

# Reflective Practice in Stimulating Professional Growth of English Department Lecturers of Universitas Brawijaya, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This paper discusses a study to find out more about reflective teaching practices among teachers in tertiary level. The research investigates the awareness and application of reflective practices by the English Department lecturer(s) of Universitas Brawijaya. In addition, the variables of gender, experience and level of education are discussed in relation to reflective teaching. The questionnaires were distributed to 15 lecturers in FIB UB. The participant in this study consisted of 3 male and 12 female English Department lecturers of Universitas Brawijaya (n=15). 4 of the participants are holder S1 degrees and the other 11 lecturers have the S2 and S3 degree. The participants experience in teaching ranges between 1-15 years in ELT. The Result shows that gender, experience and level of education do not play a role in teacher's reflection. The paper ends with the recommendation to develop the position of reflective practice in language teaching.

**Keywords:** Reflective teaching, reflection in-teaching, reflection on-teaching, professionalism

## INTRODUCTION

Reflective practice can be a beneficial process in teacher professional development, both for pre-service and in-service teachers. This digest reviews the concept, levels, techniques for, and benefits of reflective practice. In 1987, Donald Schon introduced the concept of reflective practice as a critical process in refining one's artistry or craft in a specific discipline. Schon recommended reflective practice as a way for beginners in a discipline to recognize consonance between their own individual practices and those of successful practitioners. As defined by Schon, reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being coached by professionals in the discipline (Schon, 1996). After the concept of reflective practice was introduced by Schon, many schools, colleges, and departments of education began designing teacher education and professional development programs based on this concept. As the concept grew in popularity, some researchers cautioned that SCDEs that incorporated reflective practice in their teacher education programs were focusing on the process of reflective practice

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while sacrificing important content in teacher education (Clift et al, 1990). These researchers recommended that reflective teaching combine John Dewey's philosophy on the moral, situational aspects of teaching with Schon's process for a more contextual approach to the concept of reflective practice.

More recently, Boud and Walker (1998) also noted shortcomings in the way SCDEs were applying Schon's concept of reflective practice to teacher education. They took issue with what they considered to be a “checklist” or “reflection on demand” mentality, reflection processes with no link to conceptual frameworks, a failure to encourage students to challenge teaching practices, and a need for personal disclosure that was beyond the capacity of some young teachers. Boud and Walker suggest that these weaknesses can be addressed when the teacher-coaches create an environment of trust and build a context for reflection unique to every learning situation.

Teacher's reflection has gained lots of attention during the last few decades. It is report in the literature that reflection can be used as a very efficient tool towards proficient development. McAlpine and Weston (2000) suggest that reflection fosters professional growth. Osterman and Kottkamp (2004) (cited in Hung, 2008) define reflection as a professional development strategy, and they believe through reflection professionals will be equipped with ‘opportunities to explore, articulate and represent their own ideas and knowledge’. Although Reflection is highly essential, this study indicates that more than half of the teachers included in the study had not had any training on Reflective Teaching. This indicates that universities, which prepare prospective teachers, do not give enough importance to reflective teaching while preparing teachers for their jobs.

There is no doubt that reflection is essential for professional growth and more effective teaching. However, there is still uncertainty whether teachers can be taught how to become reflective practitioners. Zeichner & Liston (1996) assert that ‘reflection is not a procedure that can be taught but rather a holistic orientation to teaching that can be helped to acquire’. This study raises more questions regarding the efficacy of teacher preparation courses in raising awareness or linking theory to practice.

This paper discusses a study intended to investigate the reflective teaching practice of English Department Lecturers of Universitas Brawijaya Malang. It also seeks to find out the awareness of the theory or the importance of reflection in teachers' professional growth.

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## Method

### Participants

This study was conducted at Faculty of Culture Studies of Universitas Brawijaya Malang with 15 lecturers (3 male and 12 female). The participants surveyed belonged to the English Department Program.

**Table 1. The participants' experience**

Years of experience	Frequency	percent
1-5	3	20
6-10	10	67
10-15	2	13
<b>total</b>	15	100

### Questionnaires

The questionnaires was developed by the researchers and validated by the experts. It was also tried out by the expert. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part includes instruction to the participants in addition to 3 questions about gender, education, and experience. The second part of the questionnaire shows a list of 20 reflection practices for the participants to tick how frequently they practice each item (never, rarely, sometimes, often, or usually).

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Reflection in the classroom while teaching

This part aims at investigating whether teachers apply reflection in the classroom. The results indicate that the respondents apply reflection while teaching. *As it can be seen* from table 2, the respondents (60%) are usually aware of the general atmosphere in the classroom. It is also clear that over a half of the respondents (53.3%) are aware of what went well and what didn't go well during the lessons. Table 2 also shows that only few respondents (20%) usually assess everything they do or say in the classroom and know why they say that things.

