All student teachers demonstrated a certain level of reflective skills, both in their interview answers and their diaries. Most were able to explain the reasoning which led to their actions and choices, evaluate their past experiences, and address mistakes critically.

The reflective diaries, while present in all participants' practice, showed varying degrees of reflection from mechanical recollection of the events of the school day accompanied by little analysis, to more thorough evaluations of the successes and disappointments experienced in and out of the classroom.

During the recollection of various school events and experiences, it could be argued that there was a notable tendency to focus on negative comments, while overlooking the constructive ones.

Student teachers' self-reflection and self-evaluation was in many ways shaped by their beliefs about the teaching profession and the image they had in their minds of the perfect teacher, as well as their expectations regarding their relationships with other members of the teaching community.

Special attention was paid to the importance of peer learning.

The most conspicuous problems mentioned during reflection on professional practice included: the lack of cooperation between senior teachers and student teachers, the gap found between the actual English knowledge of pupils, and that expected or required within the curriculum, and the various unexpected occasions and disturbances taking place over the course of the lessons.

There are four main factors which form the key issues of the findings: relational factors, situational factors, developmental factors, and experiential factors. This set of factors was partly developed from the literature review (see chapter 3) after the analysis and critique of Schön's theory and was informed by the themes formulated in the findings, which were grouped accordingly. Some of them had to be redefined for more clarity, which is reflected below in Table 6.1.

This chapter discusses the findings, as well as literature relevant to the set of issues in question. Firstly, I provide an explanatory framework which considers these issues. Secondly, I provide a detailed comparison of the findings with that of previous research, pointing out

similarities, differences and new, unexpected factors that influenced the reflection. Thirdly, I draw conclusions about the connection between the reflective practice of student teachers and the internal and external factors discussed within the chapter.

6.2 Issues that influence reflection and reflective practices

What do the issues from the findings tell us in regard to reflection and reflective practice? Firstly, I would like to explain in more detail how and why the four sets of issues in developing reflective skills were formulated. As was discussed in the literature review (see chapter 2), Schön's framework of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-practice remains extremely influential in teacher education. Nonetheless, over time many critical comments, elaborations and additions surfaced, most of which were focused on expanding the practical implications of the reflection theory, as this theory is charged with not being integrated with practice well enough (Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Such implications appear to be crucial in better understanding the ways in which student teachers learn to reflect, as well as the ways in which their reflective skills may be enhanced. Therefore, the existence of reflection alongside Schön's theory, suggested the necessity of using additional theories and studies to explain student teachers' reflective processes and most conspicuously those that were based on an analysis of actual practical influence of reflection.

It is necessary to point out here that for the purpose of this study, I use the term introduced by Schön himself (i. e. 'reflection'), although numerous studies have argued in favor of the term 'critical reflection' since it reportedly underlines the practical and conscious aspect of this phenomenon (Larrivee, 2000; Hickson, 2011; Goldman & Grimbeek, 2014). However, there are two reasons for using the original term. First, it is recognized that student teachers may not have a fully formed understanding of reflection, which is why it may be too early to speak about 'critical' aspect of such reflection. According to Larrivee (2000) and Hickson (2011), critical reflection implies reconstruction of one's beliefs and the ability to recognize personal assumptions. Discovering this was not the purpose of my study, although it may be a potentially interesting topic for a future discussion. Secondly, the present study essentially relies on the 'reflecting upon reflection' of student teachers, which is why it may seem unnecessary to introduce an additional term.

Overall, it was possible to define four sets of issues that influence reflection and reflective practices, which are summarized in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6-1 Issues that influence reflection and reflective practices

Set of issues	Issues
Relational	Communities of practice Peer mentoring Obstacles to mentoring
Situational context	The new statutory guidelines Financial problems Language proficiency “Crowded classrooms” Major and minor subjects
Developmental issues	Quality of reflection Quality of preparation for reflection Self-evaluation in terms of time
Significance of experience	Professional identity The relevance of teaching practicum

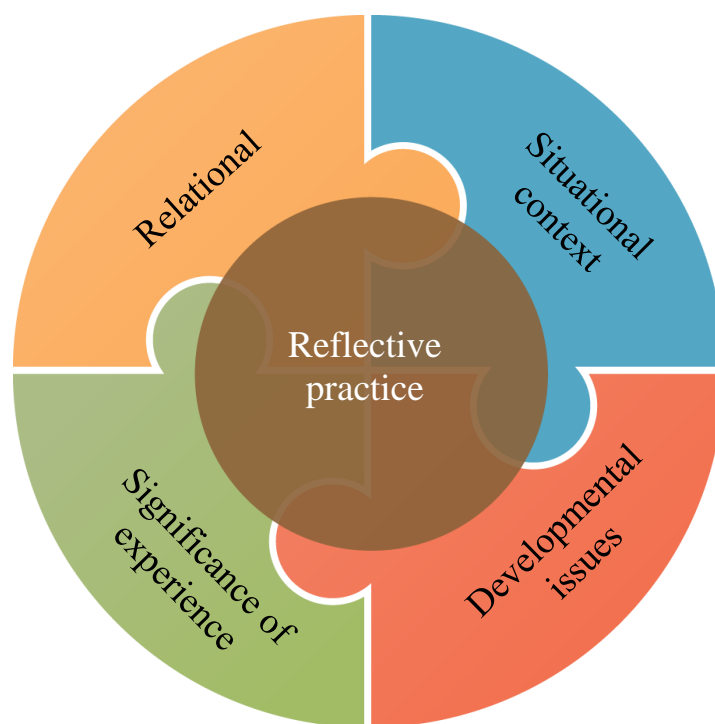


Figure 6-1 Reflection and related issues

As Illustration 6.1 shows, all groups of reflective building are interconnected. The development of relationships between the members of the professional community directly depends on the level and quality of the experiences of the community members, as well as the time dedicated to building and developing the community, and the overall situation (environment and circumstances). In turn, situational contexts relate to dynamic and significant experiential factors in many ways. Lastly, experience is shaped first and foremost

by meaningful relationships (or the lack thereof), the situational context in which the learning occurs, but also by time.

These issues were fully discussed in Chapter 5. As they comprise the analytical framework, the following is a summary of the main ideas used in subsequent sections when discussing the empirical data:

1. Relational factors arise in the professional teaching community, or the “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991). They include the conditions and events happening in relationships between student teachers and their senior colleagues (Bandura, 1977; Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Ulvik & Smith, 2011) and amongst student teachers themselves (Ambrosetti, 2012).

2. Situational context includes the formal educational environment in the country (the curriculum, the type of school, the financial support given to education and educators, specific classroom peculiarities). Eraut (1995) argued that Schön’s theory could not be applied to particular situations found in “crowded classrooms” with actual students and teachers.

3. Developmental issues refers to how the student teachers as professionals change and develop over time (affirmative role of practice, improvement of reflective skills).

4. Significance of experience presupposes the ability to learn from experience and the tendency to focus on a particular type of teaching experience (constructive or destructive).

These findings will be discussed in more detail below and assessed in terms of their reflective content, that is, in relation to the four sets of issues identified above and how they relate to Schön’s theory of reflection.

6.3 Relational

The following section is dedicated to the group of topics that reflect relational issues in student teachers’ practice. The most prominent issues related to this area included those which concern communities of practice, peer mentoring, and obstacles to mentoring. Communities of practice were described by Lave and Wenger (2009); according to their theory, novice teachers should be legitimate, peripheral participants of the teaching community, while older members of the community should support them. In turn, peer

mentoring was assessed by Ambrosetti (2012) as mentorship between colleagues which disregards differences in age, level of experience, or status. Lastly, obstacles to mentoring identified in the findings included the anxiety student teachers experienced in anticipating negative feedback, as well as mentors' misunderstanding of their duties.

6.3.1 Communities of practice

The significance communities of practice have for student teachers has been strongly confirmed by the findings. Most participants were introduced to the school staff upon arrival in their schools, and some of them were invited to staff meetings and discussions. Fortunately, most cases revealed that the relationships between student teachers and their senior colleagues (whether supervisors, school mentors or senior teachers) were based on principles of adult learning: a certain level of informality, mutual respect and consent was present, and the relationships were collaborative and supportive (Knowles, 1977). These qualities should be present in the relationships between supervisors and student teachers when there is a desire to make learning as effective as possible.

Judging from the interviews, many supervisors can be credited for helping student teachers, especially in suggesting solutions for specific issues – the attitude that should be persistent among teacher educators (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) or in their approach to mentoring at least. As the findings revealed, supervisors and mentors provided guidance in various situations, suggesting specific techniques or pointing out areas that needed work. Virtually the only problem with this group of supervisors was that they were not 'harsh' enough in the eyes of the student teachers who craved more criticism and advice (see Chapter 5 for more examples). Thus, in general the findings regarding communities of practice proved consistent with previous data.

While most findings were coherent with previous research done in this area, some proved unexpected. Most notably, student teachers actively desired to be members of a teaching community and to be involved in community practices. According to Abdullah-Sani's 2000 doctoral study set in Malaysian schools, although student teachers held a high image of a teacher and teaching profession (which was apparent in the present study as well), they made no attempt to blend in with the professional community in the schools, viewing their position there as only temporary. Student teachers were reportedly more interested in relationships with their supervisors, as these were expected to last longer and have a bigger effect on their academic performance (Abdullah-Sani, 2000, p. 242).

On the contrary, the present study showed equal interest in building positive relationships with school mentors and supervisors from the university, gaining their respect, and receiving feedback and advice. All participants wanted to be in touch with their mentors and receive feedback from them (as opposed to findings by Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Ogonor & Badmus, 2006). For example, Dania pointed out in her journal her impressions about a “very friendly staff... all teachers met us with smiles” and added that she “hope[s] that this positive environment will help me to complete my practicum.” This suggests that a progressive relationship with senior colleagues can be significant for student teachers’ self-esteem and desire to grow professionally. Feedback is used as food for thought and as a blueprint for self-improvement.

6.3.2 Peer mentoring

What is also evident in the findings is that the relationship between student teachers themselves, and their willingness to provide mentorship to each other proved unexpectedly strong. In addition to the feedback received from senior colleagues, the participants often referred to the suggestions and criticism provided by other student teachers. Such a dynamic is believed to be typical for pre-service education, as student teachers in the pre-service community “support each other, become co-learners and engage in professional dialogue which in turn enhances their abilities both inside and outside the school environment” (Ambrosetti, 2012, p.175). Lindeman (1926) also emphasizes that small groups of adults may inspire each other throughout their educational journey; this was apparent in this research as student teachers consistently emphasized how they continuously made use of their community of practice. The community of practice proved to be a key resource through which students could share knowledge, seek information and clarity at times where they were uncertain of the efficacy of their teaching methods, or simply gain support and newfound motivation. This dynamic can form what may be termed a knowledge community, in which members of the community play important roles in developing and sharing the techniques of teaching and learning.

These findings were reflective of Ambrosetti’s (2012) concept of peer mentoring. As the author explains, mentors are stereotypically perceived as older and wiser figures with more experience and usually hold a senior position, while their mentees are typically younger and less experienced. However, this is not necessarily true, as mentoring can occur between people of roughly the same age and level of experience, who may be professional equals, as is the case when student teachers mentor one another. Overall, it was striking that, many

participants actively supported each other, especially when they found themselves unable to find advice and guidance elsewhere, as is shown below.

6.3.3 Obstacles to mentoring

Despite the mostly constructive findings described above, there was also evidence that not all schools (or educational institutions) were correspondingly effective communities of practice. One issue that was uncovered as problematic was the lack of support to be found in some schools, something which disturbed the growth of their student teachers.

Senior teachers participating in the study, such as Mr. Soon and Ms. Yasmine, stated that they believed the formation of a system which motivates and encourages employees to be unnecessary. They argued that the schools already provide a workplace and a stable salary, and this should adequately persuade the teachers to do their best. According to Odden and Kelly (1996), the teaching profession used to be held in such high prestige, and the career was so sought after that teachers were motivated to do their best for the benefit of their students, without demanding further reimbursement or rewards. Although reward systems may be thought a useful way of incentivizing effort and commitment, theorists such as Ballou and Podgursky (2001), and Odden & Kelly (1996) question the reward approach's ability to assure the continuous development of teachers. These theorists favour the fostering of self-motivation, citing the commitment and pride which are products of personal career aspiration and ambition, as more sustainable and reliable factors in teacher development.

Nonetheless, these ideas do not always prevail in educational environments. In private schools, it is a common conviction that the best means of improving employee motivation are material in nature, for example providing a good salary and bonuses; however, this is not necessarily the case, and may be true only up to a certain threshold. Gradually, teachers may become accustomed to their higher salary, the quality of their labor may first increase only to quickly decrease. Monetary motivation is an unreliable stimulus when it comes to employee's work. Lazear's study (2003) on teachers' behaviour suggested that the use of monetary incentives or higher wages does not always align with improvement in performance, as teachers' attitudes towards financial enticement may vary from individually to individual, an on their individual circumstances. Moreover, it is not possible to constantly and considerably raise salaries. Rather, as an administrator, one could foster open and supportive communication and try to understand and listen to the teacher so that they are able to express their needs; where possible, guidance should be provided. In addition to being figures of

authority in the student teachers' eyes, mentors can give open lessons, recommendations, and they can conduct quality lectures and training on pedagogy, curriculum and continuous professional development (CPD) courses. This is the approach that Ms. Yasmine promoted when she mentioned her keenness to improve herself by attending related CPD courses. She expressed a desire not only to assist her mentees and support their needs in the teaching and learning process, but also said that enjoying herself and growing as a mentor was a motivational factor which helped her to sustain her commitment to the role.

Mentoring may be described as a process where the instructor, an experienced teacher, supports and helps another teacher or student teacher in the field of professional development, and exercises an influence over their teaching and learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Clarke et al., 2014). Findings show that there is a connection between the joint work of teachers and the success of their students, as in the cases of Ms. Yasmine and Mr. Soon. Findings also suggest that teachers who were "mentored" are more likely to remain in the profession and maintain better results than teachers who did not receive such support. In this, as the findings show, there is the potential for the following difficulties to occur in the development of mentoring in schools: "psychological barrier of teachers," "teachers' congestion for joint plans," "lack of support for the administration," "conservatism of individual teachers," "the reluctance of some colleagues to make changes in the established educational system."

The study featured cases of mentoring which helped to fulfil the needs of the novice teachers in their effort to self-improve. At times, supportive mentoring, combined with reflection, guided the student teachers to make professional and personal self-realizations which increased their self-awareness and the cementing of their professional identity. The mentoring system helped the heads of educational institutions, teachers, and mentors to quickly and qualitatively aid the professional formation of their respective teachers. It allowed them to guide the course of their development and assist them in their self-organization and self-reflection skills. It also facilitated their ability to self-analyse and increased their overall professional competence.

The student teachers' reluctance to contact supervisors for help revealed that the learning environment was not consistently built on mutual respect, but rather on teacher-centred principles of education in which supervisors and senior teachers harbour their students' dependency on their approval, often chastising them instead of providing encouragement (Knowles, 1977; Mayne, 2012). As was discussed in more detail in Chapter

4, many participants shared their feelings of discomfort, caused by a consistently unfulfilled need to communicate with their mentors, which in turn, later led to reluctance to contact them altogether.

Students' perspective. The factor that was not mentioned in the literature review but turned out to be prominent in the findings was the fear of contacting supervisors and receiving negative feedback (especially in cases with students who performed well and were criticized much less often than their peers). This anxiety can possibly be explained by findings by Ulvik and Smith (2011) who pointed out that student teachers sometimes understand mentoring as “something that they acquire and not something in which they participate” (518). Also, the reluctance to ask for feedback demonstrated by student teachers may be analysed and explained in regard to the study by Ambrosetti (2012), wherein student teachers were found to have a “supportive and friendly” image of their supervisors before meeting them in person and could be severely disappointed by the reality.

It is worth pointing out that student teachers' assessment of feedback seemed to change over time. During phases 2 and 3, the feedback from the supervisors was described more positively, as the participants started viewing it as constructive and helpful for their own self-improvement. This finding is consistent with the findings presented previously by Ambrosetti (2012), who argued that during the initial stages of their relationships with their mentors, students valued guidance and having a role model, whilst during later stages, they appreciated constructive feedback.

Mentor Teachers' and a Supervisor's Perspective. Interviews with the three mentor teachers and a supervisor provided a somewhat different insight into the possible reasons for the existence of difficulties in their relationships with students. Most notably, the supervisor and the mentor teachers' notion of mentorship seemed at times problematic. A potential explanation may be found in the work of Ambrosetti (2012), according to whom, the very concept of mentoring is not well-defined in scholarly literature (unlike the concept of supervision with which most teachers are familiar). Because of this, the lack of understanding of mentoring and its distinctive qualities lead to the “lack of confidence on the part of the mentor teachers about how to provide worthwhile experiences for the pre-service teacher” (Ambrosetti, 2012, p.2). Additionally, Talbot (2017) points out that teachers often see mentoring as something constrained in space and time (i.e. occurring only in the classroom or school or university, on specific days and at specific time) and limited to explaining “how we do things here” (p.92).

Alarming, it seems that senior teachers' mentoring role was even less significant than the one described by Talbot (2017). It is notable how in the findings, the phrase "we should not spoon-feed them [the students] everything" was repeated by supervisor and mentors in regard to their perceived mentorship. When compared with the evidence of student teachers' frustration and discomfort with the need to contact their supervisors, there seems to be a considerable gap between their mutual perceptions. In other words, when student teachers expect emotional support and advice, supervisors may view it as a sign of passiveness, dependence and weakness. This shows that mentors may fail to continually assess the student teachers' approach to mentoring correctly and recognize their frustration. As a result, they may confuse anxiety with passiveness and an unwillingness to communicate. If the communication does not take place at all, it undermines Schon's (1987) prerequisite for reflective practice, where the teacher and the learner should be engaged in "convergence of meaning through a dialogue of reciprocal reflection-in-action" (p.137).

Such an attitude to the emotional state of novice teachers was addressed by Korthagen (2001), who argued that the necessity of managing and responding to complex human emotions is a communal problem within teacher education. This idea also provides an additional perspective on Abdullah-Sani's findings (2000) described above and the fact that student teachers made no attempts to build relationships with senior colleagues can be explained by fear and insecurity, and not by a lack of interest in becoming a part of the teaching community. Such a perception can stem from the inclusive authoritarian model of teaching which is typical of Malaysia, which, along with its implications, will be discussed later.

Another explanation of the problematic relationship between student teachers and mentors is found in the study by Gallant and Mayer (2012), which revealed that providing students with feedback twice a week and completing tasks necessary for mentoring and supervision was simply too time-consuming for senior teachers. Moreover, sometimes their duties were not properly explained to them, which could also lead to a perceived lack of support, and any interference being perceived with negative connotations, as intervention. Similarly, Ambrosetti (2012) points out that one of the main disadvantages of mentoring is the significantly increased workload of the mentor. This is partially supported by the information retrieved from the student teachers' reflective diaries, as it was apparent that they were checked with distinct levels of engagement and interest. Similar behaviour was described by Carusi (2016), as typical of schools and school mentors who work with novice teachers; additionally, it was argued that schools tend to leave student teachers "without

ongoing support” (82). Whether the lack of support stems from the limited understanding of mentorship or from excessive workload, it creates an unhealthy dynamic between student teachers and their ‘mentors.’

Power and relationships formation. It is apparent that some issues in the relationship between student teachers and their senior colleagues deserve more attention, as they influence both their inclusive performance and their capacity to reflect. One of such issues, which could be a potentially promising development for future research, is the power dynamics of these relationships (Kriewaldt, Ambrosetti, Rorrison & Capeness, 2017). While there is considerable research on “teacher-student” power relationship, the problem of student teachers and more experienced teachers seems to be less thoroughly studied.

Diaz, Cochran, and Karlin (2016) state that teacher power impacts learners’ self-perception and their long-term achievements. It also affects their willingness to follow teacher’s recommendations and provide their feedback on the learning methods used. Moreover, not only the objective aspects of power are important but also their subjective perception by students. Stoyanova and Ivantchev (2016) explain that there are different types of power used in the pedagogical process while the most popular ones are legitimate and reward power or orientated. However, they suggest that effective teachers mostly use their power as a regulating mechanism able to optimize the learning process. In this way, reflective skills can be properly developed as having positive implications for learning outcomes.

Another potentially prolific discussion that arises here is the duality of the student teacher role, as it requires the mentor to be a student and a teacher at the same time. This problem was mentioned by Schon (1983) as a necessary aspect of practice for all teachers, possessing, for example, a “double vision” which requires mentors to look at themselves as both a teacher and a learner. Nevertheless, figuring out specifically how young, less experienced teachers cope with this duality and whether reflection helps them to do so could be an interesting scholarly issue.

At the same time, it seems that the problem of the emotional states of novice teachers would be addressed as well. Is there a prerequisite emotional condition for reflection? Can nervousness and frustration negatively affect one’s reflective capacity? Is it possible for reflection to improve one’s emotional wellbeing in a professional setting? While the emotional states of teachers have been discussed in research – namely, such topics as emotional regulation (Fried, 2011) and emotional labor (Keller, Chang, Becker, Goetz &

Frenzel, 2014), it can be suggested that novice teachers deserve special attention in this respect. Likely, the concept of desirable emotional preparation for teaching (Heyes, 2003) could be explored in terms of its potential to influence reflection. Overall, these issues would help in supplementing Schon's framework of reflection, which in and of itself does not directly address, but would likely benefit from the inclusion of such topics.

6.4 Situational context

As was outlined in the literature review (see Chapter 2), the Malaysian national context is fairly peculiar and influences the education sector greatly. As Gallant and Mayer have pointed out, while globalization has greatly influenced approaches to education all over the world, the changes were especially significant in the Pacific region (2012). Here I will provide a brief outline of the significant factors: improved English knowledge is a strategic goal of Malaysian society in general, and there is considerable financial support for developing new curriculum and learning materials, as well as for teachers themselves (as may be recalled from the findings, many participants positively commented on the financial benefits of teaching profession in Malaysia). However, taking into account the fact that the country has been long struggling for independence and for the right to promote Malay within all levels of education, it is unsurprising that the quality of English teaching and knowledge has worsened over the years (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015, 2013; Ariffin et al., 2018). As a result, the student teachers have to contend with the multiple barriers that the complexity of the Malaysian educational context presents. This, however, can stimulate reflection as it coerces the novice teachers into overcoming the persistent situational issues they face in their practice.

The following issues will be discussed below: the curriculum, financial problems, language proficiency, and "crowded classrooms" as potentially stimulating and disrupting factors for reflection.

6.4.1 Curriculum

It is quite apparent from the findings that both the curriculum and the textbooks stimulated the students' reflection to a certain extent, as they faced the need to follow a strict plan while at the same time adapting it to the needs of their specific audiences. This made them draw their own conclusions about working with these materials and, in the best scenarios, come up with alternative solutions (or simply continue relying on the curriculum

and the textbook despite the lack of apparent result). Struggles with the content covered in the curriculum can be partially explained by the “pressure to cover content” (Knowles, 1997, p.208), as content and academic performance sometimes stand in the way of effective teaching and do not reflect the reality of a particular school and a particular classroom. Similarly, the review of relevant literature showed that the curriculum can be a serious issue for both novice and senior teachers, and that it is not a specifically Malaysian problem (Goh & Blake, 2015). It is debatable, however, whether such conditions improve one’s reflective skills or simply make them better in mastering pedagogical content knowledge. Although the two issues are very closely related, there is still a difference between engaging in reflective practice and, more or less, effectively solving problems in the classroom.

Most schools helped the student teachers in adjusting to a new curriculum, which is in line with the requirements for a good practicum defined by Ulvik and Smith (2011) where student teachers expect to have a clear framework and guidelines. It is possible that the updated curriculum can improve the pupils’ academic performance over time. Notably, some student teachers positively commented on the updates in the governmentally approved curriculum made in schools. In spite of that, even experienced teachers were not properly introduced to it and did not know what to make of it – some of the answers of senior teachers made it apparent that they lacked information about the new curriculum. Thus, even though there is an opportunity to make the curriculum more suitable for the needs of the particular school and serve the needs of the particular community of pupils, not all schools take advantage of it. It can be suggested that such unwillingness to improve one’s professional practice demonstrates the lack of reflective ability (or desire to reflect) among the school authorities themselves.

In addition, there were references to the somewhat chaotic organization of school life, for example, unexpected meetings and other events, which can not only disrupt the student teachers’ lessons, but also negatively influence their capacity and willingness to reflect. This factor is consistent with Larrivee’s (2000) argument, according to which reflective teachers should become “perpetual problem-solvers”. It was possible to observe different reactions of student teachers to the problems they recall such as being able to quickly reflect on the spot, being able to reflect over the problematic experience later, or not reflecting about it at all and thus not drawing any conclusions from the experience. These different degrees of reflection raise the question of the end goal in terms of reflective development of a young teacher (which will be explored more thoroughly below in section “Quality of reflection”).

