A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES OF FUTURE TEACHERS BEGINS FROM A SINGLE STEP IN A MICROTEACHING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from a qualitative exploratory study which investigated the experience of student teachers as they went through the process of teaching practicum in a microteaching class. The purpose of the study is to examine to what extent reflective practice benefits students and enables them to make progress in their practicum. A cohort of student teachers from an English teacher education program of a higher institution in Banjarmasin, Indonesia took part in the study. The data were gathered from observational notes, students’ reflective journals on how they planned and conducted their mini lesson, peer comments, and interviews. The findings revealed that the experience in a microteaching class, despite its limitation as it only offers a glimpse of what teaching is like, can serve as the crucial beginning step from which the student teachers enhance their pedagogical knowledge and develop their teaching expertise. This supports Richards and Farrell’s (2011) argument that “microteaching provides experiences that can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching through processes of critical reflection.”

Key words: microteaching, student teacher, reflective practice

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In a teacher education program, an important course that must be taken by the students is teaching practicum. Richards and Farrell (2011) in their book Practice Teaching: A Reflective Approach used the term teaching practice and practice teaching interchangeably, and the term practicum is used to refer to both. There are two different kinds of teaching practicum – the first is microteaching, and the second is teaching an ESOL class. The former refers to teaching a short lesson or part of a lesson to a group of fellow student teachers, followed by feedback by a supervisor and fellow student teachers. It is often conducted as part of a group activity on teacher-training courses, where students are put into groups and asked to plan and teach certain parts of a lesson. Meanwhile, the latter refers to working at a school with a cooperating teacher or a mentor teacher and teaching part of lessons or entire lessons for an extended period of time in his or her ESOL class. The student teacher will work closely with a mentor teacher, sharing lesson plans with him or her or collaborating on planning lessons.
The mentor teacher will also observe lessons conducted by the student teachers and give feedback on their teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2011).

In most teacher colleges or universities which have teacher education programs in Indonesia, teaching practicum is well known as PPL or field experience practice. In a four-year teacher training program, this course is usually offered toward the end of the third year after the students have passed several theoretical courses in the previous semesters. Generally, the field practice or PPL is implemented for two semesters: PPL 1, which is conducted in campus, and PPL 2, which is conducted at schools for a period of two until three months. PPL 1, commonly known as microteaching, is used as the pre-requisite and foundation before student teachers do their teaching practicum at schools, where they have to teach real students.

Historically, microteaching was developed in the early 1960s at Stanford University, with the purpose to provide student teachers to master specific teaching skills (Amobi, 2005). Later on, the microteaching activity has expanded into a broader scope, in which student teachers can practice not only to master a particular skill, but also a more complete experience where they can practice various teaching skills (Ogeyik, 2009). In a microteaching class, the two most important activities are mini lessons which are videotaped and feedbacks from a lecturer who acts as a supervisor.

In the faculty of teacher education and training where I teach, the microteaching practice is offered at the fifth semester after the students have completed the required courses which include skills subjects such as Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, and content subjects such as TEFL, Curriculum and Material Development, and Teaching Media. In the 2-unit microteaching class, the student teachers are put into groups of 10-11 supervised by one lecturer, and they should meet once a week. Each student teacher will conduct a mini lesson for 15 minutes in front of their peers and supervisor. The total number of practice is 6 times for each student. The lesson materials cover junior and senior high school curriculum.

Ideally, each lesson should be videotaped, however, due to the limited facilities – only two microteaching rooms which are equipped with the video camera – most of the teaching practice in my faculty should be conducted in regular classroom without being videotaped, so in each group, the students only had the opportunity to be videotaped twice, that is, in during the third practice (which is the mid test), and the sixth practice (which is the final test). As a matter a fact, videotaped lessons are very beneficial as it will give the opportunity for the
students to revisit their lessons and reflect on their acts during teaching practice, so they can improve their next teaching performance.

Richards and Farrell (2011) have suggested that student teachers need to be provided and opportunity to take part in ongoing reflection on what he or she is learning about teaching and about himself or herself as a teacher throughout this process. Reflective practice may include different forms, such as keeping a teaching journal, lesson reports, group discussions, observation and evaluation of teachers’ own classroom practices, action research, and narrative inquiry. Recent research has emphasized the impacts of teacher self-reflections (Richards & Lockharts as cited in Geyer, 2008). Among the impacts are knowing what their strengths are, what constraints they encounter in conducting their mini lesson, what are some possible solutions, and what is the outcome.

Previously, observation and evaluation of the student teachers in my faculty were carried out by using/relying on the observation sheet provided by the microteaching bureau of the faculty as well as by the English department. The evaluation was done by both supervisors and fellow students. The supervisor may decide whether to give feedback after each lesson to an individual student, or give overall feedback after all students finish their practice that day. The feedbacks were done orally. Meanwhile, the feedbacks by the fellow students were carried out by returning the completed sheet to the person being evaluated. However, it then turned out that the observation sheet was too rigorous and not really appropriate with the context of a mini lesson. Students failed to understand how to evaluate their peer performance as no clear guidance was given accompanying the evaluation sheet. Consequently, the students did not make much improvement in their practice.

In an attempt to improve the microteaching practice and to maximize the reflective practice, I decided to modify the evaluation process by assigning the student teachers to write a reflective journal after each teaching practicum. This study then focuses on the experience of student teachers as they went through the process of teaching practicum in a microteaching class and how they respond to reflective practice. The questions of the study were: How do student teachers benefit form microteaching? What are some common problems that student teachers encounter during their teaching practicum? How do students teachers respond to reflective practice? To what extent does reflective practice enable the student teachers to make progress in their practicum?
LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Microteaching: benefits and limitations

Microteaching practice may vary from one teacher training program to another, but basically the main purpose is “to provide a safe and stress-free environment in which to develop and practice basic teaching skills (Roberst, 1998 as cited in Richard & Farrel, 2011). It also focuses on a specific teaching skills and strategy where the student teachers can get immediate feedback (Wallace, 1991 as cited in Richard & Farrell, 2011).

As an initial professional development tool, microteaching is believed to have numerous benefits for the student teachers. Among the benefits is it prepares the student teachers before they go to the real field. Through a microteaching practice, student teachers are able to get a view of what is teaching like. They can also receive feedback on their teaching performance, teaching style, the material they use, and their language competence (Cakir 2000, as cited in Ogeyik, 2009). In addition, student teachers will be more trained in how to preparing and arrange a lesson in a limited time because during a microteaching practice, the time to conduct a lesson usually ranges only around 10-15 minutes.

Some studies also have revealed that microteaching activities help student teachers overcome their anxiety levels, defeat hesitation and fear, increase professional commitment, raise consciousness about teaching profession, become efficient in all topics related to teaching proficiency, learn how to interact with students, become experienced in testing and evaluating, become professional for taking student’s attention to lesson, consume time professionally, utilize educational technologies, and control classroom management (Arends, 2000; Karamustafaoglu & Akdeniz, 2002, as cited in Ogeyik, 2009).

However, microteaching is not without limitation. For instance, the time is limited, and the setting is assumed as unnatural because it does not take place in the real classroom with only their peers being the students. In some cases microteaching may produce “homogenized standard student teachers with model procedures and stands for a form of teaching play in unnatural surroundings, that is, the artificiality of classroom environments” (Cripwell and Geddes, 1982, as cited in Ogeyik, 2009). Other limitation is the amount of time for preparing materials and the difficulty of material which may cause the student teachers feel burdened.
Richards and Farrel (2011) also have listed some advantages and disadvantages of microteaching. The advantages are: it is short and less stress than compared to teaching a whole lesson, focused on one aspect of teaching, safe environment, there is an opportunity to try out new ideas, and an opportunity to ‘try again’ based on feedback. Whereas, the disadvantages are: the short time may stress some people, ‘teacher’ may not be able to establish a rapport with the class, student teacher expectation of what can be achieved may be too high, and ‘decontextualized’ lesson that makes it difficult to get student involved (p. 6).

A study by Grudnoff (2011) revealed that the practicum experiences of student teachers were not always helpful in supporting their transition into teaching the real classroom. The student teachers who became the participants in her study stated that the practicum could not replace the conditions of full-time teaching. Therefore, the findings suggest that the practicum should be reconsidered so that it can prepare student teachers more effectively for the complexities and demands of the beginning teaching profession.

Due to the limitations of the traditional approach of microteaching, a more reflective approach has been suggested by Roberts (1998, as cited in Richards and Farrell, 2011), and Amobi (2005). Through reflective approach, the microteaching experience will not only provide an opportunity to master specific teaching behaviors and skills, but rather to provide experiences that can “trigger a deeper understanding of teaching through processes of critical reflection” (Richards & Farrell, 2011). The next section will define reflective practice in more details.

2. Reflective practice and the benefits

Reflective teaching can be defined as “the teacher’s thinking about what happens in classroom lesson, and thinking about alternative means of achieving goals or aims” (Cruickshank & Applegate, 1981, as cited in Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001, p.36). In a similar fashion, Amobi (2005) defines reflective teaching as “to revisit the sequence of one’s teaching for the purpose of making thoughtful judgment and decisions about improved ways of acting in the future” (p. 116). In reflective teaching, “teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, as use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching” (Richards & Lockharts, 1994, as cited in Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001, p.36).
By engaging in a reflective practice, teacher will be able to reflect whether his or her lesson plans run successfully or not, as lesson plans do not always meet the expectation, and not all what has been planned can be taught. By making reflection, teacher will be able to respond/anticipate what should be done in the next lesson. In reflective practice, teacher should be able to examine the context in which he or she teaches, and question the goals and values underlying his or her decision in doing certain activities in the classroom. There are various tools for the reflective practice such as journal writing, lesson reports, surveys and questionnaires, audio and video recordings, observation, action research, teaching portfolios, and group discussions (Farrell, 2004; Murphy, 2001; Richards & Lockhart, 1999; Richards and Farrell, 2005, as cited in Fat'hii, 2011).

Despite the facts that reflective practice brings numerous benefits, many teachers have difficulty in engaging in this practice. One of the common reasons is time constraint. Teachers have workload which already takes up much of their time. Evaluating their own teaching by watching video recording for example will certainly need extra time. Teachers also need to be open-minded in order to be able to identify problems, and have wide knowledge so that possible solutions to an issue can be implemented (Mathew, 2012).

The challenge is then how to develop reflective practice since the time the teachers enter teacher education program. As student teachers, they can start building a habit of making reflection. The problem is, prospective teachers often find it difficult to reflect and consider alternative ways of teaching as they already assume that the classroom is a familiar place since they have been students themselves for many years. Besides, student teachers generally hold a belief that what they need to learn during their teacher education is what to do, not to think or reflect (Moen, 2006). Therefore, it is the role of the instructor or supervisor to encourage reflective practice of student teachers as they start doing their practicum in microteaching.

Richards and Farrell (2011) have offered some stages in reflective microteaching. They include: 1) planning the mini lesson; 2) teaching and observing; and 3) reflecting on the lesson. In planning the mini lesson, the focus can range from a particular teaching skill to other dimensions of teaching such as how to make learning enjoyable, how to develop motivation, how to encourage student participation, how to manage feedback, and how to become aware of one’s teaching style. The supervisor might provide a lesson-plan format as a guide for student teachers to follow, or the student teacher may decide on the lesson-plan.
format. In the second stage, teaching and observing, the student teacher teaches his or her mini lesson and the observers complete their observation notes. In the third stage, reflecting on the lesson, the student teacher gives his or her account of the experience, the other student teachers compare their observation results, and the supervisor offers commentaries and feedback. It was not mentioned whether all these activities should be done orally or in a written account.

However, reflection in a form of journal writing can be very effective, as suggested by Richards and Lockhart (1996). In keeping a journal, teachers or student teachers can record events and ideas which can be used for later reflection, beside, the process of writing itself can trigger insights about teaching and serve as a discovery process. Teachers or student teachers can explore various topics from their classroom experiences, including personal reactions to things that happen during the lesson and observations about problems that occur in teaching. Keeping a journal can also be beneficial when teachers share their journals and meet regularly to discuss them (Brock, Yu, & Wong 1992, as cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1998, p. 8).

Bailey et al (2001) have also listed several benefits of keeping a teaching journal. A journal can serve as a place to articulate problems or puzzles, to vent frustration, or even to celebrate our triumph in teaching. When teachers are able to articulate problems, it may lead them to a more understanding of classroom issues, speculate on alternatives and solutions, and generate new teaching ideas, which in the long run it will result in professional development.

A study on reflective practice at a microteaching class in Indonesia was conducted by Palupi (2011). She examined the students’ reflective journals on particular issues such as methodology and strategies used in teaching, classroom language whether to use L1 or L2, how to create positive classroom atmosphere, and how to anticipate problems that exist during teaching. The findings revealed that reflection is able to assist the student teachers to develop their critical thinking skills.

THE STUDY

The context

The context of the study is the English language teacher training bachelor’s degree program, a division of the faculty of education and teacher training (Tarbiyah Faculty) Antasari State
Institute for Islamic Study Banjarmasin, Indonesia. Ten students (eight females, two males) in a microteaching class in which I was the supervisor had agreed to participate in this study. Prior to the microteaching practicum, we had a brief discussion regarding the lesson plans, and the sequence of the students who were going to teach at each meeting.

Previously, the student teachers had also attended an orientation program, one at the faculty level, and the other at the respective department. In this orientation program, the student teachers were told to apply 8 basic teaching skills in their practicum, which include: 1) how to open and close the lesson; 2) how to ask questions; 3) how to give reinforcement; 4) how to make variation; 5) how to give explanation; 6) how to manage the class; 7) how to guide/lead small group discussion; and 8) how to teach small group and individuals (source: Pedoman PPL Fakultas Tarbiyah IAIN Antasari Banjarmasin). These eight skills should be mastered by the student teachers from all majors in our faculty, which comprises English Department, Mathematics and Science Department, Arabic Department, Islamic Education Department, and Primary School Teacher Education Department. For the first through the third meeting, the students were assigned to teach lessons for junior high school, while for the fourth through the sixth meeting, they were using materials taken from senior high school.

**The methodology**

This study used an exploratory qualitative approach, meaning that in order to understand the central phenomenon being studied, in this case the reflective practice done in a microteaching class and the impacts towards student teachers, it needs to be viewed and explored from the participants’ experience (Creswell, 2008).

The length of collecting data lasted for the period of two months. The data were gathered through observational notes, compilation of students’ journals, peer comments, and interviews. The observational notes were used as a primary source of data on how the student teachers planned and conducted their mini lesson, and whether they were able to make progress throughout their practicum. In addition, the participants were asked to write a self-reflective journal after each teaching practicum, and comments for their peers’ performance. The guidelines were given on what they should write on their journals and feedbacks. Basically, they should comment on the strength, weaknesses, and some suggestions for their peers. Then I assigned the participants to compile all their journal entries, feedbacks, and comments by sticking them on colorful paper so they can read through them later on. The interviews were conducted after the participants finished all their teaching
practices and all their self-reflections and peer comments were completely compiled. The interview was one-on-one, open-ended and semi-structured, with the purpose to gain information on students’ opinion about their microteaching experience and reflective practice (see appendix).

After all the data were complete, they were analyzed by identifying themes, then organizing and dividing them into several emerging themes. Observational notes, journal entries and peer comments were compared for similar themes, and the interviews were transcribed. Finally, the data were interpreted and confirmed with relevant literature. Interpretation was made by drawing out broader meanings from the emerging themes, reflecting on how the findings relate to existing research, and stating the significance found in the study.

**FINDINGS**

The findings presented below depict individual student teacher’s journeys from the beginning through the end of their microteaching practicum. The names used here are pseudonym and due to limited space, not all of them will be described here.

**Journey 1: Dealing with anxiety and implementing the lesson plan**

At the initial stage, the most common problem of the student teachers was their uncertainty about the lesson plan, how they should go about it, how to overcome nervousness, and how to manage the time.

During the practicum, it is evident that the student teachers were struggling with their nervousness and implementing what they had written in their lesson plan. I observed that there were some parts of the lesson plans that did not run well as some materials are not mastered well, the activities were not relevant with the skills focus, and some problem occurred due to limited time of practice. The student teachers acknowledged these limitation/weaknesses in their journals/self-reflection as well as peer comments. Below are some excerpts of what they have written in their journals.

“Today is my first time in learning practice. I feel so nervous because I have to speak in front of my class. I have prepared the material before I teach in the classroom. Although I can’t be the master of my material but I try to interact with my students. I use my time to
teach all the material and try to make the students understand my material. Today I feel I can’t be a good teacher but next time I hope will be better than before” (Maria)

“When I was a teacher, I feel very nervous. Actually I have prepared the lesson plan, material, and what should I say when I teach, but I was very nervous so I can not focus. I forgot what should I say. Maybe it is because it is the first time I teach in front of the class, I hope I can be better next meeting.” (Nindy)

“Today is my first meeting. I feel very nervous, so many of lesson plan that I have made couldn’t I presented well. And because I got almost last number to practice teaching, the students feel bored and tired, so the class feel not interested. I hope next week could be better than today and I want to teach with games next week, so the students can feel interested and not bored.” (Rita)

From the students’ reflection above, it shows that their anxiety level was still high at the beginning practice, which is actually natural. It also can be seen that student teachers tended to focus on their performance and confidence, not on the method or material, or lesson objectives. A student teacher who was also concerned on her performance, which she thought was dull and interesting, expressed it in her journal entry:

“In my teaching performance, I feel that I failed. My class was so boring. How poor I am! I don’t have a sense of humor. I wish I could be better in another chance” (Aya)

All of this anxiety sometimes resulted in unclear instructions or too-fast explanation, which will be explained in the next section.

**Journey 2: Language issue, pace and clarity of instruction**

The second issue that arose during the practicum was the use of the language, and the pace and clarity of instruction. Some student teachers had a tendency to explain the lesson fast, which might be resulted from nervousness.

“Today is my third time for teaching performance. I feel a little bit nervous, as a result I forget what I want to say, hehe.. Another thing that happen to me is I speak too fast. That is my big problem while teaching. Fortunately my students are my friends that they are cleverer than me. So, they can understand what I say. If my students are junior high school, I am sure that they will not understand with my explanation because I speak too fast...” (Aya)

I found similar comments from peer feedback where most of the student teachers suggested their peers not to speak too fast in explaining the materials.
“I think you are too fast when you explain the materials so your students sometimes still confuse, but the game that you used during the lesson make them enjoy.” (comment for Yanti)

I also observed that some student teachers had been trying to use English as much as possible in explaining the lesson. However, they tend to use the English language which was a way too complicated for the level of students. For example, on one of her lessons about expressing apology Aya put on her slide about the definition of apology, which is actually unnecessary. Her peers gave comment by writing:

“Good performance, but bahasa yang dipakai terlalu ilmiah. Kurangi pemakaian bahasa ilmiah karena anak SMP masih belum bisa untuk mencernanya.” (my translation: You should minimize the use of academic language because it’s hard for the junior high school students to understand).

On the other hand, student teachers feel that when the level to be taught is senior high school, English should be used most of the time. Below are some peer comments:

“A nice game during the lesson, so your students enjoy the lesson, but please use English more because the lesson is for senior high school students.” (comment for Nita)

“Because your students are in 12th grade, you don’t have to explain the simple present too long, because they understand. Better if you ask the student practice more on how to use simple present. And because your students are 12th grade, better if you use English more clearly and fluency” (comment for Nindy).

In my feedback, I reminded the student teachers that although they were teaching their peers, they had to be treated as though they were students of junior or high school students. As students at a higher institution, student teachers may have been exposed to higher level of English, but still they need to adapt to the type of student they would be teaching. I also recommend them to learn more on classroom language, so they still can use English in simple way.

Another issue related to language is whether to use L1 or L2 in giving instruction. A few student teachers preferred to use L1 in explaining or giving instruction because they felt that it would make his or her explanation more clear and could build better rapport with the students, while some others prefer to use English. Here are excerpts of peer comments for Irfan who most of the time used Indonesian and even Banjarese language in his instruction:

“He look relaxed when teaching. He spoke in three languages. The purpose to make student easy to understand, but very little interaction to the student.”
“As lecturer said last week, it's better to use English for simple question ex. how are you, etc."

I have previously challenged the student teachers to use English as much as possible during the instruction based on my belief that teachers need to give much exposure to the students. However, I also allowed the student teachers to use their L1 if they think it would help to make the lesson run smoothly. Based on my overall observation, the use of L1 and L2 had quite an equal ratio, with some students tended to use English more than the others.

Beside the preference of using English, student teachers were also aware of the importance of clarity of instruction and correctness such as in pronunciation. Below are some peer comments:

“improve your pronunciation again before you come to the class to teach. So, you can’t make the wrong pronunciation when you teach your students. But you explanation today is good.” (comment for Nita)

“very good method, I like that. But please give clear explanation, clear instruction” (comment for Nita)

“lack in explanation and give example, so student still confused about the material” (comment for Juju)

From the peer comments, it can be inferred that student teachers consider the use of language is one of the important factors that influence the success of their teaching.

Journey 3: Attitude in teaching and classroom control

The next issue is concerned with the attitude in teaching, such as whether to sit or stand up in front of the class or move around while teaching, being disciplined or laidback, teacher-centered or learner-centered, one way or interactive lesson. The student teachers mostly dislike to see their peers teaching the class by only sitting at the desk. For example, when Riza and Irfan mostly did their practice by sitting, their peers reacted by writing comments:

“Teacher interaction style still lack, because he often sit down on the chair.” (comment for Irfan)

“The class is boring because the teacher only sit and just read.” (comment for Irfan)
“I suggest you to not sit everytime when you explain. Try to stand up. For example write on the white board if you need to explain important material” (comment for Riza)

“Good presentation and clear explanation. But you can stand up when you teach and walk around your students. Don’t just sit on your chair.” (comment for Riza)

Beside the concerns on the teacher position and movement in the classroom, another issue that arose was the way a student teacher controlled the classroom. In order to get student attention, the teachers have tried various techniques, the most common one was by asking questions. They also tried to speak with the student in a soft-spoken and friendly manner. However, a student teacher, Nindy, did it differently. She tried to discipline the students and kept reminding students to pay attention to her explanation. One peer comment about her strictness was:

“Your voice is clear and you can master your material. But don’t be a killer teacher because your students difficult to ask some questions for you. Please be a kind teacher to make your students easy to understand and can interact with you.”

This comment implies that it is preferable to have a friendly teacher and relaxed atmosphere.

Journey 4: Synchronizing activities with skills focus and choosing appropriate techniques

Regarding the classroom activities that the student teachers designed for each lesson, I examined that some were not really relevant with the skill focus intended. For instance, in one of his lessons plan, Riza planned to teach listening as the skills focus, but during the practice it was dominated by speaking and grammar exercises. My feedback was:

“I wonder why in your lesson plan the focus is listening, but during the practice you focus more on speaking. If tape recorder or speaker is not available, listening activity can be done by the teacher saying the expressions while the students do the exercises such as filling the blanks, matching, choosing the correct answer, etc.”

Or in one of her lessons, Nindy planned to teach how to write an invitation letter, but it turned out into speaking as the activities implemented were misleading when she asked the students to practice saying the expressions and reading the invitation in front of the class. As a supervisor, in my feedback, I underlined the importance of synchronizing the classroom activities and the lesson focus. For Nindy’s writing lesson for example, I suggested her to focus more on the format and content of an invitation letter, and assigned the students to
create invitation cards on colorful paper and stick it on the wall so that they could see at each other’s work.

Another illustration is, at other practice student teachers intended to have speaking skills, but lack of drilling or modeling activities. The teacher just asked the students to practice or create short dialog. Thus, in my feedback I reminded them the importance of giving exposure, modeling and drilling. For reading lesson, most of the student teachers seemed to favor reading aloud activity, some accompanied by translating the sentences one by one, which I assumed was not effective. Therefore, I suggested them to design activities which focused more on reading comprehension.

**Journey 5: Handling unforeseen situation**

During the practicum unforeseen circumstances could occur which made the lesson not run as smoothly as previously planned. The most common cause of the problem was media and facilities, as expressed in the following journal entries:

“Today I taught about number, color, and things. I don’t feel as nervous as the first meeting. But in my second meeting I disappointed because there are so many pictures in my slide that I really want to show with the students, but because the electricity was stop, I can’t show it. I think I taught better than last week, but I don’t know my friends’ opinion” (Yanti)

“Today is my fifth chance to have teaching performance and I choose listening skills. actually I just get the video from Youtube.. So, there is no script. as a result I have to write it by myself by hearing the video for several times. I did it as well as I can. I think my teaching performance is better than last week, even there is a problem with my speakers that make me should read the script in front of my students. But I saw that my students could enjoy it.” (Aya)

“Today I teach about the magic of the stories (narrative text). I think for today still have some weaknesses, and because it’s raining, my voice is not clear. But it’s ok. My students were very interested with my material because I have a game to engage my student and make them not boring.” (Rita)

In such situation, student teachers were challenged to find alternatives and make decision on how to overcome the situation. My observation was although the situation was frustrating, the student teachers were generally able to overcome it.

**Journey 6: Managing to be a better teacher**

At the final week, after all the self-reflection and feedbacks form peers and supervisor, I observed the significant improvement in the student teachers’ teaching performance. Most of them were at their best performance; they used various materials and teaching aids, they were
able to vary the activities such as group work for writing and games for grammar, apply appropriate techniques for each skills, less teacher-centered, good time management, and maximum use of English as the language of instruction. Apart from that, there are certainly some areas that still needs to be improved such as pronunciation skills and questioning techniques. Below are some illustrations of student performance and reflection:

“Today I feel spirit because this is the last meeting. I have prepared the material well. In this meeting I try to make game, it is arrange the steps to make instant noodle. The students are interested. I am so happy, but I think I teach the material so fast.” (Nindy)

This time Nindy was able to manage her lesson in an interesting way. With the skills focus writing a procedural text, she firstly asked the student to arrange the picture, then asked them to write sentences based on the pictures. She implemented peer writing which made the student feel more comfortable and can help each other.

Maria and Aya who used to be very fast in explaining now could manage the pace of their instruction and develop classroom activities which were related to the skill focus and make the lesson interesting because of their varied techniques. Maria was teaching about reading news item and she exposed the students to the topic by firstly showing a newspaper. She made some interactions with the students by asking questions about news item before assigning them to read the text. This time she developed true false statements and questions for comprehending the text. Meanwhile, Aya was teaching how to write a narrative text. She explained very clearly the structure and connectors in a narrative. In addition she used a short video from which students must develop their narrative. Finally she applied peer editing and gave guidance to students on what to check on their writing.

From the result of the interviews, it is found that the student teachers respond positively to microteaching practicum and its reflective practice. They believe that through microteaching they could gain a lot of knowledge about teaching. They also suggest that microteaching practicum in the faculty be extended to more than six times practice, and the time allotment for each student to practice be lengthened. Furthermore, they expect that all lessons could be videotaped, although it would make them feel more nervous. The benefit is the video can be replayed so that they could see the mistake and make improvement if their performance was not satisfactorily. Because in practice not all lesson can be videotaped, the student teachers feel the benefits of writing self reflective journals and reading feedbacks from supervisor as well as from peers, as it becomes an alternative solution for making reflection.
CONCLUSION

The above findings suggest that microteaching has been proven very important as it could serve as the foundation from which the student teachers will take their step before going to the next journey: practicum teaching at school, and to be future teachers. Due to its limited nature, microteaching might only offer a glimpse of what teaching is like. Nevertheless, through microteaching experience, the student teachers can enhance their pedagogical knowledge and develop their teaching expertise.

Furthermore, as an initial part of teacher professional development, reflective practice in microteaching has enabled the student teachers to uncover their strengths and weaknesses, and unwrap certain issues which they may have not realized when they learn the theoretical knowledge. From their self-reflection, it is found that student teachers may have weaknesses in writing their journals particularly grammatical problem, which is understandable as they are still much influenced by their mother tongue. However, the enthusiasm and positive attitude toward reflective practice imply that the activity has benefited them a lot. Self-reflection through journal writing enables student teachers to express their feelings about both favorable and unfavorable situations in their teaching, which in turn will lead them to a better performance in the future. Therefore, although there might be some obstacles regarding the lack of time and the language proficiency, it is recommended that reflective practice through journal writing be continued.
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APPENDIX

Interview Questions

1. What have you learned from the teaching practicum?
2. What do you think of the 8 teaching skills? Can they be applied during your mini lesson practicum?
3. What are the constraints in preparing the lesson? What do you think of the time allotment? Is the weekly schedule too short to prepare a lesson optimally?
4. Is the three-hour practice with ten students in one group too long and exhausting for you and make you hard to concentrate?
5. Should all the lessons be videotaped so that we can make more effective reflection by watching the video?
6. What is your opinion about writing reflective journals and feedback?
7. What areas do you feel you are still very weak at? (language skills, mastering the materials, finding appropriate technique, classroom management, others?)
8. Give overall comment on your microteaching experience (what skills you have gained, what problems you have encountered, and what are the solutions, etc.)