

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter presents the background of this research proposal in regards to reflective teaching in mentoring to improve novice teacher classroom performance. Besides, this chapter also provides the problem identification and the associated research questions that this study sets out to answer.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The first years of teaching career have been indisputably problematic for most of ‘novice teachers’, those who are new in experiencing teaching. Not only possessing the new environment of the work place to adapt to, but also handling and maintaining adequate classroom performances are of the major issues. To illustrate, several facts about novice teachers with which many studies cannot deny are described below.

First, the period of the first years of teaching career is assumed not easy to be undertaken by the novices (See Angell & Garfinkel, 2002; Feimen-Nemser, 1983 as cited in Feimen-Nemser, 2001: 1027). Often times, the growing feelings of being overwhelmed by any complexities related to teaching and school are of the novices’ big concerns (Farrel, 2008: 3). Second, the issues saying that “*the practice shock*” (see also Achinstein & Barret, 2004: 716) or “*reality shock*” (Farrel, 2008: 2) ensued among the novices are very well acknowledged. Say, when attempting to apply theories into real practice, it is inevitable that the novices confront a lot of difficulties (Lindgren, 2006: 725). Third, it is also evidence that the novices mainly lack of knowledge about teaching, let alone the experiences in teaching itself (Hogan &

Rabinowitz, 2004 & 2009; Toh et.al, 2003: 200), which in turn influences their classroom performances.

Given the situation experienced by novice teachers mentioned in the preceding paragraph, there should be any strategies that may help them to overcome their problems. One of them is reflective teaching (RT), within which the novice teachers can reflect critically on what they have done and/or taught in the classroom (see Qing, 2009: 36; Pennington, 1992 as cited in Bailey, 1997: 4). As viewed by Navaneedhan (2011:331; Gunn, 2010: 209; Minot, 2010: 331), this RT is a type of deliberate actions by a teacher to re-evaluate critically what happened during a lesson session so that the possibility of a better teaching performance can be pursued. At this point, this RT is addressed to teacher professional development, as the consequence (Ma & Ren, 2011: 154).

There are several benefits that the novices may take from reflective teaching. They mainly have to do with teacher professionalism, such as the improvement of classroom instructional practice (see Nodhousan, 2011; 1; Farrel, 2004 as cited in Gunn, 2011; 210; Collier, 1999; 174; Calderhead, 1989; 43). Moreover, the other profound effects of reflective teaching proven from studies conducted by some researchers have revolved around “*job satisfaction and teachers’ sense of self efficacy*” (Braun & Crumpler, 2004 as cited in Akbari, 2007: 1998), the teachers’ improved awareness of his/her beliefs in teaching (Farrel 2006: 77-90), the teachers’ improved teaching confidence (Sowa, 2009: 1031) and the teacher improved behaviors in becoming more initiative and responsible in their practice of teaching (Ma & Ren, 2011).

All of the RT benefits presented above have indicated the importance of the RT itself for teacher teaching practice, but the problem is that there have been scarcely detailed studies on this particular topic, specifically the ones that outline the novice teacher’s improved classroom performance through reflective teaching. Therefore, the present study devotes an attention on how a novice English teacher improved his performances on teaching practice through reflective teaching.

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The reflective teaching that the novices undertook in this study was in accordance with the conception of a collaborative model of reflective teaching (as theorized by Wallace, 1991), wherein the mentoring took place to be the means for the teacher practitioner to do the reflection (as having been suggested by Hannesy, 2011; Harrison & Yaffe reported in Swennen & Klink, 2009: 148; Jay, 2003: 20; Fischer & Andel, 2002: 5). The classroom observation framework carried out upon the reflective teaching process was based on Shulman conception of teacher pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in 1978. However, not all aspects of PCK were investigated, yet this study was addressed only to teacher aspects of pedagogy.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the research questions as follows.

1. How can novice teacher classroom performances be improved through reflective teaching practice in mentoring?
2. What are the teachers' opinions (both teacher mentee and teacher mentor) toward the practice of reflective teaching they have engaged with?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The overarching objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify how reflective teaching practices can improve the novice teachers' classroom performances.
2. To find out the teachers' perceptions toward the practice of reflective teaching they have engaged with

## **1.4 Significances of the Study**

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Referring to Cresswell (1994: 111; 2003: 149), the significances of the present study are therefore provided in three points of view, as described below.

1. Theoretically, this study may add empirical supports to the existing theories, literatures and scholarly research findings of reflective teaching undertaken by a novice teacher in a collaborative model of mentoring with an experienced teacher.
2. Practically, the results of this study may help to clarify the benefits of applying reflective teaching in mentoring so that more teachers can replicate this strategy in their daily teaching so as to improve their teaching practice.
3. Professionally, this study may encourage the teachers in the research site or in the regency to apply reflective teaching practice in mentoring; and promote the social constructivist based theories in approaching the process of teacher education for any schools in the regency.

### **1.5 The Scope of the Study**

Since the present study is classroom action research, it is definitely “*very much contextual*” and “*situation specific*” (Musthafa in Alwasilah, 2009: 298). Therefore the findings of this study will not be generalized, but they will be limited to some particular cases of which essential characteristics are similar to the present study.

### **1.6 The Definitions of the Key Terms**

The following are several operational definitions related to some particular terminologies used in the present study.

1. Reflective teaching is an approach to teaching and to teacher education which is based on the assumption that teachers can improve their understanding of

teaching and the quality of their own teaching by reflecting critically on their teaching experiences (Qing, 2009: 36).

2. A Novice English Teacher is an English teacher who has completed her/his study (including the practicum) and just commenced teaching in an educational institution (Farrel as cited in Burns & Richards, 2009).
3. A reflective practitioner is the one who commits reflective practice such as a teacher, a learner, and so on. However, in the context of this study, the reflective practitioner refers to the novice teacher.
4. Mentoring is the activities where two or more people involved working together (Bryant-Shanklin & Brumage, 2001: 44). In the context of the present study the people involved in a joint work are a novice teacher acted as the teacher mentee and an experienced teacher acted as the teacher mentor.

### **1.7 Overview of the Following Chapters**

The subsequent chapters of this thesis can be highlighted as follows. Chapter 2 provides the rationale for the framework of this study. Mainly, it discusses about reflective teaching including the definitions and its conceptions, the mentoring activities, the novice teachers including their characteristics within the framework of pedagogical content knowledge and the aspects of classroom observation. Chapter 3 describes the methodological approaches, research design including the procedures and/ or techniques of how to conduct the reflective teaching practice in the related context of the study, and the findings of pre-actions. Chapter 4 discusses the findings and discussion of the obtained data started from cycle 1 to cycle 2. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and limitation of the study followed by suggestions for further research.