6.4.2 Financial problems

While the connection between the reflective practice of novice teachers and their financial wellbeing may not be obvious, it is one of the ways in which a specifically Malaysian educational context influences the capacity to reflect. Previously, scholars have often pointed out that a lot of money had been spent by Malaysian government on the modernization of equipment at schools and teacher preparation (Deni, Zainal & Malakolunthu, 2014). One could suggest that such efforts may create a better environment for teaching and learning, as teachers would receive more effective education, and the modernization of education will allow them to spend more time on self-development.

However, in many ways these measures created an adverse effect. First, as was explained above, even though the teaching preparation programs may have been well-financed, they still do not reflect the reality of Malaysian educational context and do not provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they need. Moreover, as will be explained below in more detail, there is no clear aim as to what student teachers would achieve in terms of reflection – even though reflective activities are a part of their teacher education.

Secondly, the answers of many students revealed that they have chosen the teaching profession solely because of financial benefits. Some of them switched careers (such as Chua, who intended to leave teaching within a few years, Gina and Hayati, who initially studied law, or Emylia, who did not like her profession and was not sure about remaining in it), and others who confessed that they did not even enjoy teaching that much (such as Jamal, who pursued a teaching career only because of financial benefits that it provides). Thus, instead of motivated individuals who consciously choose an occupation (especially such a challenging one) schools may receive people who are in this important profession only because of the money. The findings particularly the vignettes prepared about student teachers clearly confirm the existence of this problem. It is not clear whether individuals who do not want to teach in the first place will actively engage in reflection, or whether it would benefit them as an aspect of practice.

Another consequence of financial strain is the lack of props available in rural schools, compared to suburban schools. This issue was reported by many student teachers who taught in rural schools (such as Arina and Chua), who were forced to spend their own money on supporting materials or *realia*. Arguably, this places unjust financial burden on the student teachers. On the one hand, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, Arina argued that 21st

century teaching requires more efficient teaching aids and expressed a willingness to invest in these herself. On the other hand, Jamal, who entered teaching only to receive a monthly allowance, was criticized for the lack of teaching aids and diversity of materials in his lessons by his supervisor. Whether due to an inability to buy the materials, or an unwillingness to dedicate one's own finances to something believed to be the responsibility of the school, this situation can serve to discourage certain student teachers from using supporting materials altogether. Such school policies ought not to precipitate student teachers towards undesirable conclusions, which is why their mentors would possibly focus on preparing them for similar circumstances and advise alternative solutions. Again, such restraints may foster student teachers' creativity, but it seems that they did not impact reflection positively.

6.4.3 Language proficiency

According to the findings, the language barrier between student teachers and their pupils, as well as between the pupils in the same classroom, proved to be an extremely influential factor for reflection. The present curriculum still fails to reflect the language barrier which inadvertently appears between student teachers and their pupils, especially in rural schools in which pupils may speak a local language as their mother-tongue and Malay as their second language. This problem is also repeatedly mentioned in research, which indicated that the updated curricula seem to fail to address it. The inability to adapt curriculum to the actual level of pre-existing English knowledge was pointed out by Lee as early as in 1999, following the 1995 educational reforms which did not help to address the difference between weaker pupils from rural schools and stronger ones from urban schools. A similar problem was cited by Darus (2013) as a serious obstacle on the way to reforming the education according to the ambitious goals set by the government. Lastly, Goh and Blake (2015) suggest that the grounding of the curriculum within the Malaysian context is a must for educational progress, which is confirmed by the present findings.

In their reflective diaries, many student teachers expressed their frustration at having to work with mixed-ability pupils or with pupils whose level of proficiency is unknown to them. Low proficiency in English was often used as possible explanation for poor discipline during the lesson. Participants referred to the 'communication gap' between the pupils and the teacher, as causing boredom and low engagement. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, student teachers used various techniques to bridge this communication gap, but overall the consensus was that the curriculum and the textbook activities designed for

children studying English were too ‘lengthy and wordy’. Again, whether these external circumstances stimulate or distract from reflection is a debatable topic.

6.4.4 “Crowded classrooms”

To borrow the expression by Eraut (1995), “crowded classrooms” indeed cause many problems; something addressed by student teachers and contradicted Schon’s theory. The famous examples from Schon’s “Reflective Practitioner” (1983) involved one teacher and one student. Similarly, in his 1995 speech Schon, citing Leo Tolstoy as inspiration, insisted that reflective practitioners should teach children separately, as each of them has a peculiar, unique understanding and experience. How possible is such an approach in a “crowded classroom”? If compared with the present findings, this approach seems to be more related to creativity in solving very specific issues or communicating with specific pupils, and less related to the habit of reflection – more so the ability to handle many students at once.

Interviews and reflective diaries cited at least two incidents where student teachers were required to think straight and act quickly but were unable to do so (Emylia could not calm down a crying student, Chua witnessed an accident on the lesson and did not know how to respond at first). As Eraut (1995) explains, this is exactly the kind of reflection that teaching profession may require on a regular basis: “a teacher might need to respond rapidly in a classroom to a pupil’s question or a disruptive action” (p.14). However, a student teacher is typically not prepared or experienced enough to do that, which is why his or her only option is to reflect upon the accident afterwards and figure out what went right and wrong and what ought to be remembered in future. The number of pupils were also a cause for concern at times. Student teachers and their pupils were unable to work one-on-one (as Schon’s examples suggest), and the student teachers needed to take into account the reality of having to manage classrooms with up to forty pupils (Jamal, for example, had 45 pupils in one classroom and failed to answer each of their questions when asked) .

Brännström et al. (2017) have provided empirical research on the basis of 149 students from different teacher-to-student ratio environments. Their findings have indicated that crowded spaces have a highly negative impact on students’ performance. One of the problems is that students themselves create a substantial fraction of noise that prevents them from demonstrating their full potential. However, it is argued that proper support provided to students at different stages of the learning process can effectively minimize the negative effects of crowded schools (Brännström et al., 2017). Such tactics were adopted by student

teachers in this study. For instance, Hayati and Bavani elected translators as part of a classroom support system, created in part to make sure that no one felt neglected when the student teachers were occupied with supporting weaker students. This system proved additionally successful as each of their students looked forward and took pride in being elected as translators. Thus, crowded classroom has a statistically significant impact on students' achievements.

6.5 Developmental issues

Dynamics issues that will be discussed below include the quality of reflection; most notably, the level of reflective skills that student teachers would acquire over the course of the practicum; the quality of preparation for reflection (teaching practicum and the nature of activities in which students are required to participate), and self-evaluation in terms of time (the ability to see one's progress or the lack of it).

6.5.1 Quality of reflection

Questions arose with regards to the developmental development of reflective skills, as to how they would change with time and what their ideal goal ought to be. Several researchers pointed out the lack of depth in student teachers' reflection, which to my knowledge open the way for a discussion on the quality of reflection. Developmental issues were mostly in agreement with previous research, as all student teachers demonstrated growth over the course of the study (Mayne, 2012; Loughran, 2014). Their self-assessments generally reflected the key principles of andragogy, showing a certain level of independence and self-motivation in thinking and decision-making.

Teslinov (2016) has elaborated on andragogy of development as a logical step forward, within existing social development trends. The author states that the conceptual synthesis of the development of andragogy and developmental adult education is necessary for facilitating the positive transformations at all teaching levels. Adult education may be viewed as developing culture that requires the proper support from teachers and educational professionals (Teslinov, 2016). Moore (2016) stresses that flipped classrooms and other innovative practices are essential for shifting the traditional education solutions to the needs of adult learners. This means that educational innovations should reflect the constantly growing needs of adult learners and facilitate their intellectual transformation.

Nevertheless, Lindeman (1926) emphasizes the need for adult learners to engage in the learning process, without which the learning environment will fail whatever its nature, and however fertile the conditions be. Lindeman (1926, p.7) views learners as the primary players in education, stating “experience is the adult learners’s living textbook”, whereas educators and resources such as textbooks and curriculum, are merely the peripheral, supplementary elements which interact with their process of learning.

Interestingly, the reflective aspect of the teaching practicum had a reasonably strong presence. In contrast, for example, with the findings by Ulvik and Smith (2011) who lamented the complete lack of interest in reflection and reflective practices in Norwegian teacher education, the Malaysian context seems to have a definite affiliation with these practices. Certain student teachers were familiar with reflective practice and were able to cite specific activities and examples where they used reflection both as part of their teaching practicum and as a tool for self-development in general. For some student teachers, reflection and reflective concepts could be identified as being amongst the most significant contributors to their practice. For other novice teachers, their skills of self-reflection improved during the preliminary analysis of the interviews and were of increasing significance to their practice. All of the teachers, however, could provide examples of successes and failures, review their past experiences and use them to avoid mistakes in the future, demonstrating reflecting-in-action, as it is described by Schön (1983), which requires practitioners to challenge their repeated actions and correct them. It must be acknowledged that elements of doubt still remain, and the part reflection plays in practice must be subject to still further scrutiny. For example, these findings urged me to consider the question mentioned earlier and ask whether the student teacher’s ability to adapt their practice demonstrated the use of reflective skills or simply educators’ problem-solving capacity.

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the interviews with student teachers provided quite a few examples of constructive self-evaluation, as the participants tended to focus more strongly on the negative experiences. This was the case with Jamal who nearly gave up, being so entirely discouraged after receiving negative feedback following an observation. Dania focused heavily on what she perceived to be her failure to control her classroom, and Chua appeared depressed and preoccupied with the initial lack of verbal response she received from her students. There may be two possible reasons for this. Firstly, the reflective diaries of many student teachers were structured in a way that highlights problems and solutions but does not have a separate section for describing achievements and progress. Thus, the participants might become conditioned to structuring their self-evaluation

in a similar fashion, for example, by looking at their experience in terms of ‘questions and answers’ as opposed to actions and consequences. Secondly, it is possible that the questions prepared for the interviews did not focus specifically on the positive events, which is why the participants did not bring them up themselves.

Despite the seemingly positive presence of reflective activities in practicum and practice in terms of reflection, it may be wise to exercise caution in order avoid a trap, as Russell (2013) warns. He argues that, over the course of his 30-year long work as an educator and research of reflection, he observed that student teachers and educators alike have become

...weary of so much reflection, particularly when so many different assignments call for reflection and when they have been given little guidance in terms of what reflection involves what the results of reflection should look like, and how reflection can help them learn to teach (Russell, 2013, p.81).

These concerns can be somewhat justified if we remember the comments made about the reflective diaries of student teachers and the comparisons made regarding their quality. The mechanical nature of some diary entries can not only indicate the student teachers’ lack of experience in reflective practices, but also probably reveal the lack of guidance and explanation regarding what should constitute ‘good’ reflection.

For the most part, the writings found in the reflective diaries contained expressions of the student teacher’s feelings rather than an analysis of their feelings. Most often the student teachers attended to facts of the situations, writing for example what they felt without necessarily assessing why they felt it, or writing what took place without questioning why it took place. Two questions arise from this observation: are student teachers able to reflect deeply at this stage in their professional development? Do they need to be able to reflect deeply at this stage at all? Again, as was mentioned earlier, it turned out that some of the student teachers were unsure about wanting to be a teacher altogether; thus, it is hard to gauge how reflection fits uniformly into the worldview of the many different participants.

6.5.2 Quality of preparation for reflection

The previous issue of how to assess quality in reflection, allowed whether explanation of reflection and reflective practices are indeed well-delivered by educators and promoted in the teaching community to be questioned. Student teachers often individually realized that they still had a lot to learn, and subsequently asked their supervisors for more constructive or critical comments (Bavani, Dania and Hayati). However, their reflective diaries at times did

not reveal enough self-reflection and analytical skills, which suggests that the supervisors who reviewed the diaries could have pointed out the lack of actual reflection. It is also possible that the diaries themselves could be redesigned to contain more thought-provoking questions (the diary provided by Bavani could serve as a good example, as it contained such questions).

Also, it is possible to suggest other ways of stimulating reflection – for example, videotaping the lessons and re-watching them afterwards. Although in the present study, none of the student teachers or their mentors mentioned such an activity, in the study by Gallant and Mayer (2012), also dedicated to assessing teachers' performance in Malaysia, videos of the lesson were named by teachers as a very helpful tool. It could be especially relevant in witnessing developmental changes in the performance of student teachers, as they can access their videos any time after recording them and compare them with their current performance. This would also help them to recall the course of the lesson more vividly.

Lastly, the findings show there are students who are overly dependent on their supervisors, especially when exploring new curriculum and methods of teaching. A certain proportion of student teachers did not recognize themselves as independent adult learners, able to work on their own or with their colleagues so as to give the best in each lesson, and in understanding the new curriculum overall. Another developmental aspect is one described by Eraut (1995), of the importance of reflection which goes on for a certain period of time, and not only reflection which occurs in need of quick decisions. It was apparent not only during the teaching and learning process, as reported by the participants, but also during the interviews themselves, during which some participants were able to formulate and define their concerns better.

6.5.3 Self-evaluation

All students were required to set a time limit for problem-solving in their journal entries, which stimulated them to be specific with their goal-setting and also to evaluate the situation realistically. This is generally in line with the comment made by Erlandson and Beach (2008) who pointed out that the ability to reflect and learn is closely related to the experiences of the body – unsurprisingly, an unusual workload and new tasks took a toll on the student teachers' physical and emotional condition in the cases of Iman and Jamal. This is another argument in favor of studying the physical and emotional aspects of teaching practice on less experienced teachers.

6.6 Significance of experience

The gap between theory and practice in teaching was vividly reflected in the answers of participants most notably, the difference between planning lessons and conducting them. Student teachers may be too focused on receiving theoretical knowledge during their practicum and thus lack insight into more practical problems (Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006). However, they usually encountered numerous practical problems during actual teaching, and this can at times serve as a touchstone for their reflective skills and ability to draw necessary conclusions from their actions. For example, Hayati in her weekly reflection, without fail, made reference to how she had learnt and developed her lesson plans and classroom management, using as guidance the small gestures of her pupils to the feedback provided by her friends and senior teachers. Although the majority of the student teachers demonstrated the ability to learn from their experiences (or at least described their practice with this approach), their answers tended to touch upon negative experiences much more often, while positive experiences only received passing mentions or were not mentioned at all. This contradicts the previous findings by Penso (2002), according to which student teachers tended to focus on the positive and overlook their difficulties. However, constructive elements may be identified in the interpretations teaching and learning contained in their reflections (in their reflective diaries); in their evolution throughout the three phases of their practicums and the encouraging experiences they shared through the progress apparent over consecutive interviews. In addition, attention will be paid to the student teachers' assessment of the preparation program, as discussion of this program invited a lot of reflection and critical comments during the interviews. The next two subsections are focused on the concept of professional identity and the students' view on the teaching practicum.

6.6.1 Professional identity

The "learning" of professional identity can be partially explained with the use of Bandura's theory of social learning. According to Bandura, "the most informative methodology for studying cross-situational consistencies is to record how much people vary in their behaviour across situations that differ measurably in the probable consequences for the behaviour being examined" (Bandura, 1977, p.8). Bandura (1977) distinguishes between learning by response and learning through modeling. Learning by response occurs when the learner's actions lead to a constructive or a destructive outcome; learning through modelling occurs when an individual follows the example of another. This dynamic continues to be affirmed by contemporary theorists who assert that social interactions with colleagues are

formative for a novice teacher's professional identity, as well as for his or her willingness to reflect on the reasons for actions and choices made in the classroom (Parsons & Stephenson, 2006; Hurst, Wallace & Nixon, 2013). An appropriate and effective community of practice, which exposes student teachers to the professional identities and good practice of their senior teachers, ought to thereby boost their student teachers' levels of reflection. Student teachers may reflect in order to become more like the senior teachers they admire, and who demonstrate mature abilities in overcoming the obstacles of the classroom. Student teachers' successes, progressive approaches and innovative ideas towards teaching and learning may be encouraged by the positive recognition and acknowledgement they receive from those they model themselves on. These conditions could instil confidence in the student teachers, allowing them to enhance their feelings of self-determination and independence. This is important not only for the formation of professional identity but for many particular qualities of teaching preparation such as exchange of knowledge and techniques, mutual inspiration and providing feedback. What exactly is modeled during the process of social learning is a potentially interesting topic for discussion. Bandura explains that "modeling... plays a prime role in spreading new ideas and social practices within a society, or from one society to another" (1977, p. 50). One could reasonably suggest then that reflective skills are something that may be modelled, and that watching colleagues and peers reflect could serve to encourage wider engagement in the activity.

It is apparent that other behaviours demonstrated by student teachers are more likely based on learning by response (i.e. they want to conduct a good lesson in order to receive good marks and avoid criticism, not to become better professionals). This being the case, it is interesting whether a habit for reflection is acquired by response (for example, simply to get high grades and follow the rules for teaching practice) or if it is modeled after someone else's example. Very likely, student teachers engage in both learning by response and learning by modeling to differing extents. In this study, many of the student teachers seemed to be learning by response, citing the fear of bad feedback and bad grades as the primary motivational factor. However, some students appeared to be model themselves on previous inspirational teachers they had experienced during their own schooling, or on present educators they were exposed to during their practicum. Bavani, for example, admired greatly Ms. Yasmine and stated that if she were to become a mentor, she would like to be a mentor like her.

Forming a professional identity proved to be problematic for some student teachers, especially in terms of their self-perception. What elements of self-perception made it

problematic? And were they concerned how they are perceived by others? A strong focus on disciplinary activities was noticed in most reflective diaries, which reveals a lot about the perceived image of what a teacher should be. The overwhelming majority of the participants felt that they were ‘not strict enough’ and put a lot of effort into building better discipline in the classroom, this was pointed out in literally every single reflective diary under review as well as in most of the interviews.

Several diary entries were dedicated solely to discipline (in some cases, to particular school rules, such as not allowing pupils into the classroom during the recess), but there were no mentions of the actual lesson held during the day or any preparation for future lessons (for example weekly diary entries by Dania, Gina and Hayati). Also, few participants mentioned a friendly atmosphere in the classroom or the desire to build a friendly relationship with the pupils, which is especially important for children. Thus, it may reflect an undesirable tendency towards authoritarian, teacher-centered classroom which persists among novice teachers and prevents them from spending more time on creating interesting and engaging content for pupils.

At the same time, some student teachers linked poor precipitate discipline to poorly acquired knowledge of English and an inability to perform the activities suggested on the lesson (see in more detail in section 6.3 Situational context). The opposite was also true, as participants sometimes put the lack of participation in the lessons down to inadequate discipline, which did not always seem quite accurate. For example, Fauziah described a lesson where group activities were performed generally well, but some pupils were struggling to understand them and did not participate as much as necessary. She claimed that the reason was ‘poor discipline,’ while actually it could have been the lack of English knowledge.

It is interesting to consider whether reflection is explicitly viewed as a part of a teacher’s professional identity, and whether the student teachers expected it of themselves to be reflective and critical in their practice, or whether it was expected by mentor teachers or supervisors. While the student teachers referred to professional growth, this did not explicitly acknowledge the need to reflect which leads to a questioning of whether or not student teachers feel the reflective skills are useful for teaching or the community valuing this as a whole.

6.6.2 Teaching practicum

Teaching practicums present persistent educational problems in teacher preparation worldwide (Korthagen, Loughran & Russell, 2006; Hammerness, 2006; Ulvik & Smith, 2011). Many researchers who study Malaysian education and specifically teacher preparation have argued that their findings should be taken into account in order to create better teaching practicums, or even to inspire educational reforms (Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008; Darus, 2013; Goh & Blake, 2015). Most comments put forward by these researchers refer to the learning experiences of the practicum, focused on the inclination of moving towards more practice and less theory; otherwise, it is warned that the experience of actually entering the classroom and teaching real pupils becomes too exceptional and even somewhat distressing. Overall, the quality of experiences received during the teaching practicum, as outlined by participants in this research, reflected Goh and Blake's (2015) claim that these circumstances in Malaysia "mimic" those practiced in Western teacher institutions, but do not actually stem from the Malaysian cultural context.

It is apparent that a better designed teaching practicum could effectively prevent most of the problems described above from occurring, or at least provide novice teachers with some insight regarding their future working environment. The content and quality of teaching practicums should be reviewed, as the study showed that some participants were dissatisfied with the way they were designed. This finding is consistent with the argument presented by Deni, Zainal and Malakolunthu (2014) who pointed out that Malaysian teacher preparation programmes, along with the staff responsible for them, disregard the needs and beliefs of the participants. In their opinion, such preparation leads to the simple mastering of predefined skills but never the questioning of one's own development and progress as a teacher, which makes teachers more likely to blame external forces for their lack of academic success and overlook issues with their own behavior (Deni, Zainal & Malakolunthu, 2014, p.663). Similarly, Goh and Blake (2015) argue that dissatisfaction with the practicum, especially with its emphasis on theory as opposed to practice, is a concern repeatedly voiced by student teachers and teachers who have only recently started working. According to Dewey (1933) complex or problematic experiences are not always educative. Experience can be interpreted differently by each learner, and experience can have a negative impact when it does not elicit a desirable reaction; for instance, one individual may react to disruptive children with insensitivity and impatience, whereas another may respond to the same behaviour with compassion and inquisitiveness.

When student teachers contemplate their lessons in the classroom during their practicum, they have the potential to reformulate their teaching strategies and develop their professional identity as a teacher as well. The student teachers feel satisfied after overcoming an obstacle; for instance, when they notice their students are not answering or doing the activity accordingly, a quick reflection in action within the classroom can allow the student teacher to take back control over the class which in turn builds up their confidence and sense of empowerment. As the student teachers' experience accumulates, and as they start to recognise the power they have to effectively dictate the course of the lesson, their professional identity may be reinforced.

However, Dewey (1933) warns that learners who are insensitive and unresponsive to their students and the classroom environment do not stand to benefit much from experience. Student teachers may experience the same limitations if their reflections consist of superficial descriptions of how they felt during the class. Without questioning why or reflecting more deeply, their experiences would fail to provide guidance for the future.

Another factor which can go overlooked is the quality of the preparation of supervisors and mentors themselves. Loughran's (2014) suggestion has already been mentioned above, that many educational institutions disregard teachers' experience and falsely confuse proficiency in teaching with good subject matter knowledge. The same author argued that experienced teachers are not attracted to participating in teaching practicums as they have too many other duties (Loughran, 2014, p.274). Judging by the present findings, which reverberate similar dissatisfaction, it seems a reasonable expectation that the supervisors should be properly trained or more thoroughly prepared to conduct practicums. The student teachers would benefit from a process that ensures their mentors understand the concepts of learner-oriented classroom, authoritarian vs. authoritative teaching, and mentoring in general.

However, it is necessary to point out that the lack of proper mentoring skills is certainly not a new problem and is not one unique to the Malaysian educational context. For example, Ambrosetti (2014) argues that few teachers actually receive training for being mentors, as it is assumed that if they can teach their pupils, they can naturally share their skills and knowledge with others. Such an approach turns out to be counterproductive, as it is apparent that "mentoring is not a natural ability that people inherently have" (Ambrosetti, 2014, p. 30). In addition, the aforementioned findings by Gallant and Mayer (2012), where

supervisors were proven to lack time, opportunity, and resources to provide proper mentoring and feedback, can also inform any proposed changes in teacher preparation.

6.7 Critical Reflections on Reflective Practice

The fact that reflection and reflective practice continue to be actively studied and discussed by the community of educational researchers strongly suggests that reflection has a certain appeal to modern educational practice in general. Reflective activities are currently included in the teaching practicums of many countries around the world, which would indicate that reflection in education remains relevant throughout different and unique cultural contexts (Ivanovska, 2015). However, the extent to which reflection should be present and the extent to which it should be emphasized in teaching practice and teaching practicums remains contentious. (see Literature Review).

Consistently within the research, the evidence of the findings demonstrates and points to the benefits, influential factors, and issues to be found with defining and measuring the reflective practice of student teachers of English as Second Language (ESL). Additionally, it proved virtually impossible to discuss reflection without addressing closely related subjects and theories – such as andragogy (Knowles, Freire), social learning theory (Bandura), experiential learning (Dewey), and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger). Based on this paradigm, it seems that the idea of incorporating reflection into one's professional practice is translatable within the reality of Malaysian teacher preparation (Goh & Blake, 2015). However, there should be certain modifications and clarifications of both reflection as a concept and how it can serve as an agent of change to teacher education, as well as a constant source of knowledge and reference for the student teachers.

6.7.1 Reflection on Malaysian educational context

What determines the benchmarks of teacher preparation? Of course, I would not argue that the standard of Malaysian teacher preparation is vastly different from another teacher preparation programmes in place elsewhere. The same can be said about the approach to reflection and reflective practices. While, certainly, there are peculiarities specific to a non-Western educational context (which will be discussed in the next section), the overall picture is quite similar to that of Western countries, and in terms of reflective practice, Malaysian education seems to have the same issues that teacher education tends to have on the global scale. Specific to the Malaysian context, a couple of issues and questions will be considered

in detail within the next section; these include: what place should reflection hold within Malaysian teacher preparation? Is there an end goal for developing reflective skills? And, is reflection relevant to the Malaysian educational context?

a) What place should reflection hold within Malaysian teacher preparation?