**Table 2. Reflection in Teaching from the Most Frequent to the Least Frequent**

No	Questions	Response	Frequency	Percent
1.	I am aware of the general atmosphere in the classroom (sleepy, tired, bored, active, angry, smiley, excited students)	sometimes	1	6.6
		often	3	20
		usually	9	60
2.	I am aware of what went well and what did not go well during the lesson	rarely	1	6.6
		sometimes	1	6.6
		often	5	33.3
		usually	8	53.3
3.	I adapt what I need to do next class hour to ensure that the students learn the unclear content	sometimes	4	26
		often	3	20
		usually	8	53.2
4.	I plan what I need to do next class hour to ensure that the students learn the unclear content.	sometimes	3	20
		often	7	46.6
		usually	5	33.3
5.	I think about possible consequences or reactions that my actions or words might invoke	rarely	4	26
		sometimes	3	20
		often	4	26
		usually	4	26
6.	I try to find proofs of the students' learning	rarely	1	6.6
		sometimes	4	26
		often	5	33.3
		usually	4	26
7.	I assess everything I do or say in the classroom and know why I do or say these things.	rarely	4	26
		sometimes	5	33.3
		often	3	20
		usually	3	20
8.	I reach conclusions by the end of the lesson that direct my future teaching practices	rarely	1	6.6
		sometimes	4	26
		often	6	40
		usually	4	26
9.	I talk to my colleagues about problematic issues in my classroom in order to have new ideas.	rarely	1	6.6
		sometimes	6	40
		often	4	26
		usually	3	20
10.	I discuss educational issues with my colleagues formally in meetings	never	1	6.6
		rarely	6	40

		sometimes	4	26
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## Reflection on Teaching

This part investigates teachers' reflection on their own teaching '*Reflection on Teaching*'. Moreover, it questions the way teachers reflect on their teaching. It is clear from the findings that the most preferable way is talking to colleagues about educational issues either informally during free time or formally in weekly meetings. The results indicate that (see Table 3) over half of the respondents (53.2%) consider every students engagement and what they wanted to happen during the lesson. Almost half of the respondents (40%) search the Internet for possible alternatives for the current teaching practices. Colleagues, teacher, trainer or administrator observe the teacher lesson. (See Table 3)

The results shown in Table 3 reveal that reflection in writing comes in the last place. Almost over a half (53.2%) of the respondents never keep a personal professional portfolio in which they collect proofs of their learning as a teacher over a specified period of time. The findings also indicate that none of the respondents usually keeps a reflective journal and half of the respondents never write journals reflecting on classroom incidents. (See Table 3)

**Table 3. Reflection on Teaching**

No	Questions	Response	Frequency	Percent
11.	After the lesson, I think about what I wanted to happen during the lesson. I consider how my practice might change after having new understandings	sometimes	2	13.3
		often	2	13.3
		usually	3	20
12.	After the lesson, I ask myself (What could I have Done differently?) I search on the internet for Possible alternatives for my current teaching practice	sometimes	4	26
		often	5	33.3
		usually	6	40
13.	I observe my colleague's lessons. I fill a formal reflection form for every lesson I teach	rarely	5	33.3
		sometimes	3	20
		often	2	13.3
		usually	5	33.3
14.	After the lesson, I think about what I wanted to happen during the lesson. I consider how my practice might change after having new understandings	rarely	1	6.6
		sometimes	5	33.3
		often	3	20
		usually	6	40
15.	I keep a personal professional portfolio in which I collect proofs of my learning as a teacher over a specified period	rarely	3	20
		sometimes	5	33.3

	of time	often	4	26
		usually	3	20
16.	I observe my colleague's lessons. I fill a formal reflection form for every lesson I teach	rarely	5	33.3
		sometimes	7	46.3
		often	3	20
		usually	4	26
17.	After the lesson, I think about what I wanted to happen during the lesson. I consider how my practice might change after having new understandings	rarely	3	20
		sometimes	1	6.6
		often	3	20
		usually	4	26
18.	I keep a personal professional portfolio in which I collect proofs of my learning as a teacher over a specified period of time	rarely	8	53.2
		sometimes	5	33.3
		often	2	13.3
		usually	6	40
19.	After the lesson, I think about what I wanted to happen during the lesson. I consider how my practice might change after having new understandings	rarely	1	6.6
		sometimes	1	6.6
		often	4	26
		usually	3	20
20.	I keep a personal professional portfolio in which I collect proofs of my learning as a teacher over a specified period of time	rarely	6	40
		sometimes	7	46.2
		often	2	13.3
		usually	5	33.3

## DISCUSSION

Craig (1994) acknowledges that despite the fact that teachers are often aware of the term reflective practice and the importance of being reflective, they do not really apply this to their real life teaching experience. Kvernbekk (2001) also supports this view by stating that theories on teaching do not usually govern actions in the classroom and that most knowledge does not directly lead to action. Whether they are aware or not aware of Reflective Teaching, this study has revealed that awareness is not enough. There is a gap between theory and practice.

Schön (1987) defines two types of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on action. Reflection-in-action happens whilst teaching, and it refers to the importance of teachers' being aware of their decisions as they work and it enables the teacher to take the necessary steps towards his/her following actions. This research shows that the majority of the teachers practice this level of reflection. They are well aware of the contexts where they teach and the variables these contexts include and they make decisions accordingly.

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The second level of reflection is Reflection-on action. As defined by Schön (1987), Reflection-on-action occurs after action has been taken, and it engages the teacher with reviewing, analysing and evaluating the situation which enhance professional growth. Van Manen (1991) argues that reflection-in-action cannot take place as we usually do not have the time or opportunity to reflect. However, this study shows an opposite view. The participants were found to reflect-in-action more than on-action.

Reflection-on-action was found to be ignored by the majority of the teachers. This level of reflection can be achieved by thinking back our experiences, testing our existing beliefs and questioning decisions and their results. This can be expressed in writing reflective journals, audio journals, action research, and keeping professional portfolios. In other words, it is a deeper level of Reflection and more time-consuming.

The main thing that a must for the teachers have can be an obstacle between teachers and Reflectio non- action.

## Conclusions

This research has drawn a clear image about the status of reflective practice within a higher education institution. It is obvious that gender, experience and education do not play a role in teacher's reflection. In addition, awareness of the theory or the importance of reflection in teachers' professional growth does not necessarily mean that teachers apply reflection in their teaching experience.

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