Modern Malaysian education seems to exhibit some of the problems highlighted by Smyth (1989) who referred to American and Western education where school reforms tried to ensure that “what goes on *inside* schools is directly responsive to the economic needs *outside* schools” (p.10). The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 clearly holds schools responsible for producing competitive professionals, naming the achievement of “improvements in productivity and efficiency of the higher education system” (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013, p.6) amongst the key goals of educational reform. In line with Smyth’s observations, Malaysian policymakers are undertaking similar actions to those of Western school reformists: updates to the curriculum, the implementation of state-wide testing; the use of teacher appraisals and other activities. It is argued that these measured aims to ensure the economic effectiveness of schools and teachers but neglect other aspects of educational effectiveness (Ariffin et al., 2010).

The focus on the economic sustainability of education inevitably shapes the criteria for what are considered to be successful teachers and what is considered to be effective teaching in a certain, specific way. It prevents reflection from becoming a vital part of teachers’ professional practice, as they have to be busy with completely different things: keeping up with the updated curriculum under limited time and adhering to the governmental standards of teaching English (which do not quite match the actual realities of the classroom) doing their paperwork (see Chapter 4 for more examples from the study findings). This leads to a situation in which considering Schon’s idea of reflection becomes problematic within the Malaysian context in least in one aspect – the situational context. While specific individuals (particularly passionate teachers or their motivated interns) may be interested in fostering reflection and reflective skills, as well as understanding its potential for improving teaching practice, reflection would not necessarily be encouraged and promoted among all novice teachers. In the present study, it was established right away that the quality and prevalence of reflection is closely related to the conditions of time, its availability and how it is regimented. It seems that a lack of time and resources has an adverse effect on the teachers’ willingness to engage in reflection.

Reflection is considered to be a system-forming factor in creative thinking, ensuring not only its semantic organization and self-regulation but also the self-realization and self-development of the individual teacher. Reflection creates the conditions required for micro developments in an individual's thinking process to occur, as it can help an individual to identify answers to questions, resolve problems, and respond effectively to conflicting situations. Reflection as an educational activity encompasses two areas; firstly, the ontological, which relates to subject content knowledge and secondly, the psychological which relates to the knowledge involved in the activities of a given subject. For example, an English teacher's ontological knowledge might include their knowledge of the English language itself (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation), whereas their psychological knowledge might relate to the creative use and implementation of those activities they use to teach English. In attempting to better comprehend their own educational activity, the student focuses both on the "knowledge" products of their activity, (for example, a capacity for creativity) and on the structure and form of the activity itself, which required that she or he create these products. The growth of student teachers' interest in the activity, and their creativity will naturally have an impact the depth of their commitment and resolution to put their knowledge into practice. This is because the more a student teacher is fascinated by an activity, the more they will wish to know, the more investment they will make in time, attention and energy, and all of this can be expected to be reflected in their practice. According to Dewey (1973) learners' actions and thinking are interrelated with their previous experiences, and the meaning or consequences these have for their future decisions and actions. It may be suggested that these past experiences are fertile grounds in which creativity may take root, as learners process their experiences in the past and the lessons they provided, they may be compelled to find alternative ways of practising, whether that means presenting material in a different way or finding new ways to capture the imagination of their class.

The use of situational reflection may help the teacher to better comprehend and exercise self-control over their behaviour in the real time of actual situations. Quality reflective practice and content knowledge are insufficient forces when they are not informed by experience and transformed by creativity. Creativity and experience help teachers to make educated decisions in unscripted scenarios and in the face of real challenges where box standard responses would be inappropriate. Schon (1983) emphasizes that learners are not only capable of reflecting and altering their practice with the benefit of hindsight but may also reflect and react appropriately as they face novel challenges. This is process cannot be executed without the guidance that experience brings. Dewey states that each learner will develop the qualities necessary to reflect through time and will become acquainted with the

benefits of taking responsibility for their own reflection, and their practice in the classroom. Both the positive and negative situations and experiences the teachers encounter in the classroom may prompt the teacher to analyse what occurred and why it occurred. As a result, a teacher may correlate his or her actions to manage or encourage a particular situation, coordinating their actions in accordance with the changing conditions of the classroom, producing an authentic, rather than pre-programmed response. This approach manifests itself in the way a student teacher delivers a particular activity, in how often they analyse what is happening, in the degree of the development of their decision-making processes, in their propensity for self-analysis in specific situations. Reflection is often conceptualized as a tendency to analyze past activities and past events, one may, therefore, question how a novice teacher who is inexperienced, may reflect on her past experience to find better solutions or methods in response to the obstacles they face in the classroom (Van Manen, 1995). However, the fact is that all of the student teachers are adults and have the ability to make decisions based on the knowledge they have retrieved from their own experiences in life, in the classroom, or through the experiences of others in their community of practice. This ability may be immediately tapped into from their very first teaching experience, as their first encounters in the educational environment may draw from their experiences in life up until that point. Thenceforth, a catalogue of experiences specific to the educational environment will continue to be added to and strengthened.

The student teachers' diaries provided evidence of this basic capacity, revealing that very often the student teachers analyzed and evaluated the events that occurred in the classroom, showing a general inclination to analyze the past and analyze the part they played in it. Amongst the characteristics Knowles (1977) postulates as being specific to the adult learner is the presence of life experience and knowledge; adult learners are therefore able to derive their practice from this previous knowledge and experience, and this awakens reflective potential (see Literature Review Chapter for more information on Knowles's adult learners' characteristics). However, again, Knowles (1977) emphasizes the crucial importance of linking theory to practice, without which the benefits of experience are lost. Moreover, he postulates that only adult learners are able to thoughtfully make this link, and only adults are able to select experiences that are worthy and sensible to draw from in any particular situation. This potential, he argues, is underdeveloped in children.

Moreover, reflection is connected with the analysis of future forthcoming activities, with planning and the forecasting of probable outcomes. Can engaging in such reflective habits have a knock-on effect on the student teachers' awareness of the reflection they are

engaging in? Will it lead students to a better appreciation and use of reflection?

Manifestations of reflection are present in the following: the thoroughness with which the details of a student teachers' behavior are planned, the frequency of references made to future events, how the student teachers orientate themselves with the future, and their future classes.

First and foremost, it is necessary that student teachers be aware of every kind of reflection, as they are resources to call upon at times when they are forced to act and respond effectively in the face of obstacles. Reflective practice can encourage student teachers to create a positive environment and set the tone by which they mean to interact with their students, this is because through reflection they are engaging in a constant effort to improve and adapt their teaching to the benefit of their students. Being in touch, through reflection, with what is wrong and what is right about the classroom should promote the student teacher's feeling of accountability; if a teacher's conduct is having a negative effect on their students, reflection provides an opportunity for this to be identified, and for their behavior to be modified for the better in the future. This research showed that the wider perspective reflection provided, in allowing student teachers to return to and occupy many different viewpoints in time, allowed student teachers to make a link between the learning difficulties or misbehaviour of particular students, and the methods and activities that the student teacher was delivering in the classroom. This took time to develop; as students repeatedly looked back and reflected on each lesson, patterns were able to be identified, and conclusions were able to be drawn. Student teachers used reflective practice to scrutinize and clarify sets of experiences; without reflection, so many lessons may have been lost, and the potential to learn limited.

This research revealed that many student teachers were able to develop more effective habits of communication when they reflected on the experiences where communication was a problem. Student teachers were able to reassess miscommunication, some questioned the suitability of their usual means of communication when working with children and looked to their community of practice for guidance. Student teachers who felt lacking in this area asked student teachers they believed to be more socially competent in communicating with children for advice, and thus, took away tips to try out. In some cases, communication was identified as being a contributing factor in a lesson that went badly, but in one case, a student teacher was able to dismiss communication and get to the real source of the problem with her lesson. In this example a student teacher speculated that her lesson was failing due to her student's poor level of English comprehension; as a result, she decided to teach the same lesson, using Malay to clarify her instructions and explanations. Unexpectedly, little changed, in short, the

lesson failed again. This process of trial and error, however, gave the student teacher an opportunity to get to the real heart of the problem, allowing her to identify correctly her strengths and weaknesses.

Consistency in the use of reflective practice is necessary to allow student teachers to think actively and be aware of which experiences are meaningful and provide material which it would be worthwhile to evaluate. The danger is that if reflection is done sporadically, anecdotal experiences may be mistaken for general truths. According to Taylor (1981) reflection is a crucial platform of education for learners but reminds the reader that reflective competence is something which may develop gradually. Student teachers should not try to hurry along reflective practice, being overeager to draw quick conclusions from their experiences may result in misguided practice. Adult learners may exercise patience and restraint, reflecting on their decisions and experiences step by step. According to Boud, Keogh and Walker (2013), confidence in these skills, and success as a result of reflection, will motivate adult learners to become better educators.

Specific individuals (particularly passionate student teachers) may be interested in fostering reflection and reflective skills, as well as understanding its potential for improving their teaching practice. They may have written a reflection on every lesson taught, they may cherish every experience, but this is immaterial unless they are able to use this to inform their future practice positively. This research showed that the student teachers who wrote in their reflective diaries in detail and with consistency, delivered better lessons. This was because in doing so, they were able to identify specific tactics that could be used to remedy problems in the classroom; they were able to indicate precisely what changes they intended to make in their future lesson and clarify their rationale for doing so.

In the present study, it was established early that conditions of quality and prevalence in reflection closely relate to conditions of time, that is its availability and how it is regimented. It appears that limitations in time and resources have an adverse effect on the teachers' willingness to engage in reflection. However, even when the conditions of time may be described as positive (for example, if time is allocated and reserved specifically for reflection, and if that time is ample) one factor that proved to be significant was the uncertainty student teachers often felt over the appropriate content of reflection and how knowledge may be derived from that content.

Other questions must be asked regarding the effectiveness of learner-centred education. Although effectively realising the ideals of learner-centred education can prove challenging, achieving learner-centred education is still recommended as the only viable long-term strategy for Malaysian education. The rationale behind this conviction is that only by developing a system which is learner-centred will the national Malaysian education system integrate into the global system and produce students who can compete on the global platform in terms of educational achievement, employment, technological innovation and knowledge production.

This being the case, different strategies must be used to implement learner-centred education in developing countries than in developed countries. Firstly, learner-centred education should not be viewed as an ultimate goal per se but rather as a means for increasing the quality of education (Schweisfurth 2013). If in any specific context learner-centred education compromises the effort to maximise the overall quality of education, the actual education policy should deviate from the traditional framework of learner-centred education. Secondly, it is insisted that gradual rather than radical transformation should be encouraged. Gradual transformation is optimal in so far as related risks can be identified early, and appropriate adjustments can be made. For this reason, gradual reorientation toward learner-centred education may prove more sustainable long-term. Thirdly, it is emphasised that teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders must actively participate by engaging with and adjusting their professional strategies to the new approach (Schweisfurth, 2013a, 2013b). This way, maximum respect will be paid to the interests of all people involved. Fourthly, all barriers and obstacles identified during the implementation of such an approach should be closely investigated. There is a potential, for example, that considerable resistance to change may arise, due to the conservative views held by many Malaysians. In addition to this, many Malaysian teachers may perceive teacher-centred approaches to be the only reasonable way of managing the conditions they face in the classroom (large class sizes being one example.) Within this study, student teachers often resorted to teacher-centred approaches when they faced obstacles in the classroom, perceiving them in times of stress as a way of regaining control over their students.

It is therefore necessary that educators be provided with thorough elaboration on all the major issues relevant to learner-centred education. However, it must be emphasized that the pressure to make learner-centred education successful must not fall solely on the shoulders of the teachers. It is argued that consensus among stakeholders may be reached, and they may be persuaded to adopt key elements of learner-centred education (Schweisfurth

2013b). Decision makers within education must focus on creating the right conditions, and an educational environment which supports and promotes learner-centeredness. Whilst at the same time, it is recommended that stakeholders be provided with the opportunity to discuss and share solutions to the obstacle's teachers might face; educators could, for example, learn how to persevere with learner-centred approaches in the crowded classroom. Educators can use learner-centred approaches to engage their students, and therefore manage classroom behaviour.

Finally, it is necessary to initiate a campaign in which information is provided to the general public, with the aim of swaying their opinion in favour of this type of education. Based on the ideas of Michele Schweisfurth and other prominent scholars, Alderson (2011) stresses the need to mobilise the dominant public opinion in developing countries. For this type of education to be accepted, those involved in education and the public must be in favour of it. It is argued that if citizens become acquainted with the benefits of this approach, implementation is more likely to be successful. The expectations parents have of the education their children receive, has a significant impact on teachers. Gaining their support will have a positive, motivating impact on both students and teachers.

Overall, learner-centeredness presents a sound choice, providing many opportunities for education within developing countries, but it must be properly and consistently implemented. This type of education should not be imposed on the population, but rather its characteristics should be thoroughly outlined and its key advantages promoted. Under such conditions, learner-centred education can be adapted according to the local conditions in Malaysia, entailing positive implications for all parties involved. Schweisfurth's (2013a) ideas and recommendations are relevant both because they provide guidance as to how the main benefits of learner-centred education should be explained to local populations, and because they specify and allow the additional obstacles facing developing countries to be anticipated. Thus, comprehensive strategies should be formulated to address the risks of implementing learner-centred education. Adequate preparation should help Malaysia to transition successfully away from teacher-centred approaches, reducing the gap between the Malaysian education system and those national systems which dominate the higher ranks of international standards.

The proposals for implementing learner-centred approaches outlined within this section could be equally applied in attempts to further enhance reflective practice. The recommendations provide key steps to ensure the success of its implementation, helping to

promote solid understanding of the approach and thereby avoid apathetic reactions toward reflection. If reflection is understood and thus embraced, it is expected that students will ultimately benefit from the improved practice of their teachers, and their motivation to learn will be subsequently elevated.

b) Is there an end goal for developing reflective skills?

It seems that the point made previously can be easily challenged if we mention that most, if not all, teaching practicums nowadays have specific reflective activities – usually, reflective diaries. Thus, the role of reflection in teaching preparation is seemingly acknowledged by the policymakers who design these practicums. This is true for Malaysian education as well as during the study; I analyzed different types of reflective diaries with various degrees of detail and critical inquiry. Nagro et al. (2017) stress the potentially beneficial role of video-recording and self-reflection for maximizing student teachers' reflective abilities and the effectiveness of their interventions. Therefore, teacher preparation is critical for the further development of their reflective skills.

Furthermore, Admiraal (2015) claims that role play may be used to enable student teachers to better evaluate situations from the learner's perspective. As a result, they are able to improve their comprehension of learners' concerns and difficulties, as well as determine the corresponding effective solutions for maximizing their motivation and learning outcomes. In general, reflection, to be effective, presupposes predicting the potential responses of other individuals (Admiraal, 2015). There is abundant evidence in scholarly literature that reflection can improve teaching practice (Larrivee, 2000; Moon, 2005). However, as I argued above, the problem may not be with the concept of reflection itself, but a result of the fact that there seems to be no clear goal as to what student teachers should be able to do in terms of reflection. This allowed me to move onto a discussion about the standard of reflection that is expected, arguing that it is not quite clear whether student teachers learned anything new about reflection over the course of their teaching preparation, or that they used any skills additional to that which they had already previously acquired.

The evidence from the findings of the present study suggests that the activities included in the teaching practicum cannot always be assessed as strictly reflective *per se*. Most students are required to describe their problems and suggest solutions, but this correlates more with problem-solving skills, as opposed to reflective skills. According to Marquardt and Waddill (2004), reflection occurs only when the learner, with a level of

insight particular to the adult learner, experiences a problem that is for one reason or another familiar, and exercises their ability to respond in a way that is inspired by their previous experience. This process of retrieving information from the past, to apply this experience appropriately to present situations, develops the skill and intuition involved in understanding when knowledge and experience is relevant and when it is needed (Freire. 1973). As was outlined above, only one student out of all participants was actively critical and reflective in her writings – she assessed her feelings and tried to find the deeper reasoning that informed her decisions, and this seems aligned with both Schon's understanding of what reflection should be, and more modern assessments of reflection, including 'critical reflection.' Although no significant findings, from student teachers reflective writing, were shown to explore changes in student teachers' reflection and its relation to problem solving. Stuessy (1996) believes that students' reflection can be viewed as evidence of newly acquired knowledge through the use of problem-solving skills. In addition to that previously suggested, this may be an area of interest for future research.

One may argue that this could be the end goal of developing reflection in novice teachers, however, this is just a suggestion, and it is somewhat disheartening that the curriculum of a teaching practicum does not address this question. This takes us back to the lack of clarity regarding the issue in educational programs. What exactly should the student teachers know as reflective practitioners? What skills should they demonstrate? These findings confirm yet another criticism of Schon, clarified by Russell (2013) who finds that the purposes and end goals of reflection and reflective activities in modern education are more often than not unclear to educators and their students themselves.

Moreover, it is easy to evaluate the validity of the concern highlighted above by referring to the comments made by the student teachers regarding their teaching practicums. Was it always clear to them why they were taught certain things? It seems that they felt that there was too much theory and not enough practice, and while one could object that it is impossible to cover everything in a rather short course, there is still an obvious gap between what is taught to student teachers and what is expected of them later. According to Mezirow (1990) it is almost impossible to be entirely unprejudiced in our interpretations of our experiences, he therefore recommends that adult learners remain aware of this fact and focus on understanding how their emotions affect their assessment of situations. Likewise, Habermas (1976) acknowledges that reflection can lead one astray if the personal perspective and feelings of an individual come to dominate. He asserts that humans learn theoretically

and practically, and the outcomes of these processes of learning depend on how knowledge is balanced, safeguarded and utilized in practice.

The above critical analysis is presented to outline the key elements impacting the teachers' capacity to reflect on the learning performance and provide the relevant interventions.

c) To what extent is reflection relevant to Malaysian educational context?

It is easy to recognize and observe that reflection requires a specific environment. Such an environment would be best described as respectful to the experience of others, actively engaging, encouraging, and based on principles of equality. The findings of the present study have made the importance of communication between different members of teaching community of practice very clear. To my knowledge, this was manifested in three ways:

- The actual, real-life interactions between student teachers
- The preconceived notions about the role of teachers and teaching practice
- The gap between expectations and reality

This gap, as Hebert (2015) rightfully states, is exactly what stimulates reflection as it leads one to question his or her values and beliefs when facing the actual reality of the school environment.

All three aspects of communication proved immensely important for reflection, which in its turn allows one to progress onto speaking in more detail about the connection between reflection and social learning, as well as reflection and community of practice. This is where the uniqueness of the Malaysian cultural context plays a significant role again.

In this case, a specifically Malaysian issue largely stems from its authoritarian culture; a senior teacher (as any senior person) demands absolute agreement and perceives critical questions or comments as threats to their authority. This is why the principles of andragogy needed to be brought into discussion more actively; Malaysian teacher education did not always seem to take them into account, using principles of pedagogy instead and essentially treating student teachers the way in which children are usually treated (Freire, 1970;

Knowles, 1977). I was able to see a few examples of such an attitude in the findings, when student teachers were reprimanded for discussing their ideas with their peers or laughed at for making suggestions in front of more experienced teachers. These aspects either discourage reflection or encourage the student teachers to draw negative conclusions about their teaching practice, their professional expertise or their level of confidence. Moreover, it signifies that reflection is, in some cases, viewed by the senior teachers as something unwanted and harmful for a novice teacher.

I believe that reflection is not, therefore, the only challenge faced by the student teachers, but the main issue relates to the sometimes-infantilizing treatment they receive, and a disregard of the fact that they are adult learners. Mentors and senior teachers, in laughing at the ideas of their student teachers, undermine the mutual respect that should exist between themselves and their adult students. Knowles (1973) stresses to educators the necessity of not treating adult learners as children under supervision, in order to avoid the erection of barriers in the delivery and reception of knowledge. In many cases student teachers understand themselves as adult learners and show a readiness to accept responsibility as adult learners, delving further into information based on their reflection and previous experience. However, student teachers will of course face doubt at times, and will not always be able to overcome every obstacle alone. This should not be seized by mentors and supervisors of evidence of the student teacher's helplessness, as if the answers must filter down from the top; in this research it was shown that adult learners may share their issues within their community of practice and find a solution on that level. This evidence suggests that the use of reflective practice, hybridized with andragogical principles, may enhance and progress the student teacher's learning process.

It is evident that elements of such attitude contribute to creating a situation in which almost all participants were scared of negative assessments and reluctant to turn to others for help, even though in most cases their senior teachers gladly provided this along with positive feedback and other comments. If we imagine that one student shares with a group how she was criticized for sharing ideas, or how she was mocked by her senior teacher, or how she did not receive help when her pupils threatened her, what ideas about the teaching community as a whole can it give to the group?

Certainly, the remnants of authoritarian tendencies in the Malaysian professional communities of practice have a largely negative influence on novice teachers' reflection, skills, and competence, this remnant are exemplified in the physical punishment of students

still practiced in Malaysia (Gardner, 2016). They have to work twice as hard to overcome bias and a lack of support. Similarly, such tendencies do not quite go along with the key principles of andragogy, often directly contradicting them.

Sharifi, Soleimani, and Jafarigohar (2017) suggest that andragogy constitutes one of the most promising scientific fields considering its potential practical implications. In particular, it should presuppose the active involvement of adult learners in the learning process. They should not merely perceive the provided information in a passive way but rather actively formulate their hypotheses and research questions. Although teachers can assist them in these endeavors, they should not restrict adult students' independent thinking abilities. Thus, properly implemented andragogical practices are comparatively effective in advancing the learning practice.

Wang and Storey (2015) concluded that adopting methods appropriate to the adult learning environment benefit adult learners and tried to determine the most effective andragogical practices in the context of foreign language learning. This research looked at a similar context, that of teaching a foreign language. The findings served to reiterate the importance of acknowledging and respecting the position of the student teachers as adult learners, moreover, it was suggested that andragogy holds particular significance for students coming from Asian cultural backgrounds. According to Wang and Storey (2015), Asian students are groomed to not question information delivered to them, in an environment where respect for the teacher equates to blind obedience, and teachers are encouraged to use an exam approach in their teaching where student are expected to answer rather than ask questions and speak when spoken to. Wang and Storey (2015) specify the following andragogy techniques as being the most useful in language learning: experience-related issues, personalizing instructions; microclimate development, and addressing students' needs. Their results indicate the effectiveness of the above methods. Sato, Haegele, and Foot (2017) claim that andragogy requires the extensive integration of self-directed learning and students' engagement in the questions discussed. This is generally consistent with the above findings which expands on the need for adults to engage in active learning.

Another theory suggested as having the potential to compliment reflective practice was community of practice. Etzioni (1995) argues that a strong community of practice may be formed in response to an environment where authoritarian tendencies and problematic policies dominate. He claims that strong communities of practice work for the benefit of its members and to produce better communitarians in the future. One of the consequences to be

found when student teachers cannot receive help elsewhere is that they naturally turn to each other for ideas and suggestions. Similarly, if the schools expect them to invest their own money into buying *realia* and equipment for the lessons, they are encouraged to look into the most effective (and probably the cheapest) options suggested by peers. As was mentioned before, even the fact that many supervisors and school teachers gladly helped the students and were not dismissive of their concerns, did not prevent students from feeling dissuaded from seeking help.

Unfortunately, the professional identities of the student teachers were shaped by similarly negative notions. They critically reflected on their own actions in the classroom, often using their preconceived notions of ‘what being a teacher is,’ and often being misguided in doing so. As was described above in more detail, virtually all student teachers thought that they should be good disciplinarians – first and foremost. Did the classroom reality prove them wrong? Yes, in the majority of cases they were able to realize that discipline was a superficial reflection of deeper issues with pupils’ understanding. However, such an assessment of their role in the classroom is yet another proof that teacher-centered, authoritarian approach to conducting lessons influences novice teachers more strongly than any pedagogical theories that they may have been exposed to up to that point.

6.7.2 Reconstructing Reflective Practice

The concerns described above support the argument that reflection may not be the most significant problem in Malaysian teacher preparation, and moreover, may not provide the vast improvement in the quality of education as is often suggested in research. For example, the need to accept and balance multicultural and globalized education creates many more urgent problems for teachers than those which reflection alone could solve, especially when it comes to less experienced teachers (Knowles, 1977). Certainly, one can argue (which I have attempted in the “Findings” chapter) that obstacles such as language proficiency, economic problems and so on facilitate reflection and foster creativity. However, are we sure that novice teachers would be able to come up with adequate solutions to state-scale educational problems in the extremely short amount of time spent on their preparation?

While scholars may strongly argue in favour of reflection as a means of enhancing student teachers’ responsibility and awareness of their teaching practice, this is not necessarily reflected in the actual educational reality in Malaysia where reflection may not always be used to promote accountability. Misunderstandings of what reflection is or should

be mean that student teachers may simply provide unconstructive, descriptive details in their reflective accounts and fail to scrutinize or connect how their own conduct relates to the outcomes of the class.

Reconstructing how reflective practice is understood could be beneficial to the student teachers' education. Reconstructing reflective practice involves not only understanding what is embodied in reflective practice, but also what makes reflective practice crucial.

Considering the evidence from the findings, the research suggests that reflection can make a significant contribution to teacher education, when used in collaboration with principles of adult learning, when grounded in a strong community of practice and when the professional identity of student teachers is supported. Lessons may be taken from the four main factors apparent from the findings (the relational issues, situational context, developmental issues and the significance of experience) and indicate how principles of andragogy may combine to form a hybridised version of reflective practice.

Firstly, the findings show that the key relational issues influencing the student teachers' development of reflective skills included how they construct and participate in a community of practice; how the student teachers experience and use peer mentoring, and how they understand the role of the mentor. Secondly, apparent in the findings were the situational contexts that influencing the student teachers' development; these included their financial circumstances, the various problems they encountered with the curriculum, and the barriers and obstacles connected to practice within the classroom. Thirdly, the findings revealed certain developmental issues such as the presence of variations in the quality of reflection. Finally, experiential issues were observed, such as how the student teachers form a professional identity, and in how they assess the teaching practicum. Encountering such issues and circumstances and attempting to resolve them can prompt the student teachers to reflect.

These set of factors form the fractures that may be observed and must be addressed in reflective practice. Such fractures and gaps may be filled in or scaffolded with the use of other theories; for instance, principles of community of practice, professional identities and andragogy can support reflective practice and compensate for some of its potential deficiencies. The academics involved in the development and research of reflective practice, have invested time examining the theories underpinning it, in addition to examining the future possibilities of the theory and new areas where it can be of use.

While many scholars strongly emphasize the benefits of reflection, such enthusiasm for reflection is not always mirrored in practice, within the actual educational reality where obstacles and circumstances can stifle the full potentials of reflection. In particular, some scholars have come to question whether or not reflection is effective when applied in teacher preparation. Evidence showed that only one student teacher put in consistent effort, from the very first phase, to reflect on every aspect of her teaching and learning, the rest of the student teachers focused on problem-solving on the spot. Reflective practice may not, therefore, always result in a vast improvement in the quality of education. Nonetheless, student teachers' reflective skills did improve, along with their problem-solving skills, consistently throughout the three phases of practicum and did so in parallel with improvements in practice.

Knowles (1978) strongly emphasized that an adult has all the prerequisites required to make independent decisions, whilst Carlson (1989) reminded that at this stage of learning, adult learners are still in need of guidance to help them build up their own abilities and use their talents to reach their potential. Such comments beg the question: is reflective practice well-suited to being used alongside other concepts and theories? If so, which concepts and which theories? Are principles taken from andragogy sufficient? Answering these questions requires a further exploration of the benefits and challenges of using reflective practice alongside other concepts and theories.

It is revealing that as the student teachers develop their professional identities, reflect and talk about their roles as teachers, their eagerness to be accepted into the community of senior teachers is apparent. It seems that this drive to be accepted is profoundly embedded in human behaviour. Reflection can have serious flaws; if a student teacher engages in defensive or emotion-driven observations, the decisions they make will be unlikely to be productive (Wallace, 1991). If this is the case, a strong community of practice could serve to challenge and counter the attitudes of the individual student teacher. The perspectives and ideas of others in the community may prompt the individual student teacher to reassess their own thoughts and conclusions about a certain situation and draw some value from their experience. Farrell (2007) emphasized that student teachers who systematically reflect on their experiences may have gain stronger insights, develop better teaching technique and enhance their creativity. In a later study, the same theorist discusses bridging the gap of student teachers and in-service teachers; there he states that a teacher's community of practice is one of the key factors in development of effective reflection, Farrell (2010). In a community of practice student teachers mutually benefit from sharing information and

supporting each other, but they also defend themselves from the infiltration of invalid and unhelpful ideas by sharing perspectives. Student teachers consult and use their community of practice throughout their teacher education, reporting their experiences and sharing their challenges and successes with their peers. Furthermore, members of the community of practice can provide reassurance and support; the creativity of the group can be boosted through discussion of their experiences as individuals respond and relate to one another.

Moreover, reflective practice that is appropriately reconstructed may of further benefit to the student teachers. Student teachers, when in an environment which recognises and respects them as adult learners, have the opportunity to take ownership over developing their own understandings, use their own vision and set more fitting goals for their education. Knowles's model of andragogy identifies the presence of subject matter knowledge, individual and situational differences amongst adult learners; all such differences will inevitably be encountered by the educator in the classroom, because the student teachers they teach: their goals, their motivations, their circumstances and their relationships, will be diverse. As adult learners, student teachers frequently have a motivation or desire to become professionals, effective teachers or the desire to advance one's career in education by becoming educational managers.

Despite the clear existence of reflective practice, it is difficult to discuss the student teachers' ideas regarding reflection as they may or may not understand or make explicit reference to the concept (as was the case with Fauziah and Jamal, whose weekly diaries reported rather than analysed events). Moreover, they may not have made a link between their reflective thoughts when they write their reflective diaries and any subsequent changes or improvements. From the perspective of a researcher looking in from the outside, the student teachers' evolution throughout the practicum, and their reception of and reflection on feedback seem inseparable in that one seems to follow from the other. Nonetheless, student teachers are not always aware of any connection. This is clearly apparent in the evidence of the findings where the student teachers took the feedback they were given seriously, using recommendations and criticism to improve from one lesson to another. This pattern was observed during three phases of the student teachers' practicums when they emphasised the importance of the feedback they receive from their mentors, supervisors and peers. Thereby, student teachers were able to acknowledge and reflect on their thoughts, understand the limits of their own subjectivity, and thus, seek and come to value other perspectives. Adult learners have the ability to direct the course of their learning in the ways that they react and reflect on their experiences, this is largely due to their ability to make independent judgements. The

characteristics of adult learners are discussed in Lindeman's theory of adult education (1926) subsequently adapted by Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2005). It is there noted that adults are motivated to learn because doing so will satisfy their needs and interests; it is claimed that adults are engaged in life-long learning, that their richest source of education is found in experience, and that they have a need to be self-directing. Each of these conditions seem relevant to the learning experience of the student teachers and how they reflect on any obstacles they face. Initially, the student teachers were motivated to learn, perceiving that this would satisfy their need to become better professionals and excel in the profession. Upon engaging in their training, they utilized reflection as a means of shaping their future experiences, valuing the feedback they received after each observation as the data on which to reflect. All the while they made use of the decision-making skills they possessed as adult learners, they accessed resources, sought the knowledge of others and came up with their own solutions to tricky problems. All of this contributed to their professional development and identity.

When circumstances permit, and under the right conditions, student teachers are able to advance from one behavioral habit to another, shedding, for example, dependence on their superior to maintain a more independent state of mind. Apparent in the findings was the role reflection can play in such progression; if an adult learner is criticized for failing to seek information, or for their inability to use their own initiative, they will thereby have the awareness they need to adapt their future conduct. Csikszentmihalyi and Sawyers (1995) discuss the critical role feedback can play, stating that reflecting on any criticism and recommendation received initiates the cognitive process of problem solving whereby solutions and strategies to weaknesses, and ways of enhancing performance may be found.

As Freire (1998) argues, teachers who were not taught themselves to think critically will never "make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community" (p.14). As a result, they will mechanically pass on book knowledge, never teaching truly valuable or creative lessons to others. It is for this reason imperative that they take ownership over their practice, that is, develop their reflective competence and use their autonomy as adult learners.

Nonetheless, the role of university supervisors and school mentor teachers must not be underestimated. These figures are still responsible for helping student teachers to acquire and achieve their objectives. Evidence identified and explained how feedback is used as a lens through which to reflect. The feedback received after each classroom observation was

considered useful by the student teachers as it provided a clear indication of areas requiring attention. The feedback assisted the student teachers in their future lessons and also encouraged them to discover and identify possible improvement strategies. Moreover, in the interviews the student teachers demonstrated development in their professional identity as teachers, in their abilities to refer back to and share their experiences of feedback.

However, during the interviews, a number of student teachers shared certain concerns they had over the feedback they had received from their mentor teachers and supervisors. Some student teachers believed the advice and feedback they received was generalized, basic and of little help. Such feedback was stated by Smyth (1989) as an encouragement for the students to take control over, think about and develop their own teaching and learning approaches. The pursuit of self-control perhaps could be balanced by the use of a hybridized form of reflective practice, in which student teachers are not left in the dark with minimal help, but not encouraged to become over dependent on guidance. In the case of feedback, an andragogical approach should motivate and provide the student teachers with the skills needed to take responsibility for their practice, whilst at the same time, reflection may help them to interpret feedback and derive meaning from feedback which is subtle or lacking in clarity. In turn, feedback which, even following deep reflection, is still found to be cryptic or confusing, may be clarified if student teachers feel confident in approaching their senior teachers and requesting a new explanation. If reflective practice fails to provide the student teacher with clarity, and if the student-mentor relationship does not deliver answers despite the attempt to adopt an andragogical approach, student teachers may fall back on their community of practice for help. Etzioni (1995) argues that in cases where student teachers struggle to derive meaning from the feedback they receive, and where reflection is of little help, there is an opportunity for bonding to occur within the community of practice.

Assistance clearly needs to be balanced and respect the autonomy and integrity of the adult learner. Help needs to be offered in a way that supports student teachers' engagement in reflective practice and independent professional development. Moreover, the simultaneous use of reflective practice and principles of andragogy will only have positive results if the practitioners and facilitators understand the theories well; good practice will depend on how the principles and methods are applied, how their use is developed, and a healthy synthesis achieved.

Optimal, effective reflective practice can be achieved when the limitations of reflective practice are overcome with the aid of other principles, theories or practices.

A student teachers' repertoire of reflected experiences, and the skills they have as adult learners can combine to fulfil the proactive potentials of reflection. In teaching and learning, reflective practice can be used as a tool through which to reveal any discrepancies between the reflective diary entries covering previous and current experiences to their future lesson. As a result, adults student teachers will be continuously empowered in their choices, judgements and problem-solving skills.

The evidence in this study suggests that reflective practice alone is insufficient as a conceptual apparatus and proves unable to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the context of the TEI practicum. Rather, reflective practice needs to be supplemented and supported by other concepts in order to provide a beneficial contribution to the student teachers' education. My research proposed a framework from which to scaffold reflective support practice with other theories and concepts, with the aim of increasing the understanding of reflective practice and supporting the use of reflective practice. The central aim is to ameliorate the lack of awareness of, and quality of reflection to be found in student teachers' education program in Malaysia. The framework includes the integration of reflective practice and andragogy, reflective and community of practice and reflective practice and experiential learning. If most research has focused on proving or exploring the existence of reflection, a valuable step forward would be to reconstruct reflective practice, cultivating it with other theories and principles to form hybridized, sophisticated forms of reflection. Reconstructing reflective practice could contribute to future studies and research, providing a worthwhile opportunity through which reflective skills can be developed in many new, innovative and effective ways.

6.8 Summary

The chapter discussed the findings, critically comparing them to the previous research. While some of the findings are confirmed by other recent studies, others are challenged; this enabled the relevance of Schon's theory of reflection for the Malaysian educational context to be examined. It was established that, while reflection in itself can be beneficial for novice teachers in Malaysia, it proves inadequate in addressing or eliminating the most persistent problems that exist in relation to teacher preparation in the country. One of the most significant problems is the unclear place reflection occupies in Malaysian education, another is the troubling absence of end goals in terms of what developing reflective skills may look to achieve. Lastly is the lack of encouragement student teachers receive to reflect. Further problems within Malaysian education such as the inconsistent

curriculum, the language barrier between student teachers and pupils, and the remnants of authoritarian tendencies in the teaching and relationships between the teachers, make the concept of reflection fade into the background. Even though one may rightfully argue that reflection should be a lifelong, evolving process and not a quickly arrived at destination; within the context of student teacher education, the need to assess and adequately measure reflective skills and their progress still exists. It is fair to question whether reflection can be measured at all, or how reflection can be effectively measured.

Overall, in terms of relational factors, the findings of the study positively addressed the concerns voiced by Deni, Zainal and Malakolunthu (2014) who argued that building a professional community is one of the biggest and most persistent challenges for Malaysian education in general. These findings were also positive in comparison with most previous research, where the relationship between different members of the teaching community was far from perfect (Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Ulvik & Smith, 2012). More specifically, from the viewpoint of reflection and development of reflective skills, relational issues in the communities of practice proved to be both obstacles and stimulating factors. The discussion of relational factors allowed for the exploration of the strength and importance of peer mentoring, the misunderstanding of mentorship by both students and teachers, as well as the problematic power dynamics, potential to the student-teacher relationship. All of this challenged Schon's reflective framework.

The findings provided many examples of the ways in which situational factors, (the curriculum, the language barrier, or the number of pupils in the classroom,) stimulate student teachers' reflection and make them find creative approaches to solving this problem. However, the student teachers who consistently struggle to understand how to implement the curriculum will not adequately address their pupils' actual needs. The solution of this problem ought not to lie on the teachers' shoulders, becoming an additional burden in an already difficult profession, but rather become a topic of interest to educators and authorities responsible for the development of new editions of the curriculum. There should be additional mechanisms for student teachers who do not understand and feel doubtful as to how they can implement curriculum.

Additionally, the lack of financial support to schools can be an influential factor for the lack of psychological and professional support to student teachers. Also, the lack of money distributed to rural schools may be one of the main reasons why there is such a vast difference in English knowledge between urban and rural pupils. This difference was

addressed by Darus (2013) who argued that, unless this difference in preparation between pupils is acknowledged and taken into account, the academic performance of pupils will not improve, and teachers will continue to struggle.

Exploring developmental factors proved to be quite thought-provoking, as the process urged me to think about the end goal, itself associated with developmental development of reflective skills. For example, here we may properly utilize or introduce the term ‘critical reflection’ and maybe the aim would be that student teachers’ skills evolve from reflection to critical reflection, that is not simply being able to explain their reasoning but to actually reconstruct it and identify the flaws in their perception of the teaching process.

Lastly, experiential factors opened up the discussion of reflection and the formation of professional identity. Firstly, it was observed that student teachers may model the behavior of other senior teachers they have encountered in the past as many participants referred to their school English teachers as having a positive influence. Secondly, student teachers model the behavior of their current mentor teachers and senior colleagues. Bavani recalled role-play games that required the student teachers to ‘act like teachers’ in front of other students who had to act like children. It is interesting that the participant here did not refer to ‘conducting a lesson’ or ‘teaching a lesson’ but rather to ‘acting like a teacher.’ On the one hand, this may highlight the performative aspect of teaching, where teachers are expected to behave in a particular way. On the other hand, this may point to student teachers lack association with the professional role, as student teachers may not feel like ‘proper’ teachers yet. Thirdly, student teachers may also unconsciously model their behaviour on the “perfect teacher” as it is perceived by the society, presented in books and films, and so on. This is somewhat disconcerting, however, that that being a disciplinarian is perceived by them as a crucial part of the professional identity. On the one hand, it is hard to underestimate the role of boundaries and rules in the classroom, as their absence will prevent the teacher from achieving any meaningful educational results. On the other hand, it seems apparent in many cases that student teachers place a huge amount of importance on this aspect of their activities, identifying it as the central concern.

Overall, based on the findings and relevant literature, I would argue that while reflection is certainly present in teacher preparation and everyday practice, it is not continually developed or even encouraged by senior staff. What is understood to determine quality of reflection still seems a valid concern, as it is not made quite clear what the end goal of developing reflective skills would be. The themes that were identified in the findings as

“facilitating factors” and “barriers” paradoxically proved to be interchangeable, as what was perceived as a barrier to reflection and self-growth, actually fostered them and stimulated more active thought about the issues at hand. However, while barriers could be positive in that they at times stimulate reflection, one cannot help but wonder if student teachers could focus more overall on their actual practice and engagement with pupils if they did not have to find solutions to their financial problems. It can be argued that such problems are virtually unavoidable in a realistic school context. However, it seems that potential problems ought to be acknowledged more actively during teacher preparation and before teachers enter an actual classroom with real pupils. If the long-term goal of teacher preparation in Malaysia is indeed to be able to compete internationally and prepare a new generation of teachers (and, consequentially, learners), it is necessary to progress towards the use of less authoritarian styles as fast as possible.

Another possible topic for future discussion is the definition and nature of critical reflection. Evaluating the extent to which student teachers are able to perceive their own reflection critically was not the purpose of the present study. However, the findings suggest that this topic can be explored in more detail and would allow for a better understanding of the goals which student teachers could pursue in terms of reflection, as well as the level of reflective skills that ought to be achieved as a result of their practicum.

The next chapter will seek to discuss the peculiarities of conducting research in more detail; the possible limitations of the present study, and its implications both for future studies and for Malaysian pre-service teacher preparation.

7 Conclusion

“If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” (Einstein, A. as cited in Hawken et al., 1999, p.272)

7.1 Introduction

Einstein’s quote provides a vision of research which resonates with this study and reflects the process in which it was produced. The direction taken at the outset of the research was altered, and the data provided new perspectives and new avenues of inquiry. What was initially experienced as disruptive, with the benefit of hindsight, proved to be constructive; in the end, the data and not the researcher paved the way.

This chapter will reflect back on this process and conclude the research as a whole. The chapter begins with a reminder of the main research questions, and continues on to a discussion of the findings, framed and conceptualized according to the categories stipulated in the findings chapter: relational factors, situational factors, developmental factors and experiential factors. The chapter continues onto a discussion concerning the implications this research may have for theory and practice, and how these relate to the three research questions. The chapter then offers some suggestions for practice, drawn in part from Schön’s reflective practice. This is followed by an inquiry into how Schön’s reflective practice may work in partnership with other theoretical areas, of which the following are explored: community of practice, adult learning, professional identity, and experiential learning.

In the following section I examine my findings according to the three research questions; I then make a few recommendations and discuss the implications this study has for practice, as well as suggesting further inquiries that might form new paths for research. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations and the potential significance of the study, and I review my development as a researcher and how this development may have been impacted by the same four issues identified in the findings as affecting the reflective practice of student teachers.

7.2 Research questions addressed in this research

To what extent do student teachers use reflection in their lesson?

This inquiry is fundamental to the research. First and foremost, it was judged necessary to understand whether or not student teachers use reflective practices, whether they realize they are using them, and whether they perceive such practices as helpful. Adequately answering this question was deemed essential in securing the chance to proceed onto the second research question. The evidence provided a potential response to this question in that it established that the student teachers did indeed use reflection, and more than this, reflection contributed in steering the course of their development. It is worth noting, however, that not all student teachers formally recognized reflection as a helpful practice. It was suggested in the Discussion Chapter that student teachers might not formally accredit reflection as assisting their development, in some cases due to a lack of clarity as to what reflection consists of. Whilst reflection was encouraged in some practicums, and was favoured by particular supervisors and mentors, reflection was not always framed in a comprehensive way, leaving some students ambivalently reflecting as instructed, but with little sense of purpose.

In what ways does the student teacher's capacity for reflective practice develop over the practicum?

This question is very important to the research, as reflection is a constantly evolving process, and its effects may only be detected over time. This is something acknowledged by many studies, where the decision is made to collect data over extended periods of time. As a result of this approach, phases of improvement or stagnation in the reflective development of novice teachers may be identified (Park & Chen, 2012; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). The research aimed to detect these trends and draw out themes relating to the student teachers' development of reflective skills over the course of the study, with the influence of the practicum receiving particular attention. According to Loughran (2002) reflection develops in educators, and through reflection, professional development grows, as educators learn through practice and experience. Smyth (1992) believes that for reflection to reach its full potential and have an impact on practice, learners need to question and investigate their understandings of knowledge and practice, something which will ensure the optimum development of their reflective practice.

The practicum has proven itself as a medium through which the student teachers grow and mature, providing a platform on which their professional identities may continuously evolve. The second research question puts the determination of student teachers to grow and improve their skills into focus, as they attempt to be more effective in the profession. The question also unveiled the differing extents to which student teachers are able to respond to critical suggestions. This ability is alleged to play a part in determining their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1986; Warford, 2011), which is itself directly influenced by self-reflection, observation and the guidance student teachers received from more experienced colleagues. The question also opened up an opportunity to observe how the student teachers used principles of experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Moreover, the question allowed how student teachers address and recognize their past mistakes in the present to be explored – a skill that is reportedly lacking in many young professionals (Penso, 2002). Another reason why the question was of value was that the findings it produced drew attention to those factors which enabled and prevented student teacher evolution. The findings illuminated the powerful role feedback plays, and the question gave student teachers the chance to discuss the definitive moments in their development in which they felt emotionally overwhelmed and encouraged or discouraged from seeking guidance.

The evidence indicated that under the right conditions, student teachers can exercise certain capacities as adult learners. They may reflect on the feedback they received from their mentor teachers, supervisors and their peers, and this feedback has the potential to facilitate their progress as both teachers and learners. This suggests that mentor teachers and supervisors do assist the student teachers, whilst at the same time nurturing their abilities learn independently, increasingly their accountability and their acceptance of responsibility for their actions and decisions. Despite this, certain student teachers did not comment positively on the feedback they received, reporting that the feedback they were given lacked criticality, and left them feeling unsupported by their mentor teachers or supervisors. On the one hand, this may indicate a lack of mutual understanding and the failure of both parties to communicate effectively regarding the kind of feedback and assistance the student teachers needed, and the kind and level of support and feedback mentor teachers were willing to offer. Whilst some feedback was met with confusion, the very process of searching for clarification, of consulting their peers to better understand feedback which had not made immediate sense to them, at times provoked deeper reflection. In their weekly diary reflections, student teachers pondered over such feedback and attempted to find meaning in them. As a result, feedback initially met with bafflement, or worse, resentment, had a transformative effect at times.

Many student teachers showed an increasing awareness and appreciation towards their mentors over the course of their practicum. Whereas in the early days of the practicum, some were unsatisfied with the feedback they received, with the benefit of hindsight, they began to credit their mentors and supervisors for their newfound confidence, inspiration and motivation. The feedback served to frame the maturation of their professional identity, and reinforced the trust they had in their community of practice. In processing feedback, their community of practice was strengthened twofold. Firstly student teachers comprehended and shared the feedback they had received through sharing interpretations and experiences. In turn they were able to draw more meaning and understanding from the feedback, as well as offer one another support, encouragement and emotional support. Secondly, as student teachers came to appreciate and make sense of their mentors' feedback, their faith in their superiors' insights was reasserted and as a result they felt reassured and supported.

What facilitating factors and barriers exist in the development of their reflective practice?

It was necessary to understand student teachers' perspectives of their own practice, the benefits and drawbacks of their preparation, and the potential aids utilised to improve their reflective skills. This question presented an opportunity to discuss in more detail how the teaching practicum was perceived. The research showed that most student teachers' reflective practice was assisted by the maturation of their pedagogical knowledge (the methods and skills they use to plan and implement their classes), as reflecting on previous experience resulted in positive growth, persuading student teachers of the worth of reflection in helping to enhance the quality of their future lessons.

Collectively, these factors helped student teachers to weave the insights they gained from theories of learning into their lessons, and to source better learning materials. Some student teachers were eager to enhance and improve their pedagogical skills and subject matter knowledge by developing their teaching methods, and experimenting with methods inspired by learning journals (subject to the scrutiny of their peers.) Moreover, the language barrier, which was initially reported as putting a major strain on the student teachers' relationship with their students, turned out to be a facilitating factor overall. The student teachers were pushed to innovate and adopt various strategies, including the introduction of dictionaries, encouraging other students to be translators (as part of a buddy support system), and expending an effort to develop learning activities to better engage and attract their students' attention. According to Byrnes and Kiger (1994) the attitude educators adopt plays

a crucial part in how they perceive, and therefore, shape learning and teaching; what matters most is how they understand and choose constructive approaches and methods of teaching. Another significant factor made apparent in the findings was the existence of a discipline barrier. The student teachers' response towards disciplinary issues varied greatly. Some student teachers who struggled with discipline reacted with passivity, while other student teachers look at such issues proactively, seizing opportunities to try out the novel classroom control methods they found and shared within their community of practice.

Through the lens of these research questions, reflective practice has been shown to have the potential to inform student teachers' development in practice, allowing them to view their experiences with more clarity and respond with appropriate action. Reflective practice may exist as a mediating force, allowing student teachers to navigate between theory and practice, as they are able to learn what works well and what their students respond positively to.

The following two sections summarize and consolidate what has been thus far explored in relation to reflection, with a section on Implications for Practice and followed with Implications for Research.

7.3 Recommendations

This section will open with a discussion of what the research has to say about the position of reflective practice within Malaysian student teacher education, and the conditions which govern that relationship. A section on the implications this research has for practice and for research will follow, and will conclude the section.

a) Implications for Practice

Student teachers deserve high-quality education and curriculum (or proforma), and training which brings them to appreciate the importance of knowledge and value their experiences. Appropriate and creative teaching and learning skills provide the foundation on which this appreciation may be built. The research would suggest that reflection is worthy of inclusion in high-quality education, indeed reflection may be conceptualized as a bridge connecting theoretical education and practice. The findings provided insights into student teachers' reflective practice and how reflective practice has had an impact on their education.

Ultimately, this research showed that reflection should be a welcome, well understood and actively promoted aspect of practice in the teaching community, if it is to be an effective, positive addition to teaching practice. Otherwise, reflection may remain a problem-solving skill, rather than an outlook or a worldview that is able to foster a teacher's professional growth. It is suggested that reflective practice must be taught formally as a subject in student teacher education, and it recommended that it would be most suitable to teach it before the student teachers perform in their practicums. Rea-Dickins & Germaine (1992) stated that reflection and evaluation can raise awareness of the need for change, but also give an indication of where change should take place. As such, this study hopes to provide some persuasive insights into how reflective practice created change and positively impacted the practice of the student teachers in the pre-service education programme. It is hoped that this would consequently give cause for the major stakeholders of Malaysian education to consider advancing the place reflective practice in the teacher education curriculum.

Discouragingly, in this study, reflection did not seem to be well-addressed in the teaching practicums. There are a number of factors which may be contributing toward this deficit, and which the research attempts to adequately address. One of these factors is that the financial sustainability of education is being prioritized and is shaping the direction of educational reform. Eraut's criticism of Schon's theory would seem pertinent here as he argues, in short, that it lacks a socioeconomic dimension. Perhaps it would be desirable to determine and explore the factors and challenges resulting from the particular norms and conditions of various student teacher education programmes. Longitudinal research could be held which follows the progression of the student teachers from their beginning of their education, and which inquiries into how this relates to their socioeconomic position. This would allow certain things to be examined in more depth. For example, one could ask in what ways financial incentives impact the Malaysian student teachers' experiences of their teacher education. This research indicated that some student teachers' decisions were highly influenced by financial considerations, with more than one student teacher admitting that they were in the teaching profession for solely financial reasons (for example: Bavani and Jamal). However, these cases may be viewed as anecdotal and the conclusions incomplete; to get a fuller picture, a case study which follows very closely individual cases over a longer period of time, may yield more reliable data.

Furthermore, we can conclude that school reforms, built around the need to make schools financially efficient, can lead to an increased amount of workload and stress on teachers, senior teachers and novice teachers. As a result, experienced teachers may simply

not have the time and resources to help their young colleagues as much as they might like. Unfortunately, this may have a long-lasting impact on the inexperienced teachers who draw the wrong conclusions about their profession, and what kinds of social dynamics they can expect within education. Moreover, this situation inevitably leaves educators with little time or space for effective reflection or complex critical thinking.

Should certain educators swim against the tide to engage in reflection, they will find that they have not reached the finish line but have to contend with the challenge of how best to reflect. While reflective activities are present in teacher education, they seem to have no clear goal. Thus, not all student teachers put effort into writing reflections, but only those student teachers who have a personal predisposition to reflection continue doing so in their professional practice, while others rather mechanically perform the tasks suggested by their supervisors. The findings showed that whilst certain student teachers' reflective diary entries contained many insights, they were often in need of more guidance in order to extract information that they could use to shape their future practice. It is therefore not merely enough to direct educators to reflect, and it must be emphasized that reflection is not an end in itself.

Thus, the main critique of Schon's idea of reflection (and the overall body of scholarly literature dedicated to reflection) would still be its overt dependence on a specific educational context. While reflection may be helpful as a tool or an activity, in order to turn it into a useful professional practice there must be a specific environment and a specific community for that. If such a community has more pressing issues which are not being adequately met, reflection can become a distraction. Learning communities are not only formed by the student teachers and their peers, or student teachers and their senior teachers but also by the students in the classroom. The students in the classroom are a part of their community and exist in close proximity, without the student teachers necessarily recognizing their role. Classroom communities communicate in two directions: the students learn and share their understandings, in addition to the knowledge and experience they receive from their student teachers. Simultaneously, the student teachers acquire experience, as a result of challenges, collaborative teaching, and an understanding of pedagogy, to develop a network of effective support, and strong bonds between them.

A sustainable approach to teaching which invests in teacher training, which provides access to the equipment needed to produce a positive educational environment would ensure future teachers may continue to implement quality and effective education. The adoption of a

well-organized reflective practice proforma, materials which facilitate reflection would seem a sensible start. Guidelines inspired by those drawn in countries which have succeeded in using reflective practice within student teacher education could provide the basis from which to proceed. These success stories could be used as a resource and could be key in the early stages of reform and adjustment, in the effort to improve the quality of student teacher education in Malaysia. However, it is essential that the importance of culture be constantly reiterated. Successful programmes from elsewhere must be used as inspiration and cannot be directly and identically applied to the Malaysian context. Potential systems, and programmes must be subject to a process of assessment, and this would require the engagement of globally thinking, pro-active educators who are in touch with the realities of the Malaysian context.

The last point raises the very significant issue of culture, something which was raised and kept in mind throughout this research. The research has attempted to show that while, overall, reflection is applicable to teacher education regardless of cultural context, modifications should be considered when applying it to a particular setting. We should take care to note, for example, that some aspects of Malaysian culture seem to directly contradict the necessity of reflection for teachers (and especially novice teachers). According to Cummings (1996), the respect Asian students accord teachers is most likely to be influenced by their traditional upbringing, in which respecting elders is emphasized, and in which teachers and supervisors are particularly revered. Such cultural norms can result in a reluctance on the student teachers' behalf to ask their mentors and supervisors for clarification over feedback which troubled them, often preferring to consult their peers.

The findings also exposed the larger, structurally created gaps in communication found to exist between the various hierarchical levels of those involved in education in Malaysia. A potential for the distortion of information was found as it passes from one level to the next; this has consequences for everyone involved in education; that is all the major stakeholders: education planners, curriculum administrators, the educators and most importantly, the students. As Ornstein et al. (2009) highlights, teachers and administrators look at curriculums through their own philosophical "lens" and may have radically different impressions and ideas. It is imperative therefore that they work together, educate one another by comparing their ideas, with the hope that in doing so, teachers and administrators might develop a shared understanding and avoid confusion. Once again, a strong community of practice may help to prevent such gaps in communication in so far as its members would feel comfortable clarifying the information they have received and communicating their own perspectives. It is worth emphasizing that student teachers should not restrict themselves to

interacting with their peers and mentor teachers but should engage with and seek assistance from administrative staff, and the other senior teachers available in their school. A strong community of practice could alleviate some of the gaps in communication that exist internally within schools, but other strategies may be necessary to address the gaps in communication that sometimes exist between the Teacher Education Institute and individual schools. Ms. Yasmine, one of the mentor teachers, suggested that student teachers could receive the new curriculum and related materials more directly through platforms such as Youtube. That way, student teachers would not be dependent on second hand, filtered information. This would also allow the student teachers to provide feedback and ask questions, to have access to questions that they had not thought of and receive answers in a form that can be reread and reviewed.

It was evident in this research that some remarks and criticisms can be directed at the theoretical limitations of reflection. Schon's focus on one-on-one contact between the teacher and the student means that no guidance can be found which explains how teachers should act with two or more pupils, and how reflection may help educators to become more effective at teaching groups of students. It was, therefore, concluded that the theory of reflection must could be supplemented with insights on what it means to reflect in a "crowded classroom." Moreover, it was suggested that allowing principles of andragogy to determine the student teachers' learning can better empower the students to reflect and use reflection to inspire and inform their practice. This being the case, a critical challenge remains: how are we to implement andragogy in the Malaysian education system, when we are faced with its cultural challenges?

Another significant insight that can be drawn from the findings is that when student teachers' learning is shaped by a pedagogical perspective alone, reflection is not stimulated, on the contrary, it is at times actively inhibited. As a result, reflection should be considered in terms of teacher-student power dynamics. Such power dynamics are described by Schon (and assessed by Tubbs, 2000, as 'master-slave' mentoring), and seem outdated in the modern educational context; one reason is that they do not take into account the complexities and variations of mentorship. Before proceeding further into this matter, it is worth noting that educational policy and practice in Malaysia is strongly reinforced and promulgated by cultural and religious ideologies, and more or less western perceptions, incorporated from the colonial rule of Britain. The power dynamics must therefore be understood in relation to Schon's description, but also in relation to the Malaysian context.

In the findings, both student teachers and their mentors expressed dissatisfaction at the disruption the power distance caused them at times. The power distance created a situation in which the mentor teachers and their students did not communicate or clarify their expectations of their relationship and the role they were to play, and this caused problems. For example, some mentor teachers and supervisors stated that they were open to being approached by the student teachers; indeed, they had waited for them to do so, but had been unwilling to overtly encourage the student teachers to consult them as this was not how they understood their role as a mentor. This suited the student teachers who wanted to prove their capacity to act independently and who did not feel the need to seek their mentors' blessings. However, some student teachers who expected greater input were left feeling neglected, and some desired interaction with their mentor but did not have the courage to initiate it. Evident from the findings was the, at times, less than adequate support student teachers received from their mentors, and the frequent fear student teachers experienced when consulting them (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.2a Feedback, where Arina's fear of consulting her school mentor is apparent). Other student teachers made false presumptions about their progress, concluding that their mentor or supervisor's silence meant that they were completely satisfied with them. In both cases, the power distance limited the student teachers' potential to move forward.

The potentials of power distances must therefore be taken into account when introducing reflective practices in teacher education; if the right conditions are created, some of these issues could be avoided. Improving the opportunities for developing reflective practice in teacher education would seem to depend not only on supporting change in the student teachers but on supporting change in supervisors or educators and school-based mentors as well. Mentor teachers and supervisors could place themselves in better positions from which to face the predictable problems caused by power distances, and they could thereby consider potential solutions. For instance, open dialogue at the onset of the relationship regarding what both parties expect of one another could ensure that the mentor and student teacher reach a mutual understanding and do not behave according to misunderstandings. One mentor participating in the study used phone applications to communicate with her students, reassuring them of her constant availability. The student teachers understood clearly that their mentor was there to be consulted, and open to being consulted. Mentors and supervisors could also anticipate their student teachers' reactions towards feedback and ensure that the student teacher is encouraged to ask questions so that they feel themselves to be an active participant in the feedback process. Andragogy may prove to be of use again here; if mentors and supervisors' approach and respect student teachers as adult learners, the power balance may shift in a way that empowers student

teachers. Mentors and supervisors could also take care that the feedback is delivered in a way which respects the student teachers' ongoing professional identity construction, thereby closing the power distance which separates them. Adopting principles of andragogy in the mentorship of novice teachers could thus encourage the novice teachers to be more independent and certain of their choices as they will be able to seek their mentor or supervisor's acceptance and support. Moreover, if this foundational relationship is supported by a teaching community connected by shared practices, beliefs, and attitudes, the environment would be more fertile and produce more shared experiences and achievements which are the results of combined efforts. Such a teaching community presupposes the clear articulation of learning goals consistent with the current knowledge, status and potential of adult students.

If reflection is not anchored properly in the wider context, and if it does not have a robust relationship with student teachers' wider experience, it may have little positive impact on the student teachers' progression. It has been questioned, for example, how helpful reflection is to student teachers when the content of the reflection is weak, composed of fleeting impressions ungrounded in experience. Reflection may not be inherently beneficial but is subject to conditions and circumstances. Reflection can help the students to understand challenging experiences if they establish consistent reflective practice, and exercise commitment and discipline.

A number of the student teachers, mentors and supervisors perceived reflection as involving perseverance in the face of obstacles. Ms. Yasmine, one of the mentor teachers emphasized the importance of approaching reflection as you would any other skill, and stressed that this requires repetition, dedication and persistence. She also maintained that student teachers cannot receive reflective skills from their mentors as such; rather, they should be introduced to the basics of reflective practices as early as possible in their training so that they can proceed to perfect these independently. Both acquiring reflective skills and developing effective reflection requires perseverance, and it is suggested that reflection as a practise is not easily and quickly accomplished. The connection drawn between reflection and experiential learning is certainly not new in educational research but is evoked here for its poignancy and relevance to this research. To understand this partnership, first and foremost, one needs to consider the types of experience that would be most fruitful in nurturing the acquisition of reflective skills (i.e. being encouraged to reflect, observing others engaging in self-evaluation and self-reflection), then pursuing such experiences may be

prioritized. Reflection and experience could therefore be developed simultaneously and stimulate awareness and growth in one another.

Reflective practice may be used as an aid in the development of student teacher education, markedly, it may be adopted by student teachers themselves as they try to direct the formation of their professional identity. In this study, using reflection instrumentally helped the student teachers were thus able to meet two needs: they were able to develop their own character in the classroom, at times modelling themselves on the good practitioners they were exposed to at school, and they were able to develop their own professional identity whilst at the same time learning to be active and contribute to various social groups: the school community, their peers, and the classroom communities. Nonetheless, it is worth asking what other elements might help them to enhance this identity, and whether or not they get enough experience in school to fully develop their professional identity.

It may perhaps be remembered that culture forms the basis of a specialist's education, since it penetrates all types of human activity. The cultural mindset of any individual will affect how they construct their professional identity as it will dictate how they perceive their role in education, it will affect the social dynamics and relationships they experience in the work place, and how they approach praise and discipline in their classroom. (Ä. Leijen et al., 2018). It is argued that the cultural background of any given teacher will affect how they construct their professional identity (Johnson, 2003; Wang & Du, 2014), and emphasized that this social cultural context continues to shape the teacher and influences what is an ongoing process to develop themselves as professionals (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

One of the socio-cultural factors contributing toward this professional identity development is the student teachers' place and navigation within certain power distances. According to Hofstede (1980) power distance designates a level of relationship between individuals, determining who makes decisions, who is subordinate, who follows and who leads. In this research, the student teachers may be clearly recognised as subordinates. Some student teachers referred in their reflections to how they attempt to follow and implement their supervisors' or mentor teachers' recommendations. In order to achieve the central goal of passing their practicum, gaining better marks from that of their previous practicum, they accept what is an unequal power distribution.

The Malaysian cultural environment provides the teachers with many opportunities to study spiritual heritage, provides them with a guide to life in modern society, and determines

the direction and form an individual's interests take. The findings indicated that culture had molded many of the participant's perceptions and how they attempt to assess and streamline knowledge. On a cultural level, new layers of modern civilization are constantly being formed, changing the requirements for professional competence, family conduct and spirituality. In turn, it is advised that the development of reflective practice be joined by and formed alongside cultural considerations and understandings. However, the influence sociocultural factors have on professional identity development varies, and can depend on individual factors; for instance, the multicultural nature of Malaysian society can mean that any individual teacher may be subject to the influence of more than one culture. It would be, therefore, ill advised to make simplistic assumptions about the student teachers on account of them being Malaysian, each teacher must be approached as an individual (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Reflection may be taken more seriously if it positioned in line with the concepts emphasized under Malaysia National Educational Philosophy, which advocate the development of individual potential, competence and knowledge so that citizens are able to contribute better to their family unit, society and the nation. The Malaysian Educational Philosophy espouses a holistic vision of the individual in which development in education is not limited to intellectual competence or progress, but involves establishing spiritual, emotional and physical integrity. In 1998, the Malaysia National Education Philosophy announced this intention to focus on developing balanced individuals "intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically" (Abdullah et al., 2004, p.106; Hassan et al., 2009, p.57). If reflection as a process is shown to perform a role in strengthening student teachers' community of practice, and in supporting the ideologies of the Malaysia National Educational Philosophy, it may be more likely to be embraced as it will more accurately reflect public ideals. Given the importance of the philosophy, it would therefore, appear sensible to stay in touch with it, and keep it in mind when attempting to develop reflection within student teacher education.

Revamping Malaysia Teacher Education Institute involves long-term commitment that must be subject to regular reassessment and amendment, so that stagnation is avoided, and dynamism encouraged. The value of reflective practice in student teacher education was established in this research, it is therefore suggested that aligning reflective practice with the Malaysia National Education Philosophy (NEP) will enhance its approachability and secure its place within education. Fortunately, the principles of reflection appear to be compatible with the NEP in many respects, as both promote individual responsibility and potential; both

emphasize the significance of personal growth and encourage individuals to learn from their past actions as a means of doing better in the future. According to Hassan et al., 2009, the NEP has a substantial impact on the development of students' awareness, and how they perceive each action they take and its consequences. The attempt to hybridize reflective practice may be aided by the presence of the NEP because of the NEP's focus on creating competent individuals who conduct themselves in a way which benefits their family, their community and their country. In addition to this, it seems likely that the issues emerging from the findings of this research may be more effectively addressed if the theoretical insights the student teachers gain from theory during their education and training are partnered with the aspirations and visions of the individual represented in the NEP. The NEP may compliment the theoretical insights such as those which reflective practice, community of practice and andragogy provide in so far as it aims to inspire individuals to develop and it challenges them to advance.

Nonetheless, it is unclear exactly how many Malaysians are familiar with the NEP. Furthermore, whilst the NEP may be applied in education in many ways, the success of this would be largely dependent on the accuracy and quality of the interpretation of the philosophy. This being the case, I believe that the very process of the reinterpretation and re-examination of the significance of the NEP may be influential in the effort to enhance and develop a hybridized form of reflection in student teacher education. This is largely because this process would involve the critique and clarification of the different interpretations of and potential applications of the NEP, moreover, it would provide an opportunity in which open debate and the sharing of perspectives may encouraged.

Learning to understand reflective practice, and taking inspiration from the NEP, could therefore aid and motivate the educators to translate the theories they learn into better practice, and build their competence not only in their subject knowledge but their personal skills and identities as professionals. One would hope that learning to balance and connect all the skills they have learned, would foster a confidence that would allow them to share what they know willingly with the students and others in their community of practice.

Under pressure to achieve prestige in educational ranking systems such as PISA and TIMSS, Malaysia imposed westernized approaches onto schools, in the form of a new curriculum, which attempts to distance itself from the examination-driven system which preceded it (Al-Hudawi et al., 2014; John, 2017). This new direction, however, has proven easier to set out in theory, than to follow in practice. As a result of this discrepancy, the

pressure continues on teachers to make sure their students' results are at their best each and every year, spurred on by parents who still judge their children's educational success according to their results, and therefore demand good grades.

Despite the aims of the new curriculum, and the effort to improve the education system, student teacher education is not prioritized and the main challenges which present themselves in student teachers' education go unaddressed. Worryingly, the evidence of this study revealed that every participating student teacher was introduced to the new curriculum on a one day course. The student teachers spoke of how they struggled to understand and implement the curriculum during their practicums, as they had little exposure to it in the Teacher Education Institute (TEI). These conditions meant the student teachers started on the back foot as they had to try to understand and apply the new knowledge simultaneously. However, it was found that this situation inspired reflection, leading the student teachers to build up a better community of practice, search for and share information to shine light on their experiences of teaching and learning. Student teachers incorporated the lessons they took from their experiences and used these to inform their lesson planning and future practice. The student teachers were thus, in some cases, able to use obstacles as stepping stones, and transform negative factors into positive forces. Student teacher Emylia, for example, explained that she struggled with anxiety and a lack of confidence in the classroom, comparing her frame of mind to the stage fright actors and actresses may experience. Emylia mentioned that she had written about this frequently in her reflective journal and had eventually come to appreciate the inadvertently positive consequences of her anxiety. She stated that her lack of confidence allowed her to be more learner centred; her nerves meant that she provided her students with more liberty and more opportunities to share their ideas. By referring to her previous diary entries, Emylia was able to gain a new perspective, and see the ways in which her weaknesses produced the adaptive behaviours which served to improve her classroom control, develop her self-assurance and create lessons in which her students could excel and actively participate. These behaviours and processes, the direct or indirect results of reflective practice, in turn, served to develop the student teachers' professional identity. Overall, linking theory with their own practice assisted the student teachers to reflect on their experiences and develop their skills further. Student teachers utilized their skills as adult learners, reflected on their experiences and the insights practice provided, and thus were able to exercise control over their classroom and their lessons.

Of course, many of the challenges facing the promotion of reflective practice in Malaysia are challenges that face the future of teacher education as whole, on a global scale.

However, responsibility for overcoming these challenges must be taken on every level, and teachers should be aware of the role they may play as reflective practitioners, and the role that each educator must play if collective change and improvement is to be possible. Otherwise there is a risk of passivity developing; teachers may perceive the implementation of reflective practice as the higher responsibility of the ministry of education, without recognising their own potential and part to play in forming the future educational context. Evidence from the findings suggest that student teachers' experiences, and the use of reflection as a tool through which to derive meaning from those experiences, helped student teachers' to gradually develop and strengthen their professional identity throughout their teacher education.

Nonetheless, there is always room for suggestions; student teachers and other educators could be further assisted in their development, so that they feel secure in a reassuring community of practice, and confident in their capacity to shape their own practice. Moreover, the value of encouragement and engaging the student teachers in the learning process must be emphasized to mentors and supervisors and should be a part of the working culture. Relaxing the grip of long-standing power dynamics, student teachers can take charge of their learning. They may thereby develop an authentic appreciation of knowledge and its instrumental value, and exist in a more egalitarian, effective community of practice.

b) Implications for Research and Issues for Further Enquiry

Hamachek (1999, pp. 209) believes educators always teach what they learn, stating "unconsciously, we teach who we are". Therefore, student teachers require more than subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in a classroom, and their development is as much a process of becoming as it is of acquiring knowledge. As a consequence, to understand and hence have the potential to improve any aspect of student teachers' practice, (in particular, their reflective practice) one must understand the other factors affecting who the student teachers are and become. It would follow that an understanding and enhancement of student teacher's reflective practice would be more cohesive if it was seen as part of a larger picture, of which other theories may play a role. Reinforcing this, the findings suggest that the potential of reflective practice may be activated if it is hybridized with other principles, in particular, principles which may shape the educational environment so that it better supports the reflective development of its teachers. The value in the existence of such partnerships is something which emerged strongly in this research; as a result, it is recommended that future research be designed to focus on how reflective practice may collaborate with other theories.

Other areas of potentially useful future research relate to mentorship. Establishing effective, hybridized forms of reflective practice would require preparation, the founding of guidelines and a system in which educators (student teachers but also mentor teachers and supervisors) are coached in reflective practice. Mentors and supervisors have a great impact on how their student teachers learn and grasp the content they deliver; these figures play a central role in determining their student teachers' level of engagement in the process of learning and mastering the skills of their profession. It is therefore crucial that their understanding of reflective practice and other complimentary theories is secure and comprehensive. In order to do so, it is argued that mentor teachers and supervisors should themselves engage in reflection; as with the student teachers, it would be important that the mentors and supervisors value reflection and do not approach it as another one of their obligations. If reflection is utilised by mentor teachers and supervisors, they may have the opportunity to benefit from their interactions with their student teachers; student teachers could enhance the development of their mentors and supervisors in a way that mirrors the relationship they have with their own students in the classroom. Encouraging reflection among student teachers might prove an effective way of promoting reflection amongst senior teachers, so that mentors, supervisors and student teachers may mutually benefit from their interactions.

Given that mentorship emerged as having a huge influence on student teacher development, I would suggest that how mentors and supervisors perceive, practice and teach reflection in teacher education could form interesting topics for future studies. Although in the present study, one of my main goals was to observe the progression of student teachers over the course of the practicum, it may be necessary to formulate some criteria of expectations regarding the development of their reflective skills over time and create the interview questions accordingly. In which case, it would be necessary to assess the adequacy of the preparation provided to student teachers in terms of reflection, namely, how they are introduced to reflection, whether their reflection skills are tested somehow over the course of the practicum (and if so, how and what the criteria for growth or lack thereof are). With mentors and supervisors being the principle facilitators in teacher training, the focus would naturally fall on them.

Finally, this study suggested that research relating to the generation of communities of practice which positively support the development of its members is of central importance to teacher education. Mentors and supervisors also stand to benefit from existing within a community of practice, and further research into how supportive and responsive communities

of practice may prosper could have a huge impact on practice at every level. With this aim in mind, I would humbly recommend a developmental and motivational approach to research on student teachers' reflective practice. I would encourage the production of research into how student teachers' engagement in a strong, positive community of practice may be supported and reinforced. Student teachers again and again referred to the reassuring impact their relations with their peers had on them, and subsequently how this facilitated their lesson preparation. The community of practice reinforced the student teacher's commitment to the teaching profession, contributed to the formation of their professional identity and fostered their sense of autonomy as adult learners. Encouraging a collaborative and supportive environment within education should be identified as a clear priority, because existing within a community of practice provides the student teachers with the foundation, they need to approach improving other relevant skills. Nurturing this sense of community could start within the teacher education institute itself but reverberate out into the wider community, to the supervisors and administrators, to the placement schools, mentor teachers, student teachers and their students.

7.4 Limitations of the study

No research is perfect, and research can always be enhanced in some respect, this research is of course no different. The main limitation of this research related to the time restrictions on data collection. Whilst the research attempted to adequately and equally address all research questions, it must be confessed that time restrictions and therefore, limitations in data, posed particular challenges for answering the second research question. The second research question was: 'in what ways does student teachers' capacities for reflective practice develop over the practicum?' Unfortunately, the research was only able to examine student teachers' progress over a limited amount of time. Longitudinal research would arguably be better placed to investigate student teachers' reflective practice development.

The ability to answer this research question would definitely be enhanced within longitudinal research which could examine the progress of student teachers from their first practicum (one month in their second year of education), their second practicum (two months in their third year of education) and through to their final practicum (three months in their final year of practicum). Such research would inevitably provide better insights into the student teachers' experiences, as the progression they make in enhancing their reflective practice and developing their professional identity could be observed from a better vantage

point. How student teachers' attitudes and their reflection change according to their experiences, from the beginning of their education through their first year as teachers at school could be investigated, allowing their transition from student teachers to novice teachers to be analysed. Such research could provide close-up shots of relevant aspects of the student teachers' personal lives and the context from which they enter the profession and learn. Contextual issues explored in this research could be returned to and subjected to more in-depth examination. For example, what motivated the student teachers to enter the profession and how this goes on to affect their practice was highlighted as being of importance in this study, but the significance of initial motivation could be examined in more detail if a longer period of time for observation and interviews were available.

Longitudinal research would also make it possible to better investigate how student teachers reflect, record and scrutinize changes as they occur, and view the reverberations of reflection further down the line (Gray & Smith, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1990). During student teacher Jamal's second interview, for example, he described being demotivated by comments made by his supervisor and mentor teacher. Whilst I was able to observe and analyse his progress from one month to the next and received good information from his reflective diaries and final observation, I knew nothing of his earlier experiences with his first supervisor. I was unable to ascertain whether something had transpired which might provide an insight into the feelings he revealed during his second interview. If I were given the opportunity to explore the same issue again, or further within a piece of longitudinal research, I would be better placed to be able to make sense of the student teachers' behaviour and development.

Additionally, longitudinal research would allow student teachers' social change and maturation over time to be explored, with particular attention paid to the educational context. Development of social and interpersonal skills could be viewed alongside developments in performance by studying student teachers' reflection, and how feedback affects student teachers' reflective practice could be examined. Insights could be drawn from differences in the ways student teachers respond to questions from interview to interview, revealing, for example, changes in how they perceive teaching and learning. Similarly, possessing the feedback mentors provide from the first practicum through to the final practicum would provide greater contextual clarity through which to view the student teachers' reflective development. This would be interesting as it would allow new areas of interest to be discovered and explored; it might allow patterns of development which extend over time to be detected.

Another limitation that could be identified relates to the relatively small group of participants who took place in the study. Whilst this criticism is valid, restricting the number of participants was enabling in another respect; I would argue that this allowed me to delve deeper into each student teacher's circumstances, gaining insights into their practices and perception that may have been missed had the number of participants been greater. In some regards, the time limitation identified in the previous paragraph relates to and may offer a remedy to the time limitation. A study which narrowly focused on student teachers, and which did not adequately acknowledge the social network in which they exist, would greatly jeopardise the reliability and scope of its findings. Although the central focus of this study is student teachers and their education, the study would never be complete without an embedded appreciation and acknowledgement of the social context of student teacher education, in which mentorship plays a huge role. Such is the importance of mentorship that I myself would be interested in researching mentorship as it is handled and conditioned by the Teacher Education Institute in Malaysia. This could be done by investigating the recent guidelines that the supervisors and mentor teachers are provided with, and the intentions and perspectives of the administrators in charge of creating it. Further to this, the impact of the guidelines on both mentors and student teachers could be studied with the help of interviews. Following the participants (student teachers and mentors) closely as part of a longitudinal study could provide fascinating data, and insights of relevance to the present study.

In the next section I present my development as a researcher, as it relates to the four issues from the findings and elaborate on how these issues impacted me in one way or another.

7.5 My development as a researcher

Conducting the study has certainly stimulated my own reflection. Over the course of the study, my preconceived notions about teaching practice were challenged several times. In a similar manner to the student teachers I interviewed, I had to let go of an idealized view of teaching practice and of the teaching community, and focus on their real-life manifestations. Moreover, I had to redefine and clarify many of the notions that I initially planned to analyse. One of such notions has actually become a central topic for this study. While initially the concept of “enhancing reflection or reflective skills” seemed self-explanatory to me, over the course of the study I came to see that this was clearly not the case.

Similarly, while in the early stages of the study I was quite sure that reflection would prove unquestionably beneficial for novice teachers' professional growth, such an assessment turned out to be limited and superficial. I am glad that extensive research, literature reviews, and most importantly, the live communication with student teachers, have allowed me to amend and expand my perspective, making it more multifaceted and perceptive to the complexities that exist.

In the next section, I explore the research through the lens of the four issues arising from the findings, and I outline the significance and impact of the research to me as a researcher.

a) The Relational Rationale

Supportive communities of practice can hold value at each and every stage of education. Existing within such a support system allows personal experience and knowledge to be maximized, in that information can be more readily distributed and interlinked to form a network of knowledge which benefits all members. A community of practice may be formed either through the cooperation and collaboration of a small group of colleagues, or by a bigger group, or even by the coming together of multiple disparate groups of colleagues who may be united in their experience of similar obstacles or similar challenges (Epstein, 2018). As a researcher and a student, I have my colleagues to resort to when I feel in doubt; they are there to help me to generate ideas or derive meaning from my research, to share what they have learned from their own research and to help with the technological dimensions of our research. My colleagues became my partners in debate following the courses and workshops related to our field which we attended together, something which allowing me to extract the most out of these experiences. Likewise, during the Pomodoro sessions I used the opportunity to share the analysis of the findings, and to confirm the themes that arose (described in Chapter 4). Throughout the research, my colleagues provided me with much food for thought and helped me to see beyond the confines of my own perspective. This may be identified as a community of practice similar to that which student teachers may exist in; as a result, I feel able to relate to their situation.

b) The Situational Rationale

Before becoming an academic, I was an officer at the Teacher Education Institute in Malaysia. When I attended to the first cohort of teachers undergoing training for implementing the new curriculum, I did not notice any gaps or flaws in it. The whole process

of collecting data, and of transcribing the interviews, brought to my attention each challenge faced by the teachers, educators and student teachers. I came to understand the impact the curriculum may have on teachers who do not receive appropriate explanation or information regarding the curriculum, and whose understanding of the curriculum may be problematic or misguided as a result. As it stands, teachers generally receive the curriculum indirectly from their superiors, (often the head of their subject or the headmistress or headmaster of the school) who have themselves attended a curriculum introduction course. Through word of mouth, there is the potential that information may be distorted as it descends from the top to the bottom. As a result, some teachers may struggle with uncertainty over the information delivered to them, and not know who to turn to for support and clarification. All of this I discovered whilst conducting the research, and this made me question my prior position and the limits of my perspective as a representative of the Teacher Education Institute (TEI).

Each issue that emerged from the findings not only helped me to understand the student teachers' perspectives but also helped me to reflect on how eager I am to develop my professional identity as a researcher and academic. There are certain conflicts, experiences and responsibilities that come with being a researcher and an academic, in being subject to those, I was able to see things I could not see as an employee of the TEI. One example relates to that which is detailed above; I was surprised to learn of the issue's teachers had with the curriculum, as it contradicted my experience of the curriculum. Being present in the curriculum introduction course, sent by TEI, I experienced the first phase of information delivery and was impressed with the overall quality and depth of the course. At that time, I was simply not in a position to conceive of the issues that may occur with transmitting that information to teachers on the ground. As a researcher I found myself in a more neutral position from which to receive this information; I was forced to hold back from questioning the teachers as to the validity of their issues with the curriculum or adopt a defensive position. Maintaining neutrality thus contributed towards my professional development, as I came to value its utility in prevent short-sighted or biased judgements.

c)The Developmental Rationale

As a researcher observing the classroom, and reflecting on each of the lessons, my aim was to extract maximum amount of information to discuss it with participants during interviews and develop my research skills. Many opportunities were opened up after the first phase of interviews and classroom observations when I managed to gain access to the reflective diaries of the participants. The reflective diaries gave me the chance to delve

deeper into not only student teachers' experiences, but also assisted me to evolve and reflect on my role and experiences as a researcher. Reflection helped me to revise the semi-structured interviews based on that which I learned during classroom observation and assisted me to finalise my research.

d)The Experiential Rationale

The purpose of this research is not to pick faults in the way the Malaysia Ministry of Education or the Teacher Education Institute functions or to allocate blame regarding the areas found wanting of improvement. The central motivation may is connected to a strong feeling of responsibility towards, and an appreciation of the institute. Realising this ambition involved upholding the reputation of teachers in society, a reputation that cannot be bartered for or bought. The Teacher Education Institute's future depends on how it evolves, and how it is able to convince communities and society as a whole of its value and function as a positive transformational force. The aim is not only to educate future teachers, but in doing so, to provide the best for our future generation. Whether it is always recognized or not, the fact is that without good and effective teachers, we will not be able to achieve all that has been planned in the Malaysian blueprint for education. As I consider the pressure and challenges teacher education faces, I would agree with Hattie (2009, p. 108) when she stated that "not all teachers are effective, not all teachers are experts and not all teachers have powerful effects on students". Yet, one must question the sense in being blindly preoccupied with the imperfections of teacher education, rather than engaged in the more productive effort to improve student teachers' education. There is always room and therefore potential for improvement, and one must not be distracted by voices stating otherwise. Of course, in some cases teachers are not open to change and new ideas; this may be the result of being burned out and afraid of taking the risks that come with moving out of their comfort zone (Stronge, 2002). Alternatively, it may be the case that some teachers are unwilling to admit the need for change and resent the suggestion that their practice need reformed in any way. In both cases, change must not be imposed on the teachers from the top down, but they must be encouraged to be active participants of this change. It is the job of teacher education programmes to help teachers to find their own sources of motivation, and to remain in touch with that.

This study hopes to make a modest contribution to the understanding and promotion of reflective practice; it hopes to advance the development of hybridized forms of reflective practice by inviting the reader to consider the possibilities and merits of potential partnerships. It is held that the endeavour to develop hybridized forms of reflective practice

might be of benefit for teacher education as a whole. I hope I can provide a persuasive rationale for the promotion of reflective practice through my research, and present the recommendations which follow from my research, to the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the TEI once I am back on duty.

APPENDIX 1:

Circular Letter of Compulsory School Starts at the Age of Seven



PEJABAT KETUA PENGARAH PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA
PARAS 7, BLOK J
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KP(BS) 8591/Jld.XVIII (14)

27 November 2002

Semua Pengarah Pendidikan Negeri

Y.Bhg. Datuk/Dato'/Tuan/Puan,

SURAT PEKELILING IKHTISAS BIL. 14/2002 :
PELAKSANAAN PENDIDIKAN WAJIB DI PERINGKAT RENDAH 2003

Surat pekeliling ini adalah bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tatacara pelaksanaan pendidikan wajib di peringkat sekolah rendah 2003..

2. Akta Pendidikan 1996 telah dipinda dengan memasukkan satu seksyen baru, iaitu Seksyen 29A yang menetapkan kuasa Menteri untuk mewajibkan pendidikan rendah di negara ini. Seksyen 29A (2) juga menjelaskan bahawa *setiap ibu bapa yang merupakan warganegara Malaysia hendaklah memastikan bahawa jika anaknya telah mencapai umur enam tahun pada hari pertama bulan Januari dalam tahun persekolahan semasa anak itu didaftarkan sebagai murid di sekolah rendah dalam tahun itu dan terus menjadi murid di sekolah rendah sepanjang tempoh pendidikan wajib.*

3. Kementerian Pendidikan menetapkan untuk melaksanakan pendidikan wajib di peringkat rendah berkuat kuasa pada 1 Januari 2003.

4. Sehubungan itu, bersama-sama ini disertakan buku Garis Panduan Pelaksanaan Pendidikan Wajib Di Peringkat Rendah 2003 untuk diguna pakai sebagai panduan Y.Bhg. Datuk/Dato'/Tuan/Puan dalam melaksanakan pendidikan wajib di peringkat rendah yang bermula pada Januari 2003. Buku ini mengandungi perkara-perkara berikut :

- 4.1 Mekanisme permohonan penempatan, pengesahan penempatan dan pendaftaran murid Tahun 1;
- 4.2 Mekanisme penyiasatan murid cicir;
- 4.3 Risalah atau 'pamphlet' untuk hebahan pendidikan wajib; dan
- 4.4 Peraturan-Peraturan Pendidikan (Pendidikan Wajib) 2002.

5. Bagi melicinkan pelaksanaan tersebut, khususnya dalam penyiasatan murid cicir, Akta Pendidikan 1996 di bawah Seksyen 136 telah memperuntukkan pemberian **kuasa untuk menyiasat** seperti berikut :-

"Pada menjalankan kuasa di bawah subseksyen 136 (1) Akta Pendidikan 1996 (Akta 550), Ketua Pendaftar Sekolah dan Guru memberi kuasa kepada Pendaftar Sekolah dan Guru, Pegawai Pendidikan di daerah dan kawasan, guru besar, pengetus, guru penolong kanan (HEM), dan guru bimbingan di sekolah kerajaan dan bantuan kerajaan untuk menyiasat apa-apa perlakuan suatu kesalahan di bawah seksyen 29A Akta Pendidikan 1996 dan Peraturan-Peraturan Pendidikan (Pendidikan Wajib) 2002,

Dilustrasi kembali oleh Ahmad Faris bin Johan, Unit ICT, Bahagian Sekolah, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia

tertakluk kepada apa-apa garis panduan dan arahan yang dikeluarkan oleh Ketua Pendaftar dari semasa ke semasa mulai 1 Januari 2003. (Rujuk **Lampiran 1**).

6. Kerjasama daripada Y.Bhg. Datuk/Dato'/Tuan/Puan adalah dipohon supaya memberi perhatian khusus terhadap kanak-kanak yang didapati tercicir dan mengambil tindakan sewajarnya bagi kes-kes berikut :-

- 6.1 Murid-murid yang telah mengesahkan penempatan tetapi tidak hadir mendaftar di sekolah yang telah diluluskan selepas empat belas (14) hari dari hari pertama persekolahan tahun berkenaan;
- 6.2 Aduan/laporan mengenai murid cicir yang diterima daripada orang awam; dan
- 6.3 Kes murid cicir yang ada dalam pengetahuan Sekolah/Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah/Pejabat Pendidikan Bahagian/Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri.

7. Sila maklumkan kandungan Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas ini kepada semua sekolah di bawah pentadbiran Y.Bhg. Datuk/Dato'/Tuan/Puan.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

DATUK ABDUL RAFIE BIN MAHAT
Ketua Pengarah Pendidikan Malaysia

APPENDIX 2

Full list of vignettes for all students participating in the main study

Arina

Arina is a student teacher from one of the teacher education institutes that prepare English teachers for primary school. She had been in two urban area schools for her two previous practicums, and her final practicum is in a rural school which was classified “B” by Malaysian government. Arina wished to become a teacher from an early age, recalling how her mother, also a teacher, inspired her – they both eventually studied at the same institute. Arina “taught lessons” to her dolls as a child and now, as a student teacher and a lover of English language, was keen on helping pupils with their English. She employed various techniques to keep the children engaged and to ensure that they become better at their studies, and her most troubling problem during the practicums was related to discipline. In the future, she is planning to continue her career regardless of her personal situation (i.e. marital status), read books and enter teaching courses to improve her performance.

Bavani

Bavani is 22 years old, thus being the oldest among all participants. She joined the teacher preparation program because of her mother, who encouraged her to find a financially secure job where she would not have to look for employment (as after graduation, Malaysian teachers are automatically assigned to teaching positions). Since Bavani’s family is not rich, and getting a scholarship is hard, the allowance of \$600 dollars per month, along with fully covered fees and accommodation in the hostel, is very important for her. Although teaching was not Bavani’s first choice of a career, she performed well during the observation phase and reportedly enjoyed herself after having two teaching practicums. She cited her own English teacher as a source of motivation, being impressed with how the teacher helped her and remembered her throughout the years. She is training in the same school with Arina, who cited her as a great positive influence and a hardworking, helpful friend (despite Bavani’s humble self-assessment, “I’m not a good teacher”). Arina and Bavani’s school of practicum is classified as a rural area school with 420 students and 28 teachers, with most of the students being Malay-speaking (Malaysian Educational Statistics, 2015). In the future, Bavani wishes to enroll in more courses for English teachers and possibly to work in the

Department of Education, as she feels that the curriculum and the textbooks need to be updated.

Chua

Chua is 21 years old, and she is a Chinese student teacher placed for practicum at a school with Chinese as a primary language. Her school is at rural area with 490 students and 31 teachers. For her previous two practicums, she had been in national primary schools, so there were many differences with the pupils, their native language, and overall environment. Chua did not want to be a teacher and was pressured by her mother. She wanted to study business but her mother thought that business was not financially secure, and that with an unstable economy situation such a career could become a burden. However, Chua revealed that she would still give it a try and, after finishing the 5 years contract of teaching, would pursue her dream. She still managed to score well in her two previous practicums and teach successfully. Generally, Chua is a very hardworking person. Her school mentor said that Chua is very helpful and intelligent, as she would sometimes help her with the weak pupils who could not read or write. She also said that Chua is a creative teacher. In turn, Chua herself revealed that she tended to speak Chinese more than English at first but she overcomes the language barrier by actively using the dictionary. While most of her friends are having problems making pupils understand English, she is having problems with spelling.

Dania

Dania is 21 years old, and she is married. She is the only participant to already have her own family, which is very important for her. Her husband is the main reason she joined teacher education, because he a teacher too – so they can share knowledge, experience and even holidays. Dania's husband graduated two years ago. She has been placed into a rural area school, which has a majority of students from Malay and Aboriginal communities. Dania is quite emotional when pupils misbehave. She experienced discipline problems with her pupils, particularly with a few boys who threatened her every time she scolded them or stared at them. Mentor teachers and supervisors warned Dania about possible negative outcomes, as some parents of misbehaving children contacted national television to complain or even called the police. Despite the pressure, she managed to overcome the boys' behavior by becoming their friend and creating better bonds. During Phase 2 of the present study, Dania was more open to explain her additional frustration – her husband was far away from her, and

the only time they met is during school holidays. Final observation showed that she succeeded with her class control although she was emotional at first.

Emylia

Emylia is 21 years old, and she did not want to become a teacher. Similarly to other participants, she was encouraged by her parents to pursue this career because of good allowance. At the same time, Emylia's skills were noticed by her senior colleagues, as they also thought that she should become a teacher and could succeed in it. Despite these comments, Emylia's self-esteem regarding teaching profession seemed to be quite low, and at the moment of the interview she did not consider herself a good teacher or a skilled enough young professional. She was also hesitant when asked about her long-term plans, saying that she does not even know whether she would continue teaching. However, Emylia suggested that she probably enjoy teaching adults more, as she did not know how to engage small children and how to be a creative teacher for them.

Fauziah

Fauziah is 21 years old. She recalled not being a "bright" pupil as a child and being inspired and motivated by her kindergarten teacher who taught her to believe in herself more. Thus, she became dedicated to help other people with unlocking their potential. During the first two practicums, Fauziah reportedly did not feel very motivated. However, before her last practicum she was hospitalized, and staying at the hospital made her reconsider her views – she revealed that she got scared with not having achieved anything in her age. This experience made Fauziah more determined to succeed as a teacher instead of just going through the motions. Fauziah enjoyed the teaching practicum, saying that she liked being treated as an adult and as an equal to other teachers – however, she was critical of the "chalk and talk" lessons provided by her senior colleagues. In terms of her self-development, she revealed a wish to become a more intellectual and spiritual person, which would enrich her teaching.

Gina

Gina is 21 years old, and, similarly to previous participants, she was asked to become a teacher by her parents who are also in the same profession. Initially she studied law, but was pressured to withdraw because law was not regarded by her family as a suitable career

for a woman. Gina said that her parents' example somewhat inspired her to try her best as a teacher, and that she could not resist their opinion because she is not a rebellious person. She was somewhat critical of the teaching practicum, saying that it was too focused on theory. For her, teaching profession was a test of character and patience, but it was apparent that she tried her best to unlock her pupils' potential. Most notably, Gina was visibly upset with the fact that her pupils struggled to follow instructions in English, saying that they were actually very bright and attentive, but that low English proficiency prevented them from performing well.

Hayati

Hayati was placed in rural schools for all her three practicums. Initially, she took A-level in law and could not cope with the course as she is not into this field. She tried to fulfill her mother's dream to become a lawyer, but withdrew from the course eventually and switched to teacher education. Although she spent the whole year in A-level, she still thinks that she has made the right choice to follow her dream to become an English teacher. In class, Hayati is very firm because she often admires her mother's method of teaching her and her siblings. She is the best student in her class and she consistently prepares her lesson with creative teaching aids. Her school mentor and supervisor are proud of her. Her mentor said that Hayati often shares her learning materials, and not only with other student teachers, but even with senior teachers. From all three observations, there is no doubt that Hayati is the strongest student among all participants.

Iman

Iman is a 21 years old student teacher. Her father was the Principal of a secondary school and her mother also worked in the field of education. Her siblings are teachers too, and Iman considers becoming a lecturer and entering a Ph.D. program, like one of her sisters. Allowance and guaranteed employment after the graduation was the main reason for Iman to become a teacher, but she takes her preparation quite seriously and plans to take more teaching courses in the future, when she is able to afford it herself. Iman cited feedback of her friends, school mentors and supervisors as the most important aspect of her self-development. She considered herself lucky since she worked with advanced pupils during the practicum, and said that she would have needed to change a lot of things in her teaching if she had been placed in a weaker class.

Jamal

Jamal is 21 years old. He was motivated to be a teacher mostly by his socioeconomical background, as growing up in a rural area did not provide many opportunities. He is motivated to be a good teacher and contribute more to the society where he belongs. However, he has a notably low self-esteem, consistently saying sorry for not performing as well as his fellow student teachers. During the first observation, his classes were indeed quite poor, and when it came to second observation, his mentor teacher and supervisor kept on criticizing his methods of teaching, controlling class and his work. They thought that he lacked persistence and was demotivated by other students' performance. As a result, Jamal nearly withdrew himself from the present study, as he could not cope with negative comments from both his supervisor and mentor teacher. Luckily, his confidence boosted up during his final observation and he created an interesting activity which proved engaging for pupils. Jamal says that his only goal is to make sure that his pupils speak and understand English well.

APPENDIX 3

Ethics Considerations

Plain Language Statement for Students



College of Social
Sciences

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Linking Theory to Practice: An evaluation of the student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in Malaysia Pre Service English Language Teacher Education

Nor'Ain Sulaiman

This research is part of my PhD study.

2. Invitation paragraph

'You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.'

Thank you for reading this'.

3. What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of pedagogical content knowledge among student teachers of English as a second language who undergo pre-service training.

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is the ability to transform subject matter knowledge, making it appropriate for teaching purposes. Although there is a vast amount of research dedicated to PCK and its practical application, the studies show that less experienced teachers often struggle to use their knowledge during practice and to be flexible and creative in their approach to the content of the lessons.

According to the research, reflective practices play an important part in the acquisition of PCK. The results of the research could be useful both for student teachers and for their educators. It can help enhance self-reflection in student teachers, encouraging them to share their experience with teaching practice, self-analysis, giving and receiving feedback and handling problems in the classroom. At the same time, this study will highlight the problems with using PCK on practice, making room for corrections or improvements in the student teachers' training.

4. Why have I been chosen?

The participants of this project have to represent Malaysia Teacher Education Institute. If you received an invitation, it means that one of your lecturers had recommended you for participation in this study.

5. Do I have to take part?

No, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to allow the researcher to observe three of your English lesson and there will be a follow-up post-lesson observation interviews. The classroom observations and follow-up post-lesson observation interviews will take place from Jan till April 2016. The classroom observations will be video-recorded and the interviews will be audio-recorded.

The classroom observations will be conducted three times within the 12 weeks; (1) only the student teachers (without anyone else's observation); (2) during the observation by their mentors (senior teachers); (3) during the observation by their supervisors. The table below shows the tentative schedule of classroom observations.

Teacher	Months (End of Jan to early April)		
	1 st Observation and interview	2 nd Observation and interview	3 rd Observation and interview
1	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
2	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
3	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
4	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
5	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
6	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
7	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
8	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
9	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
10	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected from you during the course of this research will be kept confidential. All data will be stored in ways consistent with the Code of Good Practice in Research. Data will be stored in an encrypted USB drive. Confidentiality of given information will be ensured by changing your name in any publications. In addition, I will take sensible steps to ensure that collected data and all records are kept in confidential manner. I will be the only person who has an access to the project's computer files. I will store all research data (e.g. printouts of transcriptions) in my locked cabinet at the University of Glasgow. The records of the observation and the interview will be stored in my personal computer with a password required to access the files.

8. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be used in the research on the pedagogical content knowledge among student teachers. Hopefully, the findings will help answering the most problematic questions regarding pre-service training and suggest improvements in the content of student teachers' education in Malaysia. The results of this research will become a central part of my PhD thesis. Findings may also be presented as conference papers or published as journal articles. A written summary of results will be made available to all participants after submission of my thesis. I will keep data for up to 5 years after my graduation but you will still be anonymous and data will be treated confidentially.

9. Possible Risk

I believe the potential for risk or harm from participating in this research is negligible, However it is not possible to exclude all risk, I will draw your attention to information I believe might identify you.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

If you experience any distress due to participation in this research, you may suspend or end your participation in the project at any time. There are no personal consequences. Your participation is voluntary.

10. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be used in the research on the pedagogical content knowledge among student teachers. Hopefully, the findings will help answering the most problematic questions regarding pre-service training and suggest improvements in the content of student teachers' education in Malaysia. The results of this research will become a central part of my PhD thesis. Findings may also be presented as conference papers or published as journal articles. A written summary of results will be made available to all participants after submission of my thesis. I will keep data for up to 5 years after my graduation but you will still be anonymous and data will be treated confidentially.

11. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)

I am funded by the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

12. Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

In conducting this research, I am under supervision of two supervisors from the University of Glasgow; Dr Oscar Odena and Dr. Mark Murphy.

13. Contact for Further Information

If you wish to have further information about this study, you may contact me by email at n.binti-sulaiman.1@research.gla.ac.uk or Dr. Oscar Odena at Oscar.Odena@glasgow.ac.uk

Should you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the School of Education Ethics Officer by contacting Dr Muir Houston:
Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION



College of Social
Sciences

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Linking Theory to Practice: An evaluation of the student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in Malaysia Pre Service English Language Teacher Education

Nor'Ain Sulaiman

This research is part of my PhD study.

2. Invitation paragraph

'You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this'.

3. What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of pedagogical content knowledge among student teachers of English as a second language who undergo pre-service training.

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is the ability to transform subject matter knowledge, making it appropriate for teaching purposes. Although there is a vast amount of research dedicated to PCK and its practical application, the studies show that less experienced teachers often struggle to use their knowledge during practice and to be flexible and creative in their approach to the content of the lessons.

According to the research, reflective practices play an important part in the acquisition of PCK. The results of the research could be useful both for student teachers and for their educators. It can help enhance self-reflection in student teachers, encouraging them to share their experience with teaching practice, self-analysis, giving and receiving feedback and handling problems in the classroom. At the same time, this study will highlight the

problems with using PCK on practice, making room for corrections or improvements in the student teachers' training.

4. Why have I been chosen?

The participants of this project have to represent Malaysia Ministry of Education. If you received an invitation, student teachers under your supervision have agreed to take part in my research study. As part of the research, you will be interviewed after you observe the student teachers in the practicum (second observation of the student teachers). Each classroom observation will take around an hour, and the post-observation interviews will take about 30 minutes to 45 minutes. The schedule can be seen below:

Teacher	Months (End of Jan to early April)		
	1 st Observation and interview	2 nd Observation and interview	3 rd Observation and interview
1	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
2	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
3	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
4	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
5	Jan (week 4)	Feb (week 4)	March (week 4)
6	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
7	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
8	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
9	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)
10	Feb (week1)	March (week 1)	April (week1)

5. Do I have to take part?

No, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be interviewed after you observed each student teacher's lesson in the second month of the practicum. The classroom observations and follow-up post-lesson observation interviews will take place from January till April 2016. The interviews will be audio-recorded. Your answers will contribute greatly to the evaluation of the student teachers' knowledge and expertise. Later, the results of the study will be used to suggest improvements in the curriculum and preparation of young English teachers. Thus, your help will be really appreciated.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected from you during the course of this research will be kept confidential. All data will be stored in ways consistent with the Code of Good Practice in Research. Data will be stored in an encrypted USB drive. Confidentiality of given information will be ensured by changing your name in any publications. In addition, I will take sensible steps to ensure that collected data and all records are kept in confidential manner. I will be the only person who has an access to the project's computer files. I will store all research data (e.g. printouts of transcriptions) in my locked cabinet at the University of Glasgow. The records of the observation and the interview will be stored in my personal computer with a password required to access the files.

9. Possible Risk

I believe the potential for risk or harm from participating in this research is negligible, However it is not possible to exclude all risk, I will draw your attention to information I believe might identify you.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

If you experience any distress due to participation in this research, you may suspend or end your participation in the project at any time. There are no personal consequences. Your

participation is voluntary.

10. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be used in the research on the pedagogical content knowledge among student teachers. Hopefully, the findings will help answering the most problematic questions regarding pre-service training and suggest improvements in the content of student teachers' education in Malaysia. The results of this research will become a central part of my PhD thesis. Findings may also be presented as conference papers or published as journal articles. A written summary of results will be made available to all participants after submission of my thesis. I will keep data for up to 5 years after my graduation but you will still be anonymous and data will be treated confidentially.

11. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)

I am funded by the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

12. Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

In conducting this research, I am under supervision of two supervisors from the University of Glasgow; Dr Oscar Odena and Dr. Mark Murphy.

13. Contact for Further Information

If you wish to have further information about this study, you may contact me by email at n.binti-sulaiman.1@research.gla.ac.uk or Dr. Oscar Odena at Oscar.Odena@glasgow.ac.uk

Should you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the School of Education Ethics Officer by contacting Dr Muir Houston: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION

Consent form for participants

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee



College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Linking Theory to Practice: An evaluation of the student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in Malaysia Pre Service English Language Teacher Education

Name of Researcher: Norain Sulaiman

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant 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 have been informed that the information collected by this research will be used in preparing a PhD thesis and possibly for further academic publication such as journal articles, conference papers, and books.
4. I agree to take part in three classroom observations and post-lesson observation interviews
5. I give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded and for the classroom observations to be video-recorded.
6. I have been informed that my data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Glasgow, while the electronic file will be kept on the computer whose password is known only by the researcher. I understand that my data will be destroyed through shredded machine and all electronic files will be deleted after the researcher has completed her PhD study unless a postdoctoral project arises.
5. I understand that I will be referred to by pseudonym or given a code name in any publications arising from the research.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Norain Sulaiman

Researcher

9 January 2016

Date

Signature

Consent form for mentor teachers and supervisor

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee



College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Linking Theory to Practice: An evaluation of the student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in Malaysia Pre Service English Language Teacher Education

Name of Researcher: Norain Sulaiman

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant 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 have been informed that the information collected by this research will be used in preparing a PhD thesis and possibly for further academic publication such as journal articles, conference papers, and books.
4. I agree to take part in post-lesson observation interviews.
5. I give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded.
6. I have been informed that my data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Glasgow, while the electronic file will be kept on the computer whose password is known only by the researcher. I understand that my data will be destroyed through shredded machine and all electronic files will be deleted after the researcher has completed her PhD study unless a postdoctoral project arises.
5. I understand that I will be referred to by pseudonym or given a code name in any publications arising from the research.
6. I agree/do not agree (delete where applicable) to take part in this research.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature



College of Social
Sciences

Application Approved

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400150058
Applicant's Name: Nor' Ain binti Sulaiman
Project Title: Linking Theory to Practice: An evaluation of the student teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in Malaysia Pre Service English Language Teacher Education

Application Status: Approved
Start Date of Approval: 23/12/15
End Date of Approval of Research Project: 30/09/17

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries please email socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

Letter of Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister Department Approval



UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Prime Minister's Department
Block B5 & B6
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA



Telefon : 603-8000 8000

Nor'ain binti Sulaiman
121 Jalan PJS 4/10
46000, Petaling Jaya
Selangor
Email : yusain5010@gmail.com

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref.:

Ruj. Kami: UPE 40/200/19/3290
Our Ref.: (7)

Tarikh:
Date: 3 January 2016

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

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:

Researcher's name	:	NOR'AIN BINTI SULAIMAN
Passport No./ I.C No	:	781217-04-5344
Nationality	:	MALAYSIA
Title of Research	:	LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE: AN EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN MALAYSIA PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION
Period of Research Approved	:	4 YEARS

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**.

"Merancang Ke Arah Kecemerlangan"



Ruj. Kami : KPMSP.600-3/2/3 Jld 7 (99)
Tarikh : 14 Disember 2015

Ketua Pengarah
Seksyen Ekonomi Makro
Unit Perancangan Ekonomi
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Blok B5 Aras 4
Kompleks Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
(u.p. Pn. Munirah Bt. Abd. Manan)

Tuan,

Permohonan Untuk Menjalankan Penyelidikan di Malaysia
Nama: NOR'AIN SULAIMAN

Dengan hormatnya saya merujuk kepada perkara di atas.

2. Adalah saya diarahkan memaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan untuk menjalankan kajian bertajuk:

" Linking Theory To Practice: An Evaluation of The Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Malaysia Pre-Service English Language Teacher Education
"diluluskan dengan bersyarat.

3. Bersama-sama ini disertakan ulasan Bahagian ini ke atas cadangan penyelidikan yang dikemukakan.

Sekian dimaklumkan, terima kasih.

" BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA "

Saya yang menurut perintah, /

(DR.HJ.ZABANI BIN DARUS)

Ketua Sektor
Sektor Penyelidikan Dan Penilaian
Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan
b.p. Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

ULASAN TENTANG CADANGAN KAJIAN

Researcher's Name : Nor'Ain Sulaiman Research/ Kajian: ☒ Ph.D / Kedoktoran ☐ Sarjana / Masters
☐ Am

Name of institution/ Nama institusi : University of Glasgow

Research Title/ Tajuk Kajian : Linking Theory To Practice: An Evaluation of The Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge In Malaysia Pre-Service English Language Teacher Education

a) Views concerning the research proposal:
Setelah membaca cadangan kajian seperti yang dinyatakan di atas, pandangan terhadap cadangan kajian adalah seperti berikut:

i) Area of study/ Bidang yang akan dikaji:

☒ Suitable / Sesuai ☐ Not Suitable / Tidak Sesuai

ii) Sample and research location / Sampel dan lokasi kajian:

☒ Suitable / Sesuai ☐ Not Suitable / Tidak Sesuai

☐ Not Clearly Stated / Kurang Jelas

iii) Benefits of the research or its importance to the Ministry Of Education, Malaysia / Hasil penyelidikan - faedah penyelidikan kepada Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

☒ Benefit / Faedah ☐ No benefits / Tidak Berfaedah

☐ Not Identified / Tidak Pasti

Findings of this study will be important to the MOE because it informs policy makers on:

"Linking Theory To Practice: An Evaluation of The Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge In Malaysia Pre-Service English Language Teacher Education"

b) Suggestions made by EPRD, Ministry of Education, Malaysia / Cadangan BPPDP, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia:

☐ Approved / Diluluskan ☒ Approved with conditions / Diluluskan dengan bersyarat
☐ Not Approved / Tidak diluluskan

* Remarks:

- Pemohon perlu berbincang dan mendapatkan kebenaran pentadbir sekolah sebelum menjalankan kajian.
- Pengutipan data tidak mengganggu proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran di dalam bilik darjah.

(DR. HJ. ZABANI BIN DARUS)
Head of Sector
Research and Evaluation Sector
Educational Research and Planning Division
Ministry of Education, Malaysia



**BAHAGIAN PENGURUSAN SEKOLAH HARIAN
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA**
Aras 3 & 4, Blok E2, Kompleks E
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62604 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA



**KEMENTERIAN
PENDIDIKAN
MALAYSIA**

Tel : 03-8884 9000
Faks : 03-8884 9315
Laman Web : www.moe.gov.my

KPMSP.600-10/22/6 Jld. *10 (25)*
Tarikh : 3 hb. Januari 2016

Puan Nor' Ain Sulaiman
School of Education
University of Glasgow
11 Eldon Street, Glasgow
G3 6NH, Scotland, United Kingdom

Puan,

**MEMOHON KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN PENYELIDIKAN UNTUK
MELENGKAPKAN THESIS KEDOKTORAN YANG BERTAJUK "LINKING THEORY
TO PRACTICE: AN EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN MALAYSIA PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHER EDUCATION"**

Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa, Bahagian Pengurusan Sekolah Harian, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (KPM) tiada halangan kepada pihak puan untuk berurusan dengan pihak pentadbir di sekolah seperti permohonan puan pada pihak kami. Kelulusan ini terhad untuk urusan dengan pentadbir sekolah bagi hal-hal yang berkaitan tanpa sebarang unsur paksaan dan implikasi kewangan kepada mana-mana pihak.

2. Sehubungan dengan itu, pihak puan perlu mengadakan perbincangan dengan Pengarah Pendidikan Negeri yang terlibat di dalam pelaksanaan program ini memandangkan sekolah yang terlibat adalah di bawah pentadbiran negeri berkenaan di samping mematuhi syarat-syarat berikut:

- 2.1 Mendapat kebenaran daripada Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri dan Guru Besar/Pengetua sekolah-sekolah yang terlibat; (**Rujukan: Perkara 3.1, Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bil.10/2011**);
- 2.2 Surat kebenaran/kelulusan ini tidak boleh digunapakai bagi maksud untuk mendapatkan sumbangan dan tajaan daripada mana-mana pihak berkenaan;
- 2.3 **Penyertaan murid dan guru hendaklah tidak mengganggu atau menjejaskan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran mereka;**
- 2.4 Pihak sekolah tidak boleh dipaksa untuk menerima program yang ditawarkan oleh pihak puan;
- 2.5 **Tiada implikasi kewangan kepada Kementerian Pendidikan, Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri, sekolah, guru dan murid yang terlibat;**
- 2.6 Pihak penganjur dimohon agar mengemukakan satu salinan laporan program dalam tempoh 30 hari selepas pelaksanaan program tersebut; dan

"1 Malaysia: Rakyat Didahulukan, Pencapaian Diutamakan"
Sila catatkan rujukan Bahagian ini apabila dihubungi





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

INSTITUT PENDIDIKAN GURU MALAYSIA
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA
ARAS 1-3, BLOK 2250, JALAN USAHAWAN 1,
63000 CYBERJAYA
SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN



Tel : 03-83126666
Faks : 03-83126655
Web : <http://www.moe.gov.my>

"1 MALAYSIA: RAKYAT DIDAHULUKAN, PENCAPAIAN DIUTAMAKAN"

Ruj. Kami: KP(IPG)8484/800/4 Jld.6(78)

Tarikh : 18 Januari 2016

Pn Nor 'Ain Binti Sulaiman,
121, Jalan PJS 4/10,
Petaling Jaya, 46000
SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN



Tuan,

KELULUSAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN BERTAJUK *LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE: AN EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN MALAYSIA PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION*

Dengan segala hormatnya saya merujuk kepada surat tuan bertarikh 5 Januari 2016 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 di **Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Pendidikan Teknik, Bandar Enstek bermula 1 Februari 2016** hingga **30 April 2016**.

3. Walaubagaimanapun, kelulusan ini adalah berdasarkan kepatuhan kepada syarat-syarat berikut:
a) Telah mendapat kelulusan secara bertulis daripada Unit Perancang Ekonomi, Jabatan Perdana Menteri sebelum menjalankan kajian.
b) Telah mendapat kelulusan daripada Pengarah IPG Kampus yang berkenaan untuk menjalankan kajian.
c) Tidak menjejaskan proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran serta pelaksanaan aktiviti-aktiviti lain di kampus.

4. Untuk sebarang pertanyaan lanjut, sila hubungi **Dr Shamsul Nizam Bin Kachi Mohideen** di talian **019-6646090** atau di alamat emel shamsul.nizam@ipgm.edu.my. Pihak IPGM juga mengucapkan selamat maju jaya atas pengajian pihak tuan.

Sekian, terima kasih.

**"SEHATI SEJIWA"
"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"**

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(DATO' SULAIMAN BIN WAK)
Rektor
Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia



Letter of Negeri Sembilan State Education Department, Ministry of Education,
Malaysia Approval



**JABATAN PENDIDIKAN NEGERI
NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS**
JALAN DATO' HAMZAH KARUNG BERKUNCI No. 6
70990 SEREMBAN, NEGERI SEMBILAN DARUL KHUSUS
Tel : 06-7653100 Fax : 06-7639969



"1MALAYSIA : RAKYAT DIDAHULUKAN PENCAPAIAN DIUTAMAKAN"

Ruj. Kami : JPNS.SPS.FP.100-1/7 Jld.12(3)
Tarikh : 5 Februari 2016

Nor' Ain Sulaiman
School of Education
University of Glasgow
11 Eldon Street
Glasgow, G3 6NH
Scotland, United Kingdom

Tuan/Puan,

Kebenaran Menjalankan Kajian Ke Sekolah-Sekolah Di Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus Di bawah Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

Saya dengan segala hormatnya memaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan/puan untuk menjalankan kajian bertajuk:-
"Linking Theory To Practice: An Evaluation of The Student Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge in Malaysia Pre-Service English Language Teacher Education" telah diluluskan.

2. Tuan/Puan hendaklah berjumpa terus dengan Pengetua atau Guru Besar sekolah berkenaan untuk meminta persetujuan dan membincangkan kajian tersebut di tempat seperti dilampiran:

- i. SK [REDACTED]
- ii. SK [REDACTED]
- iii. SK [REDACTED]

3. Dimaklumkan bahawa kebenaran ini diberi berdasarkan surat kelulusan dari pihak Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, Bahagian Perancangan Dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan, nombor rujukan KPMSP.600-3/2/3(3) bertarikh 18 September 2015 dan sah digunakan bermula dari 01 Februari 2016 hingga 30 April 2016.

4. Tuan/Puan hendaklah menghantar satu naskah hasil kajian ke Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Sembilan (u.p: Unit Perhubungan, Pendaftaran & Pelajaran Swasta).

Sekian untuk makluman dan tindakan tuan/puan selanjutnya.

Terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(~~RUSNI BINTI AB~~ JALIL K.M.W)
Pegawai Pendidikan
Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus

s.k. Pengetua atau Guru Besar sekolah berkenaan.

Nota: -Sila beri satu salinan surat kelulusan semasa membuat kajian di sekolah.



Rujukan Kami : JPNS.PPN 600-1/56 JLD.58(48)
Tarikh : 25/02/2016

NOR' AIN BINTI SULAIMAN
121 JALAN PJS 4/10
46000 PETALING JAYA
SELANGOR

Tuan,

LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE: AN EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN MALAYSIA PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

Perkara di atas dengan segala hormatnya dirujuk.

2. Jabatan ini tiada halangan untuk pihak tuan menjalankan kajian/penyelidikan tersebut di sekolah-sekolah dalam Negeri Selangor seperti yang dinyatakan dalam surat permohonan.

3. Pihak tuan diingatkan agar mendapat persetujuan daripada Pengetua/Guru Besar supaya beliau dapat bekerjasama dan seterusnya memastikan bahawa penyelidikan dijalankan hanya bertujuan seperti yang dipohon. Kajian/Penyelidikan yang dijalankan juga tidak mengganggu perjalanan sekolah serta tiada sebarang unsur paksaan.

4. Tuan juga diminta menghantar senaskah hasil kajian ke Unit Perhubungan dan Pendaftaran Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor sebaik selesai penyelidikan/kajian.

Sekian, terima kasih,

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(SHASHIM SHAH BIN HARUN)

Penolong Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor
b.p. Ketua Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

s.k. - Fail

" Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor Terbilang "



APPENDIX 4

Suggested interview questions (student teachers):

- 1) In your opinion, how did the lesson go overall?
 - 2) How did the course of the actual lesson correlate with the curriculum?
 - 3) How did the course of the actual lesson correlate with the lesson plan?
 - 4) What was especially challenging for you during the lesson? Why?
 - 5) How would you describe the discipline during the lesson? Were you successful in maintaining order?
 - 6) In your opinion, how well did your pupils understand the material of the lesson?
Please elaborate.
 - 7) Did you notice any problems in the communication between you and the pupils? If so, how did you resolve them?
 - 8) Are you content with the pupils' response to today's lesson?
 - 9) Did anything happen in the classroom that has not been addressed in your plan?
How did you react?
 - 10) Were there moments when students could not answer your questions? In your opinion, what was the reason – difficult content or wrong approach? What would you change in your explanation in the future?
 - 11) Do any of your students require more attention? What do you do to approach stronger and weaker students?
 - 12) How do you react to interruptions during the lesson?
 - 13) What would you change or improve in your future practice, judging from the experience of today's lesson? How would you approach its topic?
- For 2nd and 3rd post-lesson interview the following questions would be stressed out:
- 14) In your opinion, did your performance improve compared to the previous lesson (lessons) under observation?
 - 15) How did you address the comments made about your previous observed lesson (lessons) in today's lesson?
 - 16) How did you address the difficulties that arose during the previous lesson (lessons) in today's lesson?
 - 17) Is there anything you would like to add that I may have missed in my questions?

Suggested interview questions (mentors):

- 1) How long have you been a teacher?
- 2) How long have you been mentoring student teachers?
- 3) Is English the only subject you teach? Would you mind sharing your experiences about teaching?
- 4) Would you mind sharing your understanding of theory of teaching and learning?
- 5) How can a teacher best understand KSSR and deliver it to the students?
- 6) How can a teacher best understand and master KSSR?
- 7) How do you implement KSSR in your teaching?
- 8) Do you get to attend KSSR workshops provided by the ministry of education, district or school?
- 9) Could you describe the approach of your mentees?
- 10) Do you have any expectations before each observation?
- 11) If your mentee fails to teach according to your expectations, how do you react/what is your course of action?
- 12) What types of help do you think are most relevant, and what is your approach to providing these?
- 13) Could you share your experience mentoring the student teachers?
- 14) How many times are you expected to observe each student teacher and do you let them know prior to the observation, or is it done impromptu?
- 15) Based on all of your mentoring experience, what elements would you add to the student teachers' course to enhance it or which element do you think is crucial and has the most positive impact on teaching and learning?
- 16) Is there anything you would like to add that I may have missed in my questions?

Suggested interview questions (supervisor):

- 1) How long have you been a lecturer?
- 2) How long have you been supervising practicum students?
- 3) What subject do you teach at the institute and which department are you in?
- 4) Do you mind sharing how your experience of being a lecturer and supervisor has been?
- 5) How do find the Linking theory to Practice (LTP) course that the students have to attend before their practicums?
- 6) How can a teacher best understand KSSR and deliver it to the students?
- 7) How can a teacher best understand and master KSSR?
- 8) How do you implement KSSR in your teaching?
- 9) Do you get to attend KSSR workshops provided by the ministry of education, district or school?
- 10) Could you describe the approach of your students?
- 11) How long have you been supervising them?
- 12) Do you have any expectations before each observation?
- 13) If your students fail to teach according to your expectations, how do you react/what is your course of action?
- 14) What types of help do you think are most relevant, and what is your approach to providing these?
- 15) Could you share your experience supervising the student teachers?
- 16) How many times are you expected to observe each student teacher and do you let them know prior to the observation, or is it done impromptu?
- 17) Based on all of your mentoring experience, what elements would you add to the student teachers' course to enhanced it or which element do think is crucial and has the most positive impact on teaching and learning?
- 18) Is there anything you would like to add that I may have missed in my questions?

APPENDIX 5

Codes emerging during analysis (interview transcription)

Participants	Transcripts	Codes
Chua	"we have a presentation stage and then we have a grading stage where we first introduce the vocabulary. That part is more teacher-centred because I'm the one who is providing them knowledge and the information. But then, when it comes to the end of the lesson, for example, at the production stage, then it becomes student-centred, as will have to solve the task by themselves"	Reflective skills in action-achieving goals and problems in the classroom
Arina	"they do not practice at home, so this is the only time they can practice the language."	
Fauziah	"Firstly, they don't take English seriously, secondly, they think English is boring and difficult; thirdly, they don't have enough practice and don't put in enough effort."	

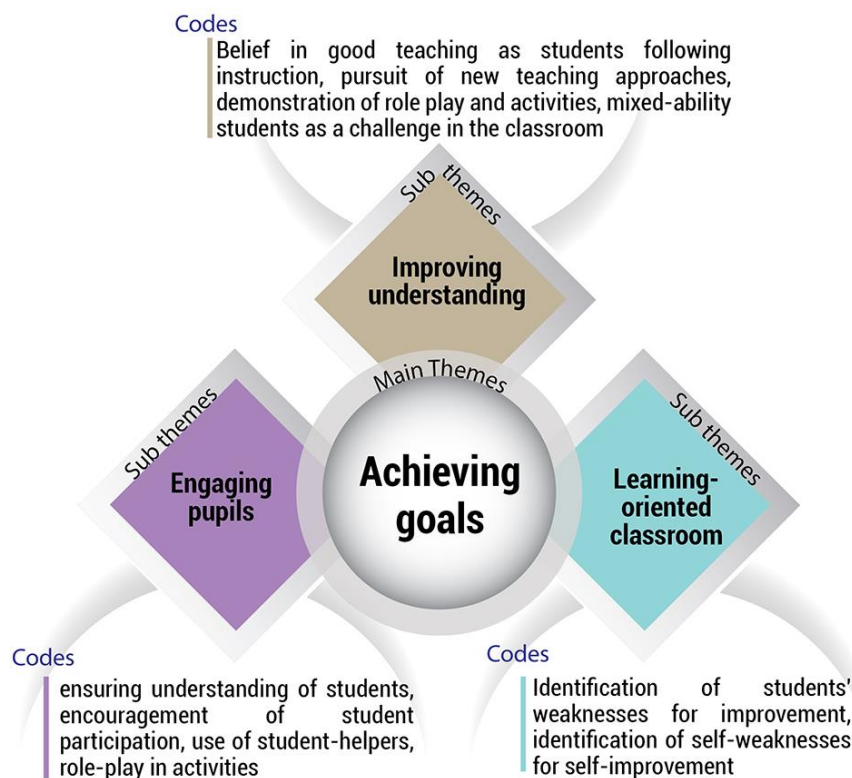
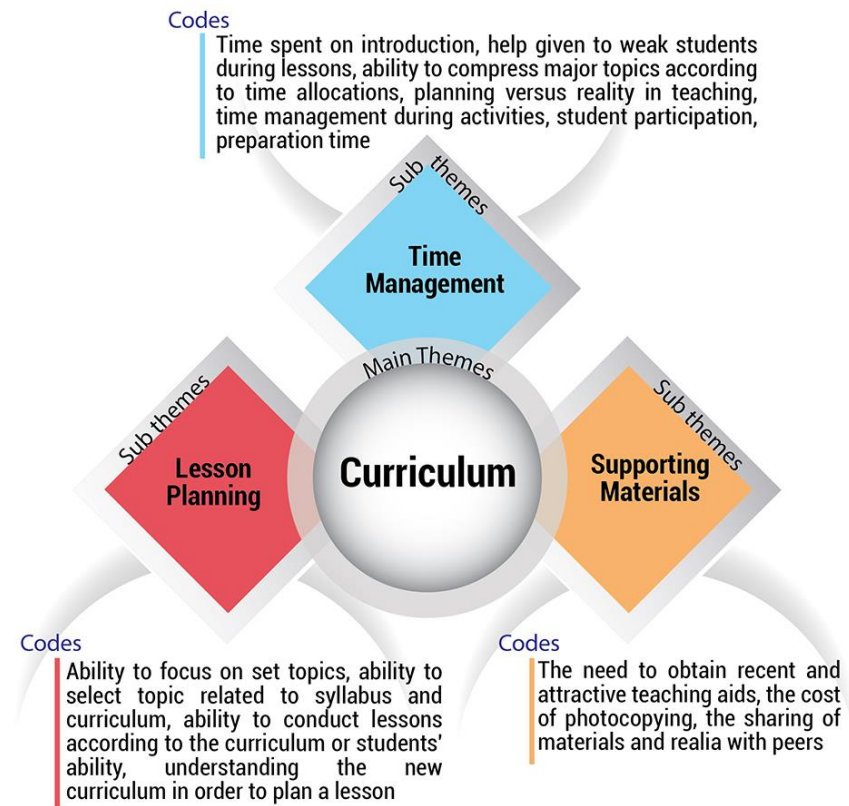
Participants	Transcripts	Codes
Gina	<p>"to know what should be in the lesson, what to write in the learning objectives and what I must achieve in the end of the lesson."</p> <p>"Yes, I use the scheme of work which was provided by the school to help me to plan my lesson so that I know what should be in the lesson. So that I know what to write for my learning objective and what can I achieve at the end of the lesson."</p> <p>"We tend to spend most of our time online. As trainee teachers, we need to look for lots of information. So when it comes to teaching, when it comes to entering the class, we are very tired and somehow we tend to be very angry at the pupils for no reason because we are tired already. So, I...I don't know what is the best method to improve this situation, but I don't think we can actually keep up with the technology that we have nowadays. We need someone to help us."</p>	Curriculum-time management, lesson planning, supporting materials, language of instruction, grasping the concept, the role pedagogical content knowledge
Dania	<p>"I don't know much about the new curriculum (KSSR) as it was only introduced to us in one day and we had to discover it by ourselves"</p> <p>"[sometimes] the lesson base is, it's very good, but when it comes to practice in the classroom, maybe the teacher couldn't deliver what he or she planned because of the teaching methods, because of the learning style or how that person approached the pupils – and for a teacher, managing the pupils the right way is one of the most important aspect in teaching."</p>	
Arina	<p>"... as you can see in my lesson plan, I planned how many minutes for each phase, so that I would not overrun. There was one time when I took half an hour just focusing on set induction."</p> <p>"I bought them myself, because I think that they are very necessary for all teachers nowadays, because this is the 21st century, so, all teachers need these things I think... and... and they actually make our work easier."</p> <p>"I introduced a dictionary but the kids found it quite boring"</p>	
Bavani	"when we carried out those kind of activities with my classmates as students, they were able to do them, but when I take exactly the same lesson plan and activities and apply them within rural schools, like I'm teaching now, I have difficulties, because the activities that I planned in my classroom are too challenging."	
Chua	"If the pupils behave in a certain way, and we haven't learned the theory before we go to practicum, then how are we to know the solution to these situations?"	

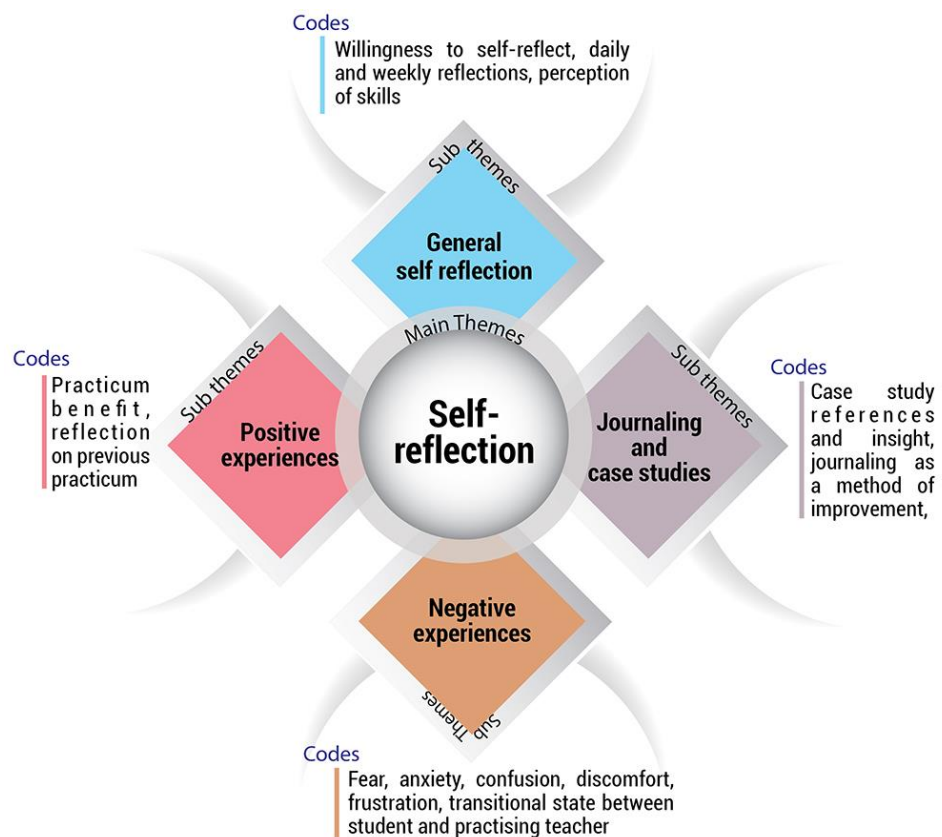
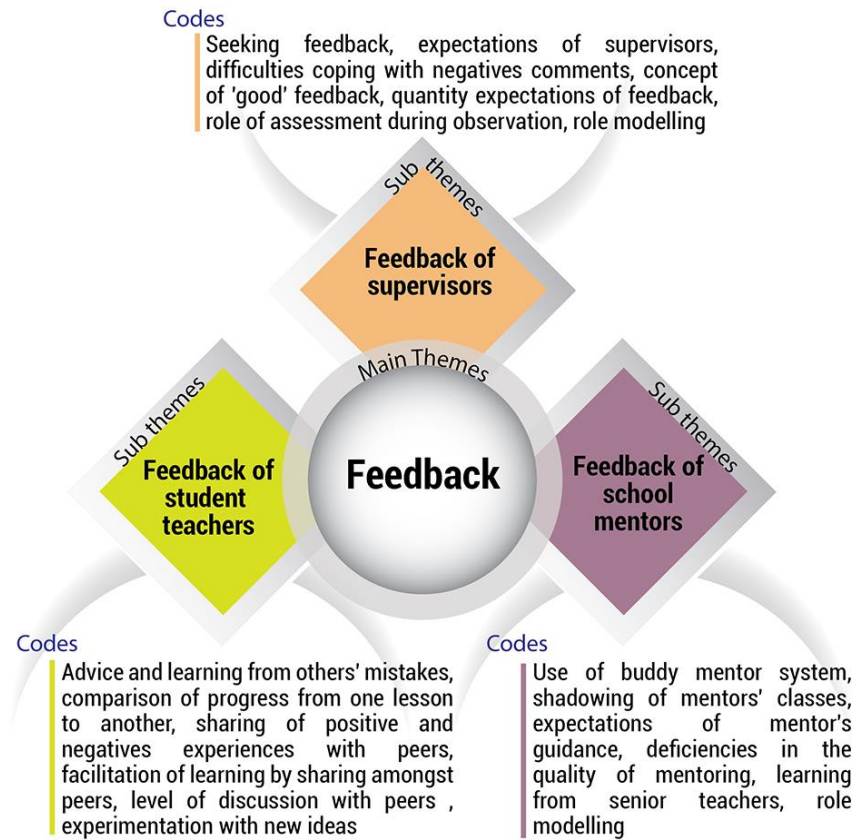
Participants	Transcripts	Codes
Chua	"I don't know, I did not notice whether they were happy or not. I am doing that for their own good." "if your lessons are always good, then you do not learn anything"	Self-Reflection, Feedback
Jamal	"They are correcting my mistakes; they are helping me to become a better person in terms of my instruction."	
Bavani	"Sometimes I become too ambitious. I think that they can do this, they can do that, but actually they can't."	
Emylia	"... from the comments by the lecturers and the teachers, I can indirectly make an assumption of what is really happening in the classroom and where am I weak at. So, I will take those comments to improve my teaching and learning process in that lesson"	
Dania	some senior teachers are quite ermm... they don't really like to be disturbed. Some of them don't really want to talk to us or maybe it is just [my feeling]. The teachers' room is quite big and when they tease you, everyone can hear it... There was one time when I gave an idea on how to create more attractive teaching aid, and she [a school mentor] laughed so hard	

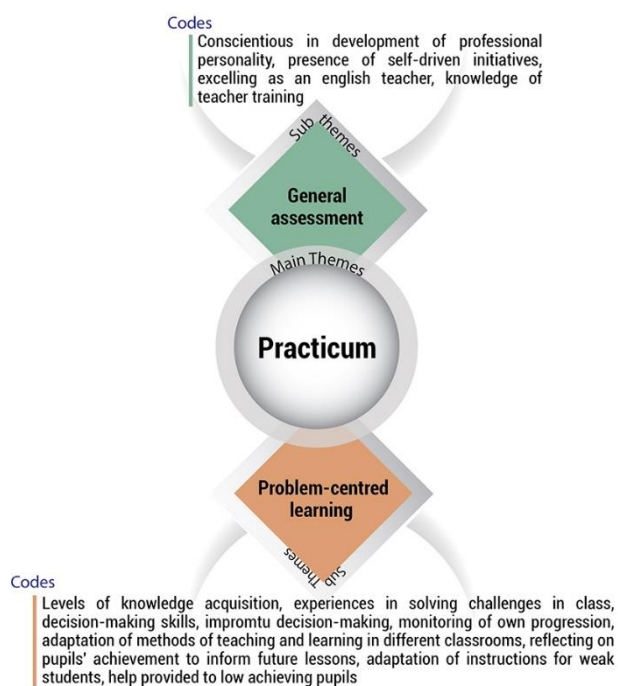
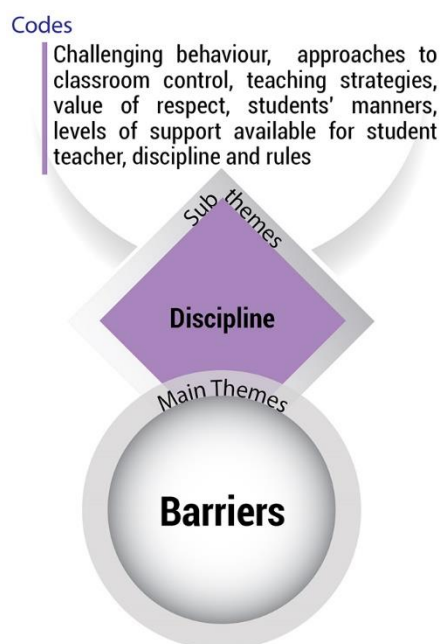
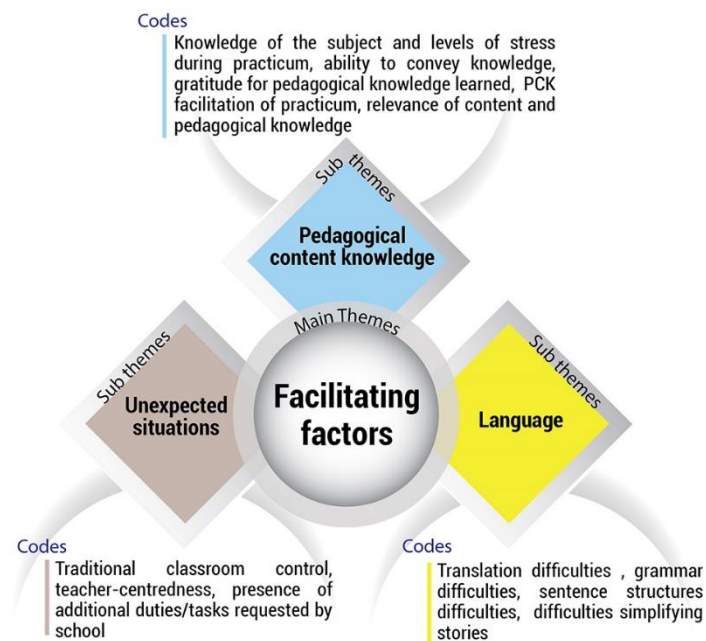
Participants	Transcripts	Codes
Arina	"someone who is knowledgeable, who will share experiences that, I think, would motivate me to become better English teacher" "I'm afraid she will have a bad impression of me, because she is quite particular."	Development of teaching and reflective skills
Bavani	"I'm in my final year and this is my last practicum. I don't want to create problems; I just want to finish this successfully." "shared many techniques. Besides, we give each other ideas on how to enhance the lesson and materials, and we realise our own mistakes and acquire our own skills and innovative skills"	
Emylia	".....from the comments by the lecturers and the teachers, I can indirectly guess at what is really happening in the classroom and where my weaknesses are. So I will take those comments to improve my teaching and learning process in my lessons."	
Chua	"the supervisors don't expect so much from you because you are still training." "We share our experiences. Sometimes we cry, so we promise to have each other's back There are seven of us, we share everything, even worksheets."	
Dania	"this is the most important thing that we need to know."	
Hayati	"They're simply kids, they didn't mean it."	

APPENDIX 6

Refined/ Revised Codes

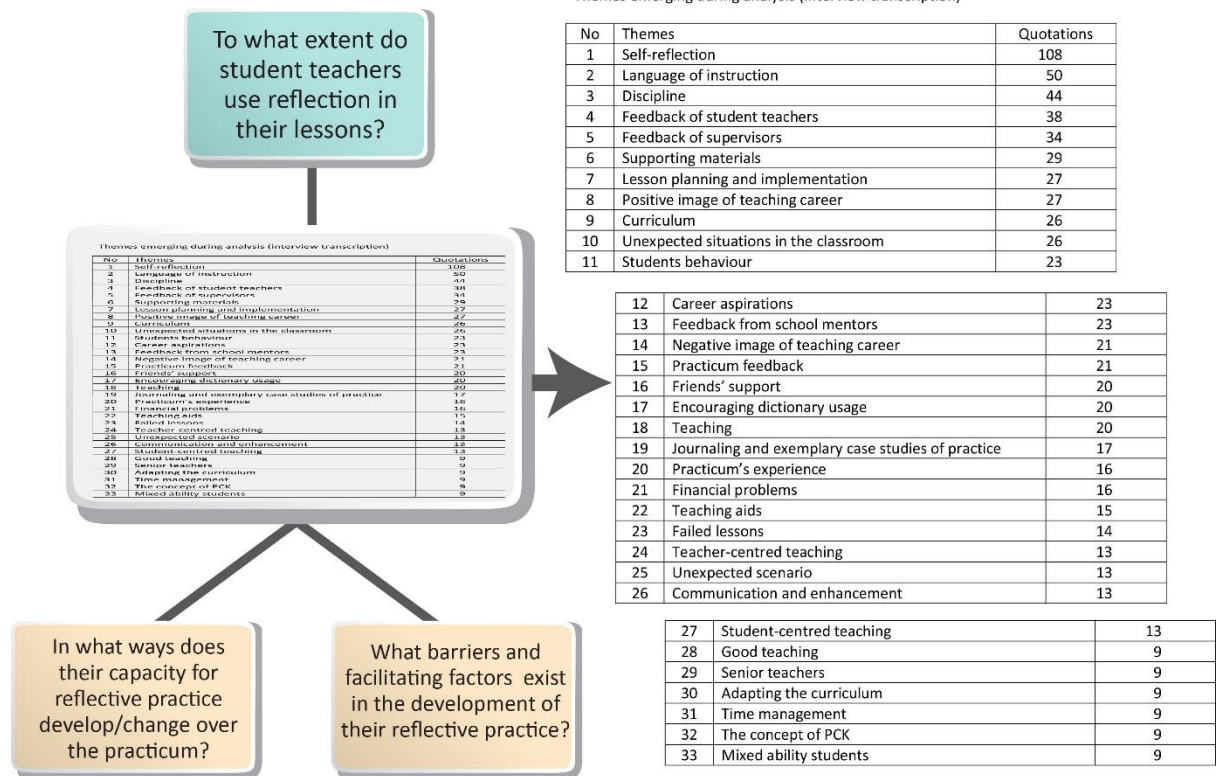






APPENDIX 7

Themes emerging during analysis (interview transcription)



APPENDIX 8

Circular Letter of the New Curriculum (KSSR)



KETUA PENGARAH PELAJARAN MALAYSIA
Director General of Education Malaysia
ARAS 8, BLOK E8
Level 8, Block E8
KOMPLEKS KERAJAAN PARCEL E
Government Complex Parcel E
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
Federal Government Administrative Centre
62604 PUTRAJAYA



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KP/KPPM/6 Jld. 2 (33)

Tarikh: 02 November 2016

Semua Ketua Bahagian
Semua Pengarah Pendidikan Negeri

YBhg. Datuk/Datin/Tuan/Puan,

SURAT PEKELILING IKHTISAS KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA
BILANGAN 8 TAHUN 2016

PELAKSANAAN KURIKULUM STANDARD SEKOLAH RENDAH
(SEMAKAN 2017) SECARA BERPERINGKAT-PERINGKAT MULAI TAHUN 2017

TUJUAN

1. Surat pekeliling ikhtisas ini bertujuan memaklumkan pelaksanaan Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) (Semakan 2017) secara berperingkat-peringkat di semua sekolah rendah termasuk sekolah pendidikan khas bermula dengan murid Tahun 1 pada tahun 2017.

LATAR BELAKANG

2. Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013-2025 menyarankan KSSR yang telah dilaksanakan pada tahun 2011 disemak semula dengan memberi penekanan kepada penguasaan kemahiran abad ke-21 seperti pemikiran kritis, kreatif dan berfikir berstruktur.

TAFSIRAN

3. Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (KSSR) (Semakan 2017) merupakan Kurikulum Kebangsaan yang digunakan oleh semua sekolah rendah dalam Sistem Pendidikan Kebangsaan seperti yang diperuntukkan mengikut Seksyen 18 di bawah Akta Pendidikan 1996 [Akta 550]. Pelaksanaan KSSR (Semakan 2017) menggunakan Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP).

PELAKSANAAN

4. Pihak sekolah hendaklah menggunakan DSKP bagi semua mata pelajaran KSSR (Semakan 2017) termasuk Pendidikan Khas yang disediakan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.

5. Waktu PdP bagi semua mata pelajaran arus perdana adalah mengikut jam setahun. Sehubungan dengan itu, jadual waktu **sedia ada** boleh dilaksanakan. Walau bagaimanapun bagi Pendidikan Khas, waktu PdP adalah tertakluk kepada Peraturan-Peraturan Pendidikan (Pendidikan Khas) 2013.

6. Mata pelajaran dan peruntukan masa untuk pelaksanaan KSSR (Semakan 2017) termasuk Pendidikan Khas perlu merujuk lampiran berikut:

- 6.1 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR (Semakan 2017) Tahap 1 (Tahun 1, 2 dan 3) - **Lampiran 1**;
- 6.2 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR Pendidikan Khas (Semakan 2017) Ketidakupayaan Pendengaran Tahap 1 (Tahun Pengukuhan, 1, 2 dan 3) - **Lampiran 2**;
- 6.3 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR Pendidikan Khas (Semakan 2017) Ketidakupayaan Penglihatan Tahap 1 (Tahun 1, 2 dan 3) – **Lampiran 3**;

- 6.4 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR Pendidikan Khas (Semakan 2017) Masalah Pembelajaran Tahap 1 (Tahun 1, 2 dan 3) - **Lampiran 4**;
- 6.5 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR (Semakan 2017) Tahap II (Tahun 4, 5 dan 6) - **Lampiran 5**;
- 6.6 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR Pendidikan Khas (Semakan 2017) Ketidakupayaan Pendengaran Tahap II (Tahun 4, 5 dan 6) - **Lampiran 6**;
- 6.7 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR Pendidikan Khas (Semakan 2017) Ketidakupayaan Penglihatan Tahap II (Tahun 4, 5 dan 6) - **Lampiran 7**; dan
- 6.8 Mata Pelajaran dan Peruntukan Masa Minimum Jam Setahun KSSR Pendidikan Khas (Semakan 2017) Masalah Pembelajaran Tahap II (Tahun 4, 5 dan 6) - **Lampiran 8**.

Bagi pelaksanaan Tahun 2 hingga Tahun 6 di bawah KSSR, jadual transisi peralihan daripada KSSR kepada KSSR (Semakan 2017) adalah seperti di **Lampiran 9**. Panduan perubahan masa daripada minit kepada jam untuk semua mata pelajaran bagi Tahun 2 hingga Tahun 6 adalah seperti di **Lampiran 10**.

7. Pelaksanaan mata pelajaran Pendidikan Kesenian, Pendidikan Jasmani dan Pendidikan Kesihatan serta mata pelajaran tambahan di Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) perlu merujuk lampiran berikut:

- 7.1 Pelaksanaan Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Kesenian - **Lampiran 11**;
- 7.2 Pelaksanaan Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Jasmani dan Pendidikan Kesihatan - **Lampiran 12**; dan
- 7.3 Pelaksanaan Mata Pelajaran Tambahan di Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) - **Lampiran 13**.

8. Pelaksanaan mata pelajaran di bawah KSSR (Semakan 2017) diperkukuh melalui Elemen Merentas Kurikulum (EMK). EMK merupakan unsur nilai tambah yang boleh diterapkan dalam PdP. Guru boleh memuat turun panduan pelaksanaan EMK melalui laman sesawang <http://bpk.moe.gov.my>.

TARIKH KUAT KUASA

9. Surat pekeliling ikhtisas ini berkuat kuasa mulai hari pertama sesi persekolahan tahun 2017.

TANGGUNGJAWAB KETUA JABATAN

10. YBhg. Datuk/Datin/Tuan/Puan hendaklah mengambil tindakan memaklumkan kandungan surat pekeliling ikhtisas ini kepada pegawai yang bertanggungjawab di bahagian KPM, jabatan pendidikan negeri, pejabat pendidikan daerah, pengetua dan guru besar di bawah pentadbiran YBhg. Datuk/Datin/tuan/puan.

Sekian. Terima kasih.


"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

(TAN SRI DR. KHAIR BIN MOHAMAD YUSOF)
Ketua Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
merangkap Ketua Pengarah Pelajaran Malaysia

APPENDIX 9:

Chua Weekly Reflective Diary

Weekly Reflective Journal	
Week	6
Duration	7/3/16 – 11/3/16 (5 days)
Topic	The failure of using role play in low proficiency class
1. Problem / incidence: I faced a serious problem when conducting role play in my English lesson. I could not manage to make my pupils to act out according to the situation given to them.	
2. Analysis: My pupils love to act but they were very noisy when the other groups were acting. Besides, they were very not systematic when acting. Some were too loud and some were not serious. All of these happened because I did not give proper instructions to them. I did not give them the chance to discuss with their friends on how to act. Furthermore, I did not provide scripts to them. I also did not give enough motivations such as giving stars. All of these had caused them to be out of control in a role play lesson.	
3. Suggestion for problem solving: i. I should always give proper instructions to them. ii. I should let them discuss and plan on how to act and the dialogues that they want to use. iii. I should provide them with scripts on the situations given. This is to give them the rough idea on what they can say in a certain situation. iv. As there are some shy students in the class, I should encourage these shy pupils to speak by using reward system. I can give them stars if they manage to speak even they speak wrongly. v. If they act well, I should praise them or ask the whole class to give them a "good job" chant.	
4. Duration of problem solving: I hope I can overcome this problem starting from today until my practicum session ends. I have to remind myself from time to time to remain confident in my lesson.	
Checked by Lecturer	Checked by Mentor